Anarchism and Authority

A Philosophical Introduction to Classical Anarchism

Paul McLaughlin

ANARCHISM AND AUTHORITY

Examining the political theory of anarchism from a philosophical and historical perspective, Paul McLaughlin relates anarchism to the fundamental ethical and political problem of authority. The book pays particular attention to the authority of the state and the anarchist rejection of all traditional claims made for the legitimacy of state authority, the author both explaining and defending the central tenets of the anarchist critique of the state.

The founding works of anarchist thought, by Godwin, Proudhon and Stirner, are explored and anarchism is examined in its historical context, including the influence of such events as the Enlightenment and the French Revolution on anarchist thought. Finally, the major theoretical developments of anarchism from the late-nineteenth century to the present are summarized and evaluated.

This book is both a highly readable account of the development of anarchist thinking and a lucid and well-reasoned defence of the anarchist philosophy.

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Introduction

A Philosophical Approach to Anarchism

This book aims to define – or to *re-define* – anarchism in relation to the fundamental ethico-political problem of authority. Authority is defined in terms of the right to exercise social control (as explored in the 'sociology of power') and the correlative duty to obey (as explored in the 'philosophy of practical reason'). Anarchism is distinguished, philosophically, by its scepticism towards such moral relations – by its questioning of the claims made for such normative power – and, practically, by its challenge to those 'authoritative' powers which cannot justify their claims and which are therefore deemed illegitimate or without moral foundation.

Part 1 of the book analyzes both the nature of anarchist scepticism (Chapter 1) and the nature of authority itself (Chapter 2). It pays particular attention to the authority of the state and the anarchist rejection of *all* traditional claims made for the legitimacy of state authority (Chapter 4). However, it also seeks to establish that anarchism cannot be defined simply in terms of its rejection of the state, still less in terms of its supposed rejection of authority as such. The anarchist sceptic must, in principle, be open to the possibility that authority of every kind can be justified. Indeed, a comprehensive treatment of authority (moral, theoretical, and practical) demonstrates that there *are* forms of authority that all but the most absolutist or abstract of anarchists (so-called 'philosophical anarchists') believe to be legitimate (Chapter 3).

Part 2 places anarchism in historical context, attempting to locate the origins of the political philosophy outlined in Part 1. It is argued that the three most important influences on the development of anarchism were the eighteenth century Enlightenment, the French Revolution of 1789–1793, and the radical enlightenment philosophy of Left Hegelianism that flourished in the 1830s and 1840s (Chapter 5). The three foundational texts of anarchism – William Godwin's *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (1793), Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's *What is Property?* (1840), and Max Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own* (1844) – are studied in some detail (Chapter 6). Finally, the major theoretical developments of anarchism from the late-nineteenth century to the present are summarized (Chapter 7).

This book is, therefore, largely a work of conceptual analysis. However, it is premised on the understanding that political ideas are products of history. The intellectual aspect of this history is central to the study. We will attempt to frame our analysis of the problem of authority within this intellectual history, thus blending conceptual analysis (in Part 1) with the history of ideas (in Part 2).

In Part 1, we will analyze anarchism as a *critical social philosophy* and investigate its *philosophy of authority*: its conceptualization of authority, its scepticism towards the notion of its legitimacy, and its critique of claims made for the legitimacy of

various forms of authority. Particular attention will be paid to the issue of political authority and the anarchist critique of the claims made for the legitimacy of the state. Of course, anarchism *as an ideology* involves a good deal more than this, including diverse visions of 'anarchy' and interpretations of the means required to realize it. It is these aspects of the ideology that divide the tradition along individualist and socialist, gradualist and revolutionary, pacifist and terrorist, and other such lines.[1] But even taking into account these ideological elements, one is still left wondering about precisely what it is that unites anarchists, about what exactly the 'anarchist idea' is.[2] This can only be determined at a fundamental philosophical level. Indeed, when confined to this level of abstraction, and divorced from other ideological elements, the anarchist idea is affirmed (often in absolutist terms) by the so-called 'philosophical anarchist' – in David Miller's words, 'a rather bloodless member of the [anarchist] species'.[3] The account of anarchism presented here may appear to characterize the present author in this light, though, for what it's worth, I would be extremely uncomfortable with such a characterization, and will attempt, especially in the Conclusion, to draw anarchism back from the realm of abstractions into the realm of concrete problems and radical solutions. The Conclusion, then, will contain a number of remarks on the social relevance of anarchism, as defined here. These remarks are intended to counter the widespread belief that a philosophical or 'sophisticated' expression of anarchism necessarily points to an abstract anarchism – an anarchism without revolutionary designs or potential. Our claim, on the contrary, is that a coherent philosophical articulation of the anarchist position is necessary (though obviously not sufficient) to make it practically forceful. Fundamental social change is, we contend, not only desirable but imperative. And anarchist alternatives, *properly understood and communicated*, may provide the best road ahead.

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1   As George Woodcock puts it: 'The differences between the various anarchist schools, though at first sight they appear considerable, actually lie in two fairly limited regions: revolutionary methods (especially the use of violence) and economic organization' [*Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 19].

2   It should be stated at the outset that the fundamental 'anarchist idea' does not necessarily give rise to what might be termed *anarchist fundamentalism*, an ideological deformation that asserts a simplistic and one-sided version of anarchism and, moreover, asserts it as definitive and absolute. This fundamentalist deformation is *anti-authoritarianism*, as discussed below. Incidentally, fundamentalist ideological deformation is not peculiar to anarchism. Thus liberalism, the *political philosophy of individual liberty*, has given rise to *neo-liberalism*, an ultra-dogmatic economistic simplification of the tradition. Neo-liberalism, in abstracting a proprietarian-economistic aspect of 'classical liberalism' (as articulated by John Locke and Adam Smith, partially represented perhaps), has effectively perverted an ideology that was once rich in ethical content (as the writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt, John Stuart Mill, and others testify). The economistic nature of this deformation is unsurprising since the leading theorists of neo-liberalism – notably Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, and Milton Friedman – have been economists rather than political or moral philosophers. The feeble ethico-philosophical efforts of these theorists (or at least Mises and Friedman) deserve rigorous critique that is, alas, beyond the parameters of this book.

3   *Anarchism* (London, 1984), p. 15.

While it is the critical philosophy of anarchism that *may* distinguish it most clearly, a full and adequate philosophical analysis ought to give consideration to it also as a *constructive moral philosophy*. However, this is beyond our scope (and, in any case, largely unnecessary) in the context of a study focused on the problem of authority. Others have adopted a different approach to the philosophy of anarchism, and would probably question ours. Alan Ritter, for example, examines the moral philosophy of anarchism *before* evaluating its critical philosophy; that is, he traces 'the anarchists' social criticism to its source in their [ethical] commitment to communal individuality' as the primary good. This strategy allows him, he claims, to bring out anarchism's 'coherence not only as a plan for social reconstruction, but also as a work of criticism'.[4] On the face of it, this seems like a rather sensible approach – starting with the ethical principle that underpins anarchist criticism in order to assess the coherence of that criticism. Indeed, Ritter's conception of 'communal individuality' *seems* to be a good *approximation* to the anarchist ethic, a conception that brings out some of its complexity. At any rate, it certainly seems better than, say, George Crowder's conception of 'freedom' – freedom as 'moral self-direction: self-direction in accordance with the will of the true or perfected self, which is the rational and right-willing part of the personality' – a conception that falls too conveniently within the terms of Berlinian analysis to be convincing.[5] Nevertheless, the actual ethic of anarchism is a great deal less apparent than the critical dimension (as the ongoing debate about what it is demonstrates), and it only comes into view when we inspect

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4   *Anarchism: A Theoretical Analysis* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 87, 61.

5   *Classical Anarchism: The Political Thought of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin* (Oxford, 1991), p. 170. Anarchists, on Crowder's account, happen to be conveniently categorizable as proponents of one of Isaiah Berlin's 'Two Concepts of Liberty'. This is further evidence of the excessive influence of Berlin's (admittedly interesting) essay, the major chapter from his *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford, 1969). One gets the impression from scholars like Crowder that Berlin wrote the very history of ideas. That said, Crowder thinks of himself as non-Berlinian for two reasons: first, he associates anarchism with the tradition of positive liberty, whereas Berlin associates it with negative liberty; and, secondly, he believes that 'the positive idea is by no means logically or naturally authoritarian', as Berlin held – indeed, anarchists have shown that it can secure 'the basis for a theory that is … thoroughly libertarian'. Crowder thus writes of 'the need to revise Berlin's thesis'. Hence, the non-Berlinian still feels the need to think in Berlinian terms – and this despite the fact that these terms are in many ways quite alien to anarchists. No anarchist theorist that I am aware of maintains so simplistically that positive freedom or 'moral self-direction', as defined in the passage quoted in the text, is 'the highest value of all' [Crowder, pp. 12, 15–16]. The complexities of the anarchist ethic do not lend it to interpretation within the restrictive Berlinian framework. Indeed, anarchists argue that a Berlinian conception of freedom *qua* freedom (even positive freedom) provides for an inadequate ethical principle. The complexity of the anarchist ethic has at least been acknowledged by some. K. Steven Vincent indicates it in Proudhon's case: 'Just as crucial as equality [to Proudhon] was liberty. Equality, in fact, was viewed as the condition of liberty, but only the union of the two formed justice' [*Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism* (Oxford, 1984), p. 60]. Thus, as I hope to demonstrate in a future work, the primary good for Proudhon and other major anarchists is *justice* – a complex good that must be conceived of integrally.

the critical philosophy of anarchism carefully. Accordingly, we undertake the latter in the present work, and hope to return to the former in a future study.

In Part 2, from the point of view of the history of ideas, it will be argued that anarchism is a child of the Enlightenment, that it received practical impetus as well as a crucial cautionary lesson from the French Revolution, and that it was influenced to a greatly underrated extent by the radical enlightenment philosophy of Left Hegelianism. Next, it will be argued that anarchism's intellectual foundations lie in three major philosophical works: Godwin's *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, Proudhon's *What is Property?*, and Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*. Having examined these foundations in some detail, a number of the more important theoretical developments of anarchism, from Bakunin to Bookchin and beyond, will be summarized.

The purpose of Part 2 is to place anarchism – and 'the anarchist idea' explored in Part 1 – in its intellectual context. This idea did not come from nowhere: it arose in a particular intellectual and social climate that gave it special resonance. This was a climate of crisis that called for revolutionary transformation; transformation that has, from the anarchist perspective, yet to take place in full. That is to say, the crisis persists in our society and has intensified to such an extent that we are now faced with an ecological crisis that threatens not only our social well-being, but our very survival. This is the contemporary context in which the anarchist idea continues to resonate.

Our historical examination of the anarchist idea – regardless of any attempt to 'contextualize' it *intellectually* – will doubtless be found wanting by social historians and others, who might argue, correctly, that history is more than an intellectual process. Social, economic, and political factors are obviously quite fundamental to historical development, and ideas cannot be fully comprehended in isolation from these factors. However, what concerns us here, in this philosophical study of anarchism, is the anarchist *idea*. No attempt is made to explain this idea in what might be considered 'fundamental' terms (in accordance with, say, the 'materialist conception of history'). The goal is simply to articulate the idea and to present anarchism as a critical philosophy that has developed more or less coherently over the previous couple of centuries. In itself, this may be too abstract. However, this work is not conceived of as a *comprehensive* study of the anarchist ideology, but as an attempt to improve our philosophical understanding of it. It is merely a contribution – and, in my view, a long overdue contribution – to anarchist scholarship from the philosophical standpoint.

As a preliminary to the conceptual and historical work outlined above, we must clear away some prevalent popular and academic misconceptions of anarchism. Therefore, a number of popular stereotypes of and dubious scholarly approaches to anarchism will be confronted in this Introduction.

Stereotypes of Anarchism

More than any other ideology, anarchism is subject to both public and academic misinterpretation, misrepresentation, and even falsification. Thus, every remotely

conscientious scholar of anarchism is obliged to begin by considering prevailing prejudices and stereotypes. In other words, before attempting to explain exactly what anarchism is, scholars are compelled to explain what it is *not*. This can be a difficult and frustrating task, given the popularity, longevity, and power of these prejudices and stereotypes. However, the task is unavoidable and we will begin in this first section by attending to it. Four stereotypes will be considered: the classical, the contemporary, the Marxist, and the academic.

The Classical Stereotype

The classical stereotype of anarchism (by now rather antiquated, as we will argue) is of its close, if not intrinsic, association with terror and violence generally. A significant literary expression of this stereotype is Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent* (1907), a fantastic story inspired by an attempted bombing of the Greenwich Observatory in 1894. The significance of this novel – by no means a great work – lies perhaps in its contribution to the violent image of anarchism. Conrad populates it with a group of revolutionary anarchists and a nihilistic colleague (whom he describes as 'the perfect anarchist'). The former are characterized as lazy, impotent, unethical propagandists; the latter ('a moral agent of destruction' known as 'The Professor') as an explosive-wearing 'lunatic' motivated by 'vengeful bitterness'. But the violent conviction that unites them at the extreme (the decrepit Karl Yundt as well as the genuinely threatening Professor) is much the same:

> 'I have always dreamed', [Yundt] mouthed, fiercely, 'of a band of men absolute in their resolve to discard all scruples in the choice of means, strong enough to give themselves frankly the name of destroyers, and free from the taint of that resigned pessimism which rots the world. No pity for anything on earth, including themselves, and death enlisted for good and all in the service of humanity – that's what I would have liked to see'.[6]

Another literary work from the same period that is often thought to be in the same vein is G.K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908).[7] However, Chesterton's work is not a political work of the dystopian imagination, like Conrad's, but a philosophical or religious work of a believer in divine order. His target is not political anarchism – the quasi-popular anarchism of 'oppressed, if mistaken, men' in places like Russia and (oddly enough) Ireland – but 'intellectual' anarchism – the metaphysical anarchism (indeed, *nihilism*) of aristocrats and poets, who revolt not against oppression (which they have never experienced) but against order in the universe, *against existence*. (Chesterton elaborates his point about such existential

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6   *The Secret Agent*, ed. Roger Tennant (Oxford, 1998), pp. 42, 81, 83, 95, 97. On *The Secret Agent* and anarchism, see the following: Donald Rooum, 'Fictitious Anarchists in *The Secret Agent*', and Paul Avrich, 'Conrad's Anarchist Professor: An Undiscovered Source', *The Raven*, 9 (1996): 76–79, 80–84.

7   In *The Essential G.K. Chesterton*, ed. P.J. Kavanagh (Oxford, 1987). For example, Peter Marshall claims that there is a 'sinister depiction of the anarchist terrorist' in both novels [*Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, revised edn (London, 1993), p. 490].

'anarchism' in a journalistic piece on Shelley written in the same year.[8]) The chief metaphysicians of anarchism, its 'priesthood', are animated by what Chesterton characterizes as the Satanic spirit of destruction: the destruction of any principle of order, of all morality, of life itself. As 'the real anarchist' and 'destroyer', Lucian Gregory (Satan himself), explains:

> We do not only want to upset a few despotisms and police regulations; that sort of [political] anarchism does exist, but it is a mere branch of the Nonconformists. We dig deeper and we blow you higher. We wish to deny all those arbitrary distinctions of vice and virtue, honour and treachery, upon which mere rebels base themselves. The silly sentimentalists of the French Revolution talked of the Rights of Man! We hate Rights as we hate Wrongs. We have abolished Right and Wrong.[9]

Anarchists have long been aware of the Conradian stereotype. Alexander Berkman wrote in 1929, 'You have heard that anarchists throw bombs, that they believe in violence, and that anarchy means disorder and chaos'.[10] Certainly, many at that time (familiar with Conrad's work or not) had heard this, when Berkman's American readership would have recalled, in particular, the killing of eight policemen near Haymarket Square, Chicago (allegedly) by an anarchist bomber in 1886, the assassination of President William McKinley by the Polish anarchist Leon Czołgosz in 1901, and the notorious (and spurious) murders by Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in 1920. Indeed, Berkman himself (with the assistance of Emma Goldman) had famously and unsuccessfully tried to assassinate the industrialist Henry Clay Frick in 1892. Berkman's European readers could point to more local events. These included the Paris bombings by Emile Henry and others in the early 1890s, as well as a number of political assassinations (such as those of French President Sadi Carnot in 1894, Spanish Prime Minister Antonio Canovas in 1897, Austrian Empress Elisabeth in 1898, and Italian King Umberto in 1900).

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8   See 'The Voice of Shelley', in *The Essential G.K. Chesterton*, pp. 244–45: 'One wholly non-popular element in [Shelley] was his anarchism. The poor are not anarchists, and never can be anarchists. They live too close to life for such artistic trifling. *When I speak of anarchism, of course I do not use the term in the exact sense which indicates a political programme*. I do not mean that Shelley disapproved of all government though he sometimes used phrases which might be taken in this sense. But his trend and tone was to offer liberty and *an escape from rule* as a panacea for the misfortunes of the people; and this is not a genuine popular trend or tone. The people know that life cannot be conducted without rules. The people is the maker and keeper of all custom, tradition, and convention ...' [emphasis added]. It seems that the kind of existential anarchism Chesterton has in mind can be defined etymologically (in terms of the rejection of 'rule' and *order*), but, as we will see in Part 1, traditional or political anarchism (which is concerned with domination and authority) cannot be defined in this way. That is not to say that Chesterton is sympathetic to the latter, but that what he instinctively opposes is not so much anarchism (or socialism) as that brand of would-be anarchism (or socialism) that is wholly divorced from popular sentiment.

9   *The Man Who Was Thursday*, in *The Essential G.K. Chesterton*, pp. 136, 151, 205, 240–41.

10   *ABC of Anarchism* (London, 1964), p. 3.

Clearly, then, anarchist acts of violence peaked around the turn of the twentieth century.[11] These acts were often justified as instances of 'propaganda by the deed', a then widespread notion according to which, in the absence of a mass anarchist movement, sporadic acts of individual violence could succeed in awakening revolutionary consciousness.[12] Alternatively, such acts were simply intended to terrorize the 'enemies of anarchy'. Thus, Emile Henry contributed significantly to the identification of anarchism with violence in his statement to the jury of his trial:

> In the merciless war that we have declared on the bourgeoisie, we ask no mercy. We mete out death and we must face it... [You] have not been able to destroy anarchy. Its roots go deep: it sprouts from the bosom of a rotten society that is falling apart; it is a violent backlash against the established order; it stands for the aspirations to equality and liberty which have entered the lists against the current authoritarianism. It is everywhere. That is what makes it indomitable, and it will end by defeating you and killing you.[13]

In addition to the above inventory of anarchist violence, critics have pointed to the most notorious document in what they take to be the anarchist tradition, the *Catechism of a Revolutionary* (1869), to prove not just its violent inclination but its intrinsic nihilism. Take the following passage, which expresses the revolutionary fanaticism and amoralism that have come to be associated with anarchism:

> All tender, softening sentiments of kinship, friendship, love, gratitude, and even honour itself must be snuffed out in [the revolutionary] by the one cold passion of the revolutionary cause. For him there is only one satisfaction, consolation, and delight – the success of the revolution. Day and night he must have one thought, one aim – inexorable destruction. Striving coldly and unfalteringly towards this aim, he must be ready to perish himself and to destroy with his own hands everything that hinders revolution.

'Everything' *and everybody*, for 'those men must be destroyed who are particularly harmful to the revolutionary organization'.[14] But this text is a work of nihilism

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11   Miller, p. 113, points to a 'second phase of terror [that] grew out of the New Left movement of the 1960s' (carried out by the Baader-Meinhof group in Germany, the Brigate Rosse in Italy, the Angry Brigade in Britain, etc.). He admits that it is questionable whether this 'can be properly described as anarchist', but argues, unconvincingly I think, that, in part, it can. I do not discuss it here because I believe that its connection to the anarchist ideology is so tenuous that it would be unfair to re-associate anarchism with violence on the basis of it. (As Marshall observes of the groups in question, their 'libertarian credentials were doubtful to say the least' [Marshall, p. 558].) In any event, I am not sure that there was such a re-association in the popular mind – and certainly nothing to compare with the popular association at the turn of the twentieth century. That is to say, these groups were generally perceived as revolutionary terrorists, period, rather than as anarchists who resorted to terrorist means.

12   See Marie Fleming, 'Propaganda by the Deed: Terrorism and Anarchist Theory in Late Nineteenth-Century Europe', *Terrorism*, 4 (1980): 1–4, and James Joll, *The Anarchists*, 2nd edn (London, 1979), pp. 117–48.

13   *No Gods, No Masters*, ed. Daniel Guérin (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1998), vol. 1, p. 42.

14   See 'Catechism of a Revolutionary', in *Daughter of a Revolutionary: Natalie Herzen and the Bakunin-Nechayev Circle*, ed. Michael Confino (LaSalle, 1973), pp. 221–30 (the quoted passages are from Part Two, §§6, 16).

'pushed to the farthest coherent point'[15] – not a work of anarchism in any meaningful sense; and, indeed, it was predominantly if not exclusively a work produced by the maniacal Russian nihilist (and, true to his word, murderer) Sergei Nechaev rather than the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, as was maintained for so long.[16]

Bakunin tended toward nihilism in moments of revolutionary fervour, and this may explain his initial naïve admiration for the energetic and courageous Nechaev. Logically, indeed, he prioritizes the destructive element, or negation. However, for Bakunin, negation is not an end in itself. Destructive elements are justified only insofar as they overcome their 'merely negative' revolutionary form and disclose *their implicit ethico-historical content*, even provisionally in revolutionary practice.[17] Nechaev, by contrast, advocates negation for negation's sake, and by any means; there is no 'ethical' end beyond negation; negation is an end in itself. Thus, '[we] recognize no other activity but the work of extermination, but we admit that the forms which this activity will take will be extremely varied – poison, the knife, the rope, etc. In this struggle the revolution sanctifies everything alike'.[18] While nihilism offers nothing but a crude '*ethic of negation*', therefore, anarchism is a substantive ethico-political outlook that is grounded on a certain *logic of negation*. This is reflected in Proudhon's motto, '*Destruam et Aedificabo*', 'I destroy *and* I build up'.[19]

It has to be said that the classical stereotype of anarchism, notwithstanding its having at least some historical basis in fact, is extremely partial. There were always anarchists – arguably the majority – who rejected most violence as ineffectual and counter-productive, and indiscriminate violence as unethical.[20] We should bear in mind, also, that the anarchist tradition at its other extreme includes radical pacifists. Leo Tolstoy maintained that two core principles of his unorthodox Christian 'anarchism' are to 'live at peace with *all* men' and 'not [to] resist evil'.[21] Herbert Read was less radical, or less consistent, than Tolstoy, but believed that central to

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15   Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. Anthony Bower (Harmondsworth, 1971), pp. 128–29.

16   Extensive scholarship has been devoted to this controversy, but the key document is perhaps Bakunin's letter to Nechaev of June 2, 1870, translated by Lydia Bott in *Encounter*, 39 (1972): 81–93. For a detailed study of Nechaev, see Philip Pomper, *Sergei Nechaev* (New Brunswick, 1979).

17   See Bakunin's 'Reaction in Germany' (1842), trans. Mary-Barbara Zeldin, *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings*, ed. Arthur Lehning (London, 1973), pp. 37–58. I discuss this article and Bakunin's revolutionary logic in Part One of *Mikhail Bakunin: The Philosophical Basis of His Anarchism* (New York, 2002).

18   Nechaev quoted by Paul Avrich in 'Bakunin and Nechaev', *Anarchist Portraits* (Princeton, 1988), p. 37. This chapter provides a good overview of their relationship.

19   Quoted by Woodcock, p. 11. Woodcock notes here that 'in the mind of no anarchist thinker has the idea of destruction ever stood alone'.

20   See ibid., pp. 12–14: 'The association of anarchism with political terrorism … is not a necessary association, nor can it be historically justified except in a limited degree … at no time was a policy of terrorism adopted by anarchists in general.'

21   *A Confession, The Gospel in Brief, and What I Believe*, trans. Aylmer Maude (Oxford, 1974), p. 167. Emphasis added.

anarchism 'is the belief in *non-violence* – in non-violent resistance to oppression, and in non-violent methods of attaining our ends'.[22]

It is certain, in any event, that anarchist terrorism has been effectively superseded and that no contemporary anarchist of note would recommend 'propaganda by the deed'. Anarchists also like to point out that the anarchist tradition, though not entirely innocent, has far less blood on its hands than any other ideological tradition. Miller writes: 'acts of terror have been performed by republicans, by nationalists, by revolutionary socialists, and by fascists, and if one tried to quantify the anarchist contribution to this catalogue of horror, it would turn out to be relatively small'.[23] Furthermore, if one tried to quantify anarchist violence relative to state violence, it would barely register. Perhaps this is due to the insignificance of anarchism and its lack of opportunity to date – or perhaps, as the anarchist would hold, it is precisely because anarchism is opposed to the state as an inherently violent institution, as 'an organization for the commission of violence and for its justification'.[24]

There is some doubt as to whether the classical stereotype still prevails. Paul Avrich, a leading scholar of anarchism, wrote in 1978:

> By the time of the First World War … anarchism had acquired a reputation of violence for its own sake that the passage of six decades has failed to alter. The stereotype, once created, has been endlessly recopied, so that to this day the association of anarchism with terrorism, with bombs, dynamite, and chaos, remains deeply embedded in the popular imagination.[25]

The more recent publication of William Powell's successful (if seemingly unreliable) manual of DIY weaponry, *The Anarchist Cookbook*, suggests that this stereotype persists.[26] However, a major transformation was underway as Avrich wrote, and the title of Powell's work now seems somewhat archaic. That is not to say that the classical stereotype has been forgotten (indeed, images of 'anti-globalization' protesters carrying black flags and attacking McDonald's have done something to preserve the memory), but it is no longer prevalent and it endures, for the most part, as a dated comic book caricature rather than a firm political prejudice.

The Contemporary Stereotype

The contemporary stereotype of anarchism, which prevails among younger generations, reflects a dramatic change in its perception. Anarchism is no longer

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22   *A One-Man Manifesto and Other Writings* (London, 1994), p. 118. Emphasis in original.

23   Miller, p. 109.

24   Leo Tolstoy, *Essays and Letters*, trans. Aylmer Maude (London, 1903), p. 258.

25   Paul Avrich, *An American Anarchist: The Life of Voltairine de Cleyre* (Princeton, 1978), pp. xiii–xiv.

26   *The Anarchist Cookbook* (Fort Lee, 1989). According to the publisher, more than 2 million copies of this book have been sold. A more recent and similarly titled work has apparently superseded *The Anarchist Cookbook*: David Harber, *The Advanced Anarchist Arsenal: Recipes for Improvised Incendiaries and Explosives* (Boulder, 1991).

considered so much a feature on the political landscape (albeit an anomalous or freakish feature supposedly devoted to the violent destruction of that very landscape) as a feature of popular culture.[27] Its political significance is now a matter of mere historical interest – treated, at that, only as something of a curiosity (begrudgingly afforded a chapter in textbooks on political ideologies), or as a footnote to the development of Marxism, communism, syndicalism, federalism, libertarianism, and – of course – terrorism. Accordingly, the majority of the few contemporary scholars who bother with anarchism at all are historians and political scientists, as opposed to, say, political philosophers.

Pop anarchism, to coin a phrase, emerged in the mid- to late-1970s with British punk (and took dogmatic, though scarcely more intelligent, form in the 'anarcho-punk' movement that followed). In fact, pop anarchism owed something to situationism, a modish French philosophy of the 1960s. The aesthetic of situationism, divested of much of its actual quasi-anarchist political content (as articulated most notably by Guy Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle* and Raoul Vaneigem in *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (both 1967)), made some impact on British punk, or was exploited by those who sought to market it – chiefly Malcolm McLaren, the manager of the Sex Pistols, together with Jamie Reid, whose situationist artwork will be forever associated with punk.

Numerous lyrical and graphic allusions to anarchism were made by bands and fans of the British punk period, but the obvious reference point is the Sex Pistols' anthem, 'Anarchy in the UK' – the title of which, together with their taste for Union Jack design, indicates ignorance of the anarchist tradition's internationalism if nothing else. Anarchism has subsequently been closely associated with the trappings of punk fashion: dyed spiky hair, body piercing, leather jackets, and so on. Other trappings of the punk lifestyle complete the contemporary caricature: consumption of cheap alcohol, glue sniffing, street-corner aggression, spray-painted graffiti, slogan screaming ('Smash the System', 'Fuck the Police', etc.), vandalism, simple-minded and riotous protest, etc. Because of its association with punk, still a marketable enough (and cyclically fashionable) brand of youthful rebellion, anarchism even makes it into the society, fashion, and arts pages of mainstream publications, where one might read of Vivienne Westwood's latest collection or the exhibitions of any number of worthless 'experimental' artists. The very symbol of anarchism – the circled A – is featured everywhere from the schoolyard to the catwalk, apparently representing anarchy in the sense of social disorder and youthful rebellion. The marketers of pop anarchism are hardly likely to remind us – even if they knew it – that the circle around the A is actually a letter O, standing for order, and that the symbol as a whole represents Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's famous conviction that

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27   For what such anecdotal evidence is worth, everyone I have asked about their associations with anarchism (who is under, say, forty years of age and remotely conscious of popular culture) responds that it is the drunk and aggressive punk, or perhaps the rioting version thereof.

'Anarchy is Order'; that for genuine anarchists, anarchism is not a decadent lifestyle for malcontents or an anti-social creed, but a sincere social philosophy.[28]

In any case, anarchism has retained its popular association with punk. This association is resented by some anarchists, who would rather be considered political radicals or outsiders, as of old, than devotees to something like a teen counter-culture or a fashionable (in the sense that the conspicuously unfashionable has become fashionable) 'lifestyle'.

The Marxist Stereotype

Aside from the classical and contemporary stereotypes, there is also a traditional Marxist stereotype of anarchism. According to this stereotype, anarchism is equivalent to strict 'anti-authoritarianism'; it consists in the rejection – *a priori* rejection – of *all* authority (since authority is, in Engels's words, 'absolutely evil'), or in the quest for 'the abolition of authority' (Engels again), a position that is claimed to be *self-evidently* unsustainable, indeed, naïve, infantile, or utopian. Of course, liberals too accuse anarchists of utopianism in their rejection of the 'necessary evil' that is the state. (James Buchanan, for example, writes: 'In a generalized social setting ... and one that man can recognize as being within the realm of plausibility, the anarchistic regime of free men ... becomes the utopian dream'.[29]) But, leaving aside the general discussion of utopianism for the moment, the classical source of the 'anti-authoritarian' stereotype is Friedrich Engels's short essay*, On Authority* (1872) – an essay in which, it should be observed, Engels not only criticizes anarchism for its anti-authoritarianism but also presents the economistic or technocratic rationale for 'imperious' authority.[30]

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28   It may be noted that a more sophisticated counterpart to the British anarcho-punk emerged in the United States from the 'hardcore' counter-culture, which flourished between the late-1970s and the mid-1980s. Hardcore was essentially a non-commercial – even anti-commercial – cousin of British punk (itself the cynical commercial progeny of New York City punk). In the shape of bands like Bad Brains, Black Flag, and the Minutemen, hardcore exhibited a degree of political consciousness and musical sophistication that put most of the legendary British acts (The Clash excepted) to shame. Every aspect of the hardcore 'scene' – lyrical content, musical distribution, show promotion, venue admittance and crowd control policies, together with the mass of self-published musical and political literature and the social activism that were inspired by the music itself and very much part of the scene; this vast manifestation of a cooperative, non-profit, and non-authoritarian ethic, can be termed anarchist in a very real and profound sense. It is perhaps regrettable, however, that so much of what was valuable and instructive in this scene should have been perverted by puritanical elements (the 'straightedge' sub-scene, a mildly ascetic offshoot which, in tone, verged on the fascistic and ultimately served as a recruiting-ground for religions such as 'Mormonism' and Hare Krishna). It is also a shame that hardcore should be marketed retrospectively by the music industry as forerunner to so-called 'alternative rock' – a commercial musical genre that is about as socio-politically relevant and insightful as heavy metal.

29   *The Limits of Liberty: Between Anarchy and Leviathan* (Chicago, 1975), p. 92.

30   See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York, 1978), pp. 730–33.

One of the more recent expressions of the Marxist stereotype from the field of so-called 'marxiology' is by Hal Draper in the fourth volume of his massive (and unfinished) *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*. Draper is, as we will see in Part 1, correct in asserting that: 'The mere "abolition of the state" [is] not enough to define anarchism.' However, what defines anarchism is, he says, 'a thesis about "authority"' involving 'the absolute sovereignty of the individual Ego as against the imposition of *any* "authority" over it'. In programmatic terms, therefore, anarchism proposes 'that the *first* word of the revolution [has] to be the abolition of all *authority over the sovereign individual* by any power of any sort outside the individual ego'. Ultimately, such anti-authoritarianism is founded on a particular conception of freedom. Draper writes:

> The anarchist view of 'freedom' is basically *individual-solipsistic*: it depends on the absolute inviolability of the sovereign Ego in relation to the outside world – the total impermissibility of any imposition of any authority, authority of any kind or source, upon the unconditional autonomy of the sovereign Ego. Anarchism is basically a solipsism, whether or not anarchists recognize this consciously in their philosophical outlook. It does not mean freedom *through* democracy, or freedom *in* society, but, rather, freedom *from* any democratic authority whatsoever or any social constraint: in short, not a free society but freedom from society.[31]

Not surprisingly, Draper is unable to cite any documentary support for this interpretation of anarchism – and it should be emphasized that he has in mind not Stirnerian anarchism, but the developed ideology of anarchism or anarchism on the 'Bakunin model'. Frankly, Draper's analysis of anarchism is philosophically inadequate.

As will be argued below, the Marxist stereotype of anarchism is simplistic and inaccurate. That is not to deny that statements such as 'Anarchy is *society organized without authority*',[32] while heavily qualified, appear to confirm the stereotype. However, the essence of the anarchist position is, I believe, captured by Bakunin when he asks: 'Does it follow [from the critique and rejection of specific forms of authority] that I reject *all* authority? Far from me such a thought.'[33] We will see which forms of authority anarchists reject and why, as well as which forms they might be willing to countenance shortly.

A patently absurd extension of the Marxist stereotype has it that anarchism consists not merely in the rejection of all authority, but in *the rejection of all power*. This notion has been espoused recently by Saul Newman (a self-confessed fan of 'post-Marxism' among other trendy 'posts'). Newman claims that anarchists (as

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31   *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, IV, *Critique of Other Socialisms* (New York, 1990), pp. 126, 131, 174–75. For a summary of Marx's and Engel's economistic views on authority, and their critique of the 'anti-authoritarianism' of the anarchist 'autonomists', see ibid., pp. 134–40. Incidentally, Draper calls Engels's aforementioned essay *On Authority* 'a small masterpiece of educational elucidation' [ibid., p. 138], a comment that captures the tone of his work.

32   Errico Malatesta, *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas*, ed. Vernon Richards (London, 1965), p. 20.

33   *God and the State*, ed. Paul Avrich (New York, 1970), p. 32. Emphasis added.

opposed to 'post-anarchists' like himself) advocate 'a grand dialectical overcoming of power', that they 'try to construct ... a world outside power'. But, he continues, Michel Foucault shows us that 'Power is everywhere' and that 'We will never be entirely free from relations of power'. Indeed, Foucault shows us that it is not power – which can be 'productive' as well as 'repressive' – but *domination* that is the problem. Relations of domination emerge 'when the free and unstable flow of power relations becomes blocked and congealed – when it forms unequal hierarchies and no longer allows reciprocal relationships'. It is these congealed relations of domination that anarchists should challenge, not power as such. In any case, the way to 'counter political domination' is 'by engaging with, rather than denying, power'. Thus, Newman urges anarchists 'to "say yes" to power, as Nietzsche would put it'.[34]

Newman's paper is, however, self-contradictory. For, while he claims that anarchists reject all power, curiously he recognizes that: 'Anarchists do not reject all forms of authority, as the old cliché would have it.'[35] While it may be possible to argue that authority is not a form of power, it certainly isn't possible to do so once one accepts something like Foucault's framework. In any case, anarchists certainly do not need Foucault to tell them that there is a distinction between power and domination, and that not all power is 'repressive'. Would any revolutionary anarchist deny, for instance, that revolution is a (valid) manifestation of power? Newman seemingly attributes a remarkable degree of ignorance to anarchists, which is presumably why he imagines that they need the intellectual assistance not only of Foucault, but, worse again, of scholastic philosophers like Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan too. We will question the alleged theoretical deficiency of anarchism below.

The Academic Stereotype

There is, finally, an academic stereotype of anarchism, which often goes hand-in-hand with the 'anti-authoritarian' stereotype. In fact, this may have been partly inspired by the intellectual contempt of Marx for the 'unscientific' notions of anarchists like Proudhon and Bakunin (bearing in mind that 'unscientific' means disagreeable, or sceptical toward economic monocausality, in Marxist terminology). It is hardly surprising, then, that leading Marxist scholars like Eric Hobsbawm have promulgated this stereotype.[36] According to the academic stereotype, anarchism is theoretically nugatory. Anarchists, it appears, reject theoretical enterprise as a whole, considering all intellectual activity distracting or even reactionary. Hence there is a lack of anything like an adequate theoretical formulation of the anarchist case (if one were even conceivable). Anarchism is, then, all about instinctive rebellion – understandable and occasionally justified and illuminating, perhaps, but ultimately

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34   'Anarchism and the Politics of Ressentiment', *Theory & Event*, 4:3 (2000): §§30, 31–32, 34. We will return to the topic of Newman's 'post-anarchism', as well as Todd May's 'poststructuralist anarchism', in Chapter 7.

35   Ibid., §15.

36   See his *Revolutionaries: Contemporary Essays* (London, 1973).

irresponsible, immature, and unrealistic – and therefore better suited to popular youth culture than refined academic circles.

This stereotype is the one for which anarchists themselves are most responsible and which they have done little to overcome. An absurd theory-praxis dualism persists within anarchism. Justice is not something to be thought about, but something to be realized. Theory – bad; activism – good. Thus, philosophical reflection can produce only abstraction and practical impotence; philosophical reflection on justice produces Rawls. This kind of anarchist argument is surely inadmissible. Anarchists may be justifiably suspicious about the abstraction of academic culture and even the cowardice of academics and their willingness to serve the status quo. But, ethically, it seems unacceptable to advocate fundamental social transformation that affects all – that is, social revolution – without a coherent justification (which does not automatically amount to scholastic inertia). The alternative is the vanguardism that has typified the Marxist tradition: those with privileged access to the divine truth (of 'scientific socialism') should lead the revolution, explaining it (or 'rationalizing' it), if they care to at all, only after the event. In any case, it might be that an intelligent articulation of anarchism (which otherwise lacks the power of conviction) might be its best means of propagation. Thus, there is a strong case, both ethical and 'pragmatic', for some degree of concentrated intellectual effort on the part of anarchists. (Incidentally, Paulo Freire, for one, acknowledges essentially the same distinction between the kind of 'authentic praxis' inspired by 'critical reflection' that we have in mind here, and 'pure activism', such as that of those anarchists who typically regard themselves as custodians of the tradition.[37])

Notwithstanding this objection to activist purism within anarchism, one might still wonder why academics, and philosophers in particular, have continued to dismiss or simply ignore anarchist theory. As any scholar of anarchism (other than the most hostile) can testify, inquiry into the subject is greeted by colleagues, more often than not, with prejudicial incredulity, condescension, and even hostility – beyond the normal ignorance of the over-specialized. Intellectual curiosity and rigour, the principle of charity, and all manner of noble academic characteristics – aside from basic human respect – go out the window and sheer intolerance and not a little stupidity become standard. Be that as it may, the riches of anarchist thought – from William Godwin to Murray Bookchin – remain to be explored by those of an open mind. In any event, a tradition that has been seriously entertained by some of the brightest minds of the twentieth century – from Bertrand Russell and George Orwell to Jean-Paul Sartre and Noam Chomsky – would certainly appear to deserve more respect than is usually accorded to it by academics.[38]

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37   *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (Harmondsworth, 1996), p. 48.

38   As Peter Marshall writes, if the accusation that 'anarchism lacks philosophical rigour and that its appeal is fundamentally emotional' were true, 'it would be difficult to explain why some of the best minds of this century, such as Bertrand Russell and Noam Chomsky, have taken anarchist philosophy so seriously, even if they have not unreservedly endorsed its conclusions' [Marshall, pp. xiv–xv]. I should clarify what I am saying here (with a few banalities) to see off a possible objection. Implicit here, it might be argued, is some kind of very unanarchist argument from authority: since such-and-such an intellectual

Scholarly Approaches to Anarchism

Despite the general contempt for anarchism within the academic community, scholarly work on it in the English language has accumulated over the years.[39] There are exceptions, but many of these studies suffer from a major weakness. That is, they place undue emphasis on the individual and on their entire body of work (often together with gratuitous attention to biographical detail).[40] Of course, bio-historical overviews are not illegitimate in themselves, but they are rarely philosophically or ideologically insightful. An ideology is not a collection of individuals, embracing everything they ever said, wrote, or did (or are speculated to have said, written, or done). Approaching anarchism as if it were such a collection, it is not in the least surprising that scholars conclude that it is an inconsistent, contradictory, or incoherent ideology. Individuals themselves change and also change their minds. We can hardly expect them to be consistent – say 'consistently anarchist' – throughout a lifetime and a body of work. The same applies to representatives of other ideologies without this diminishing the ideology with which they are associated.

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authority finds anarchism significant and interesting, we, their intellectual subjects, should think likewise. But I am not making such a claim, and neither, I assume, is Marshall. The fact that the figures in question have a particular attitude to anarchism will probably be of interest to philosophers, that is, to those in the field in which they are widely respected, but it is not a sufficient reason for anyone to adopt the same philosophical attitude. It may encourage some to consider (and, in this sense, to accord respect to) the subject itself, that is, anarchism, but it entails no obligations of any kind. Similarly, if I were to tell the fan of Graham Greene that Greene was well disposed toward Ford Madox Ford, it might encourage that fan to read the latter, but it certainly doesn't oblige the fan to share this attitude. That is to say, I would not be making an argument from authority in this instance either.

39   The full-length studies of anarchism I have principally in mind are those previously referred to by George Woodcock, James Joll, Alan Ritter, David Miller, George Crowder, and Peter Marshall, as well as the following: Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice*, trans. Mary Klopper (New York, 1970); April Carter, *The Political Theory of Anarchism* (London, 1971); David Morland, *Demanding the Impossible? Human Nature and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Social Anarchism* (London, 1997). But this list doesn't include a mass of biographical work, for example. It seems the anarchist tradition is particularly attractive to biographers. George Woodcock alone has written more than half a dozen biographies of anarchists and libertarians (Godwin, Wilde, Kropotkin, Proudhon, Orwell, Aldous Huxley, Read, and Gandhi), while historians from Max Nettlau to Paul Avrich have contributed masses of bio-historical material on the tradition. See the notes to Chapter 7 for a guide to this area of scholarship.

40   In Daniel Guérin's words [Guérin, pp. 5–6], they present 'an excess of biographical details rather than making a profound study of ideas'. (Biography, he adds, is 'often much less illuminating … than some writers imagine. Many of [the major anarchists] were not anarchists throughout their lives and their complete works include passages that have nothing to do with anarchism'.) Consequently, the reader is left 'with a feeling of diffusion, almost incoherence, still asking himself what anarchism really is'. I agree wholeheartedly with Guérin's sentiments but find his own presentation of 'the main constructive themes of anarchism' deeply flawed. Some of his characterizations of anarchism – as a 'rejection of authority' or even 'society as a whole' [ibid., pp. 3, 13] – certainly don't stand up to philosophical analysis. That said, Guérin is very strong on the practical history of anarchism.

Ideologies are collections of particular beliefs articulated in particular texts and expressed in particular activities. To understand and evaluate an ideology, one must assess these beliefs. Certainly, locating or specifying the beliefs that characterize a position is a challenge. However, evading this basic challenge of ideological inquiry by simply identifying an ideology with a collection of individuals – and, once again, every aspect of their lives and thought – is indolent and uninformative. Hence it is that scholars of anarchism continue to wonder if anarchism is opposed to the state at all when Proudhon wrote *The Principle of Federation* (1863); if perhaps anarchism isn't nihilistic because of Bakunin's alleged authorship of the *Catechism of a Revolutionary*; and so on. Perhaps these aren't anarchist works, even if we think rather categorically and conveniently of their authors as being anarchists. In any case, that they *may* reflect poorly on some individual or other doesn't have any necessary bearing on anarchism as such.

Why do scholars of anarchism favour the *individualistic approach*? It could of course serve the simple malevolent purpose of discrediting anarchism by highlighting the more eccentric aspects of those associated with it and the more erratic aspects of their thought; but, to be fair, this cannot be claimed of most of the studies in question. We can only suggest one *speculative* answer for consideration. Academic work on anarchism has been conducted primarily within two disciplines: history and political science. Both disciplines clearly have their merits, and historical and political studies of anarchism have been instructive in various (in our view, non-fundamental and sometimes inconsequential) ways. However, in terms of basic philosophical analysis, of conceptual clarification, the modes of thought that characterize these disciplines are arguably inadequate. That isn't to say that professional historians or political scientists are inherently incapable of philosophical thought – any more than professional philosophers are inherently incapable of historical research or political 'science'. Neither is to say that non-academics are incapable in any of these respects. Many leading anarchist theorists, from Proudhon to Bookchin, have been self-taught, while others like Bakunin and Stirner have been academic outcasts. Indeed, this accounts in large part for the originality of anarchist thought, both in form and content, even if it has encouraged academics to adopt a condescending attitude toward it. (Conversely, the most scholastic form of anarchism – the postmodern form that will be described below – would appear to be the least original and the least penetrating.)

Whatever its shortcomings and its overall partiality, the approach fostered by a philosophical training has something to be said for it. In the case of anarchist scholarship, it can at least fill a gap that remains in the work of historians and political scientists: it can disclose the conceptual core of the position. The existing scholarship has largely served to identify anarchism with a group of individuals, or a loosely defined 'movement', rather than a more or less coherent intellectual position (with diverse practical applications). What these individuals did at random points of their lives is held to have some bearing on anarchism, whether or not they were actually advocating a specific position that might be classified as anarchist at those points in time. Likewise, what they wrote in some off-the-cuff pamphlet or letter, whenever and in whatever circumstances, is evaluated on equal terms with their major, recognizably anarchist theoretical work. For the historian, this obsession with

detail and consequent loss of theoretical perspective may be an occupational hazard. For the political scientist, it is rather more difficult to account for. The evidence suggests something rather basic and widespread within the discipline: theoretical incompetence.[41] I will now examine the work of David Morland, which is arguably a recent case in point.

David Morland's *Demanding the Impossible?* is an evaluation of the classical social anarchism of Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin (as opposed to individualistic or 'philosophical' anarchism). However, it is typical of much of anarchist scholarship in its adoption of the individualistic approach. Morland argues that social anarchism is internally incoherent because its 'realistic' conception of human nature is at odds with its 'optimistic' vision of a future anarchist society. Thus, he rejects the common assessment that anarchism is (perhaps internally coherent but) premised on an 'optimistic' conception of human nature which renders it romantic or utopian. According to Morland, the anarchist conception of human nature is realistic in so far as it is 'double-barrelled', that is, 'composed of both sociability and egoism'.[42] Thus, anarchists are not unduly optimistic or pessimistic about our nature; we are neither intrinsically Good nor intrinsically Bad, but apparently predisposed toward the latter, toward egoism; therefore, we are ill-suited to a society of predominant sociability, as envisioned by social anarchists. Such is the contradictory nature of social anarchist thought, or so Morland would have us believe.

There are any number of problems with this argument, even supposing for a moment that Morland represents social anarchism accurately and fairly (which we will dispute below). For instance, we might ask what grounds there are for assuming that the 'double-barrelled' conception – especially when it is 'fuelled by what is, at times, a particularly honest, if not brutally pessimistic, account of the darker side of human nature' – is 'realistic'. What Morland takes to be 'realistic' in social anarchist thought is (as he represents it) the preponderant (though not exclusive) pessimism of its interpretation of human nature. This moderately 'dystopian' assumption requires justification, just as any 'utopian' assumption would. Furthermore, it appears that Morland simply equates egoism with 'badness' and sociability with 'goodness' (though he seems to be partially aware that this is problematic). We might also question the egoism-sociability dualism, by asking ask if it is philosophically meaningful (a question to which we will return below), and (if so) if the two components are truly contradictory and irreconcilable. Perhaps Morland would respond that these problems are not his but problems within the social anarchist ideology itself. After all, he is engaging in internal critique and not making any 'attempt to elaborate a definition of human nature'. (He adds, in the questionable terms of a fashionable

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41   This may sound like a rather harsh and extreme judgement. I don't intend to justify it in this context, where it was introduced as speculation anyway. Suffice it to say that it is a judgement I have made on the basis of my reasonably extensive reading of anarchist scholarship and, more importantly, my experience of political science both as a student and a teacher. Having had comparative experience in philosophy, I have no doubt where the weakness of political science lies (but, incidentally, neither do I deny its strengths relative to philosophy).

42   Morland, pp. 5–6.

philosophy: 'Given the essential contestability of the concept of human nature, such an exercise is probably futile.') That as it may be, he is evidently happy to make a major assumption about the realism of a given conception, a conception which, as he acknowledges at one point, 'abounds amidst the popular imagination' – and probably has little other foundation.[43]

Morland's account is remarkably clichéd. For example, of anarchism in general, he makes the following claim: 'Anarchist ideology has no *magnum opus* to afford easy access to the uninitiated. Consequently, its theoretical writings are often inconsistent and sometimes less than remarkable. Much of this is due to the very nature of anarchism. As an ideology it is an active creed'.[44] This statement contains two stereotypical ingredients that we have alluded to already. The first is that anarchism has little (if anything) of *real* theoretical value to offer. The second, offered in part-explanation of the first, is that anarchism prioritizes praxis (or 'activism') to such an extent that it basically rejects theory (or 'intellectualism'). Many anarchists, with something of an intellectual inferiority complex, accept these stereotypical views.

Morland's individual treatments of Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin are also riddled with clichés. The principal one is that Proudhon's thought is 'paradoxical', while Bakunin's is 'replete with contradictions and anomalies'. (Indeed, Morland comes up with his own paradoxical conclusion that Bakunin is both incoherent and profound: 'His work seldom amounts to a coherent theory' but 'he is undeniably a profound and original thinker'.) Kropotkin, by clichéd comparison, 'stands proud as a paragon of clarity and coherence' – relative, that is, to Proudhon and Bakunin. But Morland adds that it would be 'rather charitable' to say that he is 'systematic and clear' – by a higher intellectual standard, one imagines.[45]

How does Morland go about demonstrating the contradictions and incoherence within the thought of the three social anarchists? Quite simply, by adopting the individualistic approach. Thus, he quotes fairly randomly from texts written decades apart, in completely different circumstances, and for different purposes and audiences (often as translated, it might be noted, in anthologies and biographies of varying quality). What is more, some of the texts he refers to – in the case of the pre-anarchist Bakunin and especially the wavering Proudhon – aren't anarchist works at all. In any event, Morland quotes from Proudhon, with very little sense of chronology or context, from the 1830s to the 1860s; likewise, with Bakunin, from the 1840s to the 1870s; and, with Kropotkin, from the 1880s to the 1920s. The assumption appears to be that classical social anarchism equals Proudhon plus Bakunin plus Kropotkin. Therefore, anything they said at any time that contradicts or doesn't cohere with anything else they said at any other time is evidence of anarchism's contradictory or incoherent nature. Furthermore, since everything they say is part of the social anarchist ideology, when what they say doesn't seem very anarchistic, one begins

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43   Ibid., pp. 4, 6, 22.
44   Ibid., p. 19.
45   Ibid., pp. 33, 77, 166.

to wonder if social 'anarchism' is anarchist in the first place – to wonder about 'the validity of the label of anarchism if not the status of the ideology itself'.[46]

This objection to Morland's study – to his individualistic approach – may seem rather formal. Perhaps so, though we have suggested that it may indicate theoretical incompetence, an inability to grapple with the core conceptual issues of the anarchist position. In fact, when we look at the substance of Morland's argument, the suspicion seems to be confirmed. Take his treatment of Bakunin. Bakunin, according to Morland, believes that there are 'two innate capacities that are distinctive of mankind: a potential to be egoistic and the facility for sociability'. He is therefore faced with what Morland sees as an intractable problem if he is to realize 'a fully-fledged anarchy': how 'to negate or restrict the egoistic side of human nature' that seems to rule out a viable social anarchist alternative. Morland concludes that Bakunin ultimately abandoned his anarchist principles and opted for 'an increasingly authoritarian brand of politics'.[47] Thus, Bakunin is a closet authoritarian, leading those who favour the individualistic approach to ask if, somehow beneath it all, there is an authoritarian undertone to anarchism, a deep internal contradiction within the ideology that is ostensibly set against authority.

This seems like a powerful case against Bakunin – except for one small problem: Bakunin *doesn't* believe that egoism *in any sense of 'badness' or immorality* is an innate feature, and Morland can't offer a single piece of evidence to the contrary. The only quotation he offers in support of his argument is the following: 'Man is not only the most individual being on earth – he is also the most social being'.[48] Bakunin may be an individualist (of an unusual kind, without doubt), but individualism is not synonymous with egoism (again, in this vague sense of 'badness'). Nor does Bakunin have any desire to 'negate or restrict' individuality in a future anarchist society. He firmly believes that only the socialized conditions secured by 'anarchy' enable a full development of individuality (and, by extension or otherwise, moral behaviour). As for egoism in a pejorative sense, he believes that – far from being an innate feature of human nature – it is merely a feature of bourgeois culture.

All of this points to a fundamental misunderstanding on Morland's part. Egoism is (in the terms of Morland's discussion) an ethical principle. (Stirner denies this; but his position is deeply problematic, as will become apparent.) Individualism, on the other hand, is a metaphysical principle.[49] The ethical counterpart of egoism is altruism, not sociability (which is the metaphysical counterpart of individualism). Therefore, the egoism-sociability dualism that Morland occupies himself with rests on philosophical confusion – albeit a confusion encouraged by many anarchists. Bakunin's claim that man is 'by nature' both 'individual' and 'social' is a metaphysical claim, not an

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46   Ibid., p. 7.

47   Ibid., pp. 78, 114, 117.

48   Ibid., p. 78. Quoted from G.P. Maximoff's notoriously mistitled collection *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism* (Glencoe, 1953), p. 136.

49   In this context, the proposition 'Man is an individual creature' is of a metaphysical nature, while 'Man is egoistic' is of an ethical nature. Of course, 'ethical individualism' is conceivable, but it is an ethical position (of liberalism) that is based on a fundamental metaphysical belief (about the discreteness of individuals and the consequent disparity of their interests). Social anarchists do not share this metaphysical belief.

ethical claim. Ethically, Bakunin is a social determinist: man is, naturally, morally neutral and tends toward 'good' and 'evil' under given social conditions. (Morland *almost* grasps this without, it appears, grasping its full significance: 'In effect [human nature] is seen [by Bakunin] as a malleable concept capable of both good and evil, the predominance of which is largely due to environmental circumstances.'[50] That human nature is capable of good and evil does not mean that it is malleable (or that Bakunin operates with what Morland calls a 'contextualist' conception of human nature). For Bakunin, human nature is fixed by definition, biological developments notwithstanding.) The social conditions Bakunin thinks most conducive to moral behaviour are anarchic – conditions without corrupting elements of 'political power' and so on.

Frankly, Morland's critique of Bakunin appears to founder on philosophical confusion. Therefore, even if his case against both Proudhon and Kropotkin held up (in fact, it does to some extent in Proudhon's case, but scarcely does in Kropotkin's), his overall argument is disproven. Why? Because he claims to be exposing a 'fundamental inconsistency in anarchist ideology' as such – that is, an 'inconsistency' shared by Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin, a point of ideological commonality that in fact characterizes their ideology and fatally undermines it. (Morland asserts that there is 'some definitive agreement or consensus on the concept of human nature upon which anarchist ideology is built'.)[51] If it is not a point of commonality – in other words, if these three theorists do not share the particular conception of human nature that Morland outlines – then Morland has failed to get to grips with anarchism, to recognize what it is that makes anarchism (over and above even social anarchism) anarchism. And, as we will argue, it is not a common conception of human nature that unites anarchists (or even the three Morland examines), but some other philosophical factor. Morland might at least have noted basic differences between Proudhon's psychocentric conception of human nature, Bakunin's naturalistic conception, and Kropotkin's evolutionary conception. All three conceptions are open to criticism – Proudhon's, which Morland comes closest to appreciating, most of all – but they are quite distinct.[52]

As noted above, there are important studies that avoid the individualistic approach. David Miller's *Anarchism* is an outstanding analysis of the 'anarchist ideology' that eschews that approach throughout. For Miller, anarchism is not a collection of individuals; it is a collection of beliefs (which he analyses in the first part of his book, 'Varieties of Anarchism') that have gained expression in various activities over

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50   Morland, p. 122 (note 104).

51   Ibid., pp. 1, 23.

52   Significant though the differences may be, it is true to say that anarchists – with the exception of Stirner and the postmoderns (to whom we shall return in Part 2) – assert the meaningfulness of human nature as such, however it is to be described. Thus, William Godwin writes that 'We are partakers of a common nature' [*An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (2 vols, London, 1793), vol. 1, p. 106], Noam Chomsky writes that 'Human nature exists, immutable except for biological changes in the species' [*Language and Responsibility: Based on Conversations with Mitsou Ronat*, trans. John Viertel (New York, 1979), p. 91], etc. Anarchists argue that this claim can be upheld on scientific grounds – on the basis of developments in genetic science, for example.
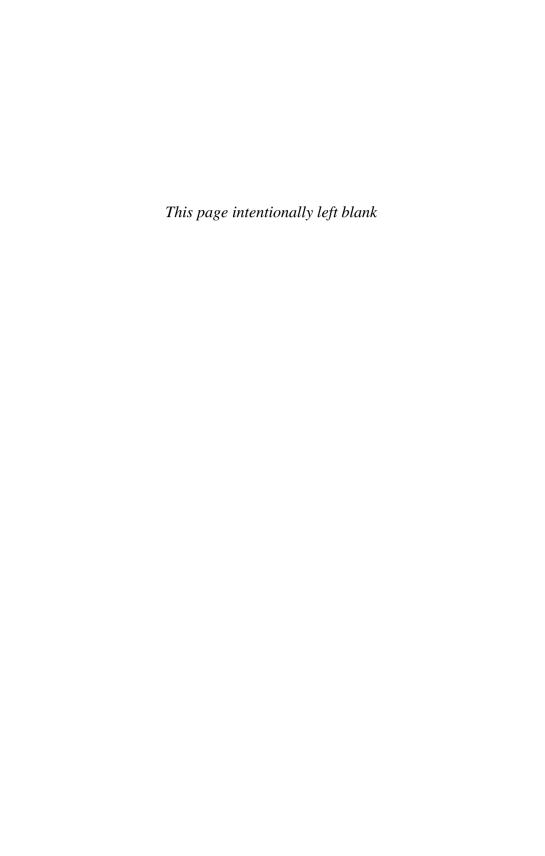
more than a century (as he describes in the second part of his book, 'Anarchism as a Revolutionary Ideology'). Miller, though largely critical of anarchism, is relatively fair in his evaluation (summarized in the third and final part of his book, 'Assessing Anarchism'). He concludes that while anarchism, with its 'idea of abolishing the state entirely', is ultimately unworkable, it offers much as 'an important corrective' to our dependency on 'relations of power' ('relations of domination' would, as we have seen already, make more sense here) and to encourage 'the ideal of free, uncoercive social relationships'.[53] However, Miller's work represents another approach to anarchist scholarship – the *ideological approach* – that, while valid and more worthwhile than the individualistic approach, isn't the approach adopted in this book.

Miller's aim is to assess anarchism as an ideology, 'as a set of beliefs about human nature, society, and the state that attempts both to explain the world and to help change it'. Hence, he attempts to summarize anarchism in all its ideological aspects before evaluating it on theoretical and practical grounds. This is a substantial task, and Miller copes with it admirably. Nevertheless, such an extensive treatment of anarchism leaves the reader in some doubt about the nature of its foundations. Indeed, having engaged with varying interpretations of practical ends and revolutionary means, Miller himself questions whether any single ideology could account for such diversity. 'We must face the possibility', he announces, 'that anarchism is not really *an* ideology, but rather the point of intersection of several ideologies'.[54] This judgement is understandable in the context of Miller's study, but whether it is ultimately satisfactory remains to be seen. Before making any hard and fast distinction between 'individualist anarchism' and 'communist anarchism', as Miller does, it might be worth returning to the foundations. We might be able, by concentrating our efforts at this level, to ascertain whether there is a common idea that has somehow inspired the many and varied theoretical and practical beliefs that together constitute what we, wisely or unwisely, call the anarchist ideology.
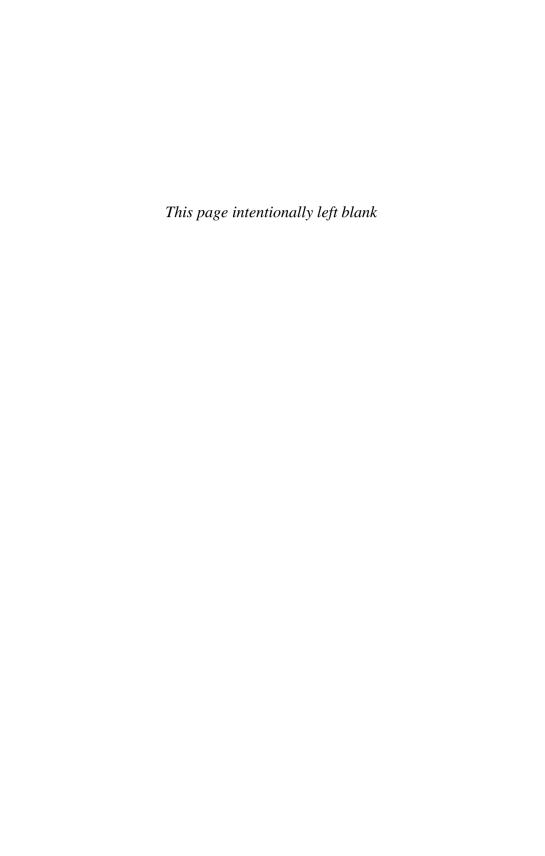
The approach adopted in this book, then, is neither individualistic nor ideological. It is, rather, a *philosophical approach*: an attempt to reveal the 'anarchist idea', an idea that can only be grasped by looking closely at the problem of authority. It is this that we turn to now, before examining the historical origins of anarchism, both in general terms – in terms of the climate that gave rise to it – and in textual terms – in terms of the seminal writings in which it gained original expression. This textual dimension of our philosophical study is significant, for anarchism is not a mere temperament associated with a number of more or less peculiar individuals, but a position articulated with some sophistication by a number of significant philosophers in some outstanding theoretical works.

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53   David Miller, p. 182. For a critical review of Miller's book by an anarchist, see John P. Clark's review in *Social Anarchism*, 6 (1986–87): 51–53.

54   Miller, 'Preface' (unnumbered page) and p. 3.

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PART 1
Anarchism and the Problem of Authority

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Chapter 1

Defining Anarchism

Anarchism has been defined in numerous ways. *Negatively*, it has been defined as the rejection of rule, of government, of the state, of authority, of society, or of domination. Less frequently, it has been defined *positively* as a theory of voluntary association, of decentralization, of federalism, of freedom, and so on. Whether any of these – or three of the more common and plausible – definitions is satisfactory will be evaluated below. However, a more basic question is begged, as to whether *any* seemingly 'simplistic definition' could possibly prove satisfactory. John P. Clark argues that it could not: 'any definition which reduces anarchism to a single dimension, such as its critical element, must be judged seriously inadequate'. Clark himself thinks 'a more comprehensive definition' is required, one 'which takes into account all significant aspects of anarchism: both theory and practice, both past historical forms and contemporary manifestations'. What he comes up with is the following:

> In order for a political theory to be called 'anarchism' in a complete sense, it must contain: (1) a view of an ideal, non-coercive, non-authoritarian society; (2) a criticism of existing society and its institutions, based on this anti-authoritarian ideal; (3) a view of human nature that justifies the hope for significant progress toward the ideal; and (4) a strategy for change, involving immediate institution of non-coercive, non-authoritarian, and decentralist alternatives. This definition would allow for use of the term 'anarchist' in both a strong and in several weaker senses.[1]

This seems like a reasonable summary of the components that make up the anarchist ideology, but it is cumbersome as a definition. Surely a definition such as 'anarchism is the ideology of non-authoritarianism' would suffice, even if it appears to simplify anarchism or to reduce it to 'its critical element'.[2] This definition implies both (1) an ethico-social ideal (that is, 'non-authoritarianism') and (2) criticism of existing institutions that fall short of the ideal (that is, more or less 'authoritarian' institutions). Moreover, the ideology of non-authoritarianism would presumably be premised on (3) some more or less coherent view of human nature – at least in the sense that every ideology is. Of course, as Clark is aware, there is no *single* anarchist conception of human nature. In fact, there is huge disagreement between

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1   'What is Anarchism?', in J. Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman (eds), *Anarchism* (New York, 1978), pp. 3, 6, 13. The list of 'simplistic definitions' in the text is a summary of pp. 4–6 of Clark's paper.

2   Clark conflates non-authoritarianism and anti-authoritarianism in his definition. We will assume that he has a non-authoritarian ideal in mind (the context indicates that this must be the case), and will return to anti-authoritarianism below.

social anarchists, who believe in 'the human capacity for mutual aid, cooperation, respect, and communal relationships', and individualist anarchists, who believe in the centrality of 'rational self-interest' or even 'ruthless egoism'. All that constitutes common ground here is a shared belief that 'libertarian potential [is] a constituent of human nature'.[3] But this belief is implicit in the abbreviated version of Clark's definition. One who holds a non-authoritarian ideal presumably believes that humans are *capable* of existing and prospering in a free society.

Finally, it might also be assumed that the ideology of non-authoritarianism has (4) some conceivable practical applications in line with its ideal, at least if it is not a complete irrelevance. It is surely true to say, then, that 'Anarchism can have no meaning as a social and political theory if it says *nothing* about praxis'. However, in our view, Clark overstates this component of the anarchist ideology. It is not obvious that the anarchist must, by definition, be an activist of some kind, as Clark implies – that the anarchist must *do* something in terms of praxis. Adopting the theory-praxis dualism that was discussed in the Introduction, Clark distinguishes between 'writers about anarchism' and (genuine) 'anarchists', the difference being that the latter attempt to put practical proposals 'into immediate practice among themselves, as an alternative to the dominant institutions', while the former do not.[4] However, it is difficult to accept an activist stipulation on the anarchist ideology when such a stipulation does not apply to other ideologies, even ideologies of a fundamentally revolutionary nature. For instance, nobody (apart from, say, a fanatic of sorts) objects to a Marxist intellectual being called a Marxist. They may think less of that person for it, but they don't go so far as to say that he or she is not *really* a Marxist. Ultimately, what determines one's ideological position is the beliefs one holds, whether or not one acts in accordance with those beliefs. Again, one may have a low opinion of the person who lacks the courage of their convictions, but this has no ideological significance in itself.

Clark's concerns about this issue appear to derive from his hostility to Robert Paul Wolff, a 'philosophical anarchist' who didn't just write from the Ivory Tower, but who appeared to develop an explicitly non-practical anarchism. 'The work that has done most to retard meaningful analysis and criticism of the anarchist position is', Clark asserts, 'Wolff's *In Defence of Anarchism*'. He continues: 'Whatever support Wolff's ethical position might give to anarchism is effectively undermined by his statement that he sees no practical proposals that follow from his theoretical acceptance of anarchism. Anarchists have differed greatly on the issue of the degree of activism demanded by their position, but never before to my knowledge has any theorist *claiming* to be an anarchist presented no proposals for action at all'.[5] Sharing some of Clark's antipathy towards Wolff (or at least his metaphysical assumptions), we are still reluctant to accept the activist stipulation on anarchism. If Wolff isn't really an anarchist, it is not because of the 'non-practicality' of his position, but

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3   Ibid., pp. 15, 17.
4   Ibid., pp. 17–18. Emphasis added.
5   Ibid., p. 8. Emphasis added.

because he backs away from his anarchist conclusion, a conclusion with which 'I confess myself unhappy' and 'am unwilling to accept'.[6]

While the abbreviated version of Clark's definition doesn't say everything about the anarchist ideology (and will be disputed anyhow), it says no less than his 'comprehensive' – or rather pedantic – version. In any case, we take it that no definition is 'comprehensive' – that every definition is an abstraction and therefore inadequate – but that definitions are necessary for conceptual work. Defining liberalism, for instance, as 'the political philosophy of individual liberty' may be simplistic, but it provides a framework in which liberalism can be discussed – along lines which any remotely intelligent person can grasp. Presumably a similarly intelligent person could assess Clark's version of anarchism, defined in the abbreviated way, along much the same lines.

What we are looking for at the outset, then, is a definition of anarchism, a definition that will provide the framework for our analysis. Why not accept the abbreviated version of Clark's definition? Why not say that anarchism is the ideology or the political philosophy of non-authoritarianism? The answer should be clear from what has been said about our approach in the Introduction. The 'non-authoritarian ideal' is, as Clark specifies, the basis for anarchist criticism; it is the ethical standard by which existing institutions are measured. While interpreting anarchism in this way seems fair, and facilitates philosophical analysis of it, there still seems to be something rather disingenuous about it. It is not clear that anarchism – or most anarchists – establish their moral groundwork *before* engaging in critical analysis. Something else appears to be going on in anarchist theory. Criticism appears to have some value in itself: not to be morally sufficient in itself, but to be an essential moral point of departure. Why this is so should become a little clearer in our discussion of anarchist scepticism.

Leaving 'comprehensive' definitions aside, let's take a look at some of the more common definitions of anarchism. Three definitions are familiar enough from the literature: the *etymological* definition, the *anti-statist* definition, and the *anti-authoritarian* definition. None of these definitions is satisfactory. According to the etymological definition, anarchism is the belief that society should be without (*an-*) rule (*archē*). This definition is, however, unhelpful and simply lends itself to the pejorative sense of anarchism as the belief in social disorder or chaos. It is doubtful, in any case, that mere etymology could suffice to tell us anything, or to define even minimally, a substantive social philosophy with a complex history – and this is clearly true of liberalism and socialism too.

Anarchism, according to the anti-statist definition, is the belief that 'society without the state, or government, is both possible and desirable'.[7] It is not false to

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6   *In Defence of Anarchism* (New York, 1970), pp. 72, 78. It is rather odd that Wolff is usually referred to as an anarchist by scholars (myself included) even though he renounces the position. This is, I suppose, due to the fact that his logic dictates anarchist conclusions even though he tries to suppress them.

7   See George Crowder's 'Anarchism', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (ed.) Edward Craig (London, 1998), vol. 1, p. 244.

attribute this belief to anarchists (at least insofar as the state is concerned[8]), but it is certainly inadequate as a definition of anarchism. Anarchists do reject the state, as we will see. But to claim that this central aspect of anarchism is definitive is to sell anarchism short.[9] Anarchists do not simply disapprove of the state; they disapprove of it as a particular (if particularly important) and unjustifiable instance of a more widespread social phenomenon. It is this phenomenon, namely authority, which is of fundamental interest to anarchists. (The anarchism of Bakunin, for one, may seem to be identifiable with anti-statism. Indeed, he calls anarchists 'anti-state socialists'.[10] Anarchists are, on this view, socialists who are simply distinguished or defined by their anti-statism. However, this does not define anarchism as such, but only its relation in one form (anarchist 'collectivism') to one form of socialism (Marxist 'communism'). Even at this level, the definition is inadequate, for it obscures fundamental philosophical differences between Bakunin and Marx that are key to an understanding of the philosophical development of anarchism.)

According to the anti-authoritarian definition, anarchism is the belief that authority as such is illegitimate and should be overcome in its entirety. (Thus, 'All anarchists deny authority'.[11]) This definition would seem to surmount the difficulties with the anti-statist definition. Nevertheless, it does so at the cost of an over-extensive simplification of anarchism, as will be demonstrated below. (Proudhon appears to define anarchism in the anti-authoritarian way. The revolutionary message of anarchism, he writes, can be summed up as: 'No more Authority!'[12] Even if this statement reflects his anarchist position accurately, it must be seen as *a conclusion to his sceptical inquiry* rather than as, let us say, a metaphysical prejudice. He may arrive at a position where he rejects all forms of authority under consideration (though not necessarily all forms of authority, real or conceivable), but this is no *a*

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8   Government is a different matter for, as Clark writes, 'While there runs through all anarchist writings an unmitigated contempt for the state, the anarchist position on government is far from unequivocal hostility'. Reflecting on the positions of Albert Jay Nock, as anarcho-individualist, and Peter Kropotkin, as anarcho-communist, he concludes that 'a simple conception of anarchism as "opposition to government" does not accurately represent its position' [Clark, 'What is Anarchism?', pp. 8, 10].

9   April Carter, for one, states that 'Opposition to the State is *central* to anarchism' but does not *define* it accordingly [*The Political Theory of Anarchism* (London, 1971), p. 28; emphasis added].

10   *Statism and Anarchy* (ed.) Marshall S. Shatz (Cambridge, 1990), p. 179.

11   George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 7. Despite this false characterization of anarchists, Woodcock does not define anarchism as anti-authoritarianism. In point of fact, he criticizes Sébastien Faure's anti-authoritarian definition ('Whoever denies authority and fights against it is an anarchist') – not for being false, but for being simplistic. Like Clark, Woodcock seeks a more 'comprehensive' definition which spells out that 'anarchism is a doctrine which poses a criticism of existing society; a view of a desirable future society; and a means of passing from one to the other' [ibid., p. 7; see also Clark, 'What is Anarchism?', p. 6]. From our perspective, this formulation (though not necessarily Woodcock's specific interpretation) seems preferable to Clark's in that it implies some degree of priority of criticism over 'idealism'.

12   *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. John Beverley Robinson (London, 1989), p. 292.

priori judgement. These forms of authority are merely held, on rational reflection, to lack moral legitimacy.)

Scepticism Towards Authority

Anarchism is best defined, in my view, as *scepticism towards authority*. This is a somewhat controversial definition, though one hinted at by Richard T. De George: 'The anarchist ... is a sceptic in the political arena. He insists on the complete justification for any political or legal system prior to accepting it'. This characterization, like the anti-statist definition of anarchism, is inadequate, for anarchists scrutinize more than politico-legal authority, and would be better described as sceptics in the *social* arena. De George adds, importantly, that 'it is not authority as such that the anarchist attacks, his words to the contrary notwithstanding. Rather he implicitly and rightly attacks authoritarianism, which anarchists have tended to equate with established authority'. While this is essentially correct, De George's 'minarchist' conclusion does not necessarily follow: 'if anarchist principles provide the basis for something like government, it is the basis for a minimal government, closely controlled from below and responsive to those below'.[13]

De George's 'analogy' of anarchism with scepticism has been taken up and challenged by Rex Martin. 'The philosophical anarchist … is one who doubts and is prepared to deny any assertion of rightful or "legitimate" authority on behalf of a government. So conceived, might not the philosophical anarchist have much in common with the philosophical sceptic?' (Again, this conception of anarchism, as scepticism towards governmental authority, is too narrow, as we will demonstrate below.) While many anarchists assert the *falsity* of *actual* claims made for governmental authority, this falls short of 'philosophical' scepticism according to Martin; it is only a *'preliminary' scepticism*. A *'genuine' scepticism* would involve an assertion of the *impossibility* of *any* valid claim for governmental authority. But if anarchism were actually analogous to scepticism of this kind, it would be 'self-contradictory'. This is so because 'to assert, characteristically, that no true claim' for legitimate governmental authority can be made, 'the philosophical anarchist requires the coherence of the concept of a government's "legitimate" authority'. And to allow for the coherence of this concept is, 'in effect, to assert that there are conditions under which such [claims] could be true'.

> Accordingly, the philosophical anarchist could not say that statements claiming rightful authority for governments can never possibly be true. Since this is the very proposition that the philosophical anarchist needs to assert, it would appear that his position breaks down internally [and that we should, therefore,] abandon the analogy [with scepticism] suggested by De George …[14]

Martin states that while anarchism cannot assert the *logical* impossibility of any valid claim for legitimate governmental authority, it might be seen to make

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13 'Anarchism and Authority', in Pennock and Chapman (eds), pp. 91–92, 106–07.
14 'Anarchism and Scepticism', in Pennock and Chapman (eds), pp. 116, 117, 121.

an alternative assertion of the '*factual* impossibility' of any such claim. In this instance, the anarchist establishes an 'ultimate standard' for legitimacy to which no government measures up. 'The anarchist's point, then, is that *instances* of rightful political authority are, for all practical purposes, impossible as a matter of fact'. However, Martin argues that this assertion of factual impossibility is difficult to reconcile with the 'traditional moral arguments of anarchism' (which are typically based 'on "evidence" of a sort' of its 'abuses and crimes'): 'The moralist case must rest on the undesirability of *de jure* [or, more precisely, legitimate] authority, on its being wrong rather than on its being impossible'. The 'tension' between these two positions can only be resolved in two ways, Martin concludes: 'by cutting free the traditional moral argumentation from its entanglement with the thesis about the impossibility of rightful political authority and letting the latter drop. Or [by doing] the opposite'. According to Martin, De George ultimately adopts the former strategy, while Wolff lets 'the detail of the moral argument go'. Wolff therefore seems to stand 'outside the main tradition of philosophical anarchism, the moralistic one which De George has emphasized'.[15]

Some of Martin's ideas here are interesting and instructive. His distinction between the 'moralistic' tradition of anarchism (which attempts to show the moral 'undesirability' of political authority, and, in fact, more besides) and Wolff's conceptual form of anarchism (which is concerned with demonstrating the factual impossibility of governmental authority from a highly abstract 'Kantian' standpoint) is especially useful. Martin is correct in pointing to a 'tension' between these forms of anarchism, a tension that actually comes to the surface when 'traditional' anarchists like Clark attack Wolff's anarchist credentials. However, Martin does not deal adequately with the question of anarchism and scepticism. The fact that anarchism cannot demonstrate the logical impossibility of any valid claim for legitimate governmental authority is largely beside the point, not least because no traditional anarchist has sought to do so. This does not prove that anarchism is not a form of scepticism; it only proves that anarchism is not a form of scepticism on the *Cartesian-epistemological* model (and this is the analogue that, according to Martin, De George has in mind). The anarchist case is not really about logical possibility (or about 'sense' or 'intelligibility').[16] Anarchism, as we will try to demonstrate, is a form of scepticism of an intrinsically *moral* nature (not, it should be stressed, 'moral scepticism' in the ordinary sense). Martin does not acknowledge any such form.

Leslie Green, like De George, suggests that anarchists are 'sceptical of authority relations', but, unlike De George, he does not see their scepticism as being limited to political authority. Green also makes a similar distinction to Martin between philosophical anarchism (as a kind of autonomism) and traditional anarchism

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15   Ibid., pp. 122–28.

16   Martin indicates that the analogue is Cartesian, ibid., pp. 116, 126–27. On p. 126, he mentions positivist scepticism (which rests on the assertion that moral standards are '"non-sense", as Ayer would have it') and 'Berkeleian' scepticism (which rests on the assertion that a concept such as rightful authority is 'inherently unintelligible') as possible alternatives. However, both would clearly require the desertion of 'the moral argumentation of historic anarchism'.

(as moral critique). His criticism of philosophical anarchism is not that it is self-contradictory, but that it rests on a concept of autonomy that is 'without value'; that it rests on an empty, a practically meaningless ideal. Autonomy as a moral duty (Wolff) or a rational demand (Godwin) to act 'on the balance of reasons as *one* sees them' conflicts not only with authority, but with all 'binding commitments', including promises (as Godwin recognized). Without such commitments, even 'voluntary association', which is 'the ideal model of human organization' for traditional anarchists, is impossible. Accordingly, the philosophical anarchists' concept of autonomy is wholly abstract. Green concludes, 'What [the anarchist] should argue is not that justified authority is a contradiction in terms' (or 'factually impossible'), as the philosophical anarchist holds, 'but that to believe in it is a moral mistake' (at least in the majority of cases) – the position of traditional anarchism, as Rex Martin argues.[17]

Forms of Scepticism

The basic philosophical procedure of anarchism is to question or raise doubt about the bases of all authority and to challenge those forms of authority that it sees as illegitimate. That is to say, anarchists take as their starting point *the open question of authority*; with the *philosophes*, they assert their right to raise this question. They are especially keen to highlight the superstitious, mythical, and generally irrational features of the justification of authority. However, they do not approach this question indifferently or as a mere academic concern. In Left Hegelian manner, they regard authority, in its very conceptual significance, as an inherently practical matter. To the extent that authority might lack a foundation or some rational claim to legitimacy, it is susceptible to dialectical confrontation and therefore negation. The revolutionary consequences of this are clear and many anarchists are willing to realize them.[18]

As a form of scepticism, anarchism has a specific place within the philosophical tradition that is worth locating. It differs from two major forms of philosophical scepticism. It is opposed to *Pyrrhonian scepticism*, the Hellenic philosophy that aims at 'a state of "unperturbedness" or quietude' (*ataraxia*) that is achievable through 'mental suspense' (*epochē*) or the suspension of judgement (epistemological and moral).[19] Unlike the essentially conservative Pyrrhonians, anarchists are not given to agnosticism, especially in matters of practical and moral significance. This 'classical sceptical theory' was developed (in the direction of Cartesian scepticism, as we will see in a moment) by the '*new Pyrrhonians*'. Richard H. Popkin writes: 'Statements of the Pyrrhonian position of Montaigne, Charron, and their successors, propose a stronger reaction [than mental suspense], that views and opinions be rejected by the mind, if they are in the slightest degree dubious, until this piecemeal rejection results in the mind becoming a *carte blanche*'. They claimed 'that by the achievement of

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17   *The Authority of the State* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 24, 34–36. Green's work offers an excellent analysis, which I draw on throughout Part 1.

18   We will look at the *historical* significance of these factors in Part 2, merely examining the *idea* of scepticism here.

19   See Christopher Hookway, *Scepticism* (London, 1990), pp. 4–6.

complete doubt and mental blankness, they would be prepared to receive truth by Revelation', or to discover 'certain knowledge ... miraculously'.[20] Anarchists, who traditionally advocate Enlightenment rationalism, are obviously dismissive of revelation as a source of knowledge.

On the face of it, as Rex Martin observes, anarchism appears to have a good deal in common with *Cartesian scepticism*. It too adopts a position of radical doubt, being satisfied only with 'certain foundations' (non-instrumental *or* instrumental) for authority in each instance. In particular, anarchists share Descartes's contempt for arguments from tradition and the like – they share his determination 'not to believe too firmly in those things which I had been persuaded to accept by example and custom only'.[21] Anarchists, however, differ from Descartes in two respects. First, Descartes employs scepticism strategically, as a means of establishing solid foundations, that is, as a way 'to *overthrow* the doubts of the sceptics'. Thus, unlike anarchists, 'he is wholly unsympathetic to scepticism'.[22] (Anarchists, by contrast, are willing to give scepticism full credit. From their perspective, if no 'foundation' for the legitimacy of a certain kind of authority can be found, so be it. Indeed, anarchists, in the true spirit of scepticism, rather suspect the lack of such foundations.) Descartes 'doubts in order to achieve certainty', to reveal indubitable truths or foundations of knowledge within the human mind that are 'buried or hidden under the debris of prejudices and opinions', but nevertheless available to it. It is doubt itself – not, as the new Pyrrhonians held, divine revelation – that brings certainty. Hence, scepticism, carried to its extreme, overcomes itself – 'the Pyrrhonian onslaught becomes its own victim'. Nevertheless, our knowledge of nature depends on divine intervention of a kind, for it is only our certain knowledge of the existence a good and therefore non-deceiving God that guarantees the existence of a material world. In this sense:

> Descartes, in the tradition of the greatest medieval minds, sought to provide [a sound basis for human knowledge] by securing the superstructure, man's natural knowledge, to the strongest possible foundation, the all-powerful, eternal God. The sceptical crisis was [therefore] to be overcome by a new theology serving an old purpose.[23]

It is this theological dimension that separates Descartes, for all his scepticism and rationalism, from the Enlightenment project that he helped to inspire and that, in turn, inspired anarchism.

The second way in which anarchists differ from Descartes is in the socio-political nature of their project. Descartes's project is personalistic and intellectualistic: 'My plan has never gone beyond trying to reform my own *thoughts* and to build on a foundation that is *wholly my own*'.[24] Once again, Descartes may have provided the

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20   *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes*, revised edn (Assen, 1960), pp. 186–87.

21   *Discourse on Method and Meditations*, trans. F.E. Sutcliffe (Harmondsworth, 1968), pp. 33–34.

22   Hookway, p. 41.

23   Popkin, pp. 180, 187–88. The title of the chapter from which these lines are quoted is, appropriately, 'Descartes: Conqueror of Scepticism'.

24   Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, p. 38. Emphasis added.

groundwork for the Enlightenment, but the Enlightenment project – a project taken up and radicalized by anarchists, as we will see – centred on the '*political* demand for the *right to question everything*'.[25] In other words, it centred on a socio-political scepticism, on profound doubt about the moral foundations of the social order itself – not on epistemological doubt as such.

Scepticism of a socio-political – or fundamentally ethical – nature has classical origins in Socratic thought. Socrates is a sceptic (*skeptikos*) in the authentic sense: a provocative *examiner* of the powers that be, a moral *inquirer* into conventional wisdom. His sole mode of existence consists 'in examining and searching people's minds, to find out who is really wise among them, and who only thinks that he is'. Socrates questions all claims to knowledge in the ethical or practical sphere (politics included). He opposes his own ignorance to the pretensions of those he examines, observing that 'it seems I am wiser than [they are] to this small extent, that I do not think that I know what I do not know'.[26] Socrates' inquiries are inconclusive and he refuses to provide the affirmative 'alternatives' that his opponents demand. Nevertheless, this is, to his mind, preferable to unjustified 'certainty'. (Of course, anarchism at its supposedly non-ethical or anti-ethical extreme, namely Max Stirner, condemns 'the founder of ethics' – from Stirner's perspective, a criticism in itself – as 'a fool' for his ultimate commitment to the Athenian 'people', his 'community', in accepting the punishment of these 'enemies'.[27])

Scepticism and Anti-Authoritarianism

There is a crucial implication of defining anarchism in terms of scepticism towards authority: contrary to the third definition we mentioned, it is not anti-authoritarian. There are, in principle, grounds for the legitimation of authority. Moreover, there are actual forms of authority that anarchists are willing to countenance. An obvious case in point is *parental authority*, which most anarchists accept, albeit in qualified form (not, that is, as a form of '*natural* authority' that is unquestionable or absolute). As the anarchist sees it, questioning parental authority is perfectly reasonable; like all forms of authority, it must be justified. The legitimacy of even parental authority cannot be asserted *a priori*. A pragmatic justification for it might be accepted by the anarchist – that is, an argument to the effect that the absence of such authority is demonstrably unfavourable to the well-being, or even mere preservation, of the subject over whom it is exercised.

The incapacity of the subject is key to the justification of parental authority. As Richard T. De George writes: 'Ideally, parents make for the child the kind of enlightened decisions that the child would make for himself, *were he capable of doing so*, but that he is incapable of making because he lacks the knowledge, experience, strength, discipline, or resources necessary'. A second key factor here is, according

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25   Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York, 1968), p. 141. Emphasis added.

26   Plato, 'Apology', in *The Last Days of Socrates* (ed.) Hugh Tredennick (Harmondsworth, 1969), pp. 50, 75 (41b, 21d).

27   *The Ego and Its Own* (ed.) David Leopold (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 21, 190–91.

to De George, the 'love' of the authority for the subject, or what we will refer to as the benevolence of the parent (or guardian, where applicable) towards the child: 'Ideally, parental commands and rules do not constitute an alien will imposed on that of a child, but *a loving help given for the child's good and in his best interest*'.[28] (When parental authority serves as the model of political authority (and anarchists think that it always does, to a lesser or greater extent), political authority tends toward something like the 'benevolent' rule of, say, the 'father' of a nation, who serves his people out of duty and love. While this model has some hypothetical appeal, and was recommended by Voltaire as an alternative model to democratic rule, anarchists deny that political subjects are incapable in the way that children are.)

Generally, the anarchist sees parental authority as being conditional on the (in each case empirically verifiable) benevolence and capacity of the parent, incapacity of the child, necessity of its exercise in each instance, and so on. Hence, few deny the legitimate authority of a parent who prevents a young child from running across a busy street (by reasonable means, needless to say, which may or may not include the limited use of force, depending on circumstances). However, even if the anarchist accepts parental authority in principle, it does not follow that it is seen to remain legitimate in the case of a malevolent or incapable parent, a capable child, its arbitrary and violent exercise, and so on. Where, for example, a relatively mature child is gratuitously or even forcibly prevented from doing something that could do no harm to either itself or anybody else by a thoughtless parent out of, say, habit alone, authority is being, as the anarchist sees it, illegitimately exercised.

The above case is perhaps the rule rather than the exception, and serves only to reinforce the culture of authority. In such a culture we become accustomed from birth to the arbitrary exercise of unquestioned or supposedly self-evidently legitimate authority. On reaching maturity – after we have 'outgrown' a 'phase' of adolescent rebellion, or had it 'educated' or beaten out of us – we are therefore disinclined to call into question the authority of the educational, legal, political, and other institutions that surround us. When the child asks 'Why?' of a command, as seems natural, and its father, say, responds with 'Because I'm your father' or 'Because *I* said so' (because, in the terms that will be introduced below, he is, *qua* parent, ostensibly an agent possessing special rights which hold independently of *what* he is telling the child to do), he is contributing to the culture of authority and the broader culture of irrationality (as his own parents doubtless did a generation previously). He is encouraging the belief that it is not *what* you say or do but *who* you are (or, in a bureaucratic sense, which office you occupy) that counts.

Another rudimentary form of authority, apart from *paternalistic authority* (that is, parental authority at its most arbitrary or 'authoritarian'), is *gerontocratic authority*.[29] (Gerontocratic authority is, incidentally, regarded by anarchists as

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28   *The Nature and Limits of Authority* (Lawrence, 1985), p. 76. Emphasis added. De George's book is particularly valuable in its classification of forms of authority and its understanding of anarchism. Though I have reservations about a number of his points, I will refer to it throughout the remainder of Part 1.

29   I certainly don't rule out a specifically *maternalistic* deformation of parental authority, but, for convenience, and to stick to the use of a more familiar term (and common

a vital genetic element in the emergence of religious and subsequently political authority.[30]) The response to a child's (or younger party's) query of a command in this case is 'Because I'm your elder'. This form of authority is rejected by most anarchists on the grounds that the relative age (and, presumably, 'wisdom') of the elder is no guarantee of benevolent intent on its part; the elder may well be motivated by self-interest. In the case of the parent (or guardian), by contrast, natural benevolence (or a 'simulated' version thereof) towards the child is assumed on the basis of overwhelming evidence, though it remains subject to empirical verification. This means that when, for example, an adult stranger prevents a young child from running across a busy street, the stranger is not seen by anarchists to be exercising legitimate authority, but merely a social power that happens to be beneficial. There is, therefore, a major distinction between parental authority (notwithstanding its paternalistic deformations) and adult authority – though, again, parental authority may be rejected when it evidently amounts to the exercise of, say, malevolent power by the parent. The parent *qua* parent, unlike the adult stranger, is therefore seen by at least some anarchists to be an agent possessing special, though not unlimited, rights, that is, legitimate authority. Of course, this understanding of parental authority begs many questions – such as whether legitimate authority can be *conferred* by the parent on a baby-sitter, nanny, teacher, etc, whether it can be *delegated* by the former to the latter. These questions are beside the point at this stage, however. The point of our discussion here is to counter the simplistic interpretation that anarchism is anti-authoritarian or, again, *necessarily* opposed to *all* forms of authority.

It is conceivable, of course, that some anarchists would deny the legitimacy of parental authority. Central to this denial might be the rejection of the assumption (even if it is subject to empirical verification) of natural parental benevolence. Hence it could be claimed that there is no essential difference between parental authority and adult authority, that whatever difference there might be is only a matter of familiarity (which may breed malevolence as much as anything else), and so forth. It might be argued, moreover, that acknowledging parental authority encourages paternalism and its religious and political offshoots. These are strong objections, but they do not alter the fact that for anarchists the question of the legitimacy of authority as such remains open, that anarchists do not presuppose a final verdict against authority – though, by definition, they examine it sceptically in each case and discard 'superstitious' and 'mythical' justifications for it.

One possible weakness in our definition of anarchism is that it appears to dissolve the distinction between anarchism and liberalism. Liberals also claim to be sceptical towards (or 'suspicious of') authority – to reject certain forms as illegitimate without rejecting authority as such. However, the crux of the dispute between anarchism and liberalism is that liberals are not sceptical in the sense we have described – in the sense of questioning quite fundamentally *all* forms of authority and confronting illegitimate forms. Liberalism either assumes the necessity of political authority – in

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phenomenon), I refer to the general deformation of parental authority (or what De George calls 'parentalism' [De George, *Nature and Limits of Authority*, p. 79]) as paternalistic authority.

30   See, for example, *The Murray Bookchin Reader* (ed.) Janet Biehl (London, 1997), pp. 80–84.

which case it isn't sceptical at all – or attempts to vindicate or provide a 'certain foundation' for a more or less limited form of it – in which case it has more in common with Cartesian (anti-)scepticism than anarchist scepticism. Accordingly, liberals like Wilhelm von Humboldt are concerned to set *limits* to 'legitimate government', while anarchists, influenced, as we will see, by Rousseau, are interested in the very *legitimacy* of the institution, limited or otherwise. We will examine the anarchist analysis of political authority and its liberal vindications below, but, before doing so, we need to look at the concept of authority itself.

Chapter 2

The Nature of Authority

What is authority? This question is pressing because authority is both conceptually complex and practically significant; it is simultaneously abstruse and potent.[1] Hannah Arendt agrees that authority is intellectually problematic, but denies that it is potent anymore. She writes: 'the moment we begin to talk and think about authority, after all one of the central concepts of political thought, it is as though we were caught in a maze of abstractions, metaphors, and figures of speech in which everything can be taken and mistaken for something else.' This is, Arendt argues, due to the fact that authority is no longer operative, that 'authority has vanished from the modern world', so that in trying to grasp the concept 'we have no reality, either in history or in everyday experience, to which we can unanimously appeal'. We should ask, then, 'What was – and not what is – authority?'[2] This will strike many as counter-intuitive. There seem to be countless instances of authority relations in the modern world, difficult as the concept itself may be to comprehend. How exactly is authority supposed to have disappeared?

According to Arendt, authority vanishes with the loss of our experience of 'foundation', the very experience that underpins 'Roman-Western' civilization. The 'sacredness of foundation' – the founding of Rome itself – was a central Roman conviction, and it was 'the experience of [this] foundation in which *the Roman trinity of religion, authority, and tradition* had its legitimate source. The strength of this trinity lay in the binding force of an authoritative beginning to which "religious" bonds tied men back through tradition'. What authority (*auctoritas*) involves, then, is building on (or, as Arendt notes, literally 'augmenting', from the verb '*augere*') the foundation. Such augmentation, with 'its roots in the past', is distinct from power (*potestas*); indeed, those in authority do not exercise power at all since, as the republican conundrum has it, 'power resides in the people'. (As we will see, anarchists argue that authority is a form of power – often a mystified form. That Arendt herself is, from an anarchist perspective, guilty of mystification is indicated by her statement that 'the source of authority transcends power'.[3])

The Roman trinity survived Rome's transformation from republic into empire and 'penetrated wherever the *pax Romana* created Western civilization on Roman foundations'. Indeed, the trinity survived the decline of the Roman Empire by being

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1   Similarly, Leslie Green writes that authority is 'a potentially problematic form of social relation that is central to political life' [*The Authority of the State* (Oxford, 1990), p. 52].

2   'What is Authority?', in *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (London, 1961), pp. 91, 136.

3   Ibid., pp. 120, 122, 125, 141. Emphasis added.

'passed to the Christian Church' (almost literally by Constantine the Great). Thus, despite 'the antipolitical and anti-institutional tendencies of the Christian faith', the Church was politicized, and its foundation – as the Christian religion proper – became the story of Christ as handed down by 'the "founding fathers" of the Church'. How, then, has Christian civilization been undermined? How has the Roman trinity in Christian form been ruptured and our sense of authority been lost? Arendt explains:

> … it has turned out, and this fact speaks for the stability of the amalgamation, that wherever one of the elements of the Roman trinity, religion or authority or tradition, was doubted or eliminated, the remaining two were no longer secure. Thus, it was Luther's error to think that his challenge [to] the temporal authority of the Church and his appeal to unguided individual judgement would leave tradition and religion intact. So it was the error of Hobbes and the political theorists of the seventeenth century to hope that authority and religion could be saved without tradition. So, too, was it finally the error of the humanists to think it would be possible to remain within an unbroken tradition of Western civilization without religion and without authority.[4]

The initiation of an attack on authority was the 'final, though decisive, phase of development' in a process (the great process of Enlightenment, as we will see in Part 2) that undermined religion and tradition previously. With this development, 'the general doubt of the modern age has also invaded the political realm', calling into doubt the very foundations of political order as we have known it since Roman times. Indeed, so serious has the attack on authority been 'that it has spread to such prepolitical areas as child-rearing and education, where authority in the widest sense has always been accepted as a natural necessity'.[5]

Arendt's analysis of authority is, like so much of her thought, profound and fascinating. However, anarchists disagree quite fundamentally with her. They disagree that authority has vanished, or that the 'crisis of authority' that many essentially conservative thinkers warn of is as deep as they suggest. Anarchists wish that scepticism would 'invade' the political and even the pre-political realms, but doubt that – outside the anarchist tradition – it actually has done to a significant extent. People continue to claim authority and others continue to recognize their claims. If these claims are less absolute than they once were, and if people now question them even to a limited degree, it is, as anarchists see it, a sign of welcome progress – not because authority is 'evil', any more than tradition is, but because human beings are capable of reasoning and have no need to depend on sacred, unquestionable foundations as the basis of their intellectual and social lives. If the sacred foundations of Roman and Christian civilization have been destabilized and partly demystified, so much the better from the anarchist perspective. But when Rome's successor in the contemporary world (the republic of the American 'founding fathers') exercises its historically unparalleled power with missionary zeal, anarchists still regard the Roman trinity with suspicion.[6]

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4   Ibid., pp. 125–26, 128.
5   Ibid., pp. 92–93.
6   Arendt considers the American case ibid., p. 140.

Approaches to the Problem of Authority

The problem of authority persists and we are still faced with the question of what exactly authority is. Joseph Raz points to (what he alleges are) two distinct approaches to the problem. The first approach, the '*explanatory-sociological*', concentrates on the socio-historical dimension of the question, 'exploring the conditions and causes of the emergence of authority, its development and disintegration, its causal relations with various political, cultural, and economic factors, and the like'. The second '*normative or moral*' approach combines '*conceptual-classificatory*' and '*moral-justificatory*' aspects, and concentrates on the abstract philosophical dimension of the problem.[7] Raz comments elsewhere that there was a wrong-headed tendency to conflate these approaches in classical times: 'Some of the classical authors sought to explain the nature of authority by explaining the way in which people come to accept the authority of individuals or groups. Discussions of the concept were mixed with descriptions of the evolution of society, of conquests, or of social contracts. Modern authors have avoided this confusion'.[8] (Raz's own philosophical approach is contentious because of his combination or possible 'confusion of conceptual analysis and normative argument'. To this objection, he responds that 'there is an interdependence between conceptual and normative argument'. In general terms, we tend to agree, though we will argue for further interdependence between philosophical and sociological argument below.[9])

Recent philosophers of authority have, as Raz indicates, confined themselves to normative work, leaving descriptive work to social scientists. Such an academic division of labour is held to be a requirement of the fact-value distinction. Were

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7   Editor's Introduction, Joseph Raz (ed.), *Authority* (Oxford, 1990), p. 1. Emphasis added.

8   *The Authority of Law: Essays on Law and Morality* (Oxford, 1979), p. 5.

9   *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford, 1986), p. 63. Raz explains his disagreement with the 'purely linguistic' approach 'often advocated by analytic philosophers' in the following way [ibid., pp. 65–66]: 'A purely linguistic account of authority claims to yield a simple explanation of what people believe who believe that someone has legitimate authority. Had [my] account been a linguistic account, an explanation of the meaning of "legitimate authority", it would have followed that anyone who believes of a person that he has legitimate authority believes that that person satisfies the condition set by [my] justification thesis. This implication does not hold for a normative-explanatory account. In being normative it avows that it does not necessarily conform to everyone's notion of authority in all detail. It does claim to be an explanatory account in singling out important features of people's conception of authority. It helps explain what they believe in when they believe that a person has authority. But some people's beliefs may not conform to the account here given in all respects. This is a key to the difference between linguistic and explanatory-normative accounts. The latter, while providing a crucial guide for the understanding of the way terms are used in different contexts, does not allow for a simple explanation based on substitutivity'. On the debate involved here, see Steven Lukes, 'Perspectives on Authority', in Raz (ed.), *Authority*, pp. 203–204. Note that while Lukes distinguishes between the analytical and the normative approaches to authority, and points to Raz's 'combination', he does not distinguish between the sociological and the philosophical approaches. In fact, he goes on to suggest [see ibid., pp. 206–207] that Weber's approach is analytical, though this is clearly an inappropriate characterization.

philosophers to undertake normative and descriptive work simultaneously, they would inevitably commit naturalistic fallacy after naturalistic fallacy. On this view, then, the best philosophy can offer (to avail of a Hegelian distinction) is abstract understanding, not rational comprehension. However, this view is highly debatable because the fact-value distinction itself is less than secure. The trend in much contemporary philosophy – especially outside the analytic tradition, but also within it to an increasing extent – has been to dissolve the distinction on the side of values. The argument in this case, to put it simply, is that facts are value-laden and that reality is effectively a social construction. This is not a position we are willing to defend. Anarchists, indeed, are typically dismissive of this brand of latter-day idealism as little more than an intellectual fashion, a commodity to be bought and sold on the academic market – a new source of profit, in Bookchin's words[10] – that presents no threat whatsoever to the status quo. (In old fashioned Marxist terms, postmodernity is part of the ideology of capitalism; or, in the terms of the New Left, it is a form of capitalist consumption. These views are not endorsed here as such, for reasons that will emerge in the Conclusion, but we do have some sympathy for them.) Such thinking serves only to distract attention from *immediate* problems of social reality. In any event, it is possible to dissolve the fact-value distinction on the side of facts, that is, from the point of view of realism. The argument here is that values *are* facts – after all, what else could they be? – or complex facts of social reality, which is itself part of nature. The complexity of these facts distinguishes them from other facts only in a quantitative sense; in other words, there is no qualitative distinction between facts and values that could justify an academic split between philosophy and the social sciences.[11]

Rational comprehension of social reality in its complexity demands a complex approach, synthesizing descriptive, explanatory, analytical, and justificatory elements, the elements that have been divided between social science and philosophy. (Comprehending authority in its full socio-ethical significance therefore requires analysis of the concept, description of it as it appears (as a phenomenon), explanation of the causal relations between this phenomenon and other phenomena, and moral evaluation of it in terms of its justifiability.) As I have argued, this division rests partly on what anarchists regard as a philosophical error; but it is also a pragmatic response. Social study is difficult and it seems sensible to share the workload. Every text emphasizes particular features of a social problem, and this philosophical work is no exception. However, to bracket out other features in their entirety as if they were irrelevant or irreconcilable is deceiving, and we will strive to incorporate basic sociological insights here.

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10   See *The Murray Bookchin Reader* (ed.) Janet Biehl (London, 1997), p. 66.

11   The critique of idealism, both theocentric and anthropocentric, is a central feature of anarchism, as we will see in Part 2. The anarchist understanding of realism is conditioned by this critique, such that its realism is essentially a non-idealism (rather than a developed epistemological position). Anarchist realism is neither naive nor uncritical, as the anarchist attitude toward authority and other forms of domination demonstrates. It does not imply that social facts should be taken at face value, any more than other natural facts should be, but that, in principle, they are accessible and amenable to rational inquiry (as opposed to idealistic obfuscation).

It might be argued that the abstract philosophical tendency to bracket out 'concrete' sociological insights – into the genesis and development of actual historical powers – reveals a pronounced conservatism: an unwillingness to uncover unsavoury facts about the practice of power and how such power came (more often than not, in anarchist opinion, through theologico-metaphysical mystification) to be regarded as 'authoritative'. It is, without doubt, easier to paint authority favourably at the conceptual level, unimpeded by sociological evidence of the abuse of power and so on. This evidence weighs heavily on all forms of authority and makes it entirely conceivable that they cannot be justified. Anarchists do not shy away from such an ethical conclusion. By contrast, the majority of academic philosophers appear to be motivated by the desire to meet what Raz calls 'the anarchist's challenge' and to resolve the 'paradoxes' of authority. Over and above the attraction of such a philosophical challenge, conceived as mere 'puzzle', there seems to be a *need*, be it ideological or even psychological, to justify at least *some* authority (for example, with Raz, the claims of 'limited government').[12] This academic strategy – in fact, this *liberal* strategy – is profoundly unsceptical and can have no other purpose than the affirmative *rationalization of authority*. Once again, this does not mean that philosophy is necessarily 'reactionary' (a view we argued against in the Introduction), but only that it can be and, academically, often is. As De George writes, 'Theoretical considerations are in themselves neither revolutionary nor conservative. They can guide both sorts of enterprises', or, for that matter, neither.[13]

In practice, a major difference between philosophical and sociological studies of authority (or, at least, the classic studies of Raz and Max Weber respectively) is that philosophical studies analyze authority 'as a feature of practical reasoning', while sociological studies analyze authority 'as a species of social power'.[14] Thus, sociological studies are presented as objective scientific analyses of socio-historical relations of power, while philosophical studies are presented as ahistorical, 'timeless', or 'nonrelativized' analyses of practical reasoning in authoritative relations. Steven Lukes argues that, despite sociological and philosophical claims of objectivity and non-relativity, both approaches are relative or 'perspectival'. Weber's sociology of authority operates from the perspective of 'the exerciser or holder of authority' (what Lukes calls 'perspective A'), not from the perspective of 'those who accept or are subject to it' (what he calls 'perspective B'). It is 'a striking fact', Lukes writes, that Weber never investigates 'the question "When and why do men obey?" or looks at authority relations from below, that is, from perspective B. On the contrary, his classification of authority is exclusively from perspective A, in terms of prevailing rationales for obedience – claims typically made by those in command'.[15] By contrast, Raz's philosophy of authority operates (though Lukes himself does not

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12   See the Editor's Introduction to Raz (ed.), *Authority*, pp. 3ff.

13   *The Nature and Limits of Authority* (Lawrence, 1985), p. 7.

14   See Green, *The Authority of the State*, pp. 19, 61.

15   Lukes, 'Perspectives on Authority', pp. 205, 207. While Lukes's distinction between the 'perspectives' of sociology and philosophy is availed of here, I do not share his more or less relativistic beliefs. It is necessary, in my view, to synthesize these 'perspectives', which are abstract in themselves, in order to comprehend authority.

state this explicitly) from perspective B, from the perspective of the rational subject of authority. Raz explains this perspective as follows: 'One can ... most clearly discern what authority is by seeing what one acknowledges when acknowledging that a person has legitimate authority'.[16]

Leslie Green also proposes a 'perspectival' approach to authority, but he seems to follow Raz in prioritizing 'perspective B'. Green holds that 'To understand authority, we must understand the way it functions for those who regard it as legitimate', or how it figures in the practical reasoning of its subjects. Evidently unimpressed by Weberian analysis, Green argues that sociology is unhelpful because its concept of power is no clearer than that of authority.

> Authority is demystified only if, in reducing it to power, one reduces it to a simpler phenomenon free of the problematic aspects of authority. The most serious of these is the intentional concept of 'reasons for acting' and its various cognates. But it has been persuasively argued that social power itself cannot be identified without reference to the interests and desires of those affected; and there is not yet any satisfactory account of either which does away with its intentionality … Until we have a fuller analysis of the nature of power and its forms, it is likely that little will be gained by exploring [authority as a species of social power].[17]

It will be argued below, against Green, that power is the only possible conceptual context in which authority can be situated and understood. Nevertheless, Green is correct in saying that perspectival analysis (or analysis from 'perspective B') is necessary for the comprehension of authority. Hence, we will attempt to synthesize what are traditionally regarded as distinct sociological and philosophical aspects or 'perspectives' – to synthesize the sociology of power and the philosophy of practical reason – and run the risk of, in Raz's terms, philosophical 'confusion'.

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16   *The Morality of Freedom*, p. 28.

17   *The Authority of the State*, pp. 60–62. The 'persuasive' argument referred to is Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London: Macmillan, 1974). Instructive in this context is Green's entry for 'Power' in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (ed.) Edward Craig (London, 1998), vol. 7, pp. 610–13. This indicates further the influence of Lukes on Green, who describes social power as 'the capacity to affect the interests of agents' [ibid., p. 610]. It also underscores Green's antipathy to the sociological approach: 'Some maintain that all normative powers [including authority] may be reduced to powers to impose or remove duties which may in turn be reduced to direct or indirect threats of force. Each step of this reduction may be challenged – especially the second, which cannot account for the fact that people often recognize duties that they think neither will nor should be enforced. Reductivist accounts, however, continue to be influential among sociologists who incline to a "realistic" view of power' [ibid., p. 611]. Generally speaking, Green is right to point to a lack of 'perspective B' in sociological analysis. But he tends to overstate the inadequacy of sociology and the complexity (or contestability) of the concept of social power. Put simply, I do not share Green's conviction, quoted in the text, that 'social power itself cannot be identified without reference to the interests and desires of those affected'. Green's difficulty, it seems to me, may not be with the concept of power as such, but with the ludicrously obscure concept of 'interests' that, following Lukes, he has superimposed on it. I will take up this argument below.

Power and Social Power

Richard B. Friedman claims that 'an account of the nature of authority must be cast in the form of an exploration of the relationship between authority and the other notions forming [the] network of influence-terms [that is, 'power, domination, coercion, force, manipulation, persuasion, etc.'], and the main task of analysis thus becomes that of exhibiting the distinctive type of influence involved in the idea of authority'. 'Influence' is therefore 'the entire class of concepts in question'; authority is a species of influence, not, as Robert Dahl and others believe, a species of 'power', or, as H.L.A. Hart believes, a species of 'social control'. The problem with 'power' and 'social control', according to Friedman, is that they 'readily suggest coercion and hence the deprivation of liberty'.[18] The naturalistic conception of power developed below avoids such connotations; it also leaves room for extreme degrees of authority (or authoritarianism) for which 'influence' is rather too weak a term, as well as non-human manifestations (of such power) for which 'influence' is too anthropocentric a term. It will be argued, furthermore, that authority is indeed a form of 'social control' (or, in our terms, domination), but that this ought to be explained in more fundamental terms – in terms of power – if we are to characterize authority adequately.

We begin, then, by saying that authority is *a form of power*. Power is *effective capacity*, the capacity to effect change (positively, by causing something to happen, and, negatively, by preventing something from happening). *Power and authority are not identical* since, at the intuitive level, the power of the wind to rattle my office blinds or my power to raise a cup of coffee to my mouth would never be said to represent any kind of authority. We will return to the latter example below, but some might argue that the former example is *anthropomorphic*. Talking of the 'power' of 'the wind' (or, the Feuerbachian humanist might add, the 'Power of God') is like ascribing a human characteristic to something non-human; more precisely, it implies, in this case, the attribution of agency to a non-agent. We contend that this is mistaken. The criticism itself rests on *anthropocentrism*, a belief in the centrality of agency (meaning *human* agency) in the natural world. Power precedes human agency and is not reducible to the latter. Power is natural, not merely human. Explaining 'the wind' may be problematic (scientifically rather than philosophically), but attributing power to this natural phenomenon is not. Nor is the power of the wind dependent on its affecting human interests. Wind erosion is a manifestation of its power that has no intrinsic connection to human agency or human interests.[19]

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18   'On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy', in Raz (ed.), *Authority*, pp. 59–60, 86.

19   These remarks are, without doubt, rather naive; but they are not uncontroversial and are worth making. What is more, they may point to a dogmatic epistemological position that is basically realist. On anarchist 'epistemology', see note 11, above. What should be added is a moral point. Anarchists, who aren't greatly interested in epistemology as such, are *morally suspicious* of much contemporary idealism and of those who can afford to cast intellectual doubt on reality – including the reality of such 'essentialist' notions as starvation, disease, death, and environmental degradation. Idealism – and ultimately solipsism – may be epistemologically irrefutable, at least in 'sophisticated' terms. But whether idealists themselves

Authority is not the same as power; it is a species of power. We can be a little more precise than that, however. People do not apply the category of authority to any other aspect of the natural world than human relations: authority is always the authority of one person or body of persons over another person or body of persons (of *party A* over *party B*). De George argues that the authority of things (*of thing A*, 'such as a book or the law', over party B) is conceivable. But this is a mystification. Things do not command, for instance; *people* command. Their commands (the written commands of the dead, for example) may be, as De George indicates, 'objectified or embodied in human products', but these products do not exercise authority in themselves. They only do so, or appear to do so, when incorporated into social systems of, say, legal or religious authority, within which they can be enforced by institutions like courts and churches. De George also claims that authority over things (of party A or even thing A *over thing B*) is *logically* if not empirically conceivable: 'The claim that things are not subjects of authority is not a logical but an empirical claim'.[20] This is wrong, for reasons that will emerge in our discussion of 'perspective B'. Things do not have *any* such perspective. Not even God could exercise authority over things, and, in the example cited above, I certainly do not exercise it over my coffee cup.

What about authority over non-human animals (of party A over *animal B*)? De George writes: 'The case of animals is ambiguous … whether we wish to say that animals are subject to authority depends on one's view of animals as well as on one's characterization of authority.'[21] Obviously, we do not speak of the authority of birds (*of bird A* over bird B or party B) any more than we speak of the authority of the wind (though, again, we might refer to the power of the wind or even the power of birds (to construct nests, catch prey, and so on)). And it is difficult to see how birds might be rationally capable of recognizing authority, or an obligation to obey, when they are intellectually or linguistically incapable of exercising it (of issuing authoritative directives). But sometimes we do refer (implicitly or explicitly) to the authority of humans over other animals, as in the case of the 'master' of a dog, though these references seem to be restricted to 'domesticated' and 'trained' animals, animals that respond to human will, as opposed to 'wild' animals, animals which are indifferent to commands. Nevertheless, for reasons that will be spelt out below, these are cases of simple domination rather than of authority. That domination is effective – that the animal responds to a command – does not make it authoritative. There is no question here of the subject recognizing – or, like the child, coming to recognize – the power exercised over it as legitimate (as a normative power), or of the commands issued

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are willing to follow their position through to its practico-ethical conclusions – that is to say, whether they actually believe what they are saying, whether they take their intellectual games seriously – is doubtful. All we have to do is ask of the contemporary idealist: 'Is the history of the Nazi Holocaust a social construction, a mere narrative, or whatever you call Ideas these days?' Few have the courage – or are foolish enough – to say yes.

20   De George, p. 16, including note 2. De George cites two examples of 'authority over things' in the footnote: 'in the New Testament, Christ's followers can intelligibly say that Christ has authority over the wind and waves when they obey his command, and the boatswain in *The Tempest* intelligibly says: "If you command these elements to silence, and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more. Use your authority".'

21   Ibid., p. 16.

figuring in its practical reasoning in a particular way. (Our 'view of animals' is, therefore, that they are incapable of forms of 'reason' that humans are capable of, though the difference may only be quantitative.) It is precisely for such reasons that 'perspective B' is central to the comprehension of authority. (Our 'characterization of authority' therefore takes account of the reasoning of the subject of authority.) Looking at the issue from 'perspective A' alone, it is conceivable, though hardly credible, that authority could be exercised over non-human animals or, as we noted above, even things.

In other instances, we refer to the dualistic and rather schizophrenic notion of 'authority over oneself' or 'internal authority' (the authority of party A over party A). Erich Fromm makes the interesting historical point that 'the development of modern thinking from Protestantism to Kant's philosophy can be characterized as the substitution of internalized authority for an external one'. While this intellectual development seems to constitute a process of liberation (away from 'heteronomy' and towards 'autonomy'), it is contradictory because freedom comes to be associated with 'the domination of one part of the individual, his nature, by another, his reason, will or conscience' (or the authority of one part of party A, the 'higher' part, over another part of party A, the 'lower' part).[22] Isaiah Berlin wrote famously of the potentially authoritarian implications of this concept of 'positive freedom' or 'self-mastery', a concept according to which 'Liberty, so far from being incompatible with authority, becomes virtually identical with it'.[23]

While the idea of 'authority over oneself' need not be taken seriously in literal terms – and can be rejected as a metaphysical abstraction – its relation to the political idea of 'self-government' requires some consideration.[24] Self-government, *when premised on inegalitarian notions* (including meritocratic notions about the special rights of the 'most able', the 'most intelligent', etc.), does have authoritarian implications. So it is that democracy in certain forms, forms that are not unfamiliar to us, contradicts itself. Meritocracy might be justified as a bulwark against dreaded 'populism'; but this only confirms that it is fundamentally undemocratic. 'Populism' may be an expression of an 'irrational' will, but it is still the 'will of the people', a will which, democratically, takes precedence over the 'rational' will of an elite (regardless of this elite's claims to govern in the 'real' interest of the people, an interest which they are incapable of recognizing themselves). The democratic solution to 'populist' deformation lies, as many anarchists have stressed, in the field of education, *not in the tyranny of those who supposedly know better*. Thus it is, at least in principle, that egalitarian education might contribute to a non-authoritarian form of self-government.

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22   *Fear of Freedom* (London, 1960), p. 143.

23   'Two Concepts of Liberty', in *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays* (eds) Henry Hardy and Roger Hausheer (London, 1998), p. 220.

24   It need not be taken seriously in literal terms, though it has some figurative significance in analogy with authority in its proper social sense. Green writes [*The Authority of the State*, p. 40]: 'Authority is interpersonal in a special way. We do sometimes speak of individuals having authority over themselves and their own affairs, but this is parasitic on the standard notion of having authority over others.'

Authority, the authority of party A over party B, is *a form of social power*.[25] Nevertheless – and this is where confusion often begins to arise – *authority and social power are not synonymous*. Social power is *effective capacity in human relations*, the capacity of one person or body of persons to have an effect on another person or body of persons. It is very obvious in certain instances that social power and authority are not the same (though exactly what the difference is remains to be seen). Raz offers the following example:

> My neighbour can stop me from growing tall trees in my garden by threatening to burn rubbish by my border. He, therefore, has some power over me but no authority. Nor does his power turn into an authority just by the fact that I acquiesce and do not pick a fight with him.[26]

This example is, dare I say, all too English for Robert Paul Wolff, who offers a couple of more American examples that begin to bring out the nature of the distinction.

> When I turn over my wallet to a thief who is holding me at gunpoint, I do so because the fate with which he threatens me is worse than the loss of money which I am made to suffer. I grant that he has power over me, but I would hardly suppose that he has *authority*, that is, that he has a right to demand my money and that I have an obligation to give it to him. When the government presents me with a bill for taxes, on the other hand, I pay it (normally) even though I do not wish to, and even if I think I can get away with not paying. It is, after all, the duly constituted government, and hence it has a *right* to tax me. It has *authority* over me. Sometimes, of course, I cheat the government, but even so, I acknowledge its authority, for who would speak of 'cheating' a thief?[27]

Two preliminary points should be made about social power. Social power need not be identified with 'the production of *intended* effects', as Bertrand Russell has it.[28] Social power involves nominal agents (human beings), but may operate unintentionally and without meaningful agency. Such is the continuity of power and social power. There is no magical qualitative leap from the natural world, the world of 'blind' power, to the world of intentionality. Many cases of social power, such as instinctive behaviour, are as 'unintentional' as cases of non-human animal power. Social power need not be identified by reference to the interests of the persons involved either. Obviously, social power generally affects our interests (assuming that these are always or ever specifiable and that the concept itself is

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25   The notion of a non-human animal society is not meaningless. At the very least, we speak of 'social' or 'sociable' animals, and between these animals power is certainly exercised. When I refer to 'social power' in this book I mean 'human social power', which, however, is too cumbersome and idiosyncratic an expression for regular use. The same point applies to the category of domination, to be discussed below. Social animals can and do dominate each other, but when I refer to 'domination' in this book I mean 'human domination'. I will, nevertheless, show how this idea can be extended to human relations with the natural world.

26   *The Morality of Freedom*, p. 24.

27   *In Defence of Anarchism* (New York, 1970), p. 4.

28   *Power: A New Social Analysis* (London, 1975), p. 25. Emphasis added.

meaningful). But we can conceive of a situation of mutual disinterest in which social power remains operative. What this indicates is that social power can be considered, at some level of abstraction, in itself. The purpose of this – the very purpose of conceptual analysis – is to isolate the phenomenon for subsequent sociological and ethical investigation (in terms of social interests, values, and so on). In fact, to tie the concept of social power to the even more nebulous concept of interests is to render it almost unintelligible, and to do so quite unnecessarily.

Social power, in our naturalistic sense, is a 'highly comprehensive' concept.[29] It takes multifarious forms, both 'natural' and 'conventional', based on strength, intelligence, appearance, gender, reputation, language, culture, geography, resources, wealth, luck, and so forth. As such, it would be absurd to – and anarchists do not – reject social power as such. (We assume that no one – anarchist or otherwise – 'rejects' power as a whole. This 'rejection' could obviously have no more than metaphysical significance. Physically, the attempt to deny power would obviously end in failure. But even the metaphysical rejection is no more than a demonstration of the human (that is to say, natural or naturally endowed) power of imagination.) Far from rejecting all social power, most anarchists advocate revolutionary (or, like Stirner, insurrectionary) power of some kind, while social anarchists advocate the power of collective, self-governed and self-managed action.

Engels argued that there is a contradiction in revolutionary anarchism. While anarchists are, according to him, anti-authoritarian, revolution itself is a form of authority, in fact, 'the most authoritarian thing there is'.[30] This argument is doubly flawed. First, as we have argued, anarchists are not 'anti-authoritarian'; if revolution were a form of authority, it might still be justifiable. In any case, secondly, revolution is a form of social power, but it is not a form of authority. If revolutionaries make authoritative claims (and anarchists argue vociferously that they should not), these claims are extrinsic to revolution as such and mark the attempted closure of revolution itself (a premature 'political' closure from the anarchist viewpoint). Revolution is still liable to moral inquiry, but the inquiry pertains to *what* is being done (the typical moral question of social power) rather than *who* is doing it (the typical moral question of authority). Revolution is an issue of *action* rather than of *agency*. If the revolutionary tries to justify what he or she is doing *on the basis of who he or she is* (for example, one versed in scientific socialism might feel entitled to claim political power), then the moral focus shifts towards the issue of authority.

Domination and Exploitation

Which kinds of social power are anarchists suspicious of or even hostile towards? Generally speaking, anarchists focus their attention on two kinds of social power: *domination* and *exploitation*. Domination signifies *the capacity of one party to exercise control over another party*. Exploitation, on the other hand, signifies *the*

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29   Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (ed.) Talcott Parsons (New York, 1964), p. 153.

30   'On Authority', in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd edn (ed.) Robert C. Tucker (New York, 1978), p. 733.

capacity of one party to gain materially through the efforts of another party, and at the latter's expense. (Were it not at the latter's expense, if the latter did not *lose* anything (say, the *full* fruit of his or her labour) by being exploited, then cooperation could be seen as *mutually exploitative*. Clearly, this goes against what we understand by both exploitation and cooperation.) Some argue that exploitation involves *manipulation* – that it entails some cunning method of getting someone to do something that he or she would not knowingly choose to do. Accordingly, those who defend capitalism say something like the following: Yes, the capitalist employer gains materially through his or her employees' efforts; but the employer doesn't manipulate them and therefore cannot be said to exploit them. However, the slave owner, who certainly exploits his or her slaves, can hardly be said to manipulate them (since they are fully conscious of what they do and why they are doing it). Therefore, manipulation is not a necessary feature of exploitation.

In some instances, slavery being a classic example, domination and exploitation go hand in hand. The slave is maximally controlled with a view to being maximally profitable for the slave owner. (It seems, however, that profitability increases when the producer is 'liberated' – is 'freed' in order to *consume*, socially speaking, its own produce.) But one can, in principle, be dominated without being exploited (in fact, this is what the Marxist vision boils down to[31]). For example, in a religious context, one might be controlled practically and theoretically by a leader who does not gain anything materially from one's subordination. (In reality, this is seldom the case; few religions demand nothing materially from their followers.) Arguably there is some kind of 'spiritual exploitation' involved here, though what this might mean in real terms is difficult to assess. For our purposes, this relationship is one of simple domination. Anarchists wonder why one would wish to be so dominated, and doubt that – in the long run – non-exploitative relations can survive on such a basis – without, that is, becoming exploitative. Dominative forces therefore tend to exploit.

What about the possibility of being exploited without being dominated? It is difficult to imagine such a situation. All exploitative relations appear to involve – or even to require – a certain level of domination. (As Errico Malatesta puts it, 'whoever governs production also governs the producers'.[32]) The employer, for example, does not just gain materially from the efforts of the employee. He or she also exercises control over the employee, at least in the workplace and by virtue of the employee's *having* to be there. Again, this control may be a necessary condition of exploitation. Thus, as David Miller puts it, capitalism is regarded by anarchists as 'both coercive [though this word may be too strong] and exploitative – it places workers in the power of their bosses, and fails to give them a just return for their contribution to production'.[33]

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31   See Richard Adamiak, 'The "Withering Away" of the State: A Reconsideration', *Journal of Politics*, 32 (1970): 3–18.

32   *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas* (ed.) Vernon Richards (London, 1965), p. 145. This point is intended as a criticism of the revolutionary vision of Marxism, but it applies more generally.

33   *Anarchism* (London, 1984), p. 9.

We are often told that the free individual in capitalist society *chooses* to work for a particular employer out of *rational self-interest*, and is therefore neither dominated nor exploited – is, in other words, free from social control and the beneficiary of his or her own labour.[34] However, it remains the case that the employee is an instrument of profit *for the employer*, and is therefore exploited at least to a limited degree. (Even a situation where the employee receives a 'fair' wage and the employer gains a 'fair' profit is exploitative, though one could argue that it is a situation of 'fair' and justifiable exploitation.) The employee is also subject to the rules and regulations of the workplace and disciplinary measures up to and including dismissal (no small matter in times of scarcity of employment and 'scaling-down' of the welfare state). (Indeed, the employer's domination extends into the legal sphere, notwithstanding the limited – and, in our time, diminishing – rights which are assigned to the worker.) Of course, all of these things may be unavoidable facts of life (at least under capitalism, which *is* a fact of our lifetimes); but, necessary or not, the relations that characterize capitalist society *are* exploitative and can be morally evaluated as such.[35]

Domination can occur without exploitation, though it encourages the latter. (Accordingly, a change in the 'mode of domination' might result in a change in the nature of exploitative relations or a change in the very mode of production. This is what anarchists argue against Marxian economism.) The state can subsist independently of capitalism, for example. (Even Marxists believe that the state can outlast capitalism, at least 'transitionally'. They tell us that a transitional state (the revolutionary dictatorship) would serve the interests of the proletariat rather than of the bourgeoisie, while a future 'non-political' state or 'administration' would serve the interests of all in a classless society. Anarchists argue against such instrumentalism, as we will see shortly.) There is, however, some doubt as to whether exploitation can occur without domination. Anarchists, including even so-called 'anarcho-capitalists', doubt that capitalism as we know it (*as a system of economic exploitation by monopolistic forces*) can subsist independently of the state (since *monopoly is*

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34   This kind of thinking lies behind the neo-liberal justification of capitalism – capitalism as both a solution to the problem of social coordination and 'a necessary condition for political freedom'. Milton Friedman claims that 'competitive capitalism' – a system based on 'voluntary cooperation', on transactions that are '*bi-laterally voluntary and informed*' – achieves 'coordination without coercion' [*Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago, 1982), pp. 10, 13]. Traditional anarchists also espouse systems based on voluntary cooperation, but deny that capitalism is such a system. They deny that capitalist transactions (at the level of production) are voluntary; they also question whether these transactions are informed.

35   A point Elizabeth Anscombe makes about the state applies to capitalism as well: 'My question is: how the state, or again how government, can be justified. The question may seem a silly one because, like it or not, we are stuck with the state. But it is after all not silly, because we can take up different attitudes to being governed' ['On the Source of the Authority of the State', in Raz (ed.), *Authority*, p. 142]. Likewise, we are stuck with capitalism, but we can take up different attitudes to being exploited. Of course, the further question in both cases is: are we 'stuck with' these things for all eternity, or just for the time being? Surely not for all eternity, as history simply doesn't seem to work that way. There hasn't always been a state and capitalism hasn't always existed. These things are subject to change, and anarchists believe that we should make the maximum of progress in that direction.

secured by the state).[36] This means that, from the anarchist perspective, domination
– which can subsist independently but is seemingly required for exploitation to occur
– takes priority over exploitation. That is not to say that anarchists do not condemn
exploitation in itself, or that social anarchists are not at times preoccupied with it
(such that exploitation appears to take priority over domination). The critique of
exploitation is very much part of the anarchist ideology, but it is not the definitive
idea of anarchism that we are pursuing in this book. In other words, the critique
of exploitation is not unique to anarchism (in fact, it is broadly socialist[37]), and,
for anarchists, it is premised on something more fundamental, something about
domination.

Miller is correct in noting apparent confusion about all of this. Anarchists, he
writes, 'see a great deal of collusion between economic and political elites' but
are 'unclear about which group is the prime mover in the relationship'. It is not
clear, for example, 'whether the state should be seen as the creature of the *grande
bourgeoisie* or the *grande bourgeoisie* as the creature of the state'. Miller concludes:
'The contrast between the ruling class and the exploited mass is clear enough, but
the inner dynamics of the former are less so'.[38] The reason for this confusion has to
do with anarchism's relation to Marxist theory, and specifically the anarchist attitude
toward the materialist conception of history. There is no doubt that Bakunin, for
example, absorbed many of Marx's ideas which he expressed, together with more
consistently anarchist ideas, in a confused and confusing way. But the scholar's
responsibility is to disentangle these ideas – the anarchist ideas from the Marxist
ideas, which anarchists including Bakunin have also criticized in important ways
– and to make sense of what is distinctively anarchist.

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36   Anarcho-capitalists, like Murray Rothbard, believe that *real* capitalism – capitalism
without even the minimal state of libertarians – provides for a free and non-exploitative
society. However, since this society would be inegalitarian, because of natural differences in
ability, inherited wealth, etc., exploitation (of the rabble by those with the necessary means
of production and know-how) would be unavoidable. And such exploitation, together with
the domination that it appears to be conditional upon (that of the employee by the employer),
would surely lead to social conflict that would require the coercive agency of something much
equivalent to the state (albeit a 'privatized' state that would be, as most anarchists see it, even
more unjust). The only way of avoiding this conclusion is, as Miller writes [Miller, p. 35], for
Rothbard to define '"exploitation" and "coercion" in such a way that it becomes axiomatic
that neither can occur within the market, but only as a result of political intervention'. This is,
of course, sheer dogmatism.

37   It is broadly socialist, but not specifically Marxist. Marx does not offer an ethical
analysis of economic exploitation but, building on the Hegelian and post-Hegelian analysis
of religious, philosophical, and political alienation, tries to describe and explain the social
consequences of *economic alienation*. Marx, then, is no moral philosopher, but a 'social
scientist'; his is not an ethical socialism but a 'scientific' socialism. Ethics for Marx is
mere ideology; moral philosophers – anarchists included – can never reach a fundamental
understanding of social reality. Accordingly, for all his sociological insight (and early
'humanism'), Marx has been fairly condemned for the ethical poverty of his thought.
Moreover, the history of Marxist praxis might be said to illustrate the danger of overlooking
such 'superstructural' concerns as the ethics of power.

38   *Anarchism*, p. 9.

Alan Carter has advanced this form of scholarship by proposing 'an anarchist theory of history', a theory based on anarchist principles that are recognizably distinct from – in fact opposed to – Marxist principles. An important feature of Carter's theory is that the state is no mere instrument in the hands of one socio-economic class, the bourgeoisie. (Nor is the state, on another reading of Marx, 'relatively autonomous', whatever that might mean.) The political class has its own interests – irreducible to those of the bourgeoisie – principally in preserving itself as a dominative force. Of course, this requires the creation of wealth: not, in accordance with the principle of parsimony, for the sake of the bourgeoisie, but for the creation of the taxable source that is required 'to pay its personnel'. 'Marxists', Carter writes, 'have mistaken a contingent correspondence between state and bourgeois interests for an instrumental relationship. The state does not, as Marxists have thought, act as the instrument of the bourgeoisie; instead, it carries out its own interests – interests which [in terms of the creation of wealth] just happen usually to correspond to those of the bourgeoisie'.[39] This account of the *autonomy* of dominative forces is developed by Carter elsewhere with his account of the *priority* of dominative forces (over exploitative forces) or 'State-Primacy Theory'. According to this theory:

> … the political structure (usually a state) comprising political and legal institutions ordinarily selects economic relations – relations of production – which develop technology – forces of production – because that is functional for the political structure, normally by providing the surplus that is necessary to develop its 'defensive' capacity (which is, more often than not, offensive). And it is this 'defensive' capacity that enables the political structure to stabilize the economic relations it has chosen to preserve.[40]

There is still the possibility of a synthesis of socialism and anarchism (usually termed 'libertarian socialism'), which could emphasize a symbiotic relation between exploitation and domination. Social anarchists frequently encourage this synthesis by arguing that 'to exploit and govern mean the same thing, one completing the other'.[41] Semantically, of course, this is untrue. Some anarchists, those most heavily influenced by Marxist economism (that is, anarcho-syndicalists), go so far as to suggest that exploitation is prior: 'Every type of political power presupposes some particular form of human slavery [e.g., wage slavery], for the maintenance of which it is called into being'.[42] However, the consistently anarchist point is rather that domination is prior; that, as Alexander Berkman puts it, 'wage slavery and capitalism cannot exist without the support and protection of government'.[43] And it is anarchism itself, and its conception of domination, that interests us in this context.

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[39]   'Outline of an Anarchist Theory of History', in David Goodway (ed.), *For Anarchism: History, Theory, and Practice* (London, 1989), p. 184.

[40]   'State-Primacy and Third World Debt', *The Heythrop Journal*, 38 (1997): 305. See also Carter's 'Analytical Anarchism: Some Conceptual Foundations', *Political Theory*, 28 (2000): 230–53.

[41]   *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism* (ed.) G.P. Maximoff (Glencoe, 1953), p. 132.

[42]   Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (London, 1989), p. 19.

[43]   *ABC of Anarchism* (London, 1964), p. 11.

Before we move on from the issue of exploitation, we should observe that there is one important case in which an attitude of domination underpins the practice of exploitation. As many ecologists argue, the belief in mankind's need or right to conquer or master nature underpins environmental exploitation. Or, in other words, anthropocentrism underpins instrumentalism. While this is not an instance of social power as such, it has been forcefully argued by Murray Bookchin, the leading social ecologist, that the attitude of domination here is a reflection of social relations – the earliest social relations of domination, which came to be projected onto our relation with nature as apparent hostile other. Indeed, the dominative attitude towards nature has, according to Bookchin, been taken to justify *increased* social domination:

> It remains one of the most widely accepted notions, from classical times to the present, that human freedom from the 'domination of man by nature' entails the domination of human by human as the earliest means of production and the use of human beings as instruments for harnessing the natural world. Hence, in order to harness the natural world, it has been argued for ages, it is necessary to harness human beings as well, in the form of slaves, serfs, and workers.[44]

Bookchin's account has great explanatory value – and ethical significance – but, conceptually, we need to be careful not to dissolve exploitation into domination. We have argued that domination takes priority over exploitation from the anarchist perspective, but we have not conflated the two concepts because they denote two different (though related) forms of social power. That exploitation is held to require domination, that domination is therefore held to be prior, and that anarchists typically disapprove of both domination and exploitation, does not mean that exploitation can reasonably be thought of as a form of domination.

While it is something to do with the issue of domination that distinguishes anarchism, it is not the critique of domination as such. Indeed, such critique is – or is usually held to be – more characteristic of liberalism. Liberalism, premised on the supreme value of individual liberty, seeks to limit the extent of social control over the individual. In John Stuart Mill's words, it seeks to determine 'the nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual', or 'to make the fitting adjustment between individual independence and social control'.[45] This raises the question of whether anarchism is merely a *synthesis* (or, at best, 'a creative synthesis'[46]) of liberalism, or the liberal critique of domination, and socialism, or the socialist critique of exploitation. In other words, is anarchism merely a synthetic philosophy *of no distinct interest in itself*? Obviously anarchists have learned a great deal from both liberals and socialists and have incorporated various liberal and socialist ideas into *the anarchist ideology*. However, as we have defined anarchism (or *the anarchist idea*), it cannot be a mere synthesis: a synthesis

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44   Quoted in *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, p. 76.

45   *Utilitarianism, On Liberty, and Considerations on Representative Government* (ed.) H.B. Acton (London, 1984), pp. 69, 73.

46   Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, revised edn (London, 1993), p. 639.

of liberalism and socialism does not result in (and cannot explain a position of) scepticism towards authority. This is a quite specific philosophical position.

Some might feel that anarchism in this sense is no more than a radicalization of liberalism (that *subsequently* supplemented itself, as an ideology, with a few socialist ideas). There is no point denying, as a matter of historical fact, that anarchism emerged from the liberal tradition in the person of William Godwin (and that subsequently, during the course of the nineteenth century, it became increasingly socialistic). Nevertheless, this cannot account for a major philosophical break between liberalism and anarchism (a break that is apparent within Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*[47]). As far as authority is concerned, anarchists are radically sceptical while liberals are anything but. Liberals seek to vindicate more or less limited government and the rule of law, anarchists question their very legitimacy. Anarchism, then, is no more a radicalization of liberalism than scepticism is a radicalization of anti-scepticism. Take the case of Mill, therefore. Having voiced the need to limit social control, he goes on to make the following highly unanarchist statement, which is more of a series of liberal assumptions than an argument for the legitimacy of legal authority: 'All that makes existence valuable to anyone, depends on the enforcement of restraints upon the actions of other people. Some rules of conduct, therefore, must be imposed, by law in the first place, and by opinion on many things which are not fit subjects for the operation of law. What these rules should be is the principal question in human affairs'.[48] Anarchists see a very different and more fundamental question as the principal one in human affairs: *the question of legitimacy, not that of 'limits'*.

Anarchists sympathize with the socialist critique of exploitation and the liberal critique of domination, and they have advanced both critiques to a considerable extent. But neither of these critiques can explain anarchism itself. The former is more socialist than anarchist, and rests, in itself, on what to anarchists are questionable premises about economic primacy. The latter, on the other hand, is unjustifiably restrictive and opposed to fundamental concerns. Thus, we return to our definition. What distinguishes anarchism, though it doesn't say everything about it as an ideology, is its scepticism towards authority. And the question remains unanswered as yet: what is authority?

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47   See Don Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin* (London, 1980), p. 53: 'In its original version especially, *Political Justice* is a fascinating record of a thinker pushed further and further, to more and more extreme conclusions, by premises not at first explicit, and to some extent hidden from the author himself ... At the beginning Godwin quotes approvingly from Paine's *Common Sense*, that "society is in every state a blessing; government even in its best state but a necessary evil". By the end he has changed his mind about both.' I take this to mean that Godwin arrived not at conclusions more extreme than he envisaged at the outset, but that he arrived at conclusions outside the bounds of what he considered his original premises to be. The *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* began its life as a work of liberalism, but by some *radical transformation* (not a mere radicalization) it ended up as the original philosophical expression of anarchism.

48   Mill, pp. 73–74.

Authority Defined

This much we have established: domination is a form of social power that in turn (and as obvious as this may be) is a form of power. Now we can assert the following*: authority is a form of domination*, it is *a dominative power*, because it involves the capacity of one party to exercise control over another party. However, though authority is a form of domination, it is, in its normativity, somewhat more complex than that. And here we begin to consider 'perspective B', or the practical reasoning of the subject of authority, rather than simply locating authority in (to adopt and adapt Friedman's terminology) the network of power-terms. In the case of *mere* domination, the dominated party plays a minor role. Yes, the dominator *needs* the dominated – if he or she is to dominate at all – and can be said to be dependent on the latter to some extent. But the dominator does not need to be *recognized* in any special way for *who* they are; they simply need to get their way, to get *what* they want. By contrast, in the case of authority (as we will explain), *party B recognizes party A as providing content-independent and binding reasons for its action or belief.*[49]

What *B*'s *recognition* means here is that *B believes* that *A*, bearing some 'mark' of authority ('office, social station, property, "great" power, pedigree, religious claims, "miracles" (Augustine), etc.'), has a *right* to impose a duty on it.[50] (*B* believes in *A* (having this right, or *accepts its claim* for the same), not in (the correctness of) what *A* says.) *B*'s duty is, in some sense, to 'surrender its private judgment' and obey what *A* says because *A* says it (having such a right). Therefore, as Wolff puts it, 'Authority is the right to command, and correlatively, the right to be obeyed'.[51] 'Command' may be too narrow a term – there may be other kinds of authoritative utterance; we will refer to them collectively as authoritative directives. And 'the right (of *A*) to be obeyed' might be better expressed from 'perspective B' as 'the duty (of *B*) to obey'. Thus, we can define *authority as the right of A to issue directives and the correlative duty of B to follow them*. Accordingly, when *B* recognizes the authority of *A*, it accepts the soundness of the following: *A* has authority; *A* decreed that *B* is to φ; therefore, *B ought* to φ.[52] Together, the basic definition and recognitional component can be summarized by saying that *authority is a normative power claimed and exercised by A, and recognized and submitted to by B*.

The notion of recognition is questioned by Raz. 'Parental authority', he writes, 'does not depend on recognition', at least, on the recognition of the child. Recognition in this case seems to be social; it is not *B* that recognizes *A*'s authority but the society into which *B* is born. (Recognition by a third party would be problematic for our account of authority were it typical. However, it is characteristic only of dependent

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49   I claim no originality whatsoever in highlighting these features of authority. My intention is simply to summarise the sophisticated analyses of H.L.A. Hart, Joseph Raz, and Leslie Green. All three acknowledge that their thinking was prefigured by Hobbes. Party A and party B are henceforth referred to as *A* and *B* for the sake of readability.

50   See Richard B. Friedman, 'On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy', pp. 68–71.

51   Wolff, p. 4.

52   I have taken this from Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, p. 28, but have changed the symbols for consistency in my text.

relations in which *B* is intellectually incapable of recognition and *A* is assumed to play the role of benevolent guardian – and this is not the case with political authority, for example.) In any event, the child itself does recognize the authority – or the special dominative right – of its parents from an early stage, prior to which their relationship is one of mere domination (legitimate in principle) serving to preserve the existence and secure the well-being of the child. This pre-recognitional function can actually be fulfilled, within reason, by anyone, regardless of their authoritative status. (Thus, in the absence of a reasoning party B – in the case of an infant, a mentally disabled person, etc. – authority may not in fact be operative. What we ideally have in these instances is, perhaps, legitimate domination.) Another problem with the notion of recognition according to Raz is that the unrecognized legitimate authority of a 'scientific genius' is conceivable.[53] In other words, non-effective but legitimate (theoretical if not practical) authority is conceivable – in which case recognition is not a necessary element of legitimate authority. For anarchists, this is a purely hypothetical case of legitimacy (which they do not need to reject as such). But anarchists think the real issue of legitimacy pertains to effective authority: to claims actually made *and actually recognized*, rightly or wrongly. This is essential to anarchist scepticism. As we have shown, anarchists do not argue for the impossibility of legitimate authority, but about the morality of actual forms of authority in the real world. What we should concede to Raz, however, is that, while helpful, the concept of recognition *in itself* is not enough to explain perspective B. *B*'s reasoning would seem to be more complex than simply 'recognizing' *A*. We should therefore retrace our steps from domination to authority rather carefully.

Max Weber defines domination [*Herrschaft*] as 'the *probability* that a command [of *A*] *with a given specific content* will be obeyed' by *B*.[54] In fact, Weber characterizes authority itself as *legitimate domination* [*legitime Herrschaft*], but this is mistaken. First, as Green argues, such a characterization overlooks the role of *B* in authority relations. And, closely related, there seem to be forms of legitimate domination that don't constitute authority. Consider the case of coercive control cited by Raz:

> It seems plain that the justified use of coercive power is one thing and authority is another. I do not exercise authority over people afflicted with dangerous diseases if I knock them out and lock them up to protect the public, even though I am, in the assumed circumstances, justified in doing so. I have no more authority over them than I have over mad dogs. The exercise of coercive or any other kind of power is no exercise of authority unless it includes an appeal for compliance by the person(s) subject to the authority … But appeal to compliance makes sense precisely because it is an invocation of the duty to obey.[55]

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53   See *The Authority of Law*, pp. 8–9.

54   Weber, p. 152. Emphasis added. In the edition of Parsons, 'Herrschaft' is translated as 'imperative control'. We follow Wolfgang J. Mommsen [see *The Age of Bureaucracy: Perspectives on the Political Sociology of Max Weber* (Oxford, 1974), p. 72, note], among others, in referring to 'domination'. The concepts of social power, domination, and authority in our account *roughly* correspond, therefore, to *Macht*, *Herrschaft*, and *legitime Herrschaft* in Weber's thought, though we will argue that Weber's notion of authority is unsatisfactory.

55   *The Morality of Freedom*, pp. 25–26.

Leaving aside his notion of authority, Weber's definition of domination captures two important elements that actually distinguish it from authority. In the first place, domination is typically *content-dependent*. All that the dominator demands of the dominated is that their 'command' (Weber's word) is taken for *what* it is and obeyed. Secondly, and most importantly, domination is *non-binding*. It is *probable* that the dominated will obey the dominator's 'command', but are *not duty-bound or obliged* to do so. The dominator claims *no special right to command*, and the dominated recognizes *no duty to obey*. Significant social power is at work in domination, but no authoritative right or duty is involved. *Authority, by contrast, is content-independent and binding (on others)*, and we will now examine these two features in turn.

An authoritative directive (a command, an instruction, a pronouncement, etc.) issued by *A* provides, in Hart's words, a 'content-independent' reason for *B*'s action or belief. Practically, such a directive 'is intended to function as a reason independently of the nature or character of the actions to be done'. That is to say, *A*'s expression of intention is 'to be taken as a reason' in itself.[56] Therefore, it is *who* issues a directive (an authority) that makes it authoritative, not *what* the directive entails (its content); indeed, *A* may issue contradictory directives that are, in principle, equally binding on *B*.[57] (This aspect of authority is morally troubling for all anarchists. For an act-utilitarian like Godwin, it is simply irrational: individual cases should be judged on their merits, according to their content, not according to the more or less arbitrary directives of an authority.) While content-independence distinguishes authority from most kinds of domination, it is not unique to authority. Other content-independent reasons include promises and (according to Raz) threats. Promises differ from authoritative directives in that, while binding, they 'are reasons for the agent alone' (authority, as we have already argued, is social: it is always the authority of party A over party B). Threats differ from authoritative directives in that, while social, they are not binding: they do not impose obligations.[58]

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56   H.L.A. Hart, 'Commands and Authoritative Legal Reasons', in Raz (ed.), *Authority*, p. 101. Richard B. Friedman describes content-independence quite helpfully: 'What is … essential to the concept of an authoritative command is the opening up of a distinction between the person who prescribes and what he prescribes, so that the content of the prescription becomes irrelevant, and the person becomes the factor that endows the prescription with its distinctive appeal' ['On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy', p. 66].

57   By saying 'who', I appear to personalize authoritative relations. However, in a bureaucratic configuration, 'who' the authority is is determined officially, by office occupied. As Weber puts it: 'In the case of legal authority, obedience is owed to the legally established impersonal order. It extends to the persons exercising the authority of office under it only by virtue of the formal legality of their commands and only within the scope of authority of the office'. This contrasts with the personalistic nature of 'charismatic authority', authority 'resting on devotion to the specific and exceptional' attributes of 'an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him' [Weber, p. 328].

58   See *The Morality of Freedom*, pp. 35–37, where Raz discusses threats and requests. Green writes that content-independence 'is a feature common to other areas of practical reasoning. When we keep promises, obey commands, or stick by decisions, we often feel that

How is authority binding (or, to be precise, binding *on others*)? The subject of authority is, it appears, duty-bound to 'surrender private judgment' in some sense. (As we have seen, anarchists like Godwin and Wolff reject authority on precisely these grounds – because authority violates the principle of private judgment or conflicts with the moral duty of autonomy. But 'traditional anarchists' – those most representative of the tradition under investigation – do not reject binding commitments as such. In Green's words, 'they hold that some are immoral without holding that all are irrational'.[59]) Hart's explanation of this feature is that authoritative directives provide *peremptory reasons* (for action or belief). They do not figure in *B*'s practical reasoning or 'deliberation' about action or belief, 'not even as the strongest or dominant reason'. Rather they 'cut off' *B*'s deliberation and are thus 'peremptory'. Hence, the will of *A* simply supersedes the reasoning of *B*.[60]

Hart's is quite an extreme notion of the surrender of private judgment. Moreover, Raz argues that it is implausible because authorities are typically indifferent to private deliberation and more concerned with actual obedience, or conformity with directives. These directives provide what Raz calls *exclusionary reasons*. They require a *partial* surrender of private judgment, or require one to give up 'one's right to act on one's judgment on the balance of [ordinary] reasons', not one's right to think at all.[61] Raz argues that an authoritative directive is not just an 'additional prima facie reason for the action [or belief] it directs, which supplements … the other reasons for or against that action [or belief]'. It is not simply 'to be added to all other relevant reasons when assessing what to do' or believe. Rather, it 'exclude[s] and take[s] the place of some of them'.[62] (Authority is limited, in part, by the reasons it can exclude.) Thus, as Green puts it, an authoritative directive gives *B* a prima facie 'reason for φ-ing' and a categorical 'exclusionary reason not to act on some of the reasons for not-φ-ing'. Combining its content-independent and binding features, then, Green offers the following characterization of authority:

> *A* has authority over *B* if and only if the fact that *A* requires *B* to φ (i) gives *B* a content-independent reason to φ and (ii) excludes some of *B*'s reasons for not-φ-ing.[63]

For example, a boss has practical authority over me, as an office dogsbody, if and only if the fact that they require me to do something in the workplace (to do some photocopying) gives me a reason to do it, regardless of what exactly it is (it could

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the force of the reasons on which we act does not wholly depend on the content of the specific promise, command, or decision which was made' [*The Authority of the State*, p. 41].

59   Ibid., p. 40.

60   See Hart, 'Commands and Authoritative Legal Reasons', pp. 100–101. Note that when *B* fails to defer to the will of *A* (when 'primary' peremptory reasons fail), threats are issued as 'secondary' reasons for *B* to obey *A*. But, Hart continues, these secondary measures for the failure of authority to secure obedience do not define it. Thus, authority cannot be defined in terms of coercion though it frequently resorts to it. [Green makes the same point in *The Authority of the State*, p. 75.]

61   *The Authority of Law*, p. 26.

62   *The Morality of Freedom*, pp. 46, 67.

63   *The Authority of the State*, pp. 39, 41–42.

just as well be to make coffee, or to *stop* photocopying), and excludes some of my ordinary reasons for not doing it (such as the fact that it bores me). But in this case, as in every case of authority, there are surely limits. My boss does not (typically) have the right to command me to clip their toenails; if they commanded me to do so, I would not recognize any duty on my part (or think that I *ought*) to obey. Practically, it might be worthwhile to obey the command (I might receive a Christmas bonus) or prudent to comply (I might stay on their good side or earn a few brownie points), but it is not within the authority of my boss to impose such a duty on me.

This seems like common sense, but it is philosophically complex. How the limits of legitimate authority are to be explained – or how authority might ideally function, how it is to be vindicated – is a key philosophical problem for liberals like Raz. But it is not the anarchist problem. (In the case just mentioned, the anarchist would question the very right of the boss to issue content-independent and binding directives, not the extent of this right or the scope of the boss's authority.) Anarchists are not concerned with hypothetical conditions of legitimacy, any more than they are concerned with hypothetical principles of justice. Of course, Raz makes an important contribution to our understanding of authority. In the first place, he shows that authority is not unrelated to commitments (that is, other *binding* commitments) that most anarchists accept. And, secondly, he shows that authority does somehow involve an appeal to reason; that while it may compromise one's autonomy, it is not wholly irrational. Anarchists have no need to deny these points, but they might well question their practical significance. Yes, legitimate authority is *conceivable*, but so are many other social relations *including anarchy*. Ultimately, anarchists demand a more rigorous moral examination of authoritative relations as they actually operate. And here we return to perspective A and remind ourselves that, notwithstanding the rational role that authority can conceivably play as a *normative power*, it still constitutes – as a matter of fact – *dominative power*; it represents an unequal social relation in which *A* dominates *B*. (As De George writes, 'The authority relation is … one of inequality, the authority being the superior, and those subject to authority being the inferiors'.[64])

In large part, the difficulty we face in seeking to comprehend authority is how to reconcile empirical aspects of perspective A with ideal aspects of perspective B.[65] Perspective B suggests that legitimate authority is conceivable. Perspective

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64   *The Nature and Limits of Authority*, p. 15.

65   Raz notes the discrepancy between ideal and real aspects of authority. His ideal rests largely on the 'dependence thesis', which states that '*all authoritative directives should be based on reasons which already independently apply to the subjects of the directives and are relevant to their action in the circumstances covered by the directive*. Such reasons I [call] "dependent reasons"'. Importantly, Raz adds, 'The dependence thesis does not claim that authorities always act for dependent reasons, merely that they should do so. Ours is an attempt to explain the notion of legitimate authority through describing what one might call an ideal exercise of authority. Reality has a way of falling short of the ideal. We saw this regarding *de facto* authorities which are not legitimate. But naturally not even legitimate authorities always succeed, nor do they always try to live up to the ideal. It is nevertheless through their ideal functioning that they must be understood. For that is how they are supposed to function, that is how they publicly claim that they attempt to function, and, as we will see below, that is the

A suggests that authority consists in the frequently excessive and often mystified exercise of social power. (It becomes excessive – more or less 'authoritarian' – when it oversteps the ideal limits we might wish to impose on it from perspective B; and it is mystified to the extent that it is held to *transcend* social power as such – to the extent that the one bearing the 'mark' of authority is held apart, effectively as a higher being, on the basis of wisdom, charisma, etc.) Thus, authority can be legitimate (and, once again, anarchists need not dispute this) but, in practice, it is morally suspect. Anarchism, as a form of moral scepticism, stresses the latter – not in order to reject authority as such (it has insufficient grounds to do so, and perspective B is not easily dismissed), but in order to challenge *actual* forms of authority and their claims to legitimacy.

Anarchists do not deny the existence of *de facto* authority, authority that is claimed, recognized, and effective. But, from the moral perspective, this is 'authority in the weakest sense'. It may not constitute legitimate or 'rightful' authority. It may not even constitute *de jure* authority, authority that is held and exercised 'in accordance with a certain set of rules or principles, which are frequently legal'.[66] Anarchists have only limited (though, as we will see, some) interest in *de jure* authority (because the set of rules or principles in question may be illegitimate). When Wolff speaks fundamentally of *de jure* authority, for example, it is clear that he has in mind what we call legitimate authority. Anarchists are interested primarily in the legitimacy of *de facto* authority – in whether the claims of effective authorities *ought* to be recognized. This is why anarchism is a moral philosophy. It is also why anarchism, in relation to the question of political authority, is a political philosophy, albeit an especially critical or sceptical one.

The basic difference between political philosophy and political science can be spelt out in this context. Political philosophers concentrate on normative issues relating to the legitimacy of political authority or 'the right to rule'. (Wolff doubts whether 'political philosophy proper exists' because it appears incapable of demonstrating the legitimacy of the state's authority. These doubts are groundless. First of all, political philosophy is not, as Wolff claims, 'the philosophy of the state'. Questions of political legitimacy are not reducible to questions of state. There have been other political arrangements and others are still conceivable. Questions of philosophical interest arise with respect to these too. In any event, it is mistaken to

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normal way to justify their authority (i.e. not by assuming that they always succeed in acting in the ideal way, but on the ground that they do so often enough to justify their power), and naturally authorities are judged and their performance evaluated by comparing them to the ideal' [*The Morality of Freedom*, p. 47]. Thus, much like Rawls, Raz seeks to establish an evaluative ideal. Anarchists have two major reservations about his approach. First, they think that the ideal itself is something of a mystification, that it obscures the genesis, development, and typical practice of authorities. Second, even assuming the validity of Raz's ideal, anarchists are highly suspicious of the rather arbitrary claim that 'legitimate' authorities 'act in the ideal way … *often enough* to justify their power'. What constitutes 'often enough'? According to whom? And what do they do when they are not acting in the ideal way? If we don't know, then it is impossible to make a judgement. We will look at some of these questions as they pertain to the political authority of the state below.

66   Ibid., pp. 18–19.

say that political philosophy necessarily has an affirmative role (in demonstrating legitimacy). Political philosophy, like all other branches of philosophy, has a questioning role; it asks questions about the legitimacy of political authority, that of the state included. It exists so long as such questions are asked.) Political scientists, by contrast, concentrate on descriptive issues relating to 'the forms, characteristics, institutions, and functioning' of *de facto* political authorities. As anarchists see it, political scientists – notwithstanding the valuable explanatory role they can perform – are guilty of taking the legitimacy of *de facto* authorities for granted and therefore of being uncritical. Nevertheless, anarchists do not have an obsessive attachment to the fundamental issue of legitimacy that blinds them to other – perhaps more immediate – moral issues. Thus, they engage in what Wolff calls 'casuistical politics' – in moral enquiry concerning the functioning of *de facto* political authorities (irrespective of their legitimacy).[67] In times of crisis, it makes little sense for anarchists to ignore all issues save the most fundamental; accordingly, they sometimes criticize violations of international law, for example, without having any necessary belief in the legitimacy of such a system. Casuistical politics, then, appears to be related, at least in part, to the issue of *de jure* authority, as political philosophy is related to the issue of legitimate authority and political science is related to the issue of *de facto* authority.

While authority can be distinguished *morally* – as *de facto*, *de jure*, or legitimate – it can also be distinguished '*functionally*' – as moral, theoretical, or practical – by the manner and realm in which it operates. We will attempt to draw out these distinctions – to analyze and evaluate the different kinds of authority – in the following chapter.

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67   Wolff, pp. 3, 5, 11, 12.

Chapter 3

Forms of Authority

There are, it is often observed, two broad categories of authority: authority in matters of *conduct*, or *practical authority*, and authority in matters of *belief*, or *theoretical authority*. Having authority of the former kind, someone (who directs conduct) is said to be *in authority*, whereas someone who has authority of the latter kind (someone who directs belief) is said to be *an authority*. At this level of generality, perhaps we should distinguish a third category of authority, namely, *moral authority*. Moral authority is the right to issue theoretical directives with practical force or moral principles that govern practice (*the practice of another*).

Moral Authority

Arguably, then, moral authority is either a kind of practical authority on a par with legal authority or a kind of theoretical authority of special practical significance. The difference between legal authority and moral authority is that legal authority does not – nor does it aspire to – direct belief. Law is intended to regulate practice, period; belief in legal directives is a matter of indifference to legal authorities. As Raz writes, 'I do all that the law requires of me if my actions comply with it.'[1] The difference between theoretical authority and moral authority is that theoretical authorities claim the right to direct belief only; they do not exercise their authority by means of *imperatives* – theoretical directives of a practical-regulatory nature. Imperatives direct belief and conduct at once.

If moral authority is neither a sub-category of practical authority nor a sub-category of theoretical authority, perhaps it just combines elements of both practical and theoretical authority. In this case, it is not really a distinct category either. Parents and teachers combine elements of theoretical and practical authority: they direct both belief and conduct. But it is doubtful whether they are moral authorities in the sense that, say, religious leaders are. (In the case of paternalism, the distinction between (deformed) parental authority and moral authority is blurred. Here the father assumes the role of absolute and unimpeachable 'head of the family' – or becomes a sort of domestic pope (worse still, an entirely unelected one).) Moral authorities claim the right to direct conduct as experts in matters of goodness. Their authority derives from a special – the 'highest' – class of theoretical wisdom: wisdom that is inherently practical. Their directives are not just to be followed in practice (as the basis of the good life); they are also to be *believed in* (as effective articles of faith).

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1   *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford, 1986), p. 39.

Moral authority, whether 'spiritual' or 'temporal', is the most absolute; it covers the entire scope of thought and action. It is claimed by both authoritarian religions and totalitarian political regimes. These require not just practical obedience, but also belief in the 'system' itself. Disobedience is redeemable (through punishment, penance, etc.), while disbelief is a more serious or 'pathological' matter.[2] It can only derive from irrationality since the system is ('divine' or 'human') reason incarnate. It is to be dealt with by psychiatric treatment, spiritual counselling, and so on. Ideally these methods will bring about conversion (when the subject comes to see the light) but, in hopeless cases, isolation or even killing may be the 'final solution'.

Liberals and anarchists reject moral authority. Liberals reject it because it conflicts with the primary value of individual liberty; it infringes on the private sphere of thought and action, the realm of individual sovereignty with which society has no right to interfere. Anarchists call moral authority into question precisely because it is held to be unquestionable; as we will see in Part Two, they assert their right to subject all such 'unquestionables' to the test of critical reason. But why do anarchists *reject* moral authority? Unlike liberals, they do not have a single, fundamental moral principle that forms of authority must satisfy (or so we contend). And here we encounter a crucial feature of anarchism as characterized here, as scepticism towards authority.

Traditional anarchists do not argue that legitimate authority is inconceivable or impossible as a matter of fact. They argue that authority – which rests on a moral claim (to rightfully impose duties) – stands in need of justification, and that the primary burden of justification rests with those who make such claims. Authority that lacks conviction (for which no convincing argument is forthcoming) is illegitimate: not inconceivable, but without moral foundation. Anarchists reject authority of this kind. This approach may seem highly unconventional, but we would argue that anarchism is philosophically similar to atheism in this respect. The atheist does not need to argue that the existence of *any* god is impossible, but can argue that there is no convincing argument for any known form of theism. In the absence of conviction, the atheist pronounces disbelief. This may be a 'weak' atheism – and the version of anarchism presented here may be similarly 'weak' – but it is, as we are attempting to demonstrate, philosophically sound.

One is, of course, entitled to ask what kind of argument the anarchist would find convincing or how any form of authority might be justified from an anarchist perspective. Anarchism is open to many kinds of argument; as a tradition, it is most undogmatic, though individual anarchists may have differing philosophical preferences. Some prefer essentially instrumental arguments, others non-instrumental arguments. These arguments might well be underpinned by differing ethical principles (say, voluntaristic or utilitarian), but no such principle could be said to characterize anarchism as such. This is the sense in which Malatesta writes

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2   Even fanatical liberals explain disbelief (or 'antiliberalism') in these terms. See Ludwig von Mises, *Liberalism: The Classical Tradition*, trans. Ralph Raico (New York, 1985), p. 13: '[The] root of the opposition to liberalism cannot be reached by resort to the method of reason. This opposition does not stem from the reason, but from a pathological mental attitude'.

that anarchism 'is not necessarily linked to any philosophical system', but is simply a moral response to specific social relations.[3] To point to a distinction sometimes made, anarchism is a *moral outlook* not an *ethical system*; it is inspired, at bottom, by doubt about the morality of relations of domination and so on, not by fundamental belief in any 'totalistic' idea that should shape reality.

What arguments are offered for moral authority, for the right to issue theoretical directives that regulate practice? Presumably the basis of absolute authority is absolute truth, truth which is revealed to the chosen ones (in theistic belief) or the great minds (in gnostic belief), and which is expressed in theological and speculative *systems*: all-embracing explanations of spirit and nature, theory and practice. The *philosophes* of the Enlightenment undermined theological system-building, the final manifestation of which was Hegel's speculative theology, a theology dismantled, in the renewed spirit of Enlightenment, by post-Hegelian thinkers. More recently, the sociological system-building of Comte, Marx, and others has been attacked as pseudo-scientific, as the quasi-theological expression of absolute truth.

The anarchist argument against absolute truth is not an argument against truth or an argument for relativism. It is an argument against *singular* truths that explain everything, whether they are called 'God', 'Economy', or anything else. Of course, anarchism would contradict itself were it to maintain that 'Authority' explains everything. It does not do so, important as it is both socially and politically. It does not explain, for example, social relations of friendship, love, mutual aid, and so on. To a large extent, this is the main point of anarchism: that a central feature of existing social relations – namely authority – does not characterize all social relations as they are, have been, and might be in the future.

Theoretical Authority

Theoretical or 'epistemic' authority is the right of *A* to issue theoretical directives (pronouncements etc.) and the correlative duty of *B* to follow them – to believe or accept them. An authoritative theoretical directive gives *B* a content-independent reason (a reason independent of the truth or falsity of the propositions the directive contains[4]) for belief, and excludes some of *B*'s reasons for disbelief (say, *B*'s own uneducated and therefore non-authoritative doubts). This characterization may appear too strong, too practical or command-oriented. Thus Green has recently written: 'Theoretical authorities, i.e., experts, are not characterized by claims to obedience – they need not even claim a right to be believed'.[5] Is this so? Don't

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3   Vernon Richards (ed.), *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas* (London, 1965), p. 19. See also ibid., p. 29: 'One can be an anarchist irrespective of the philosophic system one prefers.'

4   De George observes that: 'The truth or falsity of *p* ['some proposition'] does not affect *X*'s being a de facto epistemic authority' [*The Nature and Limits of Authority* (Lawrence, 1985), p. 33]. De George's treatment of 'epistemic authority' and of 'non-executive authority' generally is a primary source for this section on theoretical authority.

5   Leslie Green, 'Legal Obligation and Authority', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2004 Edition)* (ed.) Edward N. Zalta <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2004/entries/legal-obligation/>, §2.

theoretical authorities, as authorities, claim a right to be believed by their 'theoretical inferiors'? Writers like Green seem to assume that theoretical authority is merely a feature of knowledge or so-called 'expertise', independent of the kind of authoritative claims made by practical authorities. Hence, they weaken the concept of theoretical authority and widen the gap between it and practical authority. However, their assumption is incorrect. Many knowledgeable figures are not authorities; they may not claim theoretical authority, and they may not have their 'authority' recognized. One who trades on their expertise (presenting themselves as the last word on a subject, for instance) effectively claims theoretical authority. Such an expert regards their propositions as theoretically binding because of who they are (for example, the teacher of a group of students), or their position within a field of knowledge (for example, the author of a standard text on a subject). But many equally knowledgeable figures regard themselves not as authorities, whose word ought to be believed, but as (in principle) equal partners in a pedagogical or scientific enterprise, whose word is subject to critical examination (like that of anyone else). They maintain that, were somebody to recognize their supposed authority and to treat their propositions as binding on belief, that person would be intellectually and even morally mistaken. Not every 'expert' is an authority, then, even if we speak of them in such terms in everyday speech.

People who feel that they *ought* to believe what an expert says effectively recognize their theoretical authority. Many recognize the scientific authority of an MIT professor of physics or of a 'Nobel Prize' winning economist,[6] even when they barely understand what they are talking about. This suggests that *ignorance* – the ignorance of *B* relative to the supposed knowledge of *A*, specialized knowledge often conveyed in highly technical terms – is an important element of theoretical authority. *Specialization* and *technicality* may be necessary in the pursuit of knowledge, but they are features of theoretical authority about which anarchists are suspicious. In many cases, specialization and technicality serve only to preserve the privileges – the authority and affluence – of those insiders 'in the know'. Accordingly, 'knowledge' – often merely formal – secures relations of domination (of the 'ignorant' by the 'knowledgeable') and ownership (of intellectual 'property', a 'scarce' and therefore 'valuable' 'commodity'). The conservatism of academic culture, for example, can be explained in these terms. Those who derive significant prestige and considerable wealth from the way in which our society is structured are hardly likely to voice fundamental dissent; indeed, they have obvious reasons to vindicate the status quo. To the extent that there is academic dissent, it is usually motivated by a sense that academic prestige is being diminished or that academics are underpaid (by arbitrary

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6   It only came to my attention after writing this that there is no such prize, that what passes for the Nobel Prize in Economics is somewhat fraudulent. The Nobel *Memorial* Prize in Economics was not endowed by Alfred Nobel, but created by a Swedish bank in 1969, and named, one can only conclude, so as to sound much more prestigious than it actually is. In reality it is no more than a bankers' prize, awarded to economists who say what bankers want to hear. Nevertheless, references to Friedrich Hayek and others as Nobel Prize winning economists do have the effect of making their ideas seem somewhat authoritative.

comparison with businessmen and so on) – by no means the most noble or most fundamental of social concerns.

How does one achieve the privileged *status* of theoretical authority? A theoretical authority may be recognized informally or formally. Parents are recognized informally as theoretical authorities by their children; charismatic intellectual figures or 'gurus' are informally recognized as theoretical authorities by their followers. In the case of informally recognized theoretical authority, then, *B* believes that *A*'s theoretical utterances with respect to a particular field of knowledge *ought* to be believed (or, rather, accepted) because *A* seems to possess greater knowledge of that field than *B* does (and, as we will explain, to be trustworthy). In cases where theoretical authority is institutionalized, authorities (like doctors, lawyers, and professors) are recognized formally on the basis of *certification* by authoritative institutions that attest to their knowledge (and even their trustworthiness). (This does not mean that certification *in itself* makes one a legitimate or even a *de facto* authority. If it did, *B*'s perspective would be entirely excluded; and this, as we have argued, is not how authority operates.[7])

How might theoretical authority be legitimated? De George argues that there are four criteria of legitimacy, or four conditions that must be met.[8] The first criterion is the 'knowledge criterion', which specifies that *A* has knowledge of *R* (a 'realm' of knowledge). The second criterion is the 'inductive criterion', which specifies that *B* has good reason to believe that *A* has knowledge of *R*. The third criterion is the 'relevance criterion', which specifies that *P*'s (propositions of *A* that *B* believes) must be part of *R*, or closely related to *R*. And the fourth criterion is the 'trustworthiness criterion', which specifies that *B* has no reason to doubt *A*'s veracity. The four conditions are therefore related to *knowledge* and *character*. De George maintains that truth is not a condition since it is possible for a legitimate epistemic authority to have some false beliefs in *R*. In other words, *A* is not infallible. Nevertheless, according to De George, '*B*'s overall advantage justifies *B*'s general belief and *A*'s authority'.[9]

What is the anarchist attitude towards theoretical authority? Do anarchists think that anyone has the right to issue such content-independent and binding theoretical directives, or that anyone has a duty to accept them? Some anarchists explicitly reject theoretical authority. Stirner rejects thoughts that are '*imparted*' or '*given to me*', thoughts that are 'dictated to me [and] pressed upon me'. Such thoughts are '*alien*' and slavish.[10] But the general anarchist attitude here is more complex. Traditional anarchists have voiced apparent support for theoretical authority. Bakunin acknowledges the practical need to 'bow before the authority of special men' or experts, from bootmakers to scientists (without, as he stresses, allowing them to exercise practical authority). But his support is so heavily qualified that it is

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7   De George explains: 'Certification does not make *X* a de facto authority. It only supplies prima facie grounds for others to consider *X* as a valid authority in some field' [De George, p. 41].

8   See ibid., pp. 34–42.

9   Ibid., p. 39. Once again, I have changed the symbols for consistency in my text.

10   *The Ego and Its Own* (ed.) David Leopold (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 60–62.

doubtful whether it constitutes support for authority in the strict sense. He insists that 'subordination' to a theoretical authority must be 'voluntary' and 'temporary'; he argues, in other words, that 'imposed' and 'fixed' theoretical authority is illegitimate. But how binding is such 'authority'? What kind of duties does such 'authority' impose? Does it provide content-independent and binding reasons for belief? This is arguable, but, in any case, it seems that what Bakunin really supports (when he writes 'I listen to [experts] freely and with all the respect merited by their intelligence, their character, their knowledge, reserving always my incontestable right of criticism and censure') is more like what Godwin calls 'confidence'.[11]

Godwin rejects theoretical authority on point of principle that 'one man can in no case be bound to yield obedience to any other man or set of men upon earth'. However, he recognizes that 'the greatest of benefits will result from mutual communication', whereby another might 'enlighten my judgement and rectify my conduct'. There are therefore 'wiser' persons than me 'to whom it becomes me to pay particular attention', though they 'are not such as may exercise any particular magistracy'. There are, that is to say, experts whom I should *consult* but who have no right to exercise authority over me. I should consult them on the choice of means to any end that I freely choose. (As Godwin understands these matters, then, I consult the doctor on *how* to remain healthy and the mechanic on *how* to fix my car – both ends that *I* take to be good. But I am wary that – were the doctor's or the mechanic's word considered binding – they might well abuse their (illegitimate) authority.) Hence, the role of experts is, in Godwin's terms, *technical rather than moral*:

> I choose from the deliberation of my own judgement the end to be pursued; I am convinced that the end is good and commendable; and, having done this, I commit the selection of means to a person whose qualifications are superior to my own. The confidence reposed in this instance is precisely of the nature of delegation in general. No term surely can be more unapt than that of obedience, to express our duty towards the overseer we have appointed in our affairs.[12]

Some such distinction between theoretical authority and 'confidence' is maintained by most anarchists. But that does not mean that all anarchists reject theoretical authority, as Godwin himself does. Two instances of legitimate theoretical authority (among others) might be the theoretical authority of parents and teachers. Both could be justified according to the criteria established by De George, and generally by the benefit children and students derive from them. In terms of knowledge, it is evident that, though not infallible, the parent has knowledge – or significantly greater knowledge than the child – of life itself, the very broad field of knowledge in question; that the child has good reason to believe this; and that the vast majority of the parent's propositions are relevant to this broad field. It is also evident, in most cases, that, from the child's point of view, the parent is trustworthy. As for the teacher, it is evident that, though not infallible either, they *usually* do have knowledge – or significantly greater knowledge than the student – of the subject they

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11   Bakunin, *God and the State*, ed. Paul Avrich (New York, 1970), pp. 32–33.
12   *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (2 vols, London, 1793), vol. 1, pp. 169, 171–72.

teach; that the student (or, at an early stage, their parent) *usually* has good reason to believe this; and that *most* of the teacher's propositions are relevant to the subject. It is also evident, in the majority of cases, that the teacher is trustworthy. Or, at least, so an anarchist might maintain. Other anarchists might maintain otherwise, especially in the case of the teacher (whose primary role is arguably not to enlighten but to 'impart' a system of values).

Before leaving the topic of theoretical authority, it is worth noting that De George situates it within the wider category of '*non-executive authority*'. This category includes, in addition to theoretical or epistemic authority, '*exemplary authority*', which in turn can be divided into '*competence authority*' and '*authenticity authority*'. In the case of theoretical authority the authoritative relationship is based on the *knowledge* of *A* and the *belief* of *B*. By contrast, with competence authority, the relationship is based on the *skill* of *A* and the *imitation* of *B*; an example here would be the master-apprentice relationship. With authenticity authority, the relationship is based on *A*'s '*competence in the art of living*' (or 'self-mastery and originality in any form of human endeavour') and *B*'s *emulation*; De George gives examples like Christ, Buddha, and great artists.[13] De George holds that theoretical authority is basically justifiable in terms of knowledge and trustworthiness. Competence authority, then, is justifiable in terms of competence and trustworthiness, and authenticity authority in terms of authenticity and trustworthiness.

While De George correctly emphasizes the non-propositional nature of 'directives' in relationships based on imitation rather than on commands or other authoritative utterances, competence authority can probably be adequately understood as a sub-category of theoretical authority in which 'exemplary directives' are implicitly intended to direct belief (say, about how best to carry out a task). The master of a trade educates the apprentice, in part at least, by example rather than explicit utterance. But the master's role, as teacher, is principally that of theoretical authority. Authenticity authority is a rather different matter. Imitation may point to some kind of binding commitment (to an authoritative relation), but it is questionable whether emulation ever does. Emulation is effectively a lifestyle choice. If I choose to emulate Christ (as a model of moral existence) in my day-to-day life or Mozart (as a model of artistic achievement) in my composition, the choice involves a commitment to myself, not to any authority. It may be a very serious commitment, and one inspired by another, but it is a personal commitment. Authority, on the other hand, is always interpersonal, as we have demonstrated.

Practical Authority

Practical authority is the right of *A* to issue practical directives and the correlative duty of *B* to follow them or to obey them. An authoritative practical directive gives *B* a content-independent reason (a reason independent of what exactly is to be done) to act, and excludes some of *B*'s reasons not to act (say, *B*'s interest in a different course of action or *B*'s desire to act in another way). This characterization

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13   De George, p. 45. Emphasis added.

of practical authority is immediately open to an objection: that it limits practical authority to command-authority (or 'imperative authority') and fails to account for 'performatory authority'. Performatory authority is the right of *A* 'to perform some action, sometimes on or for another person'.[14] It would appear that performatory authority creates no obligations nor imposes any duties on *B*. There may be no *B* (for example, when *A* has authority to shred official documents) or *B* may be incapacitated (in which case *A* might have authority, for example, to perform surgery without *B*'s consent, or that of *B*'s next of kin). Performatory authority therefore seems to contradict our account of authority (as involving the right of *A* to impose duties on *B*).

Raz characterizes performatory authority as 'a right *created by a permission* to do something which is generally prohibited'.[15] That is to say, 'performatory authority' is *authorized* – authorized by law (as in the case of the surgeon) or within some bureaucratic organization (as in the case of the paper shredder). One might ask, then, whether the surgeon and the paper shredder are really authorities or subjects of (legal and bureaucratic) authority who have simply been directed to undertake specific tasks in specific circumstances. (The 'authority' that goes with often insignificant tasks explains the manner – the pride, the condescension – of petty bureaucratic characters and so on. This 'authority' lends respectability and even a sense of privilege to otherwise meaningless work.) It is evident that authorized 'authority' makes the concept of authority almost meaningless since it makes an authority of any subject of practical authority. Hence, the slave is authorized to act slavishly and becomes a performatory authority in slavish affairs.

Authorization may make one a nominal 'authority', but authorization is the authorization *of an authority*, in which case *the authorized is a subject of authority (B) with an obligation to obey that authority (A)* (in whatever task *B* is authorized to perform). (This interpretation is related to the anarchist argument that political and legal rights are, in Stirner's words, 'ties'. These rights or freedoms are authorized, so to speak, by the state, which means that those who have them (citizens) are subjects of the state – once again in Stirner's words, they 'belong' to the state.) Performatory authority should be understood, therefore, in terms of *authorized performance*, the performance of *B* authorized or 'commanded' by *A*. Of course, a person may also be authorized to exercise 'imperative authority'. Indeed, this is not uncommon. Accordingly, *A* has authority over *B* who has authority over *C* who has authority over *D* and so on. What is of fundamental interest, however, is whether any *A* (or *B* or *C*) *should* have authority over any *B* (or *C* or *D*). Our purpose here is not to *explain* systems of authority, but to question the *morality* of authority as such. In this context, the question is whether *A* has the right to issue practical directives that *B* has a duty to obey.

What, then, are the sources of practical authority? Where does this right derive from? We will suggest a number of possible sources here without, for the time being,

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14   Ibid., p. 63.
15   Joseph Raz (ed.), *Authority* (Oxford, 1990), p. 2. Emphasis added and parentheses removed.

investigating their legitimacy.[16] (The issue of legitimacy will be explored in the course of our discussion of political authority.) One possible source is *knowledge or competence*, in which case practical authority might be held to derive from theoretical authority.[17] (Politically, the wise govern, or should govern.) Another possible source is *God*, the supreme being and ultimate source of *all* authority. A third possible source is *nature*, which renders some fit to lead and others fit only to follow. A fourth possible source is *necessity* – the necessity to create authoritative structures for human survival, lest human needs are not met. *Tradition*, or 'the way things have always been', might be the source of practical authority. So too might *personality*, or the charisma of special individuals. *Human beings* collectively might be the source of practical authority – beings who, in their freedom, independence, and equality, agree to authoritative relations. *Position* – that is, position within some legalistic-bureaucratic structure – is yet another possible source of authority. And then there is any number of *psychological factors* in which practical authority might have its source: fear, habit, the herd instinct, and so on.

What are the different kinds of practical authority? Obviously, there are very many kinds; we won't attempt to be exhaustive in listing them. Three of the most important kinds are *parental* authority, *political* authority, and '*operative* authority'. We have commented (sufficiently for current purposes) on parental authority above, observing that it is justifiable for most (indeed, almost all) anarchists. We will analyze political authority – specifically that of the state – in the next chapter. And we will look at operative authority in a moment, to show that it is another form of authority that traditional anarchists think is justifiable. Before doing so, though, we will briefly consider three other kinds of practical authority that are of some interest: *pedagogical* authority, '*spontaneous* authority', and *economic* authority.

The educator has, in most cases, both theoretical and practical authority. He or she does not have moral authority, not being the holder of absolute truth that could vindicate absolute authority. Without doubt, some teachers – especially in religious schools or schools run by religious orders – have some delusions in this respect, but their authoritative claims can hardly be taken seriously. As for the practical authority of the teacher, it is presumably based on the need to secure a safe environment and an environment conducive to learning. Such authority – probably quite limited – anarchists might recognize. However, doubts arise as to the precise function of the teacher's practical authority. In reality, it seems to extend beyond the function specified above, having some apparent 'educational' role in itself. Many anarchists (and non-anarchists) suspect that the teacher's role in 'discipline and punishment' serves to shape obedient and uncritical members of society (law-abiding and patriotic citizens) and churches ('the faithful') – in other words, 'adapted' people:

> The educated individual is the adapted person, because she or he is better 'fit' for the world. Translated into practice, this concept is well suited to the purposes of the oppressors,

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16   For the most part, this paragraph just summarizes De George, pp. 93–100.

17   See ibid., p. 67: 'Clearly, people may be given executive authority because of their competence or knowledge, but this is not necessarily the case.'

whose tranquillity rests on how well people fit into the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it.[18]

'Spontaneous authority' involves the immediate assumption of authority in an emergency situation. Examples include what might happen when there is 'a fire in a crowded theatre' or when there is some kind of national crisis (say, a revolution). In the former situation, someone might start issuing instructions that others follow, believing that it is in their best interest to do so. In the latter situation, someone might assume leadership of the revolution and have their orders followed, in principle, for the good of the revolution itself. De George writes: 'While it is noteworthy that in crisis situations, some people do assume authority and are obeyed by others, such assumed authority carries with it no right to be obeyed.'[19] De George believes, in other words, that spontaneous authority imposes no obligations. This is mistaken. As we have argued, all authority – by definition – imposes obligations. It consists not just in *A*'s right to issue directives but also in *B*'s duty to follow them. Therefore, either 'spontaneous authority' is no authority at all (it may be some kind of beneficial and justifiable domination of the psychologically weak by the psychologically strong) or it does in fact impose obligations. People might well recognize, almost immediately, their duty to obey someone with sufficient initiative to assume control of a crisis situation; and their authority might be legitimated by consent of some kind. Some anarchists would be open to this kind of argument, at least in a case like the fire in the theatre, where it is clear that the authority assumed is temporary. However, anarchists are deeply suspicious about authority assumed in revolutionary situations and its tendency to ossify into new systems of social control. We will see what they make of '*political* revolution' in Chapter 5.

Sébastien Faure writes that: 'Authority dresses itself in two principal forms: the political form, that is the State; and the economic form, that is private property.'[20] The first form will be treated shortly, but what of the second form? Is there an economic form of authority? Does private property constitute authority? As a legal concept, traditional anarchists maintain that private property is not independent of the state in its juridical aspect; without the state *or something historically constitutive of political authority*, they argue that there could be no private property or 'economic authority' in this sense. (The anarchist position is therefore that, as Andrew Vincent puts it, 'Law originates with the State'[21] – and private property originates with law.) Thus, traditional anarchists deny the notion that private property is a natural right and that it pre-dates political society. Proudhon points to a contradiction in this view:

> If property is a natural, absolute, imprescriptible, and inalienable right, why, in all ages, has there been so much preoccupation with its origin? For this is one of its distinguishing

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18   Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (Harmondsworth, 1996), p. 57.

19   De George, p. 71.

20   Quoted in Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, revised edn (London, 1993), p. 43.

21   *Theories of the State* (Oxford, 1987), p. 20.

characteristics. The origin of a natural right: Good God, whoever inquired into the origin of the rights of liberty, security, and equality?[22]

The belief that private property constitutes a form of authority is probably a product of the anti-authoritarian definition of anarchism (a definition Faure himself offers[23]). If anarchists are opposed to all authority, and (social) anarchists voice opposition to private property, then one might conclude (quite illogically) that private property is a form of authority. It is not, though it is dependent on political authority. But perhaps some other aspect of capitalism constitutes economic authority. One fairly banal form of authority certainly does exist within capitalism: *managerial* authority, the right of certain individuals to issue directives and to have them followed based on their position (or *who* they are) *within* an organizational hierarchy. Managerial authority, with its emphasis on *position*, has much in common with bureaucratic authority, with its emphasis on *office*. However, managerial authority, at least at the lower levels of management, may be more personal and unofficial than bureaucratic authority.

What claims are made for the legitimacy of managerial authority? Two principles are basic: talent and effort. (This is related to the encouraging message of classical liberalism that, as Ludwig von Mises puts it, 'if [a man] possessed enough talent and energy, he could, *without difficulty*, raise his social position'.[24]) Ability (to do a job, to demonstrate initiative, and so on) and sustained application are the key to managerial success, to the achievement of greater social power. Many – anarchists and non-anarchists alike – suspect that this is untrue and that it is usually 'who you know that counts'. In managerial terms, 'networking' is imperative – and a little nepotism never goes amiss. Regardless, even if managerial authority were based on talent and effort, these principles indicate that capitalism is, at best, more meritocratic than democratic. It strikes anarchists as odd that in nominally democratic *societies* democracy should be reserved for *politics* (if it is meaningful even there); indeed, they argue that capitalist society is, as such, resolutely non-democratic. Traditional anarchists follow John Dewey in seeking wider scope for democracy or in trying to realize 'democracy as a way of life'. They see democratic potential in many realms including the economic, where they advocate 'self-management' as a preferable and viable alternative to managerial capitalism.

Authority therefore exists *within* the institutions of capitalist economy. But do these institutions – and especially transnational corporations – possess 'external' authority, authority over individuals and bodies *outside* the institutions themselves? Those who believe in a fundamentally economic process of globalization (arguably proponents of an economistic myth of globalization) maintain that, in effect, they do. These institutions, or global economic forces generally, have usurped the economic authority of the state (accordingly, 'In the twentieth century, sovereignty

22   *What is Property?* (eds) Donald R. Kelley and Bonnie G. Smith (Cambridge, 1994), p. 43.
23   See Chapter 2, note 11.
24   Mises, p. 2. Emphasis added.

was fractured and the nation-state diminished'[25]); they have taken away the state's once significant power and legitimate right to intervene in the economy. Finally, then, the market is king. But this view is – at the very least – overstated. As Robert J. Holton writes, 'most global economic actors have so far felt the need for some kind of stabilizing framework of rules and public support structures beyond the networks generated through market transactions. Even in an age of deregulation, most actors continue to look to states to provide or underwrite such supports'.[26]

If the economic power of the state has been reduced, the state still provides what economic forces conspicuously lack: authority. That is to say, if economic forces have impacted on the state's economic power, they certainly have not *usurped* its authority (for example, its right to avail of physical force). To the extent that economic forces seek to legitimate their actions, it is through states (which legally establish or authorize such institutions as corporations in the first place) and inter-state organizations (organizations which claim authority that is conferred on them by states). In other words, the 'performative authority' of economic institutions is authorized by the State. (This does not mean, of course, that these institutions derive their power from the State.) Eric Hobsbawm seems to be getting at the same point when he says the following: 'The international organizations we have exist by permission of nation-states. They have no independent power, other than that granted to them by the leading states; namely, the United States and a couple of other powers ... international organizations devoted to controlling the flow of capital [the IMF and the World Bank] are also dependent on the nation-states, so in reality, states are the only political authority.'[27]

Ultimately the notion of higher-level 'economic authority' – above and beyond managerial authority – points to the issue of political authority. Apart from that, there are issues of social power related to the functioning of economic institutions and the 'corporate economy', issues which are more socialist than specifically anarchist. That is not to say that issues pertaining to the social, cultural, political, legal, and ecological effects of capitalism are irrelevant to anarchists – far from it – but, as we pointed out above, these issues do not distinguish anarchism as we seek to do here.

'Operative authority' is defined by De George as practical authority 'that is exercised in freely formed groups' (as opposed to the family, the state, and so on). De George argues that there are three main kinds of freely formed group: the *cooperative* group, the *managerial* group, and the *entrepreneurial* group.[28] Cooperatives are established by groups of people with common ends. The members of the group share its functions and exercise authority themselves *directly*. Managerial groups 'may be cooperatively founded', but differ from cooperatives because their members 'turn

25   Mathew Horsman and Andrew Marshall, *After the Nation-State: Citizens, Tribalism, and the New World Disorder* (London, 1994), p. 263. Probably the most famous expression of this view is Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State* (London, 1996). On p. 8, for example, Ohmae speaks of 'an increasingly borderless economy' that results in 'traditional nation-states begin[ning] to come apart at the seams'.

26   *Globalization and the Nation-State* (London, 1998), p. 108.

27   *The New Century: In Conversation with Antonio Polito*, trans. Allan Cameron (London, 2000), p. 78.

28   See De George, pp. 80–90 for a detailed analysis.

over to inside or outside specialists' certain (managerial) functions. Members of managerial groups therefore exercise authority themselves *indirectly* by *empowering* certain persons to *represent* them. Entrepreneurial groups are established by their members to achieve certain ends. Others may be attracted to the entrepreneurial group to work towards *its* end, but they exercise no authority within it; typically, they are paid to obey the commands of the leaders of the group (its original members or their successors).

What is the anarchist position on operative authority? Basically, it would seem that traditional anarchists are both for and against it. All but the most extreme anarchists recognize the need to organize and work together for human survival and advancement. The anarchist ideal is – in part, at least – that we organize freely, without compulsion and without coercion. But what room is there for practical authority within freely formed anarchist organizations? Anarchists are largely against the practical authority exercised in entrepreneurial groups because they are opposed to wage-slavery or the practice of *A* buying *B*'s obedience (and, as social anarchists would see it, exploiting *B*'s labour). They are suspicious of the practical authority exercised in managerial groups – as they are suspicious of representative government – though they sometimes see a need to delegate authority under very strict conditions (especially when freely formed groups federate into larger and therefore more complex organizations). Importantly, traditional anarchists recognize the need for operative authority in cooperative groups, of the directly exercised authority that constitutes genuine self-government. This means that the right of the group to issue practical directives (agreed upon collectively) that are binding on all is, from the anarchist perspective, legitimate. It does not mean that non-consenting persons (those who choose to leave or those who never chose to join) are subject to the group's authority, or that the group can legitimately resort to the use of violence (to secure compliance or to punish the disobedient).

Needless to say, the political theorist is not going to be satisfied with this. The vague conception of a society of freely formed groups, and larger federations of such groups, in which authority is exercised directly or delegated to a minimal extent may be appealing, but it raises more practical problems than it solves.[29] But these problems are not the concern of this book. We are not attempting to outline a full theory – or to explore every ideological aspect – of anarchism. We are simply defining anarchism fundamentally in terms of the philosophy of authority, and we have established that while it is radically sceptical towards authority, anarchism is by no means anti-authoritarian. Most anarchists accept, as a minimum, parental authority and operative authority. But what is the relationship between operative authority and political authority?

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29   Perhaps the most significant contemporary attempt to work through these problems is Bookchin's political theory of 'libertarian municipalism'. See *The Murray Bookchin Reader* (ed.) Janet Biehl (London, 1997), pp. 172–96.

Political Authority

Political authority is the right of a person or body of persons charged with the administration of a polity to issue practical directives that members of the polity have a duty to obey. What administration entails (or *what* the ends and means of a polity are) and how persons are charged with it (or *who* should exercise political authority under given circumstances) are, of course, vital political questions; they are also *logically* distinct from one another.[30] But they are, as we will argue below, secondary political questions to the fundamental question of the legitimacy of political authority. A polity may be a freely formed group in which case the political authority exercised in it is a form of operative authority that anarchists might accept (as we have just seen). However, anarchists deny that the political authority of the state is of this nature, the state not being a freely formed group, let alone a cooperative group. We will return to this point, but first we should examine the nature of politics more generally.

Robert Paul Wolff claims that: 'Politics is the exercise of the power of the state, or the attempt to influence that exercise.'[31] This statement is ahistorical and (even in ahistorical terms) mistaken. Politics is irreducible to the state or 'statecraft':[32] there have been non-state political societies in the past, and politics operates to some extent within but independently, or in opposition, to the state even now. Politics is concern for and engagement in political society – or the 'polity' – as it exists or as we would wish it to be. (Concern for and engagement in, or working towards, political society 'as we would wish it to be' underpins the revolutionary project.) The polity is a society as formally or institutionally arranged, or, in some sense, an *administered* society. It is not that society as such, but defines the society in a certain condition. (It might define the society's territorial limits, its *official* membership, and so on.) The society pre-exists the polity, may outlive it, and is in fact irreducible to the polity that marks it. We might say that the polity is (institutional) form while the society is (natural) substance. 'Primitive' societies – informally arranged and non-institutional societies that were by no means 'formless' – can be considered 'pre-political', though the distinction between political and pre-political is perhaps a matter of degree. Anthropologists have studied the form of pre-political societies, while historians and sociologists have traced the development of political societies and politics itself.

The state is a form of polity that emerged by the sixteenth century; it is now the dominant (some would say the sole) form. Wolff defines it as 'a group of persons who have and exercise supreme authority within a given territory or over a certain population'.[33] Hence, the state is territorial and exercises (through those who work

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30   Berlin contends that: 'The answer to the question "Who governs me?" is logically distinct from the question "How far does government interfere with me?"' Hence, he does not see any *logical* connection between democracy or self-government and freedom ['Two Concepts of Liberty', in Henry Hardy and Roger Hausheer (eds), *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays* (London, 1998), p. 202].

31   *In Defence of Anarchism* (New York, 1970), p. 3.

32   For a development of this point, see *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, pp. 173–74.

33   Wolff, p. 3.

'in its name': politicians, bureaucrats, police, military) authority over a population (generally speaking) within that territory. Indeed, it is the precise nature of the state's authority that differentiates it from other social powers and polities, as we will see in a moment.

Wolff's supposition that the state is 'a group of persons' may contradict the somewhat mystifying conception of the state as 'a continuous public power above both ruler and ruled', or as 'an impersonal and sovereign political order'.[34] It is true to say that the state persists, systematically or institutionally, through changes in governmental and other personnel; but without any personnel to exercise authority the state is powerless. People may claim the authority of offices of state and claim to act with political and legal authority, but *they* still exercise the authority. (Accordingly, they are morally responsible for how they exercise it. If we deny this, then we ought to forgive – to use stereotypical examples – politicians like Milosevic and bureaucrats like Eichmann who act horrifically within (let's say) the authority of their office.) We have argued throughout Part 1 that authority, as a social power, is always the authority of a person or body of persons. Its exercise (or *de jure* exercise) may be governed by laws, constitutions, traditions, and so on, but ultimately it is exercised by people. In the case of the state, what is the nature of the authority that is exercised? Or, at any rate, what is the nature of the authority that is claimed and widely recognized?

Wolff notes that the state exercises '*supreme* authority' within a territory. It is the ultimate authority within that territory, acknowledging none higher than itself. When other states recognize its *sovereignty*, they recognize its claim within its territory. Such supremacy is, ultimately, a result of the historical *concentration of power* – in civil hands, probably by the late medieval period. (By contrast, as Bertrand de Jouvenel writes, 'Power in medieval times was shared [and] limited (by other authorities which were, in their own sphere, autonomous)'.[35]) The emergence of those functions (governmental, bureaucratic, and coercive) which characterize the state as a *distinct* body or social power – distinct from society itself in a way that, for example, the Greek *polis* was not – is premised on this concentration of power.[36] The state, then, is a distinct social power that claims, exercises, and is widely recognized as ultimate (though, given constitutional restraints, not absolute) authority within a territory.

The state's 'supreme authority' covers its much discussed '*monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force'.[37] The state has, or claims to have, an *exclusive right to perform acts of violence* (or to legislate for them, as in the case of individual self-defence, the actions of private security firms, and so on). In what sense does this

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34   Andrew Vincent, p. 19; David Held, *Political Theory and the Modern State: Essays on State, Power, and Democracy* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 11.

35   *Power* (London, 1948), p. 35.

36   See *The Authority of the State* (Oxford, 1990), p. 79 where Leslie Green writes that: 'Functional differentiation is a consequence … of a more basic process of the concentration of various forms of social power.'

37   Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (ed.) Talcott Parsons (New York, 1964), p. 154. Emphasis in original.

right impose duties? In what sense is it strictly authoritative? For one rather important thing, the state has a supposed right to command its subjects to perform 'legitimate' acts of violence in its name; these subjects are, in principle, duty-bound to obey such a command. Thus, the citizenry is often compelled to kill in, as anarchists see it, the interests of an elite 'political class'. State violence (including war) is a critical feature of the state's authority for anarchists (in much the same way that, say, the state's *exclusive right to tax* is critical for libertarians). Violence is no mere incidental feature of the state, but in some sense the state's very 'essence' (Tolstoy depicts states as 'instruments of violence') or, at least, essential to the state's well-being (Randolph Bourne famously proclaims that 'War is the health of the State').[38]

Violence, or coercion more generally, is not only – or even primarily – an aspect of the state's *authority* as such; it also provides a 'secondary' measure to assure that subjects of the state comply with its commands. Or, to be precise, coercive *threats* are a secondary measure in cases where 'primary' commands or authority itself fails. The state works *primarily* through authoritative utterances (legislation for example); but when these utterances fail to secure the compliance of citizens or 'order' more generally, the state *then* resorts to threats and *ultimately* to physical force. Such is the state's method of maintaining order (its own politico-legal order), or of re-establishing order when it is challenged. What this means is that while the state is distinguished from social powers like the mafia by its authoritative claims, and from other polities by the precise nature of these claims, the state is *ultimately* (as Tolstoy argues) an instrument of violence, like the mafia itself. (Bakunin writes similarly that 'the state *means* coercion, domination by means of coercion, camouflaged if possible but unceremonious and overt if need be'.[39]) The state is not equivalent to the mafia, but neither is it completely different from it. Indeed, the mafia would presumably be quite happy to operate primarily through authoritative utterances if it could somehow have its authoritative claims recognized. And this raises the question of what is so distinctive about the claims of the state; why its claims are recognized; to what extent they actually are recognized; or – most importantly – whether they *should* be recognized.

We will look at the normative issues below, but the descriptive question of whether citizens *really* do recognize the authoritative claims of the state is important. There is no doubt that citizens usually obey the state, but their obedience may be rooted in something other than a sense of moral duty to it as a legitimate authority. Obedience may be based on anything from coercion to 'ideal normative agreement'. A political order based on coercion is illegitimate, at least to the extent that the mafia is. A political order that we feel 'we genuinely *should* or *ought to*' obey, or would obey even 'in ideal circumstances', is recognized by us as entirely legitimate. Between these extremes, however, there are other reasons for obedience that are probably more compelling in so far as the state is concerned. David Held lists a number of them:

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38   Both Tolstoy and Bourne quoted in Marshall, p. 635.
39   *Statism and Anarchy* (ed.) Marshall S. Shatz (Cambridge, 1990), p. 24.

No thought has ever been given to it and we do it as it has always been done (*tradition*).

We cannot be bothered one way or another (*apathy*).

Although we do not like the situation … we cannot imagine things being really different and so we 'shrug our shoulders' and accept what seems like fate (*pragmatic acquiescence*).

We are dissatisfied with things as they are but nevertheless go along with them in order to secure an end; we acquiesce because it is in the long-run to our advantage (*instrumental acceptance* or *conditional agreement / consent*).[40]

None of these reasons constitutes recognition of the state's legitimate right to impose duties on us, or recognition of the claims the state makes for itself. Nevertheless, we will assume that there is some such recognition – that generally speaking people think they have some sort of duty to do what the state tells them to do. The question, then, is whether they are right to think so. Most theorists have argued that they are right, and we will examine their arguments in the next chapter.

Though physical force points to an especially important aspect of the state and its authority, the state's authority is more *extensive* than this. As Green writes, 'Another feature of the state's authority is its wide scope: it claims the ability to regulate the *vital interests* of *everyone* within its territory'. He continues: 'While its claim to supremacy might be thought of as a formal attribute of political authority, the scope of this claim is a material one.'[41] De George outlines the scope of the state's authority:

… although other forms of authority are restricted to a particular sphere, [the] politico-legal authority [of the state] appears to be all-pervasive. It enters our lives from the moment of birth; it infuses all the important aspects of life from education to marriage, to family rearing, to business activities; it commits us to paying taxes and fighting wars; and it decides what constitutes death.[42]

Two further features of the state's authority distinguish it from the kind of operative and political authority that anarchists might accept. The authority of the state is both *permanent* and *involuntary*. It is not, like parental authority, exhausted at a certain point in life or at a certain level of maturity. (Godwin suggests that this is exactly what *should* happen – that state authority should be dissolved at a certain level of intellectual and moral development or in an age of enlightenment.) The state exercises permanent authority over its citizens, from life to death. Furthermore, it exercises this authority whether the subjects *it* claims as citizens wish it to or not. They do not choose to recognize its authority or to assume political obligations towards it but (to the extent that they do at all) are rather *taught* to do so. They are born into the state and educated (directly or indirectly) by it; that is to say, they are effectively *shaped* as good *citizens* (who uphold law and order – who pay their taxes

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40   Held, p. 101.

41   Green, p. 83.

42   De George, pp. 91–92. On p. 91, De George also notes the permanence of the state's authority, as explained in the next paragraph of our text.

more or less cheerfully and vote once in a while) and loyal *patriots* (who take pride in their nation and their state – who stand when they hear their national anthem and cry when they see their flag fluttering in the wind). (Curiously, loyal patriots – such as those who kill or die for their state – are held in higher esteem than good citizens – who might take their political rights and duties a little too seriously. Conversely, treason is high crime while tax avoidance is a respected profession (accountancy).)

If it is true that subjects of the state have not actually chosen to submit themselves to its authority, they might still have the choice to *explicitly* reject it by leaving the territory, by going elsewhere. Indeed, some have committed themselves to this course of action and have even acquired the citizenship of another state. However, where possible (and it isn't for the majority of the world's population), this hardly represents a choice with respect to state authority as such. When there is a choice between one territory and another, or citizenship of one brand or another, there is no choice between the recognition of state authority and the rejection of it. Perhaps this kind of reasoning was cogent in Socrates' day when, 'in Athens at least, each citizen had practical opportunity to leave *freely* and without paying a prohibitive instrumental price', but by now there is no 'habitable space on earth which lies simply beyond jurisdiction of state power. Virtually everyone in the modern world, accordingly, is *claimed* as subject to political obligation'.[43]

Emigration *as exile* is conceivably a form of protest. Abandoning the state to which one 'belongs' in the first place – one's national or 'spiritual' 'home' – is an act of independence or, better still, 'non-dependence'. Thus, exile represents *a choice not to belong* to at least one state. Exiles sometimes regard their new 'home' a little too favourably, while others romanticize their previous 'home'. But the true exile is *never* at home. He or she is always frustrated by the sense that he or she *ought to belong* somewhere – or the requirement that he or she be committed to some state. Of course, this is not the case with 'asylum seekers', for example, who probably *do* want to belong somewhere, and abandon their homes as a matter of necessity. In relative terms, exile is a luxury.

Doubtless – and anarchists have never denied this – there are significant differences between states (in terms of values and realities): some are preferable to others. But this is not the issue. The question is who chose the authority of the state as such. The answer must be no one. State authority – whatever other claims may be made in its favour – is involuntary. (We will take up the discussion of voluntarism below.) And if there is no alternative, it must also be permanent. One cannot quit one's apparent obligations to the state at any point in time: it is – barring radical social transformation – with us, for better or for worse, till death us do part.

What, then, is the anarchist attitude towards the state and its *territorially supreme, pervasive, permanent, and involuntary authority*? Clearly, given that anarchists are often described as 'anti-statists', their attitude is one of characteristic (though not definitive) hostility. Miller states that 'Anarchists make two charges against the state – they claim that it has no right to exist, and they also claim that it brings a whole

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43   John Dunn, 'Political Obligation', in David Held (ed.), *Political Theory Today* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 23, 45. Emphasis added.

series of social evils in its train'.[44] (In so far as the anarchist argues in consequentialist terms, these charges are, of course, inseparable.) The 'traditional moral arguments' of anarchism (alluded to in Chapter 1) have focused to a significant degree on the 'social evils' associated with the state. Generally, anarchists have sought to expose the oppression and injustice for which the state is directly or indirectly responsible. The state is directly responsible for those practices that benefit it – or the 'political class' – at the expense of the general population (including, anarchists argue, militarism, tax extortion, state-educational indoctrination, police coercion, imprisonment, etc.). The state is indirectly responsible for the practices of privileged social groups that it promotes or protects (including, according to anarchists, wage-slavery, ecological destruction, religious indoctrination, media propaganda, etc.). The state thereby generates and secures social divisions (a 'class society' in some sense). Accordingly, anarchists regard it as a force for social disorder and disintegration rather than social cohesion and the common good.

The anarchist claim about the 'social evils' of the state may appear very one-sided. George Crowder writes that anarchist 'attacks are seldom balanced by any fair consideration of points in government's favour. The tendency is to set out a vivid catalogue of the evils of which the state is capable, and to leave it at that'.[45] Perhaps traditional anarchists are guilty of ignoring or underestimating the positive aspects of the state, the valuable social functions it performs. If they are, they might justify themselves by arguing that they have no greater obligation to portray the state favourably than the prosecutor has to portray a murderer favourably. But it is arguable that they are not guilty as charged, or not entirely so. Miller writes:

> It would be wrong to conclude that anarchists regard *all* the functions now performed by the state as superfluous. In their view, it would be impossible to account for the state's legitimacy in the eyes of the masses if it did not perform useful tasks as well as socially harmful ones … Anarchists admit [that in certain areas] some collective (as opposed to individual) action may be necessary; but they refuse to admit that only a state can fit the bill.[46]

What do anarchists mean when they say that the state has 'no right to exist'? Basically, anarchists believe that there are no satisfactory moral grounds for the state as an authoritative power. Thus, morally, the state lacks conviction. But, again, this does not mean that the 'legitimate state' is a '*logical* impossibility' or a contradiction in terms. It may mean that the 'legitimate state' is 'impossible as a matter of fact', at any rate, for certain anarchists. For most anarchists, however, it simply means that 'no satisfactory external justification for the state … has ever been given'.[47]

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44   *Anarchism* (London, 1984), p. 5.

45   'Anarchism', *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, I (ed.) Edward Craig (London, 1998), p. 246.

46   Miller, p. 7. A good example of this argument in anarchist literature can be found in Malatesta's pamphlet *Anarchy*, trans. Vernon Richards (London, 1974).

47   De George, 'Anarchism and Authority', in *Anarchism*, in J. Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman (eds) (New York, 1978), p. 93. On 'internal' versus 'external' justification, see ibid., p. 108, note 5.

There has never been a convincing 'external' argument for the moral legitimacy of the state, though, of course, 'internal' arguments could demonstrate that the state, or specific states, are *de jure* ('legitimate' by their own standards). To be precise, no remotely convincing argument has ever been offered for the state as it is, as it really functions, especially with regard to violence and the supposed authority with which it is performed and sanctioned. This does not mean that other social powers – including ones that execute functions we usually associate with the state – could not claim legitimate authority or even political authority.

Does the anarchist position rule out the *possibility* of *any* convincing argument for the legitimacy of the state? Clearly not; if state legitimacy is conceivable, an argument demonstrating the legitimacy of the state must be possible. (De George thinks the second dimension of the anarchist argument is that the state '*cannot* be justified'.[48] Anarchists may well suspect this – and present arguments which suggest as much (they often do, in fact) – but, as Martin shows, they cannot demonstrate it. In any case, anarchism – at least as it is interpreted here – does not *need* to demonstrate it, any more than the atheist needs to demonstrate the 'impossibility' of God's existence. The atheist simply argues that there is no reason to believe in God's existence, while the anarchist argues that there is no reason to recognize the legitimacy of the state.) Political theorists still strive for a convincing argument for state legitimacy, and their efforts are not intrinsically irrational. (Though not irrational, they have good reason to be judged utopian. Ironically, though, convention has it that anarchists, even as sceptics, are the utopians, not the theorists who develop *ideal* visions of the state that they seek to *impose* on reality.) Anarchists often question the motives of these theorists in attempting to legitimate something akin to the status quo. They also suspect that the idea of the state would have to be radically re-thought before it could possibly be legitimated. Perhaps its authority would be diminished to such a degree – particularly in relation to violence – that what might be legitimated would amount to something other than the state as we know it (or can even imagine it). The constructive outcome of such thinking might be the conceptual basis for a new form of polity; this would be a dramatic achievement that anarchists themselves might welcome. In fact, a minimal result of the entire anarchist enterprise could be the provocation of a new political idea, something imperfect no doubt, but progressive for all that.

We turn now to the question of state legitimacy – a central though non-definitive anarchist concern – and examine in detail what anarchists have to say about the issue.

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48   Ibid., p. 93.

Chapter 4

The Legitimacy of the State

There are many people – philosophers among them – who think it foolish to question the legitimacy of the state. They say it is a fact of life; they say alternatives are unimaginable. Of course, the state is a fact of life, of *our* lives, but this makes it neither necessary nor immutable. As for whether alternatives are imaginable: the simplest response is that political philosophy is not the field of the imagination. What some can or cannot imagine is not the point, at least in the first instance. The fundamental point is always moral: is such-and-such a state of affairs 'good'? Only then does the question of viable alternatives arise. In any event, history illustrates that the 'unimaginable' often comes to pass; it demonstrates the possibility of the conventionally impossible. Perhaps every instance of progress represents a realization of the 'impossible' – and, in some sense, a failure of what passes for 'imagination'. Perhaps utopianism itself – if something can be said for it – transcends the limited imagination and opens pathways to the 'impossible'.[1]

Two other objections to the question of state legitimacy appear to contradict each other. In one sense the question seems old-fashioned, pre-Machiavellian even. In another sense it seems specifically modern and 'liberal'. The question appears to be 'old-fashioned' because moral examination of politics is out of intellectual fashion; in fact, it is generally considered irrelevant or even wrong-headed. In this context, Machiavelli is often credited (rightly or wrongly) with having achieved a revolutionary separation of politics and ethics, of the descriptive and the normative in public affairs. Thus, Francis Bacon writes: 'We are much beholden to Machiavelli and other writers of that class, who openly and unfeignedly declare and describe what men do, and not what they ought to do'.[2] Post-Machiavelli, many (especially political scientists) think the distinction between politics and ethics is self-evident, and that the attempt to apply moral values to political institutions and practices is mistaken. However, the justification for ethical examination of the political – for political philosophy itself – is straightforward. The state, the major polity of modern times, is a significant *social power*, one which political science seeks to describe and

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1   The question of alternatives is a curious one. Criticism of anything is usually met by someone asking something along the following lines: 'What would *you* do? Come on, what's the alternative? Show us your blueprint for something better.' Reluctance to answer this question apparently indicates an inability to 'get real' or to be 'constructive'. Willingness to answer it, on the other hand, apparently indicates a 'dangerous' utopian disposition. We will respond to these objections in the Conclusion.

2   Quoted in Isaiah Berlin, 'The Originality of Machiavelli', in Henry Hardy and Roger Hausheer (eds), *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays* (London, 1998), p. 276, note 1.

explain. But the state is also a *normative power*: it claims *legitimate authority* or a moral right to impose duties on its subjects. (That this right is generally recognized – that the state is a *de facto* authority – is no vindication of it since recognition may rest on moral error.) The state is analyzed and evaluated as a normative power by political philosophy. Insofar as a fundamental moral claim is made for the state, it is properly subject to moral examination.

The question of state legitimacy appears 'specifically modern' because it only seems to arise when, like Robert Nozick for example, we make 'liberal' assumptions about individual autonomy, assumptions quite foreign to the ancients (and others). Nozick works on the liberal or libertarian assumption that: 'Individuals have rights, and there are things no person or group may do to them (without violating their rights).' He continues: 'So strong and far-reaching are these rights that they raise the question of what, if anything, the state and its officials may do. How much room do individual rights leave for the state?' From this perspective, then, 'The fundamental problem of political philosophy, one that precedes questions about how the state should be organized, is whether there should be any state at all'.[3]

That the question of political legitimacy is not *specifically* modern (or based on liberal assumptions) – the inevitable terms in which we formulate and deal with it notwithstanding – is demonstrated by reference to Plato, arguably the father of political philosophy (as Socrates is regarded as the father of ethics as a whole). In effect, Plato offers both a *justification for political authority as such* and a *criterion of legitimacy*. His justification for political authority (or specialized rule) is that *social justice* (*social order* in the proper sense) is unattainable without it, at least at a certain level of social development.[4] His criterion of legitimacy (or just rule) is *wisdom*: political authority should be in the hands of the wisest – the Philosopher-Ruler(s) – not in the hands of a rich minority (oligarchy), of the people as a whole (democracy), or of a tyrant.[5] Of course, both the general justification and the particular criterion of legitimacy are questionable, but the point is that the basic problem is foreign neither to ancient nor to modern political philosophy. Whether political authority is to be justified in terms of social justice (Plato), of individual freedom (liberalism), or of anything else, it is a fundamental concern for political philosophy as such.

Anarchists do not argue that the state is absolutely *unjustifiable* but that it is *unjustified*. The state is unjustified because the legitimacy of its authority – territorially supreme, pervasive, permanent, and involuntary – has not been established. Anarchists

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3   *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Oxford, 1974), pp. ix, 4.

4   The emergence of guardianship – of which rule is the highest sub-specialization – is described in the *Republic*, 372d–374e, 412b–e. The relationship between class specialization and social justice is described at ibid., 434c: 'when each of our three classes (businessmen, Auxiliaries, and Guardians) does its own job and minds its own business, that … is justice and makes our state just'. [The passages quoted here and below are translated by Desmond Lee (Harmondsworth, 1987).]

5   The most famous passage on the rule of philosophers is located at *Republic*, 473c–d: 'The [just] society … can never grow into a reality or see the light of day, and there will be no end to the troubles of states, or indeed … of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands'.

conclude that the state, as a normative power, is therefore *illegitimate*. How might one respond to this conclusion, assuming for a moment that it is correct? There are a number of possible responses. First, one could try to overturn the conclusion by developing a more convincing argument for the legitimacy of the state. This can be termed the 'Razian' response. Raz's argument for the state is not entirely new or convincing by any means, but he acknowledges the strength of the anarchist case and makes a fresh and unusually sophisticated attempt to meet what he calls 'the anarchist's challenge'.

A second response to the anarchist conclusion would be to reject the state on moral grounds without doing anything about it. This is the 'Wolffian' response (that of Robert Paul Wolff, as we noted in Chapter 1). It is taken to be characteristic of the 'philosophical anarchist' who 'respond[s] in a wholly passive way [to the moral rejection of the state], evading inconvenient or immoral state dictates whenever possible and complying with them when forced to do so, but taking no positive action to get rid of the state and having no constructive view about what might take its place'.[6]

Thirdly, accepting the anarchist conclusion, one could reject the state on moral grounds and seek to undermine it in various ways, from the 'Švejkian' to the 'Godwinian' to the 'Bakuninian'. Josef Švejk is the most famous literary creation of the quasi-anarchist author, Jaroslav Hašek. His method of undermining authority is to obey it absolutely ('"I will serve His Imperial Majesty to my last drop of blood"') with a level of stupidity intended to frustrate it and to reveal its absurdity ('"The swine thinks he'll be taken for a genuine idiot. You're not an idiot at all, Švejk. You're cunning, you're foxy, you're a scoundrel, you're a hooligan, you're a lousy bastard, do you understand ...?" "Humbly report, sir, I understand" … "He's only shamming and into the bargain he talks rot and tries to make fun of his superiors. He thinks they're only here for his amusement …"').[7] William Godwin placed his faith in gradual enlightenment as a means of dissolving political authority, believing that the wise have no need to be governed:

> if force might gradually be withdrawn and reason trusted alone, shall we not one day find that juries themselves and every other species of public institution, may be laid aside as unnecessary? … This is one of the most memorable stages of human improvement. With what delight must every well informed friend of mankind look forward to the auspicious period, the dissolution of political government.[8]

Mikhail Bakunin, sometimes associated with the advocation of terror, proposed popular uprising or *social* revolution as the principal weapon against the state: 'states do not topple of their own accord; they can only be toppled by a multi-national, multi-racial, world-wide social revolution'.[9]

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6   Miller, *Anarchism* (London, 1984), p. 15.
7   *The Good Soldier Švejk and His Fortunes in the World War*, trans. Cecil Parrott (Harmondsworth, 1974), pp. 61, 76–77.
8   *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (2 vols, London, 1793), vol. 2, pp. 578–79.
9   *Statism and Anarchy* (ed.) Marshall S. Shatz (Cambridge, 1990), p. 45.

A fourth response to the anarchist conclusion would be to say 'So what? There are no such foundations. We don't need to justify the state', etc. This I call the 'Rortyan' response. Richard Rorty is famous for both his general philosophical 'anti-foundationalism' and his related critique of traditional political theory. But Rorty is hardly as non-traditional as he would have us believe. He says that he, as a 'Deweyan', wants 'the first question of politics and philosophy to be not, "What is legitimate?" or, "What is authoritative?" but, "What can we get together and agree on?"'.[10] This scarcely amounts to a reorientation of philosophical debate. Rorty is not asking a different ('pragmatic' and 'non-foundational') question, but merely presupposing an answer to the fundamental question of legitimacy by the way in which he rephrases it. His question assumes that legitimate authority is basically democratic. This may be true, but Rorty scarcely deserves much credit for dogmatically asserting as much. In any case, perhaps other approaches – the 'Rawlsian' approach among them – to political philosophy itself are more typical of our time; and these approaches effectively ignore the fundamental issue of legitimacy. Thus, as Green writes, 'Modern political theory gives us less guidance in these matters than one might hope; the general problem of political authority is rarely regarded as being of primary importance'.[11]

The Rortyan and Rawlsian attitudes to political theory may appear similar, but there is a significant difference. The latter assumes that another issue – the problem of justice – is more fundamental, while the former assumes that philosophy itself is something of a trifle. Against the Rortyan attitude, one might argue that political philosophy is more than, say, a means of 'edification' (for highly privileged academics) – that both historically (given its profound influence) and morally (given the importance of the questions it poses), there is a great deal more to it than that. Rawlsian political thought, on the other hand, has been challenged for its mistaken theoretical prioritization of justice over authority: of abstract moral ends over concrete political means. (Perhaps we could make the same criticism of Plato. However, even if Plato is less sceptical towards political authority as such than many moderns, he is more conscious than Rawls of the *immediate* importance of political means (the various political systems he examines) to moral ends (the just society).)

> It is … puzzling that those who have spent the most time on the theory of justice have had the least to say about the various modalities [authoritative or otherwise (say, voluntary)] through which it might be achieved, particularly when we consider the importance of authority in the political system. Political societies are organized pre-eminently by laws, commands, and rules and their special claim to authority distinguishes them from regimes of custom or terror. In ignoring or delaying consideration of the problem of authority, contemporary political theorists end up in the embarrassing position of lacking an adequate account of their own central concern.[12]

Green remarks that while 'modernity has increased the stakes in social and political theory' – because of the 'increased scope' of the modern state's claims

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10   *Philosophy and Social Hope* (Harmondsworth, 1999), p. 111.
11   *The Authority of the State* (Oxford, 1990), p. 2.
12   Ibid., p. 6.

– the questions that modern theorists (concerned with the problem of justice, the limits of state action, the rule of law, etc.) deal with are 'of a recognizably narrower gauge than those which preoccupied earlier writers'. In a sense, therefore, political theorists have lost a grip on their own subject matter. Why is it, then, that 'if no less questionable, the state is now at least less questioned'? It could reflect 'a realistic assessment of the likely avenues of progress' (and many theorists defend the *realism* of their approach). But it could also be based on 'a failure of imagination and a dwindling inquisitiveness about the moral standing of the modern state, a willingness to take its existence and legitimacy more or less for granted'.[13]

Before examining numerous arguments for the legitimacy of the political authority of the state, we should remind ourselves of what exactly it is that political theorists have sought to justify – and what it is that others (including many political scientists and some philosophers) simply take for granted as either self-evidently justified or else beyond 'foundational' inquiry. The state claims, exercises, and is widely recognized as having a right to issue practical directives that its subjects have a duty to obey (irrespective of what the directives entail and some reasons the subject may have not to obey). In the case of the state, disobedience leaves the subject open to coercive threats and the use of physical force. The right of the state is distinguished from other authoritative rights by – or is *unique* because of – its territorial supremacy, its pervasiveness, its permanence, and its involuntariness. Such is the nature of the polity under investigation below.

Arguments for the Legitimacy of the State

There are at least twenty individual arguments (in five general categories) for the legitimacy of the state. (Some of the arguments discussed relate more directly to the problem of political obligation than that of political legitimacy. However, we will assume here – and it is implied by our model of authority – that we can only have obligations to legitimate authorities, so that arguments for political obligation can work more or less straightforwardly as arguments for political legitimacy.[14]) In some cases (the voluntaristic and instrumental arguments in particular) these arguments

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13   Ibid., pp. 2, 4.

14   A. John Simmons writes: 'only where a citizen has political obligations will his government be legitimate with respect to him'. Thus, 'political obligation and governmental legitimacy' are 'correlative notions' [*Moral Principles and Political Obligations* (Princeton, 1979), p. 196]. Simmons considers another relationship between 'the justification of the state' and 'state legitimacy' elsewhere [*Justification and Legitimacy: Essays on Rights and Obligations* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 122–57]. From his perspective, we are probably guilty of confusing these problems here. Certainly, our contention is that a morally indefensible polity (one that lacks 'justification') is one that has no right to impose duties on us (or one that lacks 'legitimacy'). We do not share Simmons's conviction that an illegitimate state can be justified (even if it *can* 'sometimes act with justification'), that: 'Some illegitimate states may … be justified by reference to the good that they do, which is just to say that they merit our support, and we thus have moral reason to provide it' [ibid., pp. 156–57]. We believe that a legitimate state is a justified state – that the legitimacy of its authoritative right can be established (among other potential ways) by pointing to the good that it does. In other

are closely related, but worth distinguishing for clarity. Various combinations are also possible, though it is doubtful whether the accumulation of flawed arguments does much to strengthen the 'statist' position. We will now introduce the arguments and see why anarchists dismiss all of them as unconvincing. (Given the limitations on space, the result will be somewhat indexical, but sufficient for the purposes of summation.) De George comments on an important aspect of the overall anarchist strategy, which might be seen as anti-dogmatic or simply opportunistic:

> The anarchist examines and shows the deficiencies of such theories as divine right, social contract, and consent, and confidently awaits any other suggested justificatory theory. He of course has a great deal of assistance in this task, and he willingly adopts the utilitarian critique of contract theories and the contract theorists' critique of utilitarianism.[15]

Antiquated Arguments

To begin with, there are some rather antiquated arguments for political authority, affirming that it is a *natural right*, the *right of the strongest*, or a *divine right*. Alternatively, and more promisingly, the legitimacy of political authority may be grounded in some debt of *gratitude*. Few would give these arguments now in defence of the state, but they are historically significant (and, in the last case, philosophically significant).

1) Argument from Nature: There is a conceivable argument – once prevalent perhaps – that authority is natural and therefore that the state too is somehow a natural thing; a historical development, yes, but a development of what nature itself determined. Modern thinkers have dismissed this argument, maintaining that 'no man has a natural authority over his fellow'. We are born equal; authority is conventional. In any event, even if we were unequal as a matter of fact, it is impossible 'to establish right by fact'.[16] Saying that something is so (for example, 'authority has always existed') is no justification of it. This counter-argument is basic to the anarchist critique of both relations of domination and relations of ownership.

2) Argument from Force: Perhaps, as many once believed, legitimate authority derives from force or is 'the right of the strongest'. (The supposed 'right of conquest has no foundation other than the right of force'; the former is reducible to the latter.[17]) The state surely is 'the strongest' and might have such a claim made for it. As the strongest, it can offer its subjects the security humans are said to crave. However, it can also be a dreadful threat to their security – it can become Milton

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words, we are open to instrumental arguments for state legitimacy, not, like Simmons, only voluntaristic arguments.

15   'Anarchism and Authority', in J. Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman (eds), *Anarchism* (New York, 1978), p. 93.

16   Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G.D.H. Cole (London, 1986), pp. 185, 183.

17   Ibid., p. 188.

Friedman's 'Frankenstein'.[18] One way or another, whether one urges absolutism or limited government, it is difficult to see the moral significance of force or strength in itself. As Rousseau writes, 'Force is a physical power, and I fail to see what moral effect it can have.'[19] Consistently applied, in any case, arguments from force can be pushed to the Stirnerian conclusions that we will encounter in Chapter 6.

3) Theological Argument: Could it be that 'civil power … is by divine institution',[20] or that legitimate authority is founded on divine right and ultimately granted by God? Clearly such an argument could be made in all conceivable cases and demonstrated in none. Every temporal ruler can find (or employ) some spiritual authority or other to proclaim his or her legitimacy in the eyes of some god or other. The theological argument cannot demonstrate any kind of *exclusive* right, for some god of my choosing might make me an authority over the state itself. Anarchists regard the theological argument as more damaging than helpful to the 'statist' cause. In the last analysis, it suggests that authority is a supernatural and altogether mysterious thing – that is, something that inevitably lacks conviction or even something that is irrational. It suggests to Bakunin that religious 'absurdity' is essential to the existence of the state and the justification of its authoritative claims. As he puts it, 'There is not, there cannot be, a State without religion.'[21] (This points to a Left Hegelian influence on anarchism that will be investigated in the next chapter.) Modern state theorists, having recognized the weakness of the theological argument, have sought to found political authority on the human instead of the divine: on, say, interpersonal agreement rather than heavenly favour.

4) Argument from Gratitude: Socrates, in Plato's *Crito*, maintains that we should be 'grateful' to 'the Laws' of the polity in which we 'have been born and brought up and educated'. We ought to recognize the legitimacy of such authority, to recognize its right to impose duties upon us. (Indeed, as Athenians, we would be free to reject it if we chose 'to take [our] property and go away'. But this points to a different (voluntaristic) argument we will come to shortly.)[22] Recognition of the state's authority, acknowledgement of our obligations to it, is a fitting expression of gratitude. There are two principal problems with this argument. First, it is not clear that we should be grateful to the state, given that its 'motivations' (if it can be said to have any) are non-altruistic and that we haven't voluntarily accepted the 'benefits' it imposes upon us. Second, even if we do owe the state a debt of gratitude, it is not clear that obedience is in fact the most fitting expression of that debt.[23] Though the argument from gratitude is antiquated, elements of it reappear in

18   *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago, 1982), p. 2.

19   Rousseau, p. 184.

20   Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha and Other Political Works* (ed.) Peter Laslett (Oxford, 1949), p. 57.

21   *God and the State* (ed.) Paul Avrich (New York, 1970), p. 84.

22   *Apology*, 50d–e, 51d, translated in *The Last Days of Socrates* (ed.) Hugh Tredennick (Harmondsworth, 1969), pp. 90, 92.

23   See Chaim Gans, *Philosophical Anarchism and Political Disobedience* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 43–49. John Horton summarizes the objections to the argument from gratitude

'benefits of government' arguments like the tacit consent argument and the argument from fairness,[24] as well as in the communitarian argument (which is probably its true heir).

Voluntaristic Arguments

Next, there are a number of voluntaristic arguments for the legitimacy of the state's authority.[25] These are intellectually the most influential of non-instrumental arguments. They do not necessarily establish any benefits of the state's existence: on this view, the state is not instrumentally good, though it may be chosen for instrumental reasons; the state is good (or, at least, a *legitimate 'evil'*) simply because it was *chosen* (or *ought* to be chosen). The value that underpins voluntaristic arguments is therefore the definitively liberal value of individual freedom (expressed in 'some putative voluntary undertaking' to the state[26]). Anarchists do not argue against this value. Individualistic anarchists believe that they take it more seriously than liberals. Social anarchists maintain, however, that individual liberty in itself is an inadequate value. We will leave this issue aside here, and look carefully at voluntaristic arguments (making, for example, a slightly unusual distinction between 'explicit' consent and 'express' consent).

5) Original Contract Argument: A famous and famously problematic modern philosophical argument is that legitimate authority derives from real, original, historical agreement between free, equal, and independent individuals who are rational and self-interested. (Richard Hooker inspired this line of thought, maintaining, as a point of fact, that 'authority derived at first from their consent upon whose persons' laws were imposed.[27]) In the first place, there is no evidence whatsoever of any such agreement. Secondly, it is doubtful whether 'primitive' individuals living in the 'state of nature' would have the conceptual ability or the desire to contract to anything. (Contract theorists appear to universalize the culturally and historically specific. Hence, 'they attribute to man a natural propensity to servitude, because the slaves within their observation are seen to bear the yoke with patience'.[28]) But even if there were evidence or it were possible, what would be the moral significance of what once

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in the following passage: 'Much of the criticism has centred on questions about whether the government or polity is an appropriate object of gratitude; whether even if gratitude is appropriate and merited it need take the form of political obligation; or indeed whether gratitude is a duty at all. The gratitude account also seems to be open to the objection concerning unsolicited benefits ... must we be grateful for benefits which have been imposed upon us?' [*Political Obligation* (London, 1992), p. 101].

24   See Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*, pp. 157–58.

25   There is a good summary of these arguments and their weaknesses in Jonathan Wolff's excellent *Introduction to Political Philosophy* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 42–50. I follow Wolff's summary in outline.

26   Horton, p. 51. On voluntaristic arguments, see ibid., pp. 19–50.

27   *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (ed.) Arthur Stephen McGrade (Cambridge, 1989), p. 93.

28   Rousseau, p. 102.

happened (or might have happened)? If our predecessors made some agreement to establish legitimate political authority, there is no reason – on voluntaristic terms – to think that this should bind us. Our predecessors had no right 'to barter away the understandings and independence of all that came after them to the latest posterity'.[29] An original contract could not possibly legitimate a polity like the state that claims authority over non-contracting generations. (Locke is simply wrong in saying that ''tis plain, governments … claim no power over the son because of that they had over the father, nor look on children as being their subjects by their fathers being so'.[30])

6) Explicit Consent Argument: Perhaps at some time we have all knowingly and voluntarily given our consent to the state (say, signed some document or made some oath to that effect). Of course, as a matter of fact, the vast majority of us have never given anything resembling explicit consent. But even if we had (and it might be said of naturalized citizens, for example), Godwin argues that we would not be bound by morally mistaken decisions made in the past: 'It is impossible to imagine a principle of more injurious tendency, than that which shall teach me to disarm my future wisdom by my past folly.' Godwin adds that 'the question of time is not the only difficulty'. The content of what one is 'knowingly and voluntarily' consenting to is also in question. The social contract that has 'been entered into in the most solemn manner by every member of the community' is an absurdity, according to Godwin, because it involves our assent not just to an entire body of laws that we do not know, 'but to all the laws that shall hereafter be made' as well.[31] Therefore, we cannot 'knowingly' give our consent to the state. Finally, if explicit consent is in some sense a *requirement* for legitimate authority, the fact that it has not been given to – and that some might withhold it from – the state makes it a rather subversive doctrine, one that undermines the 'statist' case that it is supposed to support.

7) Express Consent Argument: If we haven't explicitly consented to the political authority of the state, perhaps we express our consent, as citizens of liberal democracies, by voting. (Non-liberal democratic states are presumably illegitimate on this account, since they offer no opportunity for their subjects to express their consent.) But what is the moral significance of instrumental participation in elections? As John Horton puts it, 'it is not clear that there is any logical or conceptual mistake in denying that voters are morally bound to recognize the authority of whoever wins the election'.[32] In any event, what of those who do not vote at all (a large number in many liberal democracies)? It is 'implausible to claim that electoral abstainers consent where voting is voluntary'.[33] Theoretically, they might regard the state as

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29   Godwin, vol. 1, pp. 143–44.

30   *The Second Treatise of Government*, in David Wootton (ed.), *Political Writings* (Harmondsworth, 1993), p. 321 (§118).

31   Godwin, vol. 1, pp. 146–47, 163.

32   Horton, p. 38.

33   Carole Pateman, *The Problem of Political Obligation: A Critique of Liberal Theory* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 86. On voting as consent, see ibid., pp. 83–91.

illegitimate. What right does the state have to command them? And what of those who vote against whoever happens to be in power, who vote for 'revolutionary' parties, or who spoil their votes? Might they be making a desperate attempt to express *dissent*? What, indeed, of those who vote in response to the repeated moral exhortation (effective begging) of social leaders in schools, in churches, on MTV, etc.? Is such an act of the impressionable conscience the stuff of real consent? And, lastly, what of those who vote under duress (as in Australia and Belgium, for instance)? Their response to the state's threat is no consent to its authority, but simply testifies to its undoubted power.

8) Tacit Consent Argument: If there was no original contract and we have not explicitly or expressly consented to the authority of the state, we may still consent to it in a subtler or more indirect way. Our behaviour – indeed, mere *residence* – may constitute 'tacit consent'. How so? Arguably those who enjoy the benefits of the state or of state residence – security and the various public goods supplied by it – tacitly consent to its authority. (In Locke's words, 'every man that hath any possession or enjoyment, of any part of the dominions of any government, doth thereby give his tacit consent, and is as far forth obliged to obedience to the laws of that government, during such enjoyment, as anyone under it'.[34]) If one wishes to reject the state's authority, then, *all* one has to do is to leave its territory. Firstly, this is easier said than done; the cost of doing so seems prohibitively high (leading us to suspect that tacit consent is given under duress and is therefore non-binding[35]). As Godwin puts it (echoing David Hume), 'the peasant and the artisan, who form the bulk of the nation, however dissatisfied with the government of their country, seldom have it in their power to transport themselves to another'. And even if leaving is within one's economic means (and another country is willing to allow one to enter), at best all one can do now is move to another state and 'consent' to its authority instead. (John Horton writes: 'There is no longer any refuge for a person who wants to escape political relations entirely, and hence the choice facing such a person is more apparent than real.'[36]) Regardless, why should one have to express one's dissent by leaving one's home? By what right does the state claim my homeland as *its* territory? If I deny the legitimacy of the state, I might well stay put without consenting to its authority. In this case, my supposed 'tacit consent' would be little more than partial or unavoidable 'acquiescence', faced with the dominant social power. If such acquiescence is taken for recognition of the state's legitimate authority, 'an end is effectually put to all political science, all discrimination of better and worse … Upon this hypothesis every government that is quietly submitted to is a lawful government'.[37]

9) Hypothetical Consent Argument: It seems that social contract theory cannot tell us how the authority of the state originated or might have originated, or that it fails

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34   Locke, p. 322 (§119).
35   See Gans, pp. 53–56.
36   Horton, p. 34.
37   Godwin, vol. 1, p. 144.

even on its own descriptive terms. There was no original contract and we do not ordinarily give explicit, express, or 'tacit' consent. But, carried to a higher level of abstraction, contractarianism might tell us what *would* happen or what *ought* to happen in an idealized situation. The hypothetical contractarian argues that we would, if free and rational, consent to state authority, and that its authority is legitimated accordingly. In Hanna Pitkin's words, 'a legitimate government, a true authority, one whose subjects are bound to obey it, emerges as being one to which they *ought to consent*, quite apart from whether they have done so'.[38] We questioned the normative significance of descriptive contractarianism above, and we can also question the descriptive significance of the abstract normative account. If consent is 'a *performative* commitment',[39] an *act*, what kind of consent does the hypothetical argument describe? Many feel that hypothetical consent involves no meaningful consent at all. What the hypothetical contractarian reveals is not actual consent of any kind, but only theoretical consent – and this by making highly questionable theoretical assumptions about human agency. Even taking the hypothetical contractarian's approach seriously, the individualistic anarchist might disagree and argue that *really* free and rational individuals would choose anarchy. Who is to say? One way or another, it is pure speculation and – to anarchists at least – a most unconvincing attempt to justify the state. The state's authority cannot be legitimated (least of all, in voluntaristic terms) by imposing a theory of hypothetical consent on people who have never consented in practice.

Instrumental Arguments

The apparent failure of voluntaristic arguments brings us to the other major line of liberal argumentation for the state: instrumental arguments. The three arguments considered are quite closely related, both philosophically and historically, but they are not identical.

10) Utilitarian Argument:[40] Some argue that the state maximizes utility – or that it generates a *greater net balance of happiness* than the alternative, anarchy – and that it is legitimated accordingly. However, there are a number of problems with this argument. First, it is difficult to see how we can justify this claim given the notorious difficulty of making comparisons of utility (or of measuring pleasure and pain at all). John Rawls writes,

> Simply because we do in fact make what we call interpersonal comparisons of well-being does not mean that we understand the basis of these comparisons or that we should accept them as sound ... we should try to find some objective grounds for these comparisons, ones that men can recognize and agree to. At the present time, there appears to be no satisfactory answer to these difficulties from a utilitarian point of view.

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38   *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley, 1967), p. 62.

39   Leslie Green, 'Legal Obligation and Authority', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2004 Edition)* (ed.) Edward N. Zalta <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2004/entries/legal-obligation/>, §5.1. Emphasis added.

40   Jonathan Wolff discusses utilitarian arguments in more detail in Wolff, pp. 53–60.

Second, the principle of utility seems to conflict with the rights of individuals, a problem that may render it generally unacceptable. In utilitarian theory, worryingly, 'there is no reason in principle why … the violation of the liberty of a few might not be made right by the greater good shared by many'.[41] Hence, there is tension within certain kinds of liberalism between a basic liberal commitment to individual liberty and a further commitment to utilitarian ethics. Third, it is arguable that utilitarianism, if coherent and morally acceptable, has opposite – in other words, anarchist – implications. This Godwin, himself a more or less consistent utilitarian, certainly believed. 'Political government', far from generating greater overall happiness and well-being, 'has been the only perennial cause of the vices of mankind, and … has mischiefs of various sorts incorporated with its substance, and no otherwise to be removed than by its utter annihilation!'[42]

11) Pragmatic Argument: Pragmatists drop the problematic principle of utility, but generally insist (to much the same effect as utilitarians) that the state *works better* than the alternative, anarchy. They hold that when the state is inoperative, certain public goods are not supplied or are only supplied when some assume an unfair burden, leaving others to enjoy a 'free ride'. (The latter point underpins the argument from fairness, discussed below.) In itself, this argument is dogmatic, given the lack of comparable evidence of anarchy. The pragmatist effectively says, 'What I know works better than what I don't know.' They may be (accidentally) correct, of course, but that is not the point. Even on the pragmatist's own terms, however, the argument is questionable. The state *may* be better at providing public goods than anarchy, but it may also be worse than anarchy in its instigation of violence, for instance. (A pragmatic debate might come down to some sort of cost-benefit analysis of the state where the provision of a health service on one side is weighed up against dead people on the other. Such a debate would be morally troubling in itself.) It seems improbable that a twentieth century 'state of nature', let alone constructive anarchy, would have resulted in more than 200 million deaths. It is also doubtful whether it would have resulted in the *mere* 6 million deaths with which democratic states are *credited* (spuriously at that).[43] Nevertheless, these doubts do not constitute a pragmatic argument for anarchism. Anarchists frequently fall into the trap of citing constructive anarchist achievements (historically interesting achievements without doubt, in Spain and elsewhere) as evidence that *anarchy* works better than the state. Given the scale and longevity of these social experiments (whatever the reasons for their ultimate failure), such anarchist arguments are dubious. Pragmatic arguments one way or the other assume that what *can* happen is limited by what *has* happened.

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41   *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 26, 90–91.

42   Godwin, vol. 2, p. 579.

43   See Rudolf J. Rummel, *Death by Government* (New Brunswick, 1994), especially p. 15, Table 1.6. Rummel estimates a total figure of 203,219,000 for 'democide' or state murder (169,198,000 by 1987) and war (34,021,000 by 1980). The probable figure for the entire century is significantly higher. Rummel argues for democracy on the basis that democratic states kill far fewer people (6,398,000) than other kinds. This is probably true (though Rummel's figure is charitable to say the least), but it is no justification for the state as such.

They are, in other words, intrinsically conservative, denying that radical change or progress is possible. But even if anarchy had never been realized on *any* scale for *any* period of time, this would not prove that it is impossible – and it definitely would not justify the state's existence for all eternity.

12) Technocratic Argument: Perhaps expertise (or expert rule) legitimates the authority of the state, or establishes it as the most rational and efficacious of social arrangements. But what is the nature of rulers' expertise? What exactly do they know that others don't? Is there really some *technē politikē*? (Socrates, who raised this issue, was rather sceptical about it, and thought political authority had a different, broadly 'communitarian' foundation. Plato, by contrast, believed that there was such knowledge and that those who possessed it should rule, certainly not the ignorant rabble, as in democracy.) If there is some kind of specialized political knowledge, are those who have it (theoretical authorities, let's say) entitled to exercise practical authority? Bakunin thought not. Indeed, he argued that rule by experts or the 'government of science' would be 'the most aristocratic, despotic, arrogant, and contemptuous of all regimes'.[44] Perhaps such fears are allayed when experts function as advisers and consultants rather than as rulers. However, if expertise is the justification of the political authority of the state, surely experts should govern directly rather than through non-expert and frequently quite ignorant intermediaries (who do nothing but diminish the level of expertise with which society is governed). Why do we reject this scenario? Very simply because expert rule or 'technocracy' is incompatible with democracy, the political value that most of us claim to hold paramount. Democrats affirm that all (ignorant or intelligent, educated or uneducated) have the right to participate politically; technocracy denies this right.

'Common Sense' Arguments

Related to the instrumental arguments noted above are a series of 'common sense' arguments. Together these amount to the highly dogmatic claim that the state *obviously* works better than any imagined (utopian) alternative. While these arguments are of little philosophical value, they are worth specifying, as they tend to seep into philosophical discourse.

13) Dystopian Argument: A common argument for the state is founded on Judeo-Christian faith in the crookedness of mankind, or in 'original sin'. This has fed the dystopian imagination for generations, creating the popular notion that were the state to disappear overnight one would probably wake up to a scene of chaos (anarchy in the pejorative sense, or the Hobbesian state of nature): I might rape your sister, plagiarize your masterpiece, steal your television, and murder you – or you might do the same to me. Obviously, we need the state to save us from ourselves. The state is therefore 'a necessary evil forced upon men by their own inability to abide

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44   *Ecrit contre Marx*, in Arthur Lehning (ed.), *Archives Bakounine*, vol. 2 (Leiden, 1965), p. 204.

by the principles of morality'.[45] Such evidence as is presented for this argument is drawn not from stateless societies but from 'failed states', from what happens when, say, authoritarian regimes collapse. Anarchists maintain that there is no equivalence of constructive anarchy and post-authoritarian chaos; that what happened in Iraq when Saddam Hussein's regime was deposed, for example, had nothing to do with anarchism (and a good deal to do with the new master). Rejecting the dystopian argument does not, of course, demand faith in the purity of mankind (as it is or as it will inevitably become). The point is that 'dystopianism' (the belief that humanity is essentially bad) is no more rational than 'utopianism' (the belief, often incorrectly attributed to anarchists, that 'Humanity is essentially good'[46]).

14) Argument from Fear: Another quasi-argument for state legitimacy is expressed in the proverb, 'Better the devil you know than the devil you don't'. As bad as the state is – and we know how bad it can be after the twentieth century – many believe that the alternative *could* be even worse. (They need not share the dystopian's certainty that it *will* be worse.) And the fear of this *possibility* is sufficient for them to support (or at least tolerate) the status quo. (Hobbes's theory is an attempt to convince on the basis of this fear (of what would happen in an *imaginary* state of nature) rather than on strict dystopian certainty.)

15) Argument from Tradition: Robert Paul Wolff writes, 'The fact that something has always been done in a certain way strikes most men as a perfectly adequate reason for doing it that way again.'[47] As far as the state is concerned, there is a widespread belief that it, or something much like it, has been with us for something approaching eternity. Hence, it is an effective fact of life, so ingrained in our traditions that it would be pointless to try and change it. As a point of fact, of course, this is untrue. But even if it were true, it would have no moral significance. That something has been as it is for as long as we can remember does not justify it, unless one has an ultra-conservative faith in the wisdom of tradition.

Deontological Arguments

Finally, there are some deontological arguments (other than the voluntaristic arguments outlined above) for state legitimacy.[48] Unlike 'teleological', consequentialist, or instrumental arguments, deontological arguments maintain that the state (as a *fair arrangement*, a *just institution*, a *communal body*, a *popular body*, or a *traditional social form*) is, to some extent at least, an end in itself; it is good for its own sake, not because it is a useful instrument for bringing about desirable consequences.

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45   Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defence of Anarchism* (New York, 1970), p. 70.
46   Ian Adams quoted in David Morland, *Demanding the Impossible? Human Nature and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Anarchism* (London, 1997), p. 5.
47   Robert Paul Wolff, pp. 6–7.
48   See Horton, pp. 80–81.

16) Argument from Fairness: After H.L.A. Hart and John Rawls, one can argue that enjoying the benefits of the state obliges us to recognize it and to obey its authority. It is only 'fair' that we do so. Of course, we do not tacitly consent to the state's authority; there is no such voluntaristic justification of the state. But the argument from fairness represents, 'as it were, the "rational core" of the doctrine of tacit consent'.[49] It would be unfair to benefit from a social arrangement without recognizing certain duties to it. (Or, in Rawls's words, 'a person who has accepted the benefits of the scheme is bound by a duty of fair play to do his part and not to take advantage of the free benefits by not cooperating'.[50]) This argument can be criticized in two main ways. First, one can argue that one does *not* benefit (instrumentally) from the state. As we have seen, anarchists believe that the state is responsible for very many social evils, and that these outweigh any benefits associated with its existence (benefits that, in any case, might be produced by other means). Second, assuming that one does benefit from the state, it is not obvious that benefiting creates obligations. I might not have asked for the benefits that I enjoy. I might prefer another arrangement that secures the same benefits (at less cost). I might receive, or be unable to avoid, 'benefits' that I don't want.[51] One suspects that the argument from fairness requires some voluntaristic support, or consent to the social arrangement in question. This support is, as we saw, lacking in the case of the state.

17) Argument from Justice: In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls drops the argument from fairness and develops an argument from justice.[52] (Of course, this is not the central focus of the book; the problem of authority (and its correlates) is not of fundamental interest to Rawls – or, at least, he does not regard it as truly problematic.) He claims that 'we are to comply with and to do our share in just institutions when they exist and apply to us'.[53] Over and above any obligations we may have undertaken, we have a *natural duty* to support just institutions that 'apply to us', including the just state. The question of 'application' has received considerable attention. One 'feels inclined to ask why', as Simmons puts it, 'the mere application of a just institution should be thought to bind us to comply with it'. Simmons concludes that 'application' does not bind us: 'People cannot simply force institutions on me, no matter how just, and force on me a moral bond to do my part in and comply with those institutions'.[54] Institutions only apply to us when we have obligations to them, such as those that might be undertaken through consent. Again, consent cannot explain our would-be obligations to the state. But there is another problem with Rawls's argument, apart from the problem of 'application'. This is the problem of justice itself. What

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49   Jonathan Wolff, p. 61. Wolff discusses the principle of fairness on pp. 60–65.

50   'Legal Obligation and the Duty of Fair Play', in Sidney Hook (ed.), *Law and Philosophy* (New York, 1964), p. 10.

51   See Nozick, pp. 90–93.

52   Rawls's conception of 'justice as fairness' (in *A Theory of Justice*) is not to be confused with his earlier argument from fairness. The former is a general ethico-political conception, whereas the latter is a specific argument for political obligation.

53   Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 351.

54   *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*, p. 148. On 'application', see ibid., pp. 147–52.

constitutes a 'just' institution? The principles of justice are effectively determined, on Rawls's account, by hypothetical choice of what 'we' already accept: 'our' (liberal) 'intuitions'. If we are duty-bound to support institutions that uphold these principles, we have a *natural* duty to support liberal institutions, though these only seem to embody *conventional* (and highly questionable) principles. To Carole Pateman, this indicates the ideological nature of Rawls's argument, an argument that doesn't demonstrate state legitimacy at all, but simply '*presupposes … that the authority of the liberal state is justified*'.[55]

18) Communitarian Argument: Communitarians contend that we have 'associative obligations just by belonging to groups defined by social practice, which is not necessarily a matter of choice or consent'.[56] The state is one such group; we have obligations to it. As communitarians see it, to question authority or one's obligations to communal authorities is basically pathological (a symptom of the liberal-individualist disorder). One *is* a member of a community (whatever the alienated individual might have to say about its 'legitimacy'); therefore, one *has* obligations to it. However, even if one owes a duty to one's community, it does not follow that one owes a duty to the state; even if community is a higher value than individual liberty, it does not follow that the state is legitimated in its exercise of authority. Communitarians have a mistaken tendency to conflate community and state. (Pateman agrees that it is mistaken: 'The general, abstract conception of "political society" cannot simply be identified with the actual, present-day institutions of the liberal democratic state and the claim made that it is therefore nonsensical to ask questions about political obligation within these institutions'.[57]) On the basis of this conflation, communitarians conclude that the state is good because community is. Anarchists deny that the state is a community, arguing instead that this distinct social power is an imposition on the community or a malign power parasitic upon society itself.

19) Democratic Argument: Many republicans maintain that the authority of the state is legitimate insofar as it is 'of, by, and for the people' *conceived as equals*. Non-democratic states that do not recognize the *primary value of political equality* (or popular sovereignty) are seemingly illegitimate on this account. The first problem with this argument is the problem of representation. Anarchists argue that the authority of the state, representative or otherwise, is always alien, and that there is an inevitable inequality between those who rule in the state and those who are ruled by it. Thus, political equality is unrealizable in the state. (We have seen that anarchists do not necessarily reject direct or participatory democracy, or 'operative authority', in freely-formed organizations. Rather, they deny that the state is such an organization.) Even if anarchists overstate this problem, and state assemblies are meaningfully democratic, a second problem is that executive and judicial branches of government are less than democratic. But a third problem is more fundamental.

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55   Pateman, p. 115. On Pateman's important critique of Rawls, see ibid., pp. 113–29.
56   Ronald Dworkin, *Law's Empire* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 195–96.
57   Pateman, p. 104.

The democratic argument begs the question of origins: where did the authority of the state come from? If it is founded on popular sovereignty, presumably this 'sovereignty' was transferred to the state by the consent of the people. However, it would seem that there is no argument that can demonstrate such consent.

20) Conservative Argument: The conservative argument is, in effect, an argument against philosophical argument or 'reasonings' about political matters. According to conservatives, tradition (for all its 'prejudices') is a higher value than enlightened reason. (Edmund Burke writes: 'instead of casting away our old prejudices, we cherish them to a very considerable degree ... We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations, and of ages'.[58]) Tradition represents accumulated wisdom and stability; enlightenment represents individual hubris and potential chaos. To argue about *de facto* authority and to challenge forms that one deems 'illegitimate' is to endanger social order itself. However, if philosophy is about questioning, this argument is simply non-philosophical; it is merely 'doxical' – an affirmation of opinion or conventional belief (to say nothing of social privilege).

Anarchists hold that none of the moral arguments for the normative power of the state is convincing, that the state is without moral foundation. They conclude that because one has *no reason* to recognize the legitimacy of the state, one *should not* recognize it. That is to say, one should not feel duty-bound to obey the commands of the state, though, of course, one may be forced to do so, it may be prudent to do so, or the commands may correspond with what one feels morally compelled to do anyway. One can respond to this conclusion in a number of different ways, as we have seen above; but the 'anti-statist' conclusion is a central component of anarchism as such. However, this conclusion does not exhaust anarchist thinking; 'anti-statism' does not define anarchism. Were the state to disappear, there would still be authoritative relations for the anarchist to challenge. And even in contemporary society, other authoritative relations (familial, educational, managerial, etc.) operate within and alongside the state. These relations are also of concern to the anarchist sceptic.

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58   *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (ed.) Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 183.

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PART 2
Anarchism and the History of Ideas

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Chapter 5

The Historical Foundations of Anarchism

There is a tendency among scholars of anarchism to trace its origins back to the earliest libertarian sentiments expressed by Greek or Chinese philosophers, especially Zeno of Citium and Lao-Tzu. (Peter Kropotkin's famous *Encyclopædia Britannica*[1] article probably set this trend.) Indeed, recent histories of anarchism have drawn on so many sources that they risk becoming more confusing than informative.[2] The greatest historian of anarchism, Max Nettlau, states that such pre-anarchist ideas should be 'considered merely the earliest intellectual and moral attempts of humanity to advance without tutelary gods and constricting chains', and notes that:

> historical research will teach us to be modest in our expectations. It would be quite easy to come across glowing paeans to freedom, to the heroism of tyrannicides and other rebels, and so on, but very difficult to find an understanding of the evil inherent in authoritarianism and a complete faith in liberty.[3]

We might question Nettlau's exact definition of anarchism here, but his point about the distinction between the libertarian outlook and temperament (arguably underpinned by the libertarian ethic of freedom *in itself*), on the one hand, and the self-conscious anarchist position (arguably underpinned by the anarchist ethic of integral justice), on the other, is well made. It is a point that is powerfully reiterated by David Miller, who deserves to be quoted at length:

> We may trace the origins of anarchism to the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789. Although it is possible, by searching diligently enough, to find precursors of anarchism as far back as the ancient Greeks – and perhaps even the Chinese – this shows only that there have always been men willing to challenge authority on philosophical or political grounds. This might be described as the primitive anarchist attitude: but for anarchism to develop beyond a stance of defiance into a social and political theory that challenged the existing order and proposed an alternative, such wholesale reconstruction needed to become thinkable. This reorientation of thought was the work largely of the Revolution, which, by challenging the old regime in France on the grounds of basic principle, opened the way for similar challenges to other states and other social institutions. Henceforth all institutions were vulnerable to the demand that they should be justified from first principles – whether of natural right, social utility, human self-realization, or whatever.

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1   'Anarchism' entry, 11th edn (ed.) Hugh Chisholm (1910–1911); see *Two Essays: Anarchism and Anarchist Communism* (ed.) Nicolas Walter (London, 1987).
2   See Peter Marshall's vast *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, revised edn (London, 1993).
3   *A Short History of Anarchism*, trans. Ida Pilat Isca (London, 1996), pp. 8–9. Emphasis in original.

From this source sprang the major ideologies – conservatism, liberalism, and socialism as well as anarchism – in recognizably their modern form. It is therefore appropriate that the first major work which indubitably belongs to the anarchist tradition – Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* – should have been produced in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution (in 1793) and with that event as its direct inspiration.[4]

Miller is essentially correct, but more needs to be said. George Crowder notes that it was not just the 'practical example of the Revolution', but also 'the background beliefs of the intellectual climate from which it sprang' that gave rise to 'the anarchist idea' that 'evolved into a distinctive, although, multifaceted, theoretical and ideological tradition' in the nineteenth century.[5] In this sense, anarchism can safely be considered a child of the Enlightenment, the intellectual movement that culminated in the French Revolution. However, the Enlightenment itself was part of a broader European process, a great revolutionary intellectual process – including the Renaissance and (more problematically) the sixteenth century Reformation – that had been underway since at least the fifteenth century (arguably the twelfth, if not before[6]); a movement out of Middle Age 'superstition' – that is, as the *philosophes* would regard it, the reign of faith – toward enlightened humanity – or the reign of reason.

Renaissance and Reformation

The humanistic values and heroic deeds of the Renaissance have been cited with approval by many anarchists. The Reformation, on the other hand, has been viewed with some misgiving. Many grant that the anti-authoritarian nature of the Reformation, at least as far as papal authority was concerned, gave some revolutionary impetus to the broad European tradition of enlightenment Moreover, anarchists stress that, alongside its theological and institutional wrangling, the period exhibited (in the shape of Anabaptism, for example) a radical reconstructive element that is frequently overlooked. Kropotkin explains:

> … the great movement of the reform was not a mere revolt against the abuses of the Catholic Church. It had its constructive ideal as well, and that ideal was life in free, brotherly communities. Those of the early writings and sermons of the period which found most response with the masses were imbued with ideas of the economical and social brotherhood of mankind. The 'Twelve Articles' and similar professions of faith, which were circulated among the German and Swiss peasants and artisans, maintained not only every one's right to interpret the Bible according to his own understanding, but also included the demand of communal lands being restored to the village communities and feudal servitudes being abolished, and they always alluded to the 'true' faith – a faith of brotherhood. At the same time scores of thousands of men and women joined the communist fraternities of Moravia, giving them all their fortune and living in numerous and

4   *Anarchism* (London, 1984), pp. 3–4.
5   *Classical Anarchism: The Political Thought of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin* (Oxford, 1991), p. 6.
6   See Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (London, 1993), pp. 138 ff.

prosperous settlements constructed upon the principles of communism. Only wholesale massacres by the thousand could put a stop to this widely-spread popular movement, and it was by the sword, the fire, and the rack that the young States secured their first and decisive victory over the masses of the people.[7]

Elsewhere, Kropotkin specifies the significance, in addition to 'the early Anabaptists, especially Johannes Denck', of 'the early Hussites, particularly Chelčický', in the period immediately preceding the Reformation. (Both the Anabaptists and the Hussites were, Kropotkin adds, 'predecessors' of Tolstoy in the nineteenth century.)[8] Bakunin goes further in his praise of the Hussites in the context of his anti-Germanic diatribe:

> In the fifteenth century we encounter the great, and this time victorious as well as purely popular, revolution of the Czech Hussites. Leaving their religious views aside (let us note in passing, however, that they were far closer to the principles of human brotherhood and popular liberty than those of the Catholics or the Protestants who came after them), we note the purely social and anti-state character of this revolution. It was an uprising of the Slavic commune against the German state. In the seventeenth century, in consequence of a whole series of betrayals by the half-Germanized petty bourgeoisie of Prague, the Hussites were ultimately defeated. Almost half the Czech population was wiped out, and its lands were handed over to colonists from Germany. The Germans and Jesuits triumphed, and for more than two centuries after this bloody defeat the west Slavic world remained immobile, mute, held down by the Catholic Church and victorious Germanism.[9]

Notwithstanding these constructive elements in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, anarchists condemn the Reformation for being a merely *religious revolution*, which, like *political revolution* (see below), is inherently inadequate. It was a partial revolution, at best a revolutionary starting point that was taken by some to be an end in itself. In Max Stirner's words: 'Because Protestantism broke the medieval hierarchy, the opinion could take root that hierarchy in general had been shattered by it'. In fact, the Reformation simply 'steeled the power of hierarchy'. Anarchists maintain that it facilitated the rise or assured the supremacy of the modern State as an autonomous, self-validating institution – a baleful one at that. Stirner explains: 'Formerly the Pope gave consecration and his blessing to it and its princes; now the state is intrinsically sacred, majesty is sacred without needing the priest's blessing'.[10] According to Bakunin, in addition to this 'despotic-statist' tendency, the Reformation also generated another 'bourgeois-liberal' tendency.[11] We have seen something of the latter in Part 1, but the anarchist judgement of the Reformation is therefore that it laid the foundations – both political and economic – for modern civilization, foundations that would be firmly built upon by the intellectuals and political revolutionaries of the eighteenth century.

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7   Ibid., pp. 181–82.
8   *Two Essays: Anarchism and Anarchist Communism*, pp. 11, 20.
9   *Statism and Anarchy* (ed.) Marshall S. Shatz (Cambridge, 1990), p. 40.
10   *The Ego and Its Own* (ed.) David Leopold (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 77, 83.
11   Bakunin, p. 47.

Of all the Renaissance thinkers, it was – paradoxically at first sight – Niccolo Machiavelli whose teachings were embraced by anarchists. Machiavelli's great theoretical achievement has been summarized succinctly by Ernst Cassirer: 'The sharp knife of Machiavelli's thought has cut off all the threads by which in former generations the state was fastened to the organic whole of human existence. The political world has lost its connection not only with religion or metaphysics but also with all the other forms of man's ethical and cultural life'. Machiavelli did not prescribe unethical practice in the political sphere; rather, from an empirical standpoint, we may say that he demonstrated the irrelevance of the ethical to the political. In Cassirer's words: 'He did not attack the principles of morality; but he could find no use for these principles when engrossed in problems of political life'. Thus '*The Prince* is neither a moral nor an immoral book: it is simply a technical book'. Politics is therefore regarded as an 'art' with its own technique which might be descriptively analyzed by a political science. Whatever the relevant field of ethics – political philosophy – might have to say about politics is not necessarily false, simply extraneous. This is diametrically opposed to the classical view of Plato. Plato sought 'to *understand* the state [or polity of his time]. What he demanded and what he was looking for was not a mere accumulation or an experimental study of segregated and haphazard facts of man's political and social life but an idea that could comprehend these facts and bring them to a systematic unity'. With Machiavelli, political science supersedes political philosophy of a Platonic nature, the branch of philosophy that raises fundamental issues of legitimacy. Cassirer explains this rupture in the following passage: 'Plato and his followers had tried to give a theory of the *Legal State*; Machiavelli was the first to introduce a theory that suppressed or minimized this feature. His art of politics was destined and equally fit for the illegal and for the legal state'.[12]

The merit of Machiavelli's political science is not questioned by anarchists. Indeed, anarchists fully agree with his description of the political sphere. Bakunin therefore commends him as a 'realistic and positive thinker' and admits that from a scientific or descriptive point of view 'Machiavelli was right: we cannot doubt it now we have the experience of three and a half centuries added to his own experience'. Nevertheless, anarchists are dissatisfied, like Plato, with what we now term political science and the merely descriptive approach to the political; anarchism is a philosophical, not a 'scientific' position. Thus *anarchism is a political philosophy in the authentic sense*: it poses *the fundamental ethical question of political legitimacy*. It is not content with disinterested description of the political order but seeks, from the standpoint of 'justice', to assess the legitimacy of this order and its alternatives. Hence, anarchists, again like Plato, though with altogether different conclusions, raise the ethical issue of justice in connection with the political. Bakunin explains this ethical concern of anarchism, its point of departure from Machiavellian thought, in the following terms:

> ... our conclusion will differ radically from that of Machiavelli, and the reason thereof is quite simple: we are the sons of the Revolution and we have inherited from it the

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12   *The Myth of the State* (New Haven, 1946), pp. 69–79, 140, 143, 153, 155.

Religion of Humanity which we have to found upon the ruins of the Religion of Divinity. We believe in the rights of man, in the dignity and necessary emancipation of the human species. We believe in human liberty and human fraternity based upon human justice.[13]

Doubtless, Stirner would scoff at Bakunin's language here, at his 'pious' talk of the 'rights of man' and 'the Religion of Humanity'.[14] Indeed, Bakunin, who was as dismissive of what he called human idealism as divine idealism, might have conceded the point. But, leaving Stirner aside for now, what is clear is that anarchism is seen by Bakunin to have inherited the Enlightenment's core principles, as practically manifested in the French Revolution.

Enlightenment and Revolution

Enlightenment thought is founded on the critical conviction that nothing is above suspicion, that everything must answer when called before the tribunal of reason. The Enlightenment was an age, that is to say, in which the very foundations of European civilization, both spiritual and temporal, were subjected to critical examination. Denis Diderot, one of its chief spokesmen, captures the spirit of the age with the following statement: 'Everything must be examined, everything must be shaken up, without exception and without circumspection.'[15] In the socio-political context, Enlightenment thought expresses a certain rationalistic suspicion about the bases of the old theologico-political order and challenges this order to justify itself (and the privileges it bestows) rationally. Essentially, then, it consists of criticism of the 'superstitious' intellectual foundations of this order and *tends toward* atheism and revolutionism (without necessarily advocating them).

The Enlightenment was, however, an intellectual movement (an 'Age of Criticism', as Kant famously termed it), not a practico-revolutionary movement (or an 'Age of Negation'). The challenge the *philosophes* posed was abstract, founded on the progressive reasoning of its bourgeois proponents, who were preoccupied with 'disinterested intellectual speculation', radical as it was, 'rather than possible political action'.[16] Apart from the critical principle, underpinning it was this very principle of *progress*, which sets the champions of enlightenment apart from those who would defend 'the old order' – whether they are termed conservatives or reactionaries. But, even among 'progressives', as we will see, there is much dispute about exactly what the principle of progress entails. Hence the major divisions between liberals, socialists, and anarchists.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, among all the *philosophes*, may have had the greatest influence on the development of anarchism. Such an evaluation is, of course,

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13   *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism* (ed.) G.P. Maximoff (Glencoe, 1953), p. 142.

14   See, for example, Stirner, pp. 40, 166.

15   Quoted in Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York, 1968), p. 142.

16   Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment: An evaluation of its assumptions, attitudes, and values* (Harmondsworth, 1990), p. 253.

problematic because Rousseau seems to be a highly contradictory thinker. But, as Crowder explains very well, he appealed all the same to the classical anarchists as, effectively, a radical *philosophe*:

> In many ways Rousseau was not a representative Enlightenment thinker. His doubts about the value of reason and civilization, his sense of religion and community, and his rejection of progress set him apart from the confidently rationalistic and cosmopolitan *philosophes*. On these issues the anarchists are very much closer to Rousseau's rivals than to him. He was, nevertheless, in some respects the most radical thinker of his age, and despite the peculiarities of his position he inevitably became associated in the public, and to some extent the anarchist, mind with that critical iconoclastic side of the Enlightenment that challenged received tradition and established institutions.[17]

Though they were hostile to Rousseau's brand of republicanism, his contractarianism, his romanticism, and even his individualism, anarchists drew both ethical and political inspiration from his writings. *Ethically*, they were impressed with his 'fundamental maxim' (while they would ultimately assert its inadequacy): 'the greatest of all blessings is not authority but liberty'.[18] Following from this, *politically*, they drew on the analysis of 'political right' in his *Social Contract* of 1762. At the start of this work, Rousseau states: 'I mean to inquire if, in the civil order, there can be *any* sure and legitimate rule of administration, men being taken as they are and laws as they might be'.[19] With this, Rousseau raised the fundamental question of political philosophy (in the narrow sense): not *which form of – or how much – government is best*, but, more critically, *if any form of government, if the State itself is legitimate*. (In the broader sense of political philosophy – or social philosophy – the question applies to authority in general, not just to 'governmental' or political authority. It is this question that anarchists ask, though their Rousseauian heritage is still evident.) This question distinguishes Rousseau from other radical minds of the eighteenth century, such as Wilhelm von Humboldt. For Humboldt, writing in 1791, the 'prime question of political philosophy' is the specifically *libertarian*, rather than anarchist, question regarding 'the proper aims and *limits* of State agency'.[20] The precise nature of this distinction – between Rousseau and Humboldt and, more generally, between anarchism and libertarianism – has gone unnoticed by some, notably Noam Chomsky. For this reason, one needs to exercise caution in assessing Chomsky's conclusion that anarchism 'is properly to be regarded

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17   Crowder, p. 18. Crowder's discussion of Rousseau's influence on anarchism [ibid., pp. 16–29] is valuable, notwithstanding my general reservations about his approach, as voiced above. This approach determines his spurious conclusion that 'two areas of affinity are especially striking: the paramount commitment to freedom understood as moral self-direction, and the radical critique of modern "civilized" society, which is pictured as destructive of moral self-direction' [ibid., p. 29].

18   *Emile, Julie, and Other Writings* (ed.) R.L. Archer (New York, 1964), p. 91.

19   *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G.D.H. Cole (London, 1986), p. 181. Emphasis added.

20   *The Sphere and Duties of Government*, trans. Joseph Coulthard (Bristol, 1996), pp. 1–3. Emphasis added.

as the inheritor of the *liberal* ideals of the Enlightenment'.[21] There is, in any case, a substantial difference between the famous pronouncements of Thomas Jefferson and Henry Thoreau, between the libertarian belief that 'that government is best which governs least' and the anarchist belief that 'that government is best which governs not at all'. The latter is not, I believe, simply the former pushed 'to its ultimate logical consequences', but, instead, an answer to another, more fundamental question.[22]

Setting out from his critical point of departure, and making the moral assertion that 'we are obliged to obey only legitimate powers', Rousseau examines the various claims made for authority. He dismisses those based on natural right ('no man has a natural authority over his fellow'), the right of force ('Force is a physical power, and I fail to see what moral effect it can have'), and the right of conquest ('The right of conquest has no foundation other than the right of the strongest'). According to Rousseau, then, 'conventions form the basis of all legitimate authority among men'.[23] Of course, he goes on from here to develop what, to anarchists and some liberals, is an authoritarian political theory that encouraged the worst excesses of the French Revolution. Hence, Bakunin writes (perhaps unfairly) that 'He may be considered as the real creator of modern reaction. To all appearance the most democratic writer of the eighteenth century, he bred within himself the pitiless despotism of the statesman. He was the prophet of the doctrinaire State, as Robespierre, his worthy and faithful disciple, tried to become its high priest'.[24] There is from the anarchist perspective, at the very least, a striking discontinuity between the first five chapters of the *Social Contract* and the remainder of the work, a discontinuity that mirrors in some respects that between the critical (or 'Socratic') first book of Plato's *Republic* and the following books, in which Plato outlines his allegedly 'totalitarian' ideal.

Rousseau, for all the controversy surrounding his *Social Contract*, contributed more incontrovertibly to the emergence of anarchism with his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* of 1755 – as Chomsky observes, 'in many ways a revolutionary work'.[25] The *Discourse* attempts to answer a question that is simply set aside in the *Social Contract*: how man, who is naturally free, should come to be in a state of servitude. Rousseau writes in 1762: 'How did this change come about? I do not know.' In the *Discourse*, however, he presents a 'conjectural' account of the degeneration of man from the state of nature through various social conditions to the state itself. The state emerges, subsequent to the development of social relations of inequality, as a body instituted for the benefit of the rich and dominant at the expense of the poor and weak:

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21 *For Reasons of State* (London, 1973), p. 157. Emphasis added. In this collection of essays, Chomsky discusses Humboldt in both 'Notes on Anarchism' and 'Language and Freedom'. See, in particular, pp. 156–57, 177–83.

22 Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (London, 1989), p. 17.

23 Rousseau, pp. 184–88.

24 Bakunin, *God and the State* (ed.) Paul Avrich (New York, 1970), p. 79.

25 Chomsky, p. 169. I draw partly on Chomsky's comments on the *Discourse* in what follows. Similarly, Crowder, p. 26, writes of the 'unprecedented radicalism' of 'Rousseau's description and analysis of the modern social and political predicament'.

Such was, or may well have been, the origin of society and law, which bound new fetters on the poor, and gave new powers to the rich; which irretrievably destroyed natural liberty, eternally fixed the law of property and inequality, converted clever usurpation into unalterable right, and, for the advantage of a few ambitious individuals, subjected all mankind to perpetual labour, slavery, and wretchedness.[26]

Rousseau concludes that social inequality will persist 'till the government is either entirely dissolved by new revolutions, or brought back to legitimacy', that is, re-established on a proper (presumably contractual) foundation. Anarchists are sceptical about the second of these alternatives, as we have seen. Accepting the Enlightenment principle of progress, they are also typically dismissive of romantic conceptions of the fall of the 'noble savage'. Nevertheless, the revolutionary conclusions of Rousseau's social critique – *of both private property and political authority* – were undeniably influential on anarchism. Most anarchists agree, firstly, with Rousseau's diagnosis of the ills associated with private property, with which 'there arose rivalry and competition on the one hand, and conflicting interests on the other, together with a secret desire on both of profiting at the expense of others'. Labour itself is no entitlement according to Rousseau:

It is in vain to repeat: 'I built this well; I gained this spot by my industry'. Who gave you your standing, it might be answered, and what right have you to demand payment of us for what we never asked you to do? Do you not know that numbers of your fellow-creatures are starving, for want of what you have too much of? You ought to have had the express and universal consent of mankind, before appropriating more of the common subsistence than you needed for your own maintenance.[27]

Anarchists also agree that the state is an essentially violent institution, being without any parallel in this respect, and therefore, from the anarchist standpoint, immensely difficult to legitimate.

Hence arose national wars, battles, murders, and reprisals, which shock nature and outrage reason; together with all those horrible prejudices which class among the virtues the honour of shedding human blood. The most distinguished men hence learned to consider cutting each other's throats a duty; at length men massacred their fellow-creatures by thousands without so much as knowing why, and committed more murders in a single day's fighting, and more violent outrages in the sack of a single town, than were committed in the state of nature during whole ages over the whole earth.[28]

As indicated above, Enlightenment thought – both critical and progressive – eventually manifested itself practically in the form of the French Revolution. However, this realization of ideals, 'this passage from theory to action', was only made possible by the participation of the oppressed and exploited popular masses in the revolutionary project; in a concrete, practical sense, their activity was the 'true

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26   Rousseau, pp. 99, 181.
27   Ibid., pp. 96, 98, 109.
28   Ibid., p. 100.

fount and origin of the Revolution'. As Kropotkin writes in the opening lines of the major anarchist study of the period:

> Two great currents prepared and made the Great French Revolution. One of them, the current of ideas, concerning the political reorganization of States, came from the middle classes; the other, the current of action, came from the people, both peasants and workers in towns, who wanted to obtain immediate and definite improvements in their economic condition. And when these two currents met and joined in the endeavour to realize an aim, which for some time was common to both, when they had helped each other for a certain time, the result was the Revolution.[29]

This revolution, representing, in principle, a universal attempt to realize the humane and progressive ideals of the Enlightenment, remains the key historical turning point – the great progressive thrust – for anarchists. As Miller pointed out above, the Revolution encouraged the critically-minded to challenge each and every social institution on grounds of principle – and to overthrow those institutions which were held to fail the test of reason. Anarchists are, however, not blind to the fatal shortcomings of the French Revolution in itself. It is, perhaps, the great progressive and revolutionary lesson in history, and, as Crowder writes, its 'example is always before [anarchists], as both inspiration and warning'.[30] What anarchists take to be the warning message of the French Revolution – a message reconveyed by the failed Russian Revolution – is that political revolution is an inadequate means of progress.

> As [the French Revolution] returned toward the so-called original human rights, it wanted to bring these rights to recognition *within the state*; it was nothing but the attempt – as if it were possible – to make man free in the state, and its result proved that this is not possible. If revolution is to be fulfilled, then freedom must become more widely apprehended and it must slough off its exclusively *political* character.[31]

Political revolution amounts to the transfer of State-power from one party, or one class, to another. In the case of the French Revolution, the bourgeoisie was the beneficiary. The liberal ideology is, from the anarchist viewpoint, to some extent a rationalization of this reconfiguration. Kropotkin notes that: 'The middle classes [those who formulated the ideals of the Revolution] desired, above all things,

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29   *The Great French Revolution, 1789–1793*, trans. N.F. Dryhurst (New York, 1927), pp. 1, 15.

30   Crowder, p. 19. This remark is preceded by the following [ibid., pp. 18–19]: 'The French Revolution … is regarded by the anarchists with mixed feelings. On the one hand, "the myth of the revolution", as James Joll calls it, provides them with a precedent for wholesale social change: for the defeat of the entrenched interests of the governing classes in the name of freedom and equality. On the other hand, the history of the revolution, its degeneration from popular uprising to Jacobin Terror and eventually Napoleonic dictatorship, strikes them as a tragic demonstration of how the quest for liberty and social justice can miscarry.'

31   Edgar Bauer, 'Critique's Quarrel With Church and State' [1844], trans. Eric von der Luft, in Lawrence Stepelevich (ed.), *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology* (New Jersey, 1997), pp. 265–66.

government by the propertied classes.' He adds, however, that: 'It would certainly be unjust to say that the middle classes were actuated only by purely selfish motives. If that were the case they would never have succeeded in their task. In great changes a certain amount of idealism is always necessary to success.' Indeed, after all, they had 'drunk deep from that sublime fount, the eighteenth-century philosophy, which was the source of all the great ideas that have arisen since'. But Kropotkin concludes that 'however lofty were the abstract ideas' that motivated the Revolution, 'we must … admit that these ideas, as soon as they took shape, began to develop [as follows]: liberty to utilize the riches of Nature for personal aggrandizement, as well as liberty to exploit human labour without any safeguard for the victims of such exploitation, and political power organized so as to assure freedom of exploitation to the middle classes'.[32] Hence, the principal victims of the French Revolution were the very masses whose activity had made it possible.

In the case of the Russian Revolution, an intellectual elite on the margins of the working class, and claiming to represent it, was the beneficiary of merely political revolution. The Marxist-Leninist or 'socialist' ideology is regarded by anarchists as a rationalization of this further reconfiguration. Thus, in Jan Wacław Machajski's words:

> Power, slipping out of the hands of the capitalists and landowners, can be seized only by the lower strata of bourgeois society, the petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia which, as possessor of the knowledge needed for the organization and administration of the entire life of the country, acquired and firmly secured for itself the right to lordly incomes, the right to a share of plundered wealth, to a share of national profit.[33]

Of course, Bakunin had famously anticipated the results of this kind of political revolution, arguing that its outcome: '…will be nothing but the highly despotic government of the masses by a new and very small aristocracy of real or pretended scholars. The people are not learned, so they will be liberated entirely from the cares of government and included in entirety in the governed herd. A fine liberation!'[34] That said, under Stalin's guidance, a 'second revolution', a wholesale 'cultural revolution', occurred between 1928 and 1938, culminating in the Great Purge. As a result, a new 'intelligentsia' rose from the working class itself and replaced the purged 'bourgeois' intelligentsia of old. But, as Marshall Shatz writes: 'The new men who came to power under Stalin used their position not to abolish privilege and establish equality for all, but to create privileges for themselves … Their ambition

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32   *The Great French Revolution*, pp. 6–10.

33   Quoted in Marshall S. Shatz, *Jan Wacław Machajski: A Radical Critic of the Russian Intelligentsia and Socialism* (Pittsburgh, 1989), p. 152. Machajski, though close to anarchism in many respects (especially the anarchism of Bakunin), did not think of himself as an anarchist [see ibid., pp. 37, 65–66]. The major anarchist critique of the Russian Revolution is Voline [V.M. Eikhenbaum], *The Unknown Revolution, 1917–1921* [1947], trans. Fredy Perlman (Montreal, 1975). See also Emma Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia* [1923], complete edn (New York, 1970), and Alexander Berkman, *The Bolshevik Myth* [1925] (London, 1989).

34   *Statism and Anarchy*, pp. 178–79.

was not to create a new world of abstract perfection but to better their own standing in the world as it existed.'[35] The outcome of such a revolution – once again, the inevitable victimization of the masses at the hands of the political classes – had also been anticipated by Bakunin:

> ... from whatever point of view we look at this question, it always comes down to the same dismal result: government of the vast majority of the people by a privileged minority. But this minority, the Marxists say, will consist of workers. Yes, perhaps of *former* workers, who, as soon as they become rulers or representatives of the people will cease to be workers and will begin to look at the whole workers' world from the heights of the state. They will no longer represent the people but themselves and their own pretensions to govern the people.[36]

In the case of both the French and the Russian revolutions, the power fought for and won is claimed not only as a fact (which is undeniable), but as a right (which, for the anarchist, is always, in the true spirit of Enlightenment criticism, questionable). Thus it is not simple power that is gained by political revolution, but the apparent *right* to exercise this power: that is, *authority*. In the wake of the French Revolution, anarchists imagine that no sincere or remotely rational philosopher could assert a divine origin for this right; this groundless or 'superstitious' claim was made by those supporters of the theological order against whom the revolution was directed. In the modern, post-revolutionary period, those that continued to claim this right – both liberals and socialists – had to make alternative claims. (Excluding the reactionary posturing of postmodernism, post-Enlightenment thought, guided to some degree by rationalistic considerations, has never *denied* the need to justify all such claims or to demonstrate the *legitimacy* of authority in each case.) It is the anarchist critique of these alternative claims, which we examined in the previous chapter, that makes anarchism philosophically specific and that reveals its philosophical cogency.

Left Hegelianism

The scope for progress is greatly extended by anarchism. A fundamental social revolutionary project – 'a total transformation of [the] world condition' – is advocated, as against the partial or moderate political revolutionary projects – mere 'constitutional or politico-economic change' – of liberals and socialists.[37] Anarchists are not content with the prospect of, in Jaroslav Hašek's sarcastic words, 'moderate progress within the limits of the law'.[38] The path beyond moderation and Enlightenment criticism was laid out by Left Hegelian thought, a radical extension and intensification of Enlightenment ideas. Here, criticism is finally rejected in

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35   Shatz, pp. 176–77. For an overview of Stalin's revolution and its relation to Makhaevism, see ibid., pp. 168–77.

36   *Statism and Anarchy*, p. 178.

37   Mikhail Bakunin, 'The Reaction in Germany', in Arthur Lehning (ed.), *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* (London, 1973), p. 39.

38   See Cecil Parrott, *The Bad Bohemian: A Life of Jaroslav Hašek* (London, 1983), pp. 109–20.

favour of negation, and the logic of mediation (or compromise) is abandoned as implicitly reactionary and inadequate to genuine historical progress. Furthermore, the realization of philosophical ideals is demanded: philosophy becomes the philosophy of praxis and points the way toward revolutionary activity. Bruno Bauer encouraged such conclusions, while his brother Edgar, along with the major Left Hegelian anarchists Bakunin and Max Stirner – to say nothing of their French student of Hegelian philosophy, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon – drew them out. This Left Hegelian influence on the development of anarchism (in its individualist, mutualist, and collectivist forms) has been underestimated or even ignored by most scholars. We will try to spell it out here.

There are arguably three major influences on Left Hegelianism: (a) the Enlightenment; (b) the French Revolution; and (c) Hegel himself. David McLellan maintains likewise: 'to their romantic and idealist elements [the Left Hegelians] added the sharp critical tendencies of the *Aufklärung* and an admiration for the principles of the French Revolution'.[39] It was, however, the anti-religious criticism of the French *philosophes* rather than the transcendental orientation of the German *Aufklärung* that really influenced the Left Hegelians. Thus Bruno Bauer refers ironically (and with not a little respect) to the former as 'Wild Men' and 'people of the antichrist' who 'dared to declare the non-existence of the Eternal Lord, and this in the full light of day, in the market, before all Christian Europe, in the light of the sun which has never shone upon such wickedness. They have produced an idolatrous adultery with the Whore of Reason while they have murdered the Anointed of God'.[40] Cassirer underlines this distinction between the Enlightenment in France and elsewhere:

> If we were to look for a general characterization of the Enlightenment, the traditional answer would be that its fundamental feature is obviously a critical and sceptical attitude toward religion. If we attempt to test this traditional view by concrete historical facts, we soon come to entertain the gravest doubts and reservations so far as German and English thought of the Enlightenment is concerned. Yet French philosophy of the eighteenth century seems to confirm the traditional view all the more stubbornly.[41]

As much as the Left Hegelians speak respectfully of the *philosophes*, they insist that their own thinking is even 'stronger than [that of] the French'. Unlike the somewhat reticent pronouncements of the French, they claim to 'have openly cast away all godliness and modesty, and [to] struggle openly against Church and State'.[42] Thus, unlike the *philosophes*, they are self-consciously animated by the revolutionary spirit over and above the critical spirit. This owes something to their unorthodox interpretation of Hegel, as we will see briefly; but it obviously owes much to their aforementioned 'admiration for the principles of the French Revolution'. Under this dual influence, the Left Hegelians adopted an 'apocalyptic' tone and 'thought it their

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39   *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx* (London, 1969), p. 7.

40   *The Trumpet of the Last Judgement Against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist: An Ultimatum*, trans. Lawrence Stepelevich (Lewiston, 1989), p. 93.

41   *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton, 1968), p. 134.

42   Bruno Bauer, pp. 93–95.

duty by their criticism to force divisions to a final rupture and thus to their complete resolution'.[43]

In Left Hegelian terms, the French Revolution, as a political revolution, did not represent a 'complete resolution' of the revolutionary crisis. As Edgar Bauer put it: 'The political revolution serves us as nothing further than as a proof that it alone does not finish the project – it is an instructive example, and that may be enough. It is a historical phenomenon, complete in itself; it cannot and may not occur *as it once was.*' Thus he objects to the view that Left Hegelians urge 'a restoration of the French Revolution'. He continues: 'Our business then would be indeed nothing but a reaction; and a reaction has never in history brought any good with it.' What is 'instructive' in the French Revolution, beyond its testimony to the power of the practico-revolutionary spirit, is, according to the passage we quoted from Edgar Bauer above, its proof that 'the attempt … to make men free in the state … is not possible'.[44] That is to say, the French Revolution proves the need for an ongoing revolutionary project – beyond even what Marx would later have in mind. Indeed, as the Left Hegelians saw it, the revolution of 1830 – a revolution for their generation, though in fact just as bourgeois as that of 1789 – offered further hope for this project.

The direction that Left Hegelianism was to take – toward radicalism, whether it be the socialism of Marx and Engels or, more consistently from the standpoint of Left Hegelian 'dialectic', the anarchism of Bakunin and Stirner – was not nor could it be sincerely represented as 'authentically' Hegelian. (Bruno Bauer's claims to the contrary – that 'the Young Hegelians are the true and authentic Hegelians' – must be taken with more than a pinch of salt.[45]) The radicalism of Left Hegelianism was encouraged, again, by the revolutionary response to the Enlightenment. However, it was the thought of Hegel, albeit dubiously interpreted (or consciously 'misinterpreted'), that provided the theoretical foundation for this brand of radicalism.

Hegel's place in the emergence of nineteenth century radicalism, not least anarchism, is paradoxical. After all, we may assume that his thought can be characterized primarily in three ways: first, as speculative theology, as a rational expression of the 'consummate' religion, Christianity (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*); second, as a logical rebuttal of the principle of contradiction and the philosophy of the understanding (*Science of Logic*, *Encyclopedia Logic*); and third, as a conservative plea for the historical significance of the Prussian state (*Philosophy of Right*, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*). Accordingly, the consistent Hegelian would be a *dialectically-minded Christian conservative*. Of course, this is something of a caricature, but generally applies to Old or Right Hegelians such as Karl Friedrich Göschel, Georg Andreas Gabler, and Leopold von Henning.

Young or Left Hegelianism represents more than a modification of this orthodox Hegelian philosophy. It represents a complete transformation of it in all three aspects,

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43   McLellan, p. 8.
44   Edgar Bauer, pp. 265, 269.
45   Bruno Bauer, p. 66.

such that the Left Hegelian might be characterized as an *antithetically-minded atheistic radical*. What is apparent, then, is that the Left Hegelian interpretation of Hegel operated on the three main levels of his thought. The initial response was *theological*. The debate that took place here, on such a seemingly innocuous intellectual matter, in fact split the Hegelian movement into, in theological terms, a relatively conservative 'Right' and a relatively radical 'Left' in the first place.

Theologically, that is to say fundamentally, the Left Hegelian interpretation of Hegel had some claim to authenticity if not fidelity, a claim that diminished as the movement developed and radicalized. In other words, the Left Hegelians initially exposed certain actual ambiguities in Hegel's system that suggested genuine theological unorthodoxy. In particular, David Friedrich Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach made much of Hegel's identification of the human and the divine natures ('The divine nature is the same as the human'[46]). While the first conclusions drawn from this identification were humanistic rather than strictly atheistic, the dialectical intervention of Bruno Bauer, which we will come to in a moment, altered this. Another theological ambiguity exposed by the Left Hegelians is Hegel's contention that religion is formally inadequate to its rational content and that 'what remains to be done', therefore, 'is to supersede this mere form'.[47] By implication, Hegel tended to privilege philosophical reasoning over religious 'representation'. To Bruno Bauer, for one, this amounted to a pronouncement of the absolute incompatibility of philosophy and religion, of reason and faith, the former in each instance being declared victorious.

Subsequent to theological interpretation and critique, the Left Hegelians turned their attention to Hegel's logic. At the *logical* level, then, they set about honing his understanding of dialectical development. As Bruno Bauer and Bakunin saw it, dialectical progress was secured through negation rather than 'sublation' or mediated preservation. Thus they developed what is effectively, from an authentic Hegelian perspective, an antithetics in which the antithetical or negative moment determines the resolution of contradictory relations. The negative or revolutionary element is therefore the sole means of progress. Accordingly, Bakunin would castigate Marx's later revolutionary vision as inadequate; being founded on the 'sublation' of the State rather than its negation, it pointed to political revolution (as opposed to fundamental, root and branch 'social revolution'). This form was, as we have seen, held by Edgar Bauer and others to amount to effective reaction in the aftermath of the French Revolution.

At the *practical* level, the antithetical logic radicalized a new interpretation of Hegelianism as the philosophy of praxis, as a philosophy in which thought, having reached its summit, must necessarily give way to action. August von Cieszkowski, whose '*Prolegomena to Historiosophy* completely re-oriented Hegelianism, transforming it from a doctrine considered to be merely retrospective and theoretical into a program of fundamental social change',[48] and Arnold Ruge, who espoused

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46   *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford, 1977), p. 460 (§759).
47   Ibid., p. 479 (§788).
48   From the editor's introductory note, Lawrence S. Stepelevich, *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology*, p. 55.

the politics of freedom, were the main theoretical forces behind this interpretation. Bruno Bauer also demanded that Hegelianism 'come to the act'. The consequence of this was clear enough: Hegel's 'implicitly' negative thought, far from underwriting conservatism and sanctioning reaction, had produced a philosophy of revolutionary praxis. It was at this point, however, that this revolutionary philosophy began to catch up with events (ultimately the revolutions of 1848) and that revolutionary politics superseded radical Hegelianism and mere philosophical interpretation altogether. Thus the actual revolutionaries in the movement (Marx, Engels, Moses Hess, and Bakunin) rejected it once and for all, while others (the Bauer brothers, Feuerbach, Ruge, Stirner, etc.) drifted into oblivion or settled on the Right.

What was the general influence of Left Hegelianism on anarchism in the final analysis? It was, I believe, twofold. The first influence was philosophical, the second temperamental.

Like the *philosophes*, the Left Hegelians assert their right to question or critique two pillars of European civilization – the Church and the State – while asserting it even more vigorously. Moreover, religious criticism is stated to be the prerequisite of political criticism. This relation is maintained in the anarchism of Stirner, Bakunin, and Proudhon, and fundamentally distinguishes the anarchist analysis from the Marxist. Marx, who shared this view as a Left Hegelian, later abandoned it as an economistically-oriented thinker. For anarchists, religion is a necessary condition for the mystification of relations of domination; one cannot comprehend the latter without examining the former. For Marxists, by contrast, religion is a superstructural reflection of a particular mode of production; one cannot comprehend the former without examining the latter. The complex tension between these two analyses is basic to the dispute between anarchism and Marxism.

In contrast to the *philosophes*, the Left Hegelians embody a confrontational sensibility that encouraged actual revolutionism. Marx conveys this during his Left Hegelian period in the following manner: '…what we have to accomplish in the present [is] a *ruthless criticism of everything existing*, ruthless in two senses. The criticism must not be afraid of its own conclusions, *nor of conflict with the powers that be*.'[49] The post-Left Hegelian revolutionary movements, Marxism and anarchism, are undoubtedly indebted to Left Hegelianism in this respect. At any rate, the pre-Left Hegelian anarchism of Godwin and, to a degree, even Proudhon does not constitute a genuinely revolutionary position. (Proudhon is an awkward case since, by and large, he developed his anarchism independently of Left Hegelianism – or is pre-Left Hegelian – but absorbed Hegelian teachings from Victor Cousin and Left Hegelian teachings from Bakunin, Marx, and Karl Grün, which left their trace.) Nevertheless, as we pointed out earlier, these movements differ dramatically in their understanding of the revolutionary principle and social progress as such. Marxism is, we might say, dialectical in Hegel's sense; it is a political revolutionary movement. On the other hand, anarchism is antithetical in the Left Hegelianism sense; it is a social revolutionary movement.

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49   From a letter to Ruge, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd edn (ed.) Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 13. Emphasis added to 'nor of confrontation with the powers that be'.

There is, of course, a major division within the anarchist tradition, as yet unexamined here. This is the division between social anarchism and individualist anarchism, and Left Hegelianism played a significant part is establishing this division. Before Left Hegelianism, anarchism was more or less individualistic: more so in Godwin's case (though even he can be said to demonstrate communistic sympathies[50]), less so in Proudhon's (who was much influenced by the early French socialism of Saint-Simon and Fourier). With Left Hegelianism, however, anarchism fell under the influence of two extreme and contrary positions. (Whether these contrary positions are contradictory is another issue, frequently raised in anarchist debate.) On the one hand, Feuerbach developed a humanism that quickly transmuted into socialism at the hands of his politicized followers. This socialistic strain, in conjunction with Proudhon's anarchism, gave birth to social anarchism – collectivist, communist, anarcho-syndicalist, and so on – that is, anarchism at its most recognizable in the European tradition. On the other hand, Stirner devised an egoistic philosophy, which gave birth to the individualistic anarchism that gained some ground in the United States.

We will make little enough of these distinctions within anarchism in this book. That is not to say that we can be indifferent to the distinction between those who say that 'our ideal … is that of the fraternal equity for which all yearn'[51] and those who say 'let us not seek the most comprehensive commune, "human society", but let us seek in others only means and organs which we may use as our property!'[52] It will become obvious enough that our general inclination here is to the Left, to views of the former kind. But, at least initially, we hope to make explicit the most fundamental features of anarchism, those that define it as such. By doing so, we would like to establish some kind of demarcation principle between anarchism (in its many and varied forms) and non-anarchism. Hence, we are happy to work here with a concept of what Fernando Tarrida del Mármol termed 'anarchism without adjectives'.[53]

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50   See Kropotkin, *Two Essays: Anarchism and Anarchist Communism*, p. 12.

51   Elisée Reclus, *An Anarchist on Anarchy* [1884] (London, 1897).

52   Stirner, p. 275.

53   See Chapter 6 of Paul Avrich's *An American Anarchist* (Princeton, 1978). His quotation from Dyer Lum captures the concept well: 'Anarchy … is the fundamental principle upon which all our arguments are based. Communism [for example] is a question of administration in the future, and hence must be subordinated to and in accord with the principles of Anarchy and all of its logical deductions' [ibid., pp. 151–52]. Avrich points out that this 'ecumenical' approach to anarchism, to use his own word, has been variously termed 'non-sectarian anarchism', 'united anarchism', 'synthetic anarchism', and 'anarchism pure and simple' [ibid., pp. 150–52].

Chapter 6

Foundational Texts of Anarchism

There are three major foundational texts of anarchist thought, three works of no little philosophical genius: Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* of 1793 (first edition); Proudhon's *What is Property?* of 1840 ('First memoir'); and Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own* of 1844 (though dated 1845). None of these works was conceived as providing the theoretical framework for concrete social change, let alone a revolutionary movement. Proudhon, who might be considered exceptional in this respect, writes of *What is Property?* that it was conceived 'solely for the greater glory of philosophy'.[1] As such, these works are distinct from those of other major anarchist thinkers – Bakunin, Kropotkin, Elisée Reclus, Malatesta, Goldman, etc. – who were actively involved in an anarchist revolutionary movement that didn't exist before their time, and were conscious of their revolutionism even in their theoretical work. We will explore the anarchist themes of each of the foundational texts, looking at them in chronological order.

Godwin's *Enquiry*

William Godwin's *Enquiry* can be seen as the culmination of Enlightenment thought and as the original philosophical expression of anarchism.[2] In general terms, it is an 'enlightened' examination of 'government'. Indeed, its eventual conclusion (initially unapparent) is that government is antithetical to enlightenment – to reason and progress, to truth and justice. Godwin contends that 'political justice' demands the 'dissolution of government'. Thus, progress points towards anarchy. Godwin clearly states the Enlightenment principles of critical reason and progress. Of the former, he writes that 'nothing is too sacred to be brought to the touchstone of examination'. Of the latter, he writes that 'perfectibility [that is, 'perpetual improvement' or continual

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1   *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. John Beverley Robinson (London, 1989), p. 100.

2   Among the English-language studies of Godwin are the following: George Woodcock, *William Godwin: A Biographical Study* [1946] (Montreal, 1989); David Fleischer, *William Godwin: A Study in Liberalism* (London, 1951); D.H. Monro, *Godwin's Moral Philosophy: An Interpretation of William Godwin* (Oxford, 1953); Burton Ralph Pollin, *Education and Enlightenment in the Works of William Godwin* (New York, 1962); John P. Clark, *The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin* (Princeton, 1977); Don Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin* (London, 1980); Peter Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven, 1984); Mark Philp, *Godwin's Political Justice* (London, 1986).

progress towards intellectual and moral 'perfection'] is one of the most unequivocal characteristics of the human species'.[3]

Godwin suspects that government is an obstacle to the operation of reason and the diffusion of truth: 'it may reasonably be doubted whether error could ever be formidable or long-lived, if government did not lend it support'. He also stresses its role in preventing progress: 'Instead of suffering us to look forward, [government] teaches us to look backward for perfection. It prompts us to seek the public welfare, not in innovation and improvement, but in a timid reverence for the decisions of our ancestors.' It is evident, then, that Godwin writes in opposition to the conservatism of Burke, the great counter-revolutionary and counter-Enlightenment thinker. Certainly, therefore, Godwin is on the side of 'Liberty'. However, he is no mere liberal. Unlike Godwin, liberals regard 'politics as an object of subordinate importance'. Generally taking for granted the practical necessity of government, they do not investigate the fundamental moral significance of political institutions, or question 'whether government be not still more considerable in its incidental effects than in those intended to be produced' (by proponents of limited government and the like). In emphasizing the first importance of politics (in emphasizing that politics is properly 'founded in the principles of morality and justice'), and in undertaking fundamental moral inquiry into the very principle of 'government', Godwin initiates the anarchist critique.[4]

Why, one might ask, is Godwin so concerned with reason and truth in his ethico-political work? What is the assumed relationship between reason, truth, and justice? For Godwin, the private exercise of reason allows us to ascertain truth, and truth is practically manifest as justice. Vice, by contrast, 'is nothing more than error and mistake reduced into practice, and adopted as the principle of our conduct'. According to Godwin, justice itself 'is coincident with utility'.[5] Godwin is, therefore, a utilitarian; he believes that the greatest good is the greatest *possible* happiness or pleasure of the greatest number. (However, he is not a reductive utilitarian; he does not attempt to reduce the good to 'vulgar' pleasure, but stresses that there are qualitative differences between the highest moral and intellectual pleasures (of benevolence and wisdom), and the lowest sensual pleasures.) Political institutions are to be evaluated, fundamentally or morally, in accordance with the *principle of utility*; these institutions satisfy the demands of political justice in so far as they maximize

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3   *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (2 vols, London, 1793), vol. 1, pp. 11, 21.

4   Ibid., pp. 3–4, 30, 32, 110. Godwin argues (on p. 3) that liberals are prompted 'by a quick sense of justice and disdain of oppression'. That is to say, they react in a rather superficial moral way to the limitation of human freedom, but do not inquire into the moral basis of social and political existence. Godwin continues to distance himself from liberalism (especially the Lockean form that inspired much later 'libertarianism'): 'There are two modes, according to which we may enquire into the origin of society and government. We may either examine them historically, that is, consider in what manner they have or ought to have begun, as Mr Locke has done; or we may examine them philosophically, that is, consider the moral principles upon which they depend. The first of these subjects is not without its use; but the second is of a higher order and more essential importance. The first is a question of form; the second of substance' [ibid., p. 78].

5   Ibid., pp. 31, 121.

social utility.[6] Book One of the *Enquiry*, which details the negative consequences of government, indicates the problems that government faces from the utilitarian perspective. However, Godwin's more famous criticisms of government (in Book Three and beyond) – his more 'philosophical' and less 'empirical' criticisms – seem to rest on a different ethical principle: the *principle of private judgement*.

Scholars have struggled to reconcile the two strains in Godwin's thought: the social and consequentialist strain, which claims that government generates social misery (and is therefore unjust), and the individualistic and non-consequentialist strain, which claims that government violates the individual's *right* of private judgement (and therefore has no right to exist).[7] These strains are particularly difficult to reconcile as Godwin's utilitarianism is opposed to the liberal doctrine of rights, as a morally vacuous doctrine that appears to impose no duties on us. According to Godwin, justice demands that we act in certain ways, whether or not these 'interfere' with the 'rights' of others. Indeed, Godwin attacks the very basis of liberal 'egalitarianism', maintaining that while we are equal in some sense (as 'partakers of a common [rational] nature' who are susceptible to the same pleasures and pains), we are not all of equal value; some of us are 'of more worth and importance' than others because of the contribution we make to social utility. In determining the right course of action, then, 'that life ought to be preferred which will be most conducive to the general good'. This points to two corollaries to the principle of utility. One is the principle of *benevolence*; the other, the principle of *impartiality*. According to Godwin, our moral choices are properly *motivated* by concern for the good of all; hence, we have a *duty* of benevolence. Generally, the principle of benevolence requires that one should maintain oneself 'in the best [physical and intellectual] condition for service'. However, 'If the extraordinary case should occur in which I can promote the general good by my death, more than by my life, justice requires that I should be content to die'. Moreover, our moral choices should never be swayed by social ties (such as familial attachments, feelings of gratitude, or obligations including promises), but motivated *solely* by the general good. Accordingly, faced with a decision to save either Archbishop Fénelon or his lowly chambermaid from a burning house, one should save the more 'valuable' Fénelon, even if the chambermaid

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6   All this points to the priority of the moral over the political (a central anarchist principle); and it also means that political forms that do not satisfy the demands of morality are to be 'rejected'. See ibid., p. 121: 'The nature of happiness and misery, pleasure and pain, is independent of all positive institution; that is, it is immutably true that whatever tends to procure a balance of the former is to be desired, and whatever tends to procure a balance of the latter is to be rejected.'

7   These two 'strains' fit in nicely with Miller's statement (already quoted in Part 1) that 'Anarchists make two charges against the state – they claim that it has no right to exist, and they also claim that it brings a whole series of social evils in its train' [*Anarchism* (London, 1984), p. 5]. For some ('pragmatic') anarchists, the former claim follows from the latter: the state has no right to exist *because* it is so detrimental to social well-being (however this is to be understood). For Godwin, though, the two claims appear to be distinct, and the problem is about their relationship – or the relationship between the moral principles on which they rest.

happens to be one's mother or wife. To do otherwise would be 'a breach of justice'.[8] (Clearly, an anarchist argument emerges from the principle of impartiality. Social obligations, including those imposed by authorities or previously consented to, are of no importance in comparison with considerations of utility, considerations that should be made by us as individuals in each and every case, in the here and now, irrespective of benefits conferred or commitments made in the past.)

We see from the morally demanding corollaries to Godwin's principle of utility that there is a non-consequentialist aspect to Godwin's unusual form of utilitarianism. Accordingly, he defines virtue as 'that species of operations of an intelligent being, which conduces to the benefit of intelligent beings in general, *and is produced by a desire of that benefit*'.[9] In other words, virtuous behaviour is not a matter of mere outcome (the generation of social utility), but also of motivation (of benevolent *intent*). Moreover, only the intelligent can be virtuous; only reason can give birth to the good. This suggests that private judgement (reason properly exercised) is temporally prior to utility; nevertheless, utility would still seem to be morally prior to private judgement, since the exercise of reason is only of *moral* value to the extent that it produces the greatest possible degree of social happiness. At least, this would seem to be the position that Godwin is trying to articulate, and for this reason (though conscious of the complexities and inconsistencies in his view) we consider Godwin here as a (highly rationalistic) utilitarian.[10]

What, then, are the negative consequences of government, according to Godwin? Godwin treats this question in two ways: historically and morally. Historically, he refers to three effects of government. The first is war, which 'has hitherto been considered as the inseparable ally of political institution'. Political history originates, Godwin claims, in 'projects, by means of bloodshed, violence, and murder, of enslaving mankind'. Godwin therefore believes, like other anarchists, that government is a product of violent conquest. Even in 'enlightened' Europe, wars continue to be conducted for all manner of spurious reasons.[11] The second historical effect of government, domestic rather than international, is crime and punishment,

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8   Godwin, vol. 1, pp. 81–82, 87, 83, 106.

9   Ibid., p. 13.

10   On the complexities of this debate (to which we cannot do justice here), compare Clark and Philp. Clark views Godwin as a utilitarian, Philp (more unusually) as a 'perfectionist'.

11   Godwin, vol. 1, pp. 5–6. On pp. 8–9, Godwin quotes Swift on the causes of and justifications for war: 'Sometimes the quarrel between two princes is to decide which of them shall dispossess a third of his dominions, where neither of them pretends to any right. Sometimes one prince quarrels with another, for fear the other should quarrel with him. Sometimes a war is entered upon because the enemy is too strong, and sometimes because he is too weak. Sometimes our neighbours want the things which we have, or the things which we want; and we both fight, till they take ours, or give us theirs. It is a very justifiable cause of war against our nearest ally, when one of its towns lies convenient for us, or a territory of land, that would render our dominions round and compact. If a prince sends forces into a nation where the people are poor and ignorant, he may lawfully put the half of them to death, and make slaves of the rest, in order to civilize and reduce them from their barbarous way of living. It is a very kingly, honourable, and frequent practice, when one prince desires the assistance of another to secure him against an invasion, that the assistant, when he has driven

a theme on which Godwin will elaborate later, as we will see shortly. And a third historical effect of government is that it that it assumes the form – in the majority of times and places – of despotism, reducing men to mere slaves.

An obvious question that arises is whether such historical ills can be remedied. In general, Godwin holds that they can be – or holds that social progress is possible – because, though morally neutral, men are capable of 'perfection' or continual moral improvement. (Of moral neutrality, he writes: 'We bring neither virtue nor vice with us at our entrance into the world. But the seeds of error are ordinarily sown so early as to pass with superficial observers for innate.'[12]) Godwin is usually reproached here – along with other Enlightenment thinkers – for having an absurd faith in human goodness. While he may be excessively optimistic about the *extent* of our moral *potential*, Godwin's basic point is merely that morally neutral beings must be *capable* of goodness (and moral improvement) – a point that doesn't seem unduly contentious. (Godwin writes: 'Man is not … a perfect being, but perfectible.'[13]) But what is highly contentious is the belief that when morally neutral beings comprehend matters of goodness, they *must* become good. This belief demonstrates Godwin's extreme rationalism (and Sandemanianism), and explains why he thinks the cultivation of reason is so vital to social progress.

What are the possible 'causes of moral improvement', according to Godwin? How are we to realize our moral potential and to secure social progress? He considers three possible instruments: 'literature', education, and 'political justice'. Literature, or 'the diffusion of knowledge through the medium of discussion, whether written or oral', seems like an obvious method of overcoming 'prejudices and mistakes', at least in its philosophical or scientific (that is, rational) forms. All literature requires is freedom of discussion and diversity of opinion. However, the problem with literature is that it is too exclusive; it 'exists only as the portion of a few', and most, 'at least in the present state of human society, cannot partake of its illuminations'. Godwin reaffirms his rationalism by arguing that if the entire nation became 'convinced of the flagrant absurdity of its institutions' it would inevitably overcome them. Perhaps education is an adequate instrument for achieving this level of *general* enlightenment; perhaps it can universalize the insights of literature. The problem with education, however, is that the educator himself is unlikely to have overcome the 'prejudices and mistakes' of his own society: 'Where must the preceptor himself have been educated, who shall thus elevate his pupil above all the errors of mankind?' In any case, even the rare enlightened educator would necessarily be ineffectual in his inevitable role of educator of the few: 'if a man thus mighty, thus accomplished, can be found, who will consent to the profanation of employing him in cultivating the mind of a boy when he should be instructing the world?' 'Political justice' differs from literature and education in 'the extent of its operation'. Godwin even claims that 'of all the modes of operating upon the mind government is the most considerable'.

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out the invader, should seize on the dominions himself, and kill, imprison, or banish, the prince he came to relieve.'
12   Ibid., p. 16.
13   Ibid., p. 118.

Accordingly, despotism can 'render men pliant', while 'free' government (a notion that Godwin entertains initially) can render them 'resolute and independent'.[14]

Generally, the 'efficacy' of government is demonstrated by its role in maintaining 'error' and 'vice'. At this point, Godwin begins to argue for a *necessary* connection between government and injustice, and this brings us to the moral side of his utilitarian argument (rather than the merely historical side, which only demonstrates a contingent link between government and injustice). He analyses the 'logical' relation between government and (violent and fraudulent) *crime*, the latter being one of the great social ills. Crime has its origins, according to Godwin, in poverty – poverty that even the 'utmost industry' cannot alleviate. 'Perpetual struggle' with seemingly insurmountable poverty leaves its victims 'desperate'. Furthermore, 'the luxury, the pageantry and magnificence with which enormous wealth is usually accompanied' leaves the poor 'bitter' and open to seeking reprisal. So too does the consciousness that the wealthy, for all 'their education, their affability, their superior polish, and the eloquence of their manners', 'have neither brilliant talents nor sublime virtues'.[15] The privileged cannot appeal to either superior application or superior talent to justify their privileges. Godwin, then, is no more a defender of middle-class privilege than aristocratic privilege. This may account for his influence on later British socialism and explain his neglect by most later liberals.

If the impoverished could bear the above with 'philosophic indifference' – if they could bear economic inequality with a sense of human equality – the final insult remains the political inequality with which they are faced. Even where monarchy and aristocracy have been toppled, the rich are 'directly or indirectly [by 'expensive purchase'] the legislators of the state; and of consequence are perpetually reducing oppression into a system'. Put simply, then, the poor are the victims of economic inequality *and* political oppression. What is more, the poor are victims of cultural discrimination when poverty 'is viewed as the greatest of demerits'. The inevitable result is the 'criminal' attempt to escape such a situation of economic, political, and cultural debasement – to gain materially and socially without 'the scruples of honesty'.[16]

What *precisely* is the political role in this process of impoverishment, this process of rendering the larger part of mankind 'unhappy'? Two important elements (one *legislative*, the other *judicial*, as it were) are the spirit of legislation and the administration of law. Of the former, Godwin states that the word of law 'in almost every country grossly [favours] the rich against the poor'. Thus, crimes of the poor, crimes that the rich 'have no temptation to commit, are treated as capital crimes'; or, generally, there is greater legislative hostility to what we would call 'blue-collar crimes' than 'white-collar misdemeanours'. Godwin adds that 'the administration of law is not less iniquitous than the spirit in which it is framed'. The length and cost of proceedings, for example, practically 'exclude the impoverished claimant from the faintest hope of redress'. In any case, there is a more basic (we might say *executive*) sense in which 'inequality of conditions' is 'maintained by political

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14   Ibid., pp. 11, 19–20, 22–23, 25–26, 28.
15   Ibid., pp. 34–36.
16   Ibid., pp. 37–38.

institution', by mere inequality of power.[17] Therefore, government is no benevolent power impartially aiming at the greatest possible happiness of the greatest number; it is a malignant power partially aiming at the satisfaction of a few (while condemning others to poverty and consequent criminality). *Government is unjust*.

The above is the first of Godwin's two arguments against government: the 'argument from utility' or from justice. His second argument is the 'argument from private judgement' or from reason. As Godwin develops this argument, it becomes evident that (unlike modern 'libertarians') he is no mere 'anti-statist' (or 'anti-governmentalist'). It is governmental *authority* that infringes upon the individual's right of private judgement, and Godwin moves away from a narrowly 'anti-governmental' line of reasoning towards a general 'anti-authoritarian' line – towards a wholesale critique of authority. In doing so, he establishes a rather absolutist – and quite abstract – form of philosophical anarchism, a form developed in even more extreme form by Stirner, as we will see. It was not until Proudhon and the classical anarchists inspired by him that (properly sceptical) anarchists renounced abstract anti-authoritarianism and acknowledged that *all* forms of authority *must* be justifiable in principle. These anarchists came to realize that an absolutist and abstract brand of philosophical anarchism is both theoretically and practically unsustainable.

Godwin introduces his principle of private judgement in the following way: 'To a rational being there can be but one rule of conduct, justice, and one mode of ascertaining that rule, the exercise of his understanding.'[18] This is Godwin's definitive statement on moral means and ends, and on their intrinsic (and therefore complex) relation. Given the intrinsic relation between the good (or justice) and reason (or private judgement) for Godwin, government must be morally evaluated not only in terms of its relation to the good (or in terms of social utility), but also in terms of its relation to the apprehension of the good by means of reason (or in terms of private judgement). Government is efficacious (and negatively so, as it transpires) with respect to moral means (reason) as well as moral ends (utility). Godwin, the rationalist, sees the means as 'unspeakably beautiful' in themselves, and this sentiment causes much of the difficulty in interpreting the relationship between his two moral principles. Is social utility really the end of moral agency? Or is autonomous rational agency somehow prior – itself the real end of all human agency? Godwin does at times encourage the latter belief. However, a more coherent interpretation of Godwin is that he is a utilitarian who values (and sometimes over-values) private judgement (rather aesthetically in the above instance) for its *necessary* contribution to the good life – the life directed at justice or social happiness. (Importantly, Godwin states that private judgement is 'only [a] means of discovering right and wrong', not 'the standard of moral right and wrong' in itself.[19])

What is the relationship between government and reason? Is it possible for this 'positive institution' to stimulate reason? If it is, it could do so in one of two ways: it could 'furnish me with an additional motive' for moral action; or it could 'inform my understanding' about the proper course of moral action. Godwin argues that the

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17   Ibid., pp. 39–41.
18   Ibid., p. 120.
19   Ibid., p. 164.

first instance – in which government might reward me for acting morally (or punish me for not doing so) – 'changes the nature of the action'. It can no longer be wholly benevolent and virtuous 'because some person has arbitrarily annexed to it a great weight of self-interest'. The second instance – in which government might direct me to moral truth – perverts the understanding of truths (which are self-evident to reason) by attaching some sort of authoritative utterance to them. This can 'yield an irregular assent' to the utterance, but never understanding of it: 'I could not properly be said to perceive its truth'. In any case, authorities require more than 'assent' to their utterances. They require obedience under the threat or promise of the 'sanction [of] punishment or reward'.[20] This is precisely the kind of additional motive for action that renders it non-virtuous.

But what if – at least hypothetically – government represented an 'infallible standard' or a moral authority? Godwin declares that this standard would be 'of little use in human affairs, unless it had the property of reasoning as well as deciding, of enlightening the mind as well as constraining the body'. Positive institutions, even the most enlightened, 'decide' (legislate, judge, punish, reward, etc.) 'for us' – they do not and cannot reason for us. The *only* mode of ascertaining moral conduct, once again, is 'the exercise of [the individual's] understanding'. Moreover, only such a rational apprehension of the good can lead to the good life or social well-being. In any event, whether we should obey the directives of a hypothetically infallible authority or not, Godwin holds that political authorities are – in fact – more fallible than individuals. Why so? Because 'the depositaries of government have a very obvious temptation to desire, by means of ignorance and implicit faith, to perpetuate the existing state of things'. Godwin (like all anarchists) is therefore suspicious of the motives of the political class, the class composed of those individuals privileged by their exercise of social power. He concludes that: 'The intervention of authority in a field proper to reasoning and demonstration is always injurious.'[21]

Surely, however, there are exceptions to the universal right of private judgement. Surely there are 'emergencies' overriding this right. Godwin considers three cases: that of the criminal, the rebel or 'internal enemy', and the 'foreign invader'. In the second and third cases – of the domestic and foreign warmonger – Godwin can only say that civil and international war 'would be nearly extirpated, if [it] were supported only by the voluntary contributions of those by whom [its] principle was approved'. War, in other words, is not an argument against private judgement but *for* it. Godwin has a good deal more to say about the 'exceptional' case of the criminal. Having placed the blame for crime on society (on economic inequality and political oppression) rather than nature (or 'original sin'), he considers whether the criminal should be denied his right of private judgement – whether he should be denied his right of independent moral judgement and action by government. Surely 'some powerful arbitrator [must] interfere, where the proceedings of the individual threaten the most injurious consequences to his neighbours'.[22]

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20   Ibid., pp. 122, 124–25.
21   Ibid., pp. 128, 186.
22   Ibid., pp. 129, 136–37.

Godwin offers three arguments against this conventional view (a view taken for granted even by liberals). First of all, he points to the fallibility of evidence that leads to the inevitable punishment – sooner or later – of the innocent. He maintains that 'it is no trivial evil, to subject an innocent man eventually, to the public award and the established punishment annexed to the most atrocious crimes'. The punishment of the innocent cannot be justified, even on utilitarian grounds (as is sometimes supposed). Though we are all of different value, as Godwin has already argued, none of us is of such little value (to social well-being) as to be punished in innocence. Thus, a system which renders this outcome inevitable is detrimental to social utility. Secondly, Godwin claims that it is unjust to apply the generality of law, in Procrustean fashion, to the specificity of crime. 'Strictly speaking no two men were ever guilty of the same crime' – because of the diversity of situations and motivations (or degrees of virtue and vice) – 'but here comes in positive law with its Procrustes' bed, and levels all characters, and tramples upon all distinctions'. Thirdly, Godwin argues that punishment is 'inappropriate' for any of its stated aims. If punishment is intended to convince the criminal of a new moral truth, it is unjust because it merely attempts to replace reason with force. 'Punishment is a specious name, but is in reality nothing more than force put upon one being by another. [And] strength does not constitute justice.' Might, in other words, cannot reveal 'right'. If punishment is intended to reinforce the criminal's belief in an old moral truth, it is similarly unjust because reason cannot be supplemented by force any more than it can be replaced by it. Godwin asks: 'do you wish by the weight of your blows to make up for the deficiency of your logic?' He notes: 'This can never be defended. An appeal to force must appear to both parties, in proportion to the soundness of their understanding, to be a confession of imbecility.' If, finally, punishment is intended to set an example to others, it amounts to an unjust practice of punishing the innocent (in so far as they are punished not for their own actions but, *additionally*, for the 'benefit' of others). 'He that suffers, not for his own correction, but for the advantage of others stands, so far as relates to that suffering, in the situation of an innocent person.' Ultimately, morality demands not that we punish unjustly, but that we realize justice by abolishing 'those causes [that is, economic inequality and political oppression] that generate temptation and make punishment necessary'.[23]

What, then, is the exact relationship between the principle of private judgement and government in its various forms? Could government, in one form or another, satisfy the demands of this principle? To answer this question, Godwin has to return (in Book Three) to the principle of government itself, and to 'ascertain the foundation of political government'. After doing so, he pays more specific attention (in Book Five) to different forms of government. Godwin has little interest in the principles of *force* and *divine right* as potential foundations of government. The first principle simply identifies might with right, and thereby 'puts a violent termination upon all political science'. The second principle either follows the first – in holding that *all* government is legitimate (of 'divine origin') – or becomes 'totally useless till a certain criterion can be found, to distinguish those governments which are

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23   Ibid., pp. 130–35.

approved by God, from those which cannot lay claim to that sanction'.[24] But a third principle seems more hopeful. The principle of *consent*, and the doctrine of the social contract that is established on it, seem to respect the universal right of private judgement and therefore to demonstrate the legitimacy of government, at least from a non-utilitarian and deontological perspective. However, Godwin argues that social contract doctrine contradicts itself – that it fails to meet its own demands with respect to real and meaningful consent. He considers three kinds of consent: consent by *original contract*, *tacit* consent, and *explicit* consent.

The original contract, that consented to by our ancestors, denies *us* our right of private judgement. 'Little will be gained for the cause of equality and justice, if our ancestors, at the first institution of government … could barter away the understandings and independence of all that came after them.' Tacit consent is nothing more than 'acquiescence' to established power, whatever its moral foundation. With this principle, 'an end is effectually put to all political science, all discrimination of better and worse' forms of social power. Even the hypothetical case of explicit consent, where all of us are called at some stage (say, on reaching maturity) to declare our 'assent or dissent' to a government, faces problems. First, there is an issue of *time* (of the temporal extent of obligation): 'for how long a period does this declaration bind me? Am I precluded from better information for the whole course of my life? And, if not for my whole life, why for a year, a week or even an hour?' Second, there is an issue of *understanding* (of making a single judgement on vastly complicated matters): 'What … can be more absurd than to present to me the laws of England in fifty volumes folio, and call upon me to give an honest and uninfluenced vote upon their whole contents at once?' Third, there is an issue of *prospective reasoning* (of making an uninformed judgement about the future): 'I am not only obliged to consent to all the laws that are actually upon record, but to all the laws that shall hereafter be made.' And fourth, there is the highly significant issue of dissent (of consent withheld from established government): 'if government be founded in the consent of the people, it can have no power over any individual by whom that consent is refused'. Godwin concludes, in light of the above, that 'No consent of ours can divest us of our moral capacity', or our right of private judgement.[25]

Having considered the specific problem of consent, Godwin turns to some more general moral problems of authority as such. Especially important among these are the problem of *obligation* (including the problem of 'the obligation under which we are placed to observe our promises') and the problem of *obedience* (as the supposed 'correlative' of authority). The first of these problems has been touched upon above, in reference to the principle of impartiality. The question Godwin is concerned with is whether obligations *undertaken by us* are binding: whether we should keep promises, honour oaths, and so on. He argues that they are not binding – that 'solemn undertaking[s] of mine' are morally immaterial, that they 'can make no alteration in the case'. The only consideration in every case is justice, or for the individual to what he judges to be in the interest of all.

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24   Ibid., pp. 139, 141.
25   Ibid., pp. 143–44, 146–49.

Justice it appears therefore ought to be done, whether we have promised it or not. If we discover any thing to be unjust, we ought to abstain from it, with whatever solemnity we have engaged for its perpetration. We were erroneous and vicious when the promise was made; but this affords no sufficient reason for its performance.[26]

Justice is, according to Godwin, prior to 'obligation'. This is a utilitarian argument against obligations undertaken, but Godwin also rejects these obligations from the perspective of the principle of private judgement. When we undertake obligations, we commit ourselves to a future course of action on the basis of present knowledge. Thus, we 'disarm future wisdom' – or our ability and right to judge each case on its merits. Godwin anticipates the main objection to his rejection of such 'binding' obligations: 'it will be said, "if promises be not made, or when made not fulfilled, how can the affairs of the world be carried on?"' He answers simply: 'By rational and intelligent beings acting as if they were rational and intelligent.'[27] The enlightened man has no need to promise and 'disarm future wisdom'; he merely acts justly and wisely.

If we do not – or should not – *undertake* obligations, perhaps we *acquire* obligations to at least some forms of government by enjoying the benefits they provide, notably 'protection'. '"We live", it will be said, "under the protection of [a] constitution; and protection, being a benefit conferred, obliges us to a reciprocation of support in return".' Godwin responds that the 'benefits' of government are 'equivocal' at best. (He pointed to the closely related ills of government in Book One, as we have seen.) He also argues that obligations based on gratitude are based on vice (since gratitude violates the principle of impartiality). Furthermore, he argues that – whatever might be said for feelings of *personal* gratitude – feelings of *impersonal* gratitude to an abstraction or 'imaginary existence' like a constitution are 'altogether unintelligible'. Consequently, the citizen has no duties or obligations apart from his duty of benevolence or obligation 'to act justly'.[28]

Having considered the problem of obligation (or of obligations undertaken and acquired), Godwin considers the problem of obedience, asking whether, and to what extent, we have *a duty to obey* authority. Assuming that there is a proper moral foundation for governmental authority (though force, divine right, consent, and gratitude do not seem to provide it), are we duty-bound to obey government? Godwin maintains that we are not because 'obedience is by no means the proper correlative' of authority. Here he attempts to demonstrate that there is in fact a contradiction between governmental authority and obedience: 'The object of government … is the exertion of force. Now force can never be regarded as an appeal to the understanding; and therefore obedience, which is an act of the understanding or will, can have no legitimate connection with it'. Complying with governmental authority is like complying 'with a wild beast, that forces me to run north, when my judgement and inclination prompted me to go south'. Godwin claims, therefore, that the duty of obedience to governmental authority violates the right of private judgement. However, he also argues that it conflicts with the principle of utility:

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26   Ibid., pp. 150, 151–52, 155.
27   Ibid., pp. 152, 163.
28   Ibid., pp. 198–99, 156.

There is one rule to which we are universally bound to conform ourselves, justice, the treating of every man precisely as his usefulness and worth demand, the acting under every circumstance in the manner that shall procure the greatest quantity of general good. When we have done this, what province is there left to the disposal of obedience?[29]

In Book Five, Godwin examines the three principal forms of government: monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. Monarchy, he claims, is a counter-intuitive notion (though one 'by the accident of education … rendered familiar to us from our infancy'). In the first place, the monarch's role of 'superintending the affairs and watching for the happiness of millions' seems beyond the physical and intellectual power of a single individual. And, secondly, the monarch's distance from the rest of the species seems like 'a very violent usurpation upon' the principle of 'the physical and moral equality of mankind'. Practically and morally, therefore, monarchy is a questionable form of government. But Godwin wonders whether the prince could be sufficiently prepared and educated for his 'illustrious office' after all. Owing to his lack of experience and his constant exposure to 'falsehood and flattery', Godwin maintains that he could not. (Of course, even if he could – even in the hypothetical case of a 'virtuous despotism' – his authority would violate our right of private judgement. But Godwin pursues the utilitarian argument here.) The prince's inexperience is a result of 'pernicious' prosperity – meaning, in this case, 'a superfluity of wealth, which deprives us of all intercourse with our fellow men upon equal terms, and makes us prisoners of state, gratified indeed with baubles and splendour, but shut out from the real benefits of society and the perception of truth'. Without genuine experience, there is no way of 'attaining wisdom and ability'. The prince's constant exposure to 'falsehood and flattery' is an obvious result of his status. According to Godwin, it tends to make him intolerant of the truth (which may contradict him) and 'indifferent to mankind' (which he experiences as 'knavish and designing'). Godwin concludes that the prince is intellectually and morally unfit to govern:

His understanding is distorted; and the basis of all morality, the recollection that all men are beings of the same order as himself, is extirpated. It would be unreasonable to expect from him any thing generous and humane.[30]

Next, Godwin examines aristocracy or the 'government of the best'. (This is contrasted with dreaded rule by the multitude, or the universalist and egalitarian idea of democracy.) The 'best' are distinguished by birth – by their 'hereditary pre-eminence' – as well as by upbringing and education. The hereditary principle Godwin dismisses as the greatest 'insult upon reason and justice'. Physically, birth and 'blood' are irrelevant, since we are all equipped equally with senses and brains. Indeed, our *moral* equality follows from this physical equality, from the fact that we share a common sentient and rational nature, that we are all equally capable of moral agency. However, perhaps a refined environment and education can render some 'superior' to – and more fit to govern than – others. While Godwin acknowledges 'the power and importance of education', he denies the efficacy of 'opulent education'.

29   Ibid., pp. 168–69, 171.
30   Godwin, vol. 2, pp. 383–84, 386, 388, 391, 392–93.

The verbalistic, pedantic, and abstract education of the privileged – divorced from 'the education of things' – produces 'effeminacy and error'. Virtue and virtuous rule, by contrast, depend on fortitude and understanding. Godwin concludes, therefore,

> that to elect men to the rank of nobility is to elect them to a post of moral danger and depravity; but that to constitute them hereditarily noble is to preclude them, bating a few extraordinary accidents, from all the causes that generate ability and virtue.[31]

Godwin contrasts the systems of monarchic and aristocratic 'exclusivity' with the system of 'democratic equality'. In relative terms, he has much to say in favour of democracy. Doubtless, the classical arguments against democracy have some merit. Democracy may represent the ascendancy of an ignorant majority that is susceptible to the manipulation of demagogues. 'Political truth has hitherto proved an enigma, that all the wit of mankind has been insufficient to solve. Is it to be supposed that the uninstructed multitude should always be able to resist the artful sophistry and captivating eloquence that will be employed to darken it?' Democracy may also be 'wavering and inconstant', a system guided by 'momentary impulse' rather than immutable 'political justice'. Again, this provides the demagogue with an opportunity 'to dazzle and deceive the multitude in order to rise to absolute power'. Moreover, given the ignorance of the majority and the attempts of demagogues to exploit it, the former, 'conscious of their weakness in this respect, will … be perpetually suspicious and uneasy' – doubting even instances of genuine virtue. For all this, Godwin maintains that such democratic 'disorder' is preferable to monarchic or aristocratic 'order', to 'that unwholesome calm which is a stranger to virtue'. Democracy has been and remains to some extent a force for intellectual and moral progress:

> Democracy restores to man a consciousness of his value, teaches him by the removal of authority and oppression to listen only to the dictates of reason, gives him confidence to treat all other men as his fellow beings, and induces him to regard them no longer as enemies against whom to be upon his guard, but as brethren whom it becomes him to assist.[32]

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the progressive *spirit* of democracy, Godwin still points to the moral defects of the democratic *form of government*. Essentially, democracy violates the principle of private judgement in three ways (two of them quite fundamental, the other procedural). *Majoritarian democracy* produces a 'fictitious unanimity' whereby the out-voted minority is compelled to act with the majority against itself – against its own judgement about the proper course of action. This is not only a particular violation of the minority's right of private judgement; it is also a general 'depravation of the human understanding and character': 'He that contributes his personal exertions or his property to the support of a cause which he believes to be unjust, will quickly lose that accurate discrimination and nice sensibility of moral rectitude which are the principal ornaments of reason.'

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31 Ibid., pp. 461, 463, 464–66.
32 Ibid., pp. 489–91, 493–94.

Unanimous democracy, on the other hand, is 'deceitful and pernicious'. The 'unanimity' it produces is not the result of reason freely exercised but of men 'having a visible standard by which to adjust their sentiments': 'In numerous assemblies a thousand motives influence our judgements, independently of reason and evidence. Every man looks forward to the effects which the opinions he avows will produce on his success. Every man connects himself with some sect or party. The activity of his thought is shackled at every turn by the fear that his associates may disclaim him'. Procedurally, democracy artificially terminates deliberative reasoning with routine *voting*. This not only prevents the *gradual* pursuit of the truth; it also changes the nature of democratic 'deliberation': 'The orator no longer enquires after permanent conviction, but transitory effect. He seeks rather to take advantage of our prejudices than to enlighten our judgement'. The deciding of truth 'by the counting up of numbers' is, Godwin declares, an 'intolerable insult upon all reason and justice'.[33]

Democratic authority, whether based on majority or 'unanimous' decision, is ultimately irreconcilable with the principle of private judgement. Quashing (or at least perverting) the means by which ethico-political truth might be apprehended, democratic government is incompatible with that truth – with political justice itself. Democratic government, put simply, is neither rational nor moral. Democratic institutions that are divested of their authority – of their command function – might assume an 'invitational' function: they might 'invite [members of the community] to cooperate for the common advantage, and by arguments and addresses convince them of the reasonableness of the measures they propose'. But even this function would become unnecessary at the dawn of enlightened reason, when 'the reasonings of one wise man will be as effectual as those of twelve'. Godwin continues:

> This is one of the most memorable stages of human improvement. With what delight must every well informed friend of mankind look forward to the auspicious period, the dissolution of political government, of that brute engine, which has been the only perennial cause of the vices of mankind, and which, as has abundantly appeared in the progress of the present work, has mischiefs of various sorts incorporated with its substance, and no otherwise to be removed than by its utter annihilation![34]

Progress towards the reign of enlightened reason points to 'anarchy'. But what will this condition look like in broad outline? As we have just seen, with the dissolution of government there will be an *absence of political authority*. Any such authority would preclude private judgement and therefore justice. The subject of authority necessarily 'surrenders his reason'[35] and complies (if he does) without understanding. Anarchy also implies the dissolution of law and an *absence of legal coercion*. All coercion precludes reason: 'It includes in it a tacit confession of imbecility. If he who employs [it] against me could mould me to his purposes by argument, no doubt he would. He pretends to punish me because his argument is important, but he really punishes me because his argument is weak.' Instead of legal coercion, then, anarchy represents 'reason exercising an uncontrolled jurisdiction upon the circumstances

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33   Ibid., pp. 568–71.
34   Ibid., pp. 576, 578–79.
35   Godwin, vol. 1, p. 174.

of the case'. In any event, with the aforementioned dissolution of government, law must also 'perish', since the latter is dependent on the former: 'law is merely relative to the exercise of political force, and must perish when the necessity for force ceases'. Thirdly, anarchy implies the dissolution of private property and the *absence of economic inequality*. This outcome is closely related to the dissolution of law (and legal titles): 'the period that shall put an end to the system of coercion and punishment, is intimately connected with the circumstance of property's being placed upon an equitable basis'.[36] A little more should be said of this aspect of Godwin's anarchism.

The 'established system of property' is, Godwin affirms, unjust: 'justice and virtue … do not authorize us to accumulate [even by industry[37]] luxuries upon ourselves, while we see others in want of the indispensable means of improvement and happiness' – that is, not only 'the means of being' (food, clothing, and shelter), though even these seem 'scarce', but also the means 'of *well* being' (or the means to cultivate one's 'rational powers'). What are the effects of economic inequality, according to Godwin? First of all, it creates a 'sense of dependence' upon the affluent in the poor, a sense that suppresses their private judgement. 'Observe the servants that follow in a rich man's train, watchful of his looks, anticipating his commands, not daring to reply to his insolence, all their time and efforts under the direction of his caprice'. Secondly, the 'perpetual spectacle' of inequality corrupts the understanding and our very sense of justice. We have become 'accustomed to the sight of injustice, oppression, and iniquity, till [our] feelings are made callous, and [our] understandings incapable of apprehending the nature of true virtue'. Thirdly, economic inequality condemns the poor to numbing manual labour, thereby treading 'the powers of thought in the dust'. Meanwhile, the rich, though 'furnished with the means of cultivation', are too 'indolent' to make anything of them. Godwin wonders: 'How rapid and sublime would be the advances of the intellect, if all men were admitted into the field of knowledge?' A fourth effect of inequality, already discussed above, is crime: 'The fruitful source of crimes consists in this circumstance, one man's possessing in abundance that of which another man is destitute.' Indeed, those who possess in abundance are motivated in the present system of property by the passion of ambition – the ambition to accumulate yet more. On an international scale, this gives rise to war.

> It is clear then that war in every horrid form is the growth of unequal property. As long as this source of jealousy and corruption shall remain, it is visionary to talk of universal peace. As soon as the source shall be dried up, it will be impossible to exclude the consequence.[38]

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36   Godwin, vol. 2, pp. 704, 773, 780, 788. Emphasis removed.

37   See ibid., pp. 794–95: 'If you be industrious, you shall have an hundred times more food than you can eat, and an hundred times more clothes than you can wear. Where is the justice of this?' In any event, the reality is that: 'The most industrious and active member of society is frequently with great difficulty able to keep his family from starving.'

38   Ibid., pp. 796, 791, 799, 800, 802–07, 809, 812. Emphasis added.

How does Godwin envisage the condition of anarchy being realized? Will it come about through sudden and perhaps violent *revolution*? Or will it *evolve* gradually in proportion to the cultivation of reason and the dissemination of truth? Godwin holds the latter view: that as reason, 'the great instrument of justice',[39] comes to fruition, so society is transformed; that as we assert our independent rationality (unfettered by prejudice, authority, or social ties), so society becomes just. Indeed, so potent a weapon is reason that no other outcome is possible. Of violent revolution, by contrast, he writes: 'When we lay down our arguments, and take up our swords, the case is altered'; we 'desert the vantage ground of truth' and lapse into injustice. He urges: 'If then we would improve the social institutions of mankind, we must write, we must argue, we must converse. To this business there is no close; in this pursuit there should be no pause'.[40]

Proudhon's *What is Property?*

Ideologically, the most important of the foundational texts is Proudhon's *What is Property?* First, though this point is of questionable importance, it is the work in which anarchism was affirmed as such for the first time. Rejecting republicanism, monarchy, constitutionalism, and aristocracy, Proudhon declares: 'I am an anarchist … I have just given you my serious and well-considered profession of faith. Although a firm friend of order, I am, in every sense of the term, an anarchist.'[41] Godwin and Stirner never referred to themselves as anarchists and it is doubtful whether they would have appreciated the attribution of the term to them. Secondly, while Godwin and Stirner add philosophical weight to the anarchist case, Proudhon's argument in *What is Property?* is the model of subsequent anarchist critique. We will substantiate this point shortly. But there is a further reason why Proudhon deserves pride of place among the founding generation of anarchist theorists. Proudhon, though he thought of himself as a philosopher rather than a revolutionary, was instrumental in the establishment of the *anarchist movement* as propagator of an *anarchist ideology*. Additionally, his anarchist sentiments outlasted his first profession of anarchist belief, and he made a sustained (if highly inconsistent) contribution to anarchist thought. This can hardly be said of Godwin, still less of Stirner. For these reasons, it is unsurprising that subsequent generations should acclaim him as 'a far greater influence on the development of Anarchist theory' than his fellow founders.[42]

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39   Ibid., p. 887.

40   Godwin, vol. 1, pp. 202–203.

41   *What is Property?* (eds) Donald R. Kelley and Bonnie G. Smith (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 205.

42   Rudolf Rocker, *Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism* (London, 1973), p. 13. Works on Proudhon in English include: Henri de Lubac, *The Un-Marxian Socialist: A Study of Proudhon*, trans. R.E. Scantlebury (London, 1948); Alan Ritter, *The Political Thought of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* (Princeton, 1969); Robert L. Hoffman, *Revolutionary Justice: The Social and Political Theory of P.J. Proudhon* (Urbana, 1972); Edward S. Hyams, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: His Revolutionary Life, Mind, and Works* (London, 1979); K. Steven Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism* (Oxford,

Now we turn to the substantiation of the second point, above, and carefully study the nature of Proudhon's critique in *What is Property?* Indeed, we should invoke the subtitle: *An Inquiry Into the Principle of Right and of Government*. Like the *philosophes*, Proudhon asserts his critical right to question the 'unquestionables' of the society in which he lives: no longer 'the triple net of royal absolutism, the tyranny of nobles and parlements, and clerical intolerance', as in the pre-Revolutionary era, but the new bourgeois principles of the post-1789 and post-1830 era. These principles are the objects of his emergent anarchist critique (anticipated, as we pointed out earlier, by Rousseau in particular, especially in his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*); they are the associated principles of 'property' and 'government'.

> I undertake to discuss the very principle of our government and of our institutions – namely, property: in this I am within my right. I may be wrong in the conclusion I draw from my research, but I am within my right.[43]

Proudhon also shares the *philosophes'* progressive reasoning: 'Humanity makes continual progress toward truth, and light ever triumphs over darkness.' Thus, his anarchism is founded on the Enlightenment principles of critical reason and progress. He sketches the progress made from Roman times to the French Revolution, but states that while the latter was a progressive event, it was inadequate in its revolutionary outcome: 'We congratulate ourselves, with ill-considered enthusiasm, on the glorious French Revolution, the regeneration of 1789, the great reforms that have been effected, and the change in institutions – a delusion, a delusion! … in 1789 there was struggle and progress, but of [social] revolution there was none.' Ultimately, the French revolutions of 1789 and 1830 had three results; as Proudhon puts it, they 'consecrated' the 'three fundamental principles of modern society'. The first result of the revolutions was State-'despotism' in new, seemingly more popular or, in Proudhon's terms, 'rational' form: 'No doubt when a nation passes from the monarchical to the democratic state, there is [political] progress … but in the end there is no [social] revolution because the principle remains the same. Now, we have proof today that with the most perfect democracy we still cannot be free'. The second result was the sanctification of inequality or, for all the talk of equal rights, actual 'inequality [of 'station', of 'wealth', and of 'privilege'] before the law'. And the third result was the consecration or supposed legitimation of property. Proudhon explains:

> The people did not invent property … they proclaimed the uniformity of this right. The harsher forms of property … have disappeared; the conditions of its enjoyment have been modified, but the principle remains the same. There has been progress in the regulation of the right, but there has been no revolution.[44]

1984); George Woodcock, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: A Biography*, 3rd edn (Montreal, 1987) [1st edn (London, 1956)]; John Ehrenberg, *Proudhon and His Age* (Atlantic Highlands, 1996).

43   *What is Property?*, pp. 26, 13.
44   Ibid., pp. 22, 27–31.

At this stage of his intellectual career, Proudhon argues that the central principle of bourgeois civilization is in fact property, since both modern inequality and the modern governmental principle are founded upon it. Property is, therefore, 'the great cause of privilege and despotism'. Two of the three questions Proudhon asks in *What is Property?* – 'Is the *authority* of man over man just?' and 'Is political and civil *inequality* just?' – can only be settled by asking a third, fundamental question: 'Is *property* just?' Thus, Proudhon's critique of bourgeois-proprietarian civilization is ethical in character, a critique from the ethical standpoint of *justice*: 'Justice, nothing but justice, that is the sum of my argument'. According to Proudhon, what justice itself is cannot be stated in advance; it only comes into view through the rational process of critical inquiry. (This belief is consistent with anarchist scepticism, as outlined in Chapter 1 – a position according to which *doubt* about the moral foundations of socio-political order precedes *affirmation* of what the just society entails.)

> … since justice is determined especially with regard to government, the condition of persons, and the possession of things, we must ascertain, judging by universal opinion and the progress of the human mind, under what conditions government is just, the condition of citizens is just, and the possession of things is just. Then, *eliminating everything which fails to fulfil these conditions*, the result will simultaneously show what legitimate government is, what the legitimate condition of citizens is, what the legitimate possession of things is, and finally, *as the last result of the analysis*, what *justice* is. [45]

Proudhon's position changed markedly in later works. The nature of his critique in *What is Property?*, though it overtly points toward fully-fledged anarchism, is essentially socialist. Such socialism came under quite vicious attack from Marx, who, while acknowledging (in *The Holy Family* of 1845) that Proudhon paved the way for scientific analysis of bourgeois civilization, declared that Proudhon was missing the point, that he completely misunderstood the economics of capitalism. Proudhon's socialism is socialism from the point of view of jurisprudence and therefore, as Marx saw it, inherently metaphysical. According to Marx, a scientific socialism would have to investigate the real or 'material' basis of capitalism rather than the abstract legalistic or ideological concept of property, which, in itself, can explain nothing. Ultimately, basic analysis of the capitalist mode of production would yield insight into the superstructural elements that held Proudhon's attention. Later anarchists like Bakunin agreed with Marx:

> Undoubtedly there is a good deal of truth in the merciless critique [Marx] directed against Proudhon. For all his efforts to ground himself in reality, Proudhon remained an idealist and a metaphysician. His starting-point is the abstract idea of right. From right he proceeds to economic fact, while Marx, by contrast, advanced and proved the incontrovertible truth, confirmed by the entire past and present history of human society, nations, and states, that economic fact has always preceded legal and political right. The exposition and demonstration of that truth constitutes one of Marx's principal contributions to science.[46]

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45   Ibid., pp. 15, 31–32, 158. Emphasis added, except to the word 'justice', which is emphasized in the original.

46   *Statism and Anarchy* (ed.) Marshall S. Shatz (Cambridge, 1990), p. 142.

This is a characteristic overstatement of Bakunin's agreement with Marx. In this instance, Malatesta's rebuke that 'in political economy and in the interpretation of history, [Bakunin] was too marxist' is, from a consistent anarchist viewpoint, fair.[47] If this was actually Bakunin's position, he would be little more than a left-wing Marxist. However, while Bakunin, like many other anarchists, credits Marx with great economic insight, insight well beyond Proudhon's in the same domain, he also criticizes the major limitation of Marx's thought: his refusal to recognize other factors in historical development, principally those relations of domination which are irreducible to strict economic relations. For Bakunin, Proudhon's thought far exceeds Marx's in this respect.

As a socialist, Proudhon affirms the primacy of the economic category of property (concentrating on the third question: 'Is property just?'). However, he would later move toward an anarchist affirmation of the primacy of the socio-political category of authority (shifting his attention to the first question: 'Is authority just?'). (That is not necessarily to say that social anarchists believe that the economic is determined by the political, as Marxists have often claimed, but simply to say that what characterizes their anarchism as such is its distinctive orientation toward the latter and its critique of social analysis in monocausal-economistic terms.) Some years later, then, Proudhon claimed that authority was the 'central point' of social development, the very principle to be challenged by social revolutionaries:

> These religions, these legislations, these empires, these governments, this wisdom of State, this virtue of Pontiffs, all are but a dream and a lie, which all hang upon one another and converge toward a central point, which itself has no reality. If we want to get a more correct idea of things, we must burst this crust and get out of this inferno, in which man's reason will be lost, and he will become an idiot.[48]

If *What is Property?* is seen to be a critique aimed in the wrong direction, it stands as the formal or methodological exemplar of anarchist critique proper. It is, first and foremost, an investigation of the *right* of property, a right which was, again, secured or won by the bourgeoisie in the French Revolution. The nature of the investigation is genetic and anti-metaphysical: Proudhon is concerned with establishable origins of this apparent right and debunks what are, to his mind, its (in Enlightenment terms) mythical or superstitious vindications; he is concerned, put simply, with the 'origin and principle of property'. He rejects as manifestly immoral (not to say reactionary) the convenient response that it is better to leave such affairs alone in the interest of a quiet life.

> Some people do not like to raise the dust of pretended titles to property and to investigate its fabulous and perhaps scandalous history. They wish to hold to this proposition, that property is, always has been, and always will be a fact… I might perhaps subscribe to this doctrine as inspired by a commendable love of peace, if I saw all my fellow citizens enjoying sufficient property; but no – I will not subscribe to it.[49]

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47   *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas* (ed.) Vernon Richards (London, 1965), p. 209.
48   *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 291.
49   *What is Property?*, pp. 44, 43.

The 'fabulous' aspect of property is its mystification or sanctification as a right; property is seen as a mystification of exclusive or unequal possession. Proudhon is careful to distinguish here between fact and right. There is no question that property exists in fact, in so far as it is claimed and recognized as such. But this does not entail its legitimacy. This is the issue that is at stake in *What is Property?*, a work which might just as well be entitled *Is Property Legitimate*? (As is obvious from the famous statement 'property is theft',[50] Proudhon thinks not.) Proudhon writes:

> It is a rule of jurisprudence that a fact does not produce a right. Now, property is no exception to this rule, and so the universal recognition of the right of property does not legitimate the right of property. Man is mistaken about the constitution of society, the nature of right, and the application of justice, just as he was mistaken about the cause of meteors and the movement of the heavenly bodies. His old opinions cannot be taken for articles of faith.[51]

Proudhon challenges three customary justifications for the supposed right of property: the argument from first occupancy; the argument from civil law; and the (quintessentially modern, bourgeois) argument from labour. The first argument amounts to the claim that property is justified by the contingent fact that it exists (or has been claimed by someone in a supposed 'first' instance); it effectively evades the whole issue of legitimacy and all moral scrutiny. To offer it is 'to confess that there is no response to those who question the legitimacy of the fact itself'. As regards the second argument, Proudhon writes that 'the law, in establishing property … has in every sense of the word created a right outside of its province. It has realized an abstraction, a metaphor, a fiction, and has done so without deigning to look at the consequences, without considering the disadvantages, without asking whether it was right or wrong.' Proudhon thus denies that the law can, in mere declaratory fashion, bestow legitimacy on any arbitrary fact (about which, in the economic domain, it has no 'scientific' knowledge – and over which it has no, so to speak, moral jurisdiction). The argument from labour is refuted by Proudhon by pointing out that the modern socialization of production – where 'the production of each involves the production of all' and 'isolated industry is impossible' – is such that no individual can legitimately claim a property in any product: no individual can say this is exclusively mine as the fruit of my labour and mine alone.[52] Accordingly, all proper arguments from labour point to social visions quite distinct from bourgeois-proprietarianism.

Proudhon's refutation of the argument from labour (as the 'efficient cause' of private property) had a profound impact on the evolution of the nineteenth century critique of capitalism. Marx, of course, was the most important theorist in this evolution. However, Proudhon's basic point – that given socialized production, claims to private appropriation are absurd and unjust – became anarchist (or social anarchist) orthodoxy. Kropotkin asks: 'how can we discriminate, in this immense interwoven whole [of the production of wealth], the part which the isolated individual may appropriate to himself with the slightest approach to justice?' He continues:

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50   Ibid., p. 13.
51   Ibid., p. 64.
52   Ibid., pp. 55, 61, 115.

'now, in the extremely interwoven state of industry of which each branch supports all others, [the] individualistic view can be held no more'.[53] But these socialist insights are not specifically anarchist, and it is Proudhon's impact on anarchism per se that interests us here.

In the fifth and final chapter of the 'First memoir' of *What is Property?*, Proudhon introduces (without fleshing out) the distinctly anarchist critique of 'government' (much like Rousseau, in the context of his discussion of the origin of property and inequality). He sketches the development of authority through patriarchal, gerontocratic, and military forms to 'royalty' itself, meaning 'government' in general. This 'gave occasion to call some kings by right, or legitimate kings, and others tyrants. But we must not be deceived by names'. The first aspect of Proudhon's anarchism here is, therefore, his obvious *scepticism toward the entire issue of governmental legitimacy and authority in general*. To be more precise, his specifically anarchist conclusion is *to reject all familiar governmental forms as equivalent in principle, that is, to reject the political authority of the state*.

> Neither heredity, election, universal suffrage, the excellence of the sovereign, not the consecration of religion and of time can make royalty legitimate. In whatever form it appears, monarchic, oligarchic, or democratic, royalty, *or the government of man by man*, is illegal and absurd.[54]

Proudhon tempers his 'anti-governmentalism' with some equivocation. He indicates that anarchy is itself a form of government – the legitimate form, a form antithetical to 'royalty': '*Anarchy*, the absence of a master, of a sovereign, such is the form of government to which we are approaching every day.' This is slightly confusing, but it is clear that while Proudhon rejects the state, or the legitimacy of its authority, he does not reject the idea of government, or political order, itself. The anarchist form of political order – of order without 'mastery', whatever this means exactly – is a form consistent with socio-historical progress: 'Property and royalty have been crumbling ever since the beginning of the world. As man seeks justice in equality, so society seeks order in anarchy.'[55]

An important feature of Proudhon's anarchism, as tentatively expressed in *What is Property?*, is its explicit anti-communism. This feature was to become characteristic of anarchism generally, especially after the conflict between Marx and Bakunin. Proudhon argues that 'Communism is oppression and slavery', and this claim was endorsed by Bakunin, who insisted on a distinction between collectivism and communism on grounds that were as much political as economic. (The economic distinction between collectivism and communism – basically between the view that labour should be rewarded and the view that distribution should be based on need – shouldn't be ignored, but it is fair to say that Bakunin generally had a political point in mind when he made the distinction between what he regarded as the *libertarian*

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53   *Two Essays: Anarchism and Anarchist Communism* (ed.) Nicolas Walter (London, 1993), pp. 37, 41.

54   *What is Property?*, p. 207. Emphasis added.

55   Ibid., p. 209.

collectivism of anarchists and the *authoritarian communism of Marxists*.[56] Later anarcho-communists like Kropotkin and Malatesta obviously saw the matter differently, presenting communism itself in a libertarian light, in so far as it is 'freely desired and accepted, and the means by which the freedom of everyone is guaranteed and can expand'.[57]) Proudhon offers two principal objections to communism. First, it renders labour itself 'odious' by making it 'a human commandment', a compelled activity devoid of 'spontaneity' and creativity; socially, this produces 'pious and stupid uniformity'. And, secondly, communism, by 'rewarding equally labour and laziness', encourages the 'desire to avoid effort'.[58] Thus, communism, in extolling labour, debases it practically.

The declaration of anarchism (and anti-communism) in *What is Property?* is highly significant, but not as significant as the *critical methodology* Proudhon develops in connection with the question of property, in the exposition of his socialism. This shaped the later anarchist critique of authority, which we analyzed conceptually in Part 1. As we have seen, the same distinction between fact and right applies. Just as Proudhon denies that the fact of property's existence entails its legitimacy, so the anarchist denies that the fact of authority's existence (again, in so far as it is claimed and recognized as such) entails its legitimacy. The anarchist, that is to say, disputes the equivalence of *de facto* and legitimate authority. The key or defining issue for anarchists is the legitimacy of authority, especially political authority. Anarchists *question* (rather than reject, as against the Marxist 'anti-authoritarian' stereotype) all claims made for legitimate authority and, as we saw, reject the customary justifications for the political authority of the state: religious, contractarian, utilitarian, and so on. While Proudhon argued that property is a mystification of possession, anarchists maintain that, *in general*, authority is a mere mystification of social power or control. As regards the political authority of the state, for instance, Bakunin claims that it is a mystification of power derived through violence and force:

> The constant predominance and triumph of force – that is [the state's] real essence, while everything that political language calls *right* is merely the consecration of a fact created by force.[59]

One objection to the critical methodology of anarchism is easily anticipated. Proudhon himself, as we saw, was accused by Marx of proceeding 'metaphysically' from juridical right to economic fact in his socialist analysis: of being preoccupied with the ideology of property rights as against basic and determining forces and relations of production. (These are not ignored, as we have seen, but, by Marxist standards, are treated tangentially.) Likewise, anarchists are guilty, from the Marxist point of view, of an 'unscientific' preoccupation with derivative socio-political relations (and the ethical issue of their legitimacy) rather than basic economic factors (and their scientific investigation), with moral right rather than material fact. This points to two major differences between anarchism and Marxism. First, anarchism is,

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56   See David Miller, pp. 45–46.
57   *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas*, p. 34.
58   *What is Property?*, pp. 196–97.
59   *Statism and Anarchy*, p. 171. Emphasis added.

quite simply, an ethical position with no scientific pretensions. Secondly, anarchism has no theoretical commitment to the materialist conception of history: it is under no obligation to recognize economic factors as ultimate determinants in each and every instance.

The ethico-social analysis of anarchism is oriented toward issues of power, domination, and especially authority, as we have seen. But this orientation does not preclude analysis of economic relations: for social anarchists, the issue of economic exploitation – itself an issue of social power – is as important as that of political oppression; it is just that it does not define their anarchism as such. Anarchism has been profoundly influenced by Marxism, but is also deeply sceptical toward it as a 'science' of dogmatically limited scope.

Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*

We come now to the most idiosyncratic of anarchist theorists, Max Stirner. Though not as important *ideologically* as Proudhon's *What is Property?*, *The Ego and Its Own* is arguably the most *philosophically* intriguing work of anarchism – if it is that at all. Its archetypically anarchistic conclusions with respect to authority, and particularly legal and political authority, suggest that it is; yet the egocentric logic by which these conclusions are arrived at is atypical of anarchism. Without doubt, the rigour with which this logic is applied is quite unique to Stirner. In any case, it is clear that *The Ego and Its Own* sits uncomfortably within the anarchist tradition. We will look at it only to the extent that we can say with *any* degree of confidence that it is an anarchist work. Even at that, from the standpoint of social anarchism, a deep sense of unease remains. But the major value of Stirner's classic in this respect is that it encourages social anarchists to question their *moral* outlook and assumptions.

That *The Ego and Its Own* is readable by the standards of classical German philosophy doesn't detract from its complexity. It is a work that can only be given the most superficial treatment here. A great deal remains to be said of it, even from the narrow perspective of anarchist inquiry.[60] However, we can safely say that *The Ego and Its Own* has two main themes. The first part ('Man') offers a critique of modernity in terms of its idealism (which, whether divine or human, is seen to be religious or essentialist) and consequent oppression (accordingly, both 'spiritual' and 'humanistic'). The second part ('I') anticipates a future epoch of egoism, of 'ownness' or autonomous selfhood, in which oppressive social structures will be replaced by an unrestrictive 'union of egoists'.

The modern period is represented by Stirner as the Christian 'youth' of mankind, the stage between its ancient, pre-Christian 'childhood' (an age of realism) and its future, egoistic 'adulthood'. Modernity as a whole is characterized by the domination of spirit, of mind, of ideas (as yet undiscovered by the ancients, who were preoccupied with the 'world of [material] things' and 'natural relations', even when they had ideas *of them*). With the Reformation, 'the spiritual became complete'. That is to say,

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60   Two studies can be recommended for further analysis: R.W.K. Paterson's *The Nihilistic Egoist: Max Stirner* (Oxford, 1971) and John P. Clark's *Max Stirner's Egoism* (London, 1976).

the Reformation consummated the Christian domination of spirit, which under the medievals had remained distinct from the sensuous. Thus, while the 'Catholic strives … to banish the sensual from himself into a separate domain, where it, like the rest of nature, keeps its value for itself', 'the Protestant seeks to discover a sacredness in the sensual itself, that he may be linked only to what is holy'. Accordingly, the Catholic Church precluded marriage and familial relations from 'its consecrated order', while the Protestant church embraced them as 'holy'.[61]

The major theologian of the Reformation, Luther, had his philosophical counterpart in Descartes, for whom existence consists essentially in thought, in ideas, in spirituality. Stirner writes:

> I myself am nothing else than mind, thinking mind (according to Descartes), believing mind (according to Luther). My body I am not … I am not my flesh, but *I* am *mind*, only mind.[62]

Hegel, the speculative theologian, *the Lutheran philosopher*, resolved any contradiction that remained between Protestant theology and idealist philosophy – and, within idealist philosophy, overcame the persisting dualism of body and mind.

> Lutheranism … tries to bring spirit into all things as far as possible, to recognize the holy spirit as an essence in everything, and so to *hallow* everything worldly … Hence it was that the Lutheran Hegel … was completely successful in carrying the idea through everything. In everything there is reason, holy spirit, or 'the actual is rational'.[63]

Hegel's successors, as we have seen, derived more or less atheistic conclusions from his philosophical system (or 'humanistic' conclusions in the case of Feuerbach, Stirner's prime target in *The Ego and Its Own*[64]). For Stirner, the apparent atheism of these 'pious people' is simply another idealism; 'human' instead of 'divine', but no less threatening to the individual for it.

> Atheists keep up their scoffing at the higher being … and trample in the dust one 'proof of his existence' after another, without noticing that they themselves, out of need for a higher being, only annihilate the old to make room for a new. Is 'man' perchance not a higher essence than an individual man, and must not the truths, rights, and ideas which

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61   *The Ego and Its Own*, pp. 27, 82, 84.

62   Ibid., p. 78.

63   Ibid., pp. 84–85.

64   For an analysis of the dispute between Stirner and Feuerbach, both in *The Ego and Its Own* and in subsequent writings, see Marx Wartofsky and Hans-Martin Sass, *The Philosophical Forum*, vol. 8 (1978), which includes an overview by Frederick M. Gordon ('The Debate Between Feuerbach and Stirner: An Introduction'), as well as translations (by Gordon) of relevant pieces from Feuerbach ('On *The Essence of Christianity* in Relation to *The Ego and Its Own*') and Stirner (selections from 'Stirner's Critics'). Another analysis – more sophisticated than Gordon's, but equally sympathetic to Stirner and hostile to Feuerbach – is Lawrence S. Stepelevich's 'Max Stirner and Ludwig Feuerbach', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 39 (1978): 451–63.

result from the concept of him be honoured and – counted sacred, as revelations of this very concept?[65]

Stirner investigates the three 'humanisms', or 'liberalisms' as he calls them, that typify the last generation of modernity, the generation of 'the free' (that is, Left Hegelianism).[66] They are, in turn, 'political liberalism' (essentially meaning republicanism, as preached by Arnold Ruge), 'social liberalism' (essentially meaning communism, as preached by Moses Hess), and 'humane liberalism' (or 'critical liberalism', as preached by Bruno Bauer). The third of these is a fairly esoteric concern, having little relevance to issues beyond Stirner's own time and circle. However, his discussions of republicanism and communism are profound and worth looking at in a little detail.

The main demand of *republicanism* is for *political liberty*. It stands opposed to the right of *any one* to give orders or to *command*. But Stirner observes that while this would appear to symbolize 'the individual's independence of the state and its laws', it actually represents 'the individual's *subjection* in the state and to the state's laws'. This is, however, held equivalent to liberty because the state is no longer alien to the individual, but in fact *defines* the individual – *as a citizen* – and determines the citizen's *rights*. (This 'immediate relation' of citizen and state is the basis of what Stirner calls 'political Protestantism'.) Stirner deduces that 'Political liberty' in fact 'means that the *polis*, the state, is free'. From this point of view, the 'duties' and 'responsibilities' of individuals consist in '*service*' to the state, in being 'good citizens'.[67]

In the eighteenth century mind, the state replaced 'the higher being' as the new divinity, as the 'mundane God'; 'to serve it', Stirner adds, 'became the new divine service and worship'. Thus, the *religious* revolution of the Reformation – a *spiritual* revolution – was succeeded by the French *political* revolution – a *humanistic* revolution.

> The properly *political* epoch had dawned. To serve the state or the nation became the highest ideal, the state's interest the highest interest, state service … the highest honour … Before this god – state – all egoism vanished, and before it all were equal; they were without any other distinction – men, nothing but men.[68]

Or, in fact, 'proprietors': 'Those who had hitherto been subjects attained the consciousness that they were *proprietors*.' They attained the consciousness, that is to say, of their 'estate' or class, a class which they attempted to universalize or absolutize as 'the nation': 'the third estate, showing courage to negate *itself as an estate* … decided no longer to be and be called an *estate* beside other estates, but to glorify and generalize itself into the "*nation*".' Thus the bourgeoisie asserted its

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65   Stirner, pp. 38–40.

66   Lawrence S. Stepelevich argues for Stirner's effective completion of the Hegelian project in 'Max Stirner as Hegelian', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 46 (1985): 597–614.

67   Stirner, pp. 95, 96–97.

68   Ibid., p. 91.

supremacy in the French Revolution, and inaugurated the era of liberalism: 'With the time of the *bourgeoisie* begins that of *liberalism*.'[69]

Stirner examines the political and economic implications of the bourgeois revolution. In general, he depicts the revolution as having been '*reformatory*' before giving way to reaction; 'in bourgeois fashion', as he puts it, 'it dries away'. The limitations of the revolution lay in the inadequacy of its (merely political) ends. Stirner's explanation here is classically anarchist:

> The revolution was not directed against *the established*, but against the *establishment in question*, against a *particular* establishment. It did away with *this* ruler, not with *the* ruler … To this day the revolutionary principle has gone no further than to assail only *one or another* particular establishment, to be *reformatory*. Much as may be *improved*, strongly as 'discreet progress' may be adhered to, always there is only a *new master* set in the old one's place, and the overturning is a – building up.[70]

The pretences of representative democracy under the new regime are mocked by Stirner. What offends him (unlike other anarchists) is not the egoism and 'disloyalty' of representatives – which (like other anarchists) he thinks is the nature of the beast – but the hypocritical nature of their egoism, masked with degrees of 'devoutness'.

> The called one no longer has to ask 'what did the caller want when he created me?' but 'what do I want after I have once followed the call?' Not the caller, not the constituents, not the charter according to which their meeting was called out, nothing will be to him a sacred, inviolable power. He is *authorized* for everything that is within his power; he will know no restrictive 'authorization', will not want to be *loyal*. This, if any such thing could be expected from chambers at all, would give a completely *egoistic* chamber, severed from all umbilical cords and without consideration. But chambers are always devout, and therefore one cannot be surprised if so much half-way or undecided, that is, hypocritical, 'egoism' parades in them.[71]

Stirner turns to bourgeois morality and its economic roots. Such morality is founded on regard for 'secure' existence, on respect for those with a stake in the established order, who draw interest from it as their form of 'labour'. By contrast, it exhibits contempt for and fear of those 'who offer no "guarantee" and have "nothing to lose", and so nothing to risk', that is, the economic proletariat and 'intellectual vagabonds', who 'overlap all bounds of the traditional and run wild with their impudent criticism and untamed mania for doubt'. The antediluvian bourgeois response to 'immorality' is summarized by Stirner as follows: 'Lock up the vagabond, thrust the breeder of unrest into the darkest dungeon!' The ultimate bourgeois fear is for its '*legal* title' to its possessions and capital, underwritten wholly by the state. As Stirner writes, 'The commoner is what he is through the *protection of the state*, through the state's grace. He would necessarily be afraid of losing everything if the state's power were broken.' The proletarian, by contrast, is necessarily antagonistic toward the 'commoners' state', which 'does nothing for him' – which doesn't protect

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69   Ibid., pp. 91, 94–95.
70   Ibid., p. 100.
71   Ibid., p. 101.

his labour – except 'suck his blood' – or protect those who exploit his labour. In this hostile situation, Stirner notes that the odds are stacked in the proletariat's favour:

> The labourers have the most enormous power in their hands, and, if they once became thoroughly conscious of it and used it, nothing would withstand them; they would only have to stop labour, regard the product of labour as theirs, and enjoy it … The state rests on the – *slavery of labour*. If *labour* becomes *free*, the state is lost.[72]

The main demand of *communism* is for *economic equality* – for equality *in fact*, as opposed to republicanism's equality *in rights*. It stands opposed to the right of *private property*, declaring that '*no one must have*, as according to political liberalism *no one was to give orders*'. According to republicanism, the *state* alone should have the right of *command*, while according to communism *society* alone should *own*. Stirner responds that: 'This is the second robbery of the "personal" in the interest of "humanity". Neither command nor property is left to the individual; the state took the former, society the latter.' Henceforth, society alone is capable of meeting the individual's needs, and 'we are *under obligations* to it on that account, [we] owe it everything'. Communism therefore represents the subjection of the individual to society, as republicanism represented its subjection to the state.

> Society, from which we have everything, is a new master, a new spook, a new "supreme being", which "takes us into its service and allegiance"![73]

In communist society the individual is no longer regarded as citizen, as a politically-defined entity, but as labourer, as an economically-defined entity, who has equal status with all others in this respect. But this is seen as insufficient from the 'humanistic' (that is, idealistic) point of view. What is required is something 'uplifting', some means of 'edification' apart from 'witless' labour. Hence the language of brotherhood and fraternity which Stirner describes as 'the Sunday side of communism'. Communism holds up the ideal of material and spiritual well-being – of labour and fraternity – as man's vocation, as the human essence to be striven for and realized. Under political liberalism, all such goods were objects of competition and therefore, from the communist perspective, men were slaves of fortune. The communist vision of 'freedom' (from chance), resting on *compulsion*, simply points toward individual subjection: 'The commonality made acquisition [of 'spiritual and material goods'] free; communism *compels* to acquisition, and recognizes only the *acquirer*, him who practices a trade. It is not enough that the trade is free, but you must *take it up*.'[74]

The second part of *The Ego and Its Own* develops the future egoistic alternative to modern idealism. It opens with a call for a renewal (or supersession) of the Enlightenment project – which achieved the 'vanquishing of God' and was seemingly the high-point of modernity – in the form of a second 'heaven-storming' – intended

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72   Ibid., pp. 102–105.
73   Ibid., pp. 105–06, 111.
74   Ibid., p. 110.

to vanquish Man.[75] This is evidently the task of the future, the process by which modernity will be overcome, and autonomous individuality – or the 'owner' in its 'ownness', egoism – will be realized. Stirner treats these elements, ownness and owner, in turn, beginning with ownness.

Ownness is immediately contrasted with the *idea* of freedom. It is not the freedom of the individual as such, still less the freedom of the nation or humanity as a whole, that Stirner advocates. Freedom in itself is an '*unattainable*' dream: 'To be free is something that I cannot truly *will*, because I cannot make it, cannot create it: I can only wish it and – aspire toward it, for it remains an ideal, a spook.' In any event, the desire for freedom is always 'the desire for a *particular* freedom' – and 'therefore a new dominion', as in the case of the French Revolution – never the desire for absolute freedom. It is a desire to be 'rid of' what happens to 'embarrass you and cause you inconvenience', of what 'is in *your* way!' Still, ties that are not 'inconvenient', such as those of love, are retained, are cherished. One doesn't want to be rid or free of them. 'Why not? For *your sake* again! So you take *yourselves* as measure and judge over all. You gladly let freedom go when unfreedom … suits *you*; and you take up your freedom again on occasion when it begins to suit *you* better'. Stirner concludes in light of this that one shouldn't waste one's time with the dream and the 'hollow theory' of freedom; instead, 'ask after yourselves', 'turn to yourselves rather than to your gods or idols … bring yourselves to revelation'. Of ownness, then, Stirner writes:

> Ownness has not any alien standard … as it is not in any sense an *idea* like freedom, morality, humanity, and the like: it is only a description of the – *owner*.[76]

The following point should be underscored. Ownness is *not* descriptive of the historical individual (in its idealism, aspiring to be Man – that is, to be 'good men' according to religious or humanistic morality), but descriptive, rather, of the Owner (of the egoist proper, the 'Un-Man'), at whom we will look in a moment. Stirner describes all the pursuits of idealists – religious and humanistic (including, as we have just seen, the pursuit of freedom) – as being egoistic at bottom, as being 'for your sake'. However, such egoism is always '*unconfessed*, secret, covert, and concealed … egoism which you are unwilling to confess to yourselves, that you keep secret from yourselves'. It is unrecognized, 'unconscious egoism', therefore, in fact, '*not egoism*, but thraldom, service, self-renunciation; you are egoists, and you are not, since you renounce egoism'.[77]

If ownness is not descriptive of the historical individual, we might question its normative status in this respect. Is ownness a morality, a moral *idea*, to be striven for? Of course, Stirner has just denied precisely that. He does effectively

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75   Ibid., p. 139. Bernd A. Laska discusses Stirner's relation to Enlightenment in 'Max Stirner *in nuce*', *Die Zeit*, 27 January 2000, 49. (This article is translated, by Shveta Thakrar, online [http://www.lsr-projekt.de/poly/eninnuce.html].) Laska advises that this 'can be read as an additional chapter' to his *Ein dauerhafter Dissident. 150 Jahre Stirners 'Einziger'. Eine kurze Wirkungsgeschichte* (Nürnberg, 1996).

76   Stirner, pp. 143, 145–46, 154.

77   Ibid., p. 149.

recommend egoism and evidently *values* ownness: 'seek for *yourselves*, become egoists, become each of you an *almighty ego*'. However, he claims not to set up ownness as an 'alien standard', an idea or an essence, over and above the individual. Therefore, ownness has neither descriptive nor normative value in so far as the historical individual is concerned: it neither describes the actual intentions of that individual (qua psychological egoism) nor prescribes how that individual should act (qua ethical egoism). Instead, it simply describes the individual who has attained *self-consciousness*: the egoist proper, the conscious egoist. What Stirner values in ownness is not a morality (what ought to be) but, in Hegelian mode, its affirmation of self-consciousness (of what is in actuality). Hence:

> Just recognize yourselves again, just recognize what you really are, and let go your hypocritical endeavours, your foolish mania to be something else than you are.[78]

What, then, is this *non-moral value* of Stirner, this 'ownness'? As we have seen, it cannot be identified with individual freedom, the individual's *freedom from this or that*. It is centred on *the individual itself*, rather than on *objects* of inconvenience to the individual. It is identifiable with the individual's mastery of itself, the individual's autonomy from all impediments imposed by others on the individual (and by the individual on itself). 'I am my own only when I am master of myself, instead of being mastered … by anything else (God, man, authority, law, state, church).' On the other hand, 'I deny my ownness when – in the presence of another – I give myself up, give way, desist, submit; therefore by *loyalty*, *submission*.'[79] Hence, Stirner targets all forms of heteronomy. Before examining them individually, however, he turns his attention away from the element of ownness in itself toward the owner. Stirner is eager to emphasize that ownness is not an abstraction – again, not an idea – but always the ownness of the owner.

The owner is immediately distinguished from Man. Stirner once again describes man as 'an unreal thing', 'a spook, a thought, a concept'. Being men, he adds, 'is the slightest thing about us', is simply 'one of our qualities', on a par with being male or female, or even being a Berliner. Urging us to realize ourselves as men or to become 'thorough men' is as absurd, Stirner argues, as setting 'the earth the task of being a "thorough star"'. As for the Feuerbachian 'species-nature' of man, Stirner rejects it as meaningless because 'the species is nothing … only something thought of … *I* am my species'. Feuerbach's humanization of the divine – or, to Stirner, divinization of the human – is likewise rejected as merely 'the last metamorphosis of the Christian religion': the establishment of yet another alien essence (man) and yet another vocation (the human) in the name of which the individual might sacrifice itself. Stirner warns, 'if God has given us pain, "man" is capable of pinching us still more torturingly'.[80]

Antithetical to Man is the Un-Man, the egoist. Stirner defines the un-man as 'a man who does not correspond to the *concept* man'. Thus, to others of the essentialist mentality, 'he *appears* indeed as a man, but *is* not a man'. Moreover, to the guardians

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78   Ibid., p. 149.
79   Ibid., p. 150, 153.
80   Ibid., pp. 156–57, 158, 163.

of human society, the un-man, who does not correspond or submit to its laws, is regarded as 'inhuman'. Consequently, as Stirner writes perceptively (anticipating a whole line of Nietzschean thought), 'the state excludes him; it locks him up, or transforms him from an inhabitant of the state into an inhabitant of the prison (inhabitant of the lunatic asylum or hospital in the case of communism)'. The un-man is identified by Stirner with 'the *desecrator*', the desecrator of Man, who has, again, latterly succeeded God as 'Supreme Being'. Stirner writes:

> The egoist, turning against the demands and concepts of the present, executes pitilessly the most measureless – *desecration*. Nothing is holy to him![81]

What is it, then, that the owner seeks to assert its ownness against? What exactly does the un-man seek to desecrate, now that religion properly speaking has been desecrated? Put simply, everything that is held 'sacred' in the humanistic stage of modernity: right, authority, law, society, family, state, nation, party, private property, love, etc. Stirner's analysis of the *idea* of *right* – and associated ideas of legal and political *authority* – is especially important. This idea of right contrasts with the descriptive category of power (much as the idea of freedom contrasts with the descriptive category of ownness). Power is descriptive of the owner; right is yet another 'alien standard':

> Right – is a wheel in the head, put there by a spook; power – that I am myself, I am the powerful one and owner of power.[82]

Stirner claims that the language of rights is basically religious: 'Who can ask after "right" if he does not occupy the religious standpoint himself? Is not "right" a religious concept, something sacred?' He also claims that all rights are 'foreign', granted by the 'grace' of another (that is, something over and above the individual) – namely, 'God, love, reason, nature, humanity, etc.' Opposed to foreign right is (from Stirner's point of view) the seemingly contradictory *idea* of '*egoistic right*', the notion that all right is ultimately derived from individual might: 'What you have the *power* to be you have the *right* to. I derive all right and all warrant from *me*; I am *entitled* to everything that I have in my power.' Stirner notes, however, that what he is speaking of is in fact not 'right' at all, but power in itself: 'What I called "my right" is no longer "right" at all, because right can be bestowed only by a spirit … What I have without an entitling spirit I have without right; I have it solely and alone through my *power*.'[83] Stirner concludes that while might has always made right (and while this has been *intuited* in terms such as 'one goes further with a handful of might than a bagful of right'[84]), the egoist proper attains the *consciousness* of his *own* power, distinct from all alien 'right'.

The 'foreign right' of society – of 'the people' or 'the nation' – is expressed in *law*. Law represents the *authority* of society, its right to command (via the state): 'People

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81   Ibid., pp. 159, 165–66.
82   Ibid., p. 187.
83   Ibid., pp. 168–69, 171, 187.
84   Ibid., p. 151.

are at pains to distinguish *law* from arbitrary *orders*, from an ordinance: the former comes from a duly entitled authority.' The autonomous individual – this '*enemy*' of the state – simply rejects this right of command, this authority, maintaining that 'no one has any business to command *my* actions, to say what course I shall pursue and set up a code to govern it'. Such a desecrator of the *sacred* word of law is inevitably designated a *criminal*, a subject for *punishment*. But for the autonomous individual, again, the institution which upholds the law and punishes criminality (or egoism), practicing violence where *it* sees fit, is no less an enemy. Stirner expresses the anarchist attitude toward the *state* as follows: 'Every state is a *despotism*, be the despot one or many'. The state represents an overawing predominance of might. But, for Stirner, only a 'simpleton' would acknowledge it as 'a hallowed authority' – that is, as sacred – on this account.[85]

The primary activity of the state is, according to Stirner, violence. The state proclaims its violence – by contrast to the criminal violence of the individual (such as the contemporary terrorist) – lawful and legitimate: 'The state's behaviour is violence, and it calls its violence "law"; that of the individual, "crime".' From where, therefore, does the legitimacy of the state, 'state-*authority*', derive (if not, that is, from brute force)? Not from the will of hostile or criminal individuals, clearly, but rather from the '*collectivity of the people*', the nation. This *idea* is maintained irrespective of the form of government or *who* it is that wields state power: 'none of them lacks this appeal to the collectivity, and the despot, as well as the president or any aristocracy, acts and commands "in the name of the state"', being 'in possession of the "authority of the state"'. Against the violent power of the state ('legitimated' in the name of a non-existent 'people'), Stirner urges individuals 'to practice *refractoriness*, yes, complete disobedience'. For what becomes of the state if nobody recognizes its legitimacy or follows its commands?

> What do your laws amount to if no one obeys them? What your orders, if nobody lets himself be ordered?[86]

In a remarkable passage, Stirner parodies the liberal aspiration to limit or reform state power. He claims that this 'reduces itself to the prayer that the state (government) would please not be so *sensitive*, so *ticklish*; that it would not immediately scent malevolence in "harmless" things, and would in general be a little "more tolerant"'. Liberals are depicted as children who desire a 'playground, a few hours of jolly running about … They ask only that the state should not, like a splenetic papa, be too cross.' But, of course, they have no wish to challenge the state's authority as such; they acknowledge the full extent and significance of this authority 'in time of war', in other words, when its existence is threatened. Thus, 'The state is sacred even to them … They behave toward it only as ill-bred brats, as artful children who seek to utilize the weaknesses of their parents.' But they never deny that 'Papa State … has the right', that He possesses legitimate authority over all.[87]

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85 Ibid., p. 174–76.

86 Ibid., pp. 176–77, 174.

87 Ibid., pp. 177–78. Stirner's discussion of press freedom (or criticism within the limits of the law) develops this point against liberalism. See p. 251: '*liberty of the press*, the

Stirner devotes the bulk of the largest – and most repetitive – section of the text ('My Intercourse') to a critique of social 'ties' or relations of 'belonging': familial, political, cultural, and so on. These are opposed to the non-binding – that is, voluntary and temporary – 'union of egoists' that he envisages. All social ties or ties to 'the people' – in the form of the family or 'mankind', somehow conceived – involve the renunciation of egoistic interest before 'general' interests: 'national or popular interests, class interests, family interests, and "general human interests"'. Modernity ('the Christian people') has produced two societies that characterize it: 'the societies *state* and *church*'. Before state interest and church interest, then, egoistic interest must be renounced, and an acknowledgement of 'the majesty of the state [and] the sanctity of the church' is demanded of the modern individual. However, the egoist acknowledges 'no majesty, nothing sacred'. Everything sacred, Stirner adds, is 'a fetter', something to be *overpowered*. Overpowering the sacred is the means by which 'progress' is secured – *by the individual*. But meaningful progress is prevented by the assumed need to replace every sacred institution with yet another:

> In general, all states, constitutions, churches, have sunk by the *secession* of individuals; for the individual is the irreconcilable enemy of every *generality*, every *tie*, every fetter. Yet people fancy to this day that man needs 'sacred ties': he, the deadly enemy of every 'tie'. The history of the world shows that no tie has yet remained unrent, shows that man tirelessly defends himself against ties of every sort; and yet, blinded, people think up new ties again and again, and think that they have arrived at the right one if one puts upon them the tie of a so-called free constitution, a beautiful, constitutional tie; decoration ribbons ... [In fact,] people have made no further progress than from leading reins to braces and collars.[88]

Social relations are not, Stirner argues, relations *between* you and me – relations of 'mutuality' characterized by 'intercourse' – but relations *in* society – relations of 'community' characterized by social-'speech'. Society, in this sense, is analogous to the prison. Prisoners are defined *essentially* by their *belonging* to the prison. Their 'manner of life' is likewise determined by this 'society'. However, the prison – though it may try to regulate or control it – cannot create actual 'personal discourse', which is independent of it, which occurs *outside* it *between* individuals. Indeed, the prison looks suspiciously on such egoistic practice, and regards all intercourse as plotting *against it*. In point of fact, it is exactly that: 'personal intercourse is in hostile relations to the prison society and tends to the dissolution of this very society'.[89]

A primary instance of egoism, and the pursuit of *own* interest, challenging a relation of belonging and threatening it with dissolution is that of the *family*. Belonging to the family defines the individual not as such but as, say, son. The son

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liberals' loud demand, is assuredly possible in the state; yes, it is possible only *in* the state, because it is a *permission*, and consequently the permitter (the state) must not be lacking. But as permission it has its limit in this very state, which surely should not in reason permit more than is compatible with itself and its welfare: the state fixes for it this limit as the *law* of its existence and of its extension.'

88   Ibid., pp. 188–89, 192.
89   Ibid., pp. 193–95.

is bound to the family-society, his 'sacred community', by 'piety, this spirit of the family'. In belonging to it, he 'owes obedience'. By pursuing his egoistic interest, as against family interest, the son transgresses and becomes 'a "criminal" against the family'. He renounces his 'sonship' (and may be decried by the parent, one imagines, as 'no longer my son'). In such cases, therefore, 'those who lack piety … are not thrust out, but thrust themselves out, prizing their passion, their wilfulness, higher than the bond of the family'. Those who remain in familial relations are the weak – the powerless – and it is 'its weak members [for which] the family cares, because they *belong* to the family, do not belong to themselves and care for themselves'.[90]

The family may assert its right of punishment quite rigorously against the transgressor. Here, the transgressor may seek protection from the *state*, which asserts a superior right to family right – that is, *sovereign authority* over those that *belong* to it, its *citizens*. Stirner regards the flight from family to state as anti-egoistic, as a flight from one relation of belonging to another. Here the transgressor's 'egoism is awaited by the same snares and nets that it has just escaped. For the state is likewise a society, not a union; it is the *broadened* family'. Like the family, the state-society is for the weak and dependent. It is 'a tissue and plexus of dependence and adherence' or 'the *order* of this *dependence*'. Society is said (by liberals) to be in 'the best order' when it 'is cared for by authority, when authority sees it that no one "gets in the way of" another; when, then, the *herd* is judiciously distributed and ordered'.[91]

Like the family, again, the state (and society itself) is not chosen *by* us but imposed *on* us. Contrary to the contractarian view, we belong to the state-society and do not *create* it by *uniting* as autonomous individuals in personal intercourse: 'Our societies and states *are* without our *making* them, are united without our uniting, are predestined and established … are the indissolubly established against us egoists'. The liberal challenge to the 'established' order (including that of the 'social liberal') consists in the demand that 'what is now established' must be 'exchanged for another, a better, established system'. This is the demand for political revolution, for a change in the form of the state or a '*change of masters*'; that is, it is the demand for social reform. It is not the recognition of self-mastery and cannot satisfy the egoist:

> ... war might rather be declared against establishment itself, the *state*, not a particular state, not any such thing as the mere condition of the state at the time; it is not another state (such as a 'people's state') that men aim at, but their *union*, uniting, this ever-fluid uniting of everything standing.[92]

Stirner explains what he sees as the state's method of civilizing – of applying 'the shears of "civilization"' to – the individual; of turning the individual into civil man or, 'As with the Greeks', 'a *zoon politicon*, a citizen of the state or political man'. The purpose of this process is to transform the individual into 'a "serviceable instrument", a "serviceable member of society"'. The first aspect of the civilizing method appears to be educational, resting on the state's provision of popular education. The state 'gives me an education and culture adapted to it, not to me,

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90 Ibid., pp. 195–97.
91 Ibid., p. 198.
92 Ibid., pp. 198–99, 204.

and teaches me to respect the laws, to refrain from injury to [property], to reverence divine and earthly highness, etc.', thus teaching the '"sacrificing" [of] my ownness to "sacredness"'. This educational aspect points to a more explicitly 'religious' (in other words, idealistic) aspect of the civilizing method. Stirner maintains that 'all states are religious' in themselves, though they tolerate the existence of various churches (which they may avail of). States are therefore 'Christian states' in the modern sense. These states 'have the object of *Christianizing the people*' – not in the way of 'godliness' but of 'morality'. Hence, the state moralizes individuals, demands a 'Christian' morality of them (for example, respect for law). Why? What 'concern has it with the "wheel in my head" (principle)? Very much, for the state is the – *ruling principle*'.[93] The state demands this 'morality' because it demands that individuals – *its* people – recognize it as sacred; it demands that they recognize not only its undeniable power but also its 'moral' right, its *authority*.

Two more social ties are related to the state: the *nation* and the *party*. Stirner is sharply dismissive of nationalism, especially in its German variety. For him, nationalism is the devotion and sacrifice of individuals to the 'general, abstract', the 'empty, lifeless *concept*' of nation. It represents nothing more than sentiment for a cultural 'family'. Of German nationalists, he can only sneer: 'How ridiculously sentimental when one German grasps another's hand and presses it with sacred awe because "he too is a German"! With that he is something great!' Nationalistic sentiment will persist, Stirner adds, 'as long as people long for "brotherliness" [and] have a "family disposition"' – as long as they will to belong.[94] So much for nationalism – the desire to realize the nation as a political entity, or, in Stirner's terms, the religious desire to create a body for a thought, to make word flesh. However, Stirner also attacks *patriotism* – the religious desire to serve and sacrifice oneself for the state – in *The Ego and Its Own*. In the preface, he writes:

> … observe the nation that is defended by devoted patriots. The patriots fall in bloody battle or in the fight with hunger and want; what does the nation care for that? By the manure of their corpses the nation comes to 'its bloom'! The individuals have died 'for the great cause of the nation', and the nation sends some words of thanks after them and – has the profit of it. I call that a lucrative kind of egoism.[95]

The party is described by Stirner as a state within the state: as a political family within the broader political family. Even 'opposition' parties – revolutionary parties included – 'inveigh against every discord within the party', thus proving their basic statism, their commitment to political belonging (and political authority). Party members belong to the party and must stay 'true' to it, must 'unconditionally approve' its '*binding*' principles. Breaking the party-line shocks the '*morality*' of 'party men' and carries 'the stain of "faithlessness"'. On the other hand, independence or 'non-partisanship' – such egoism – is simply anathema to them. To the egoist, everything

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93   Ibid., pp. 199–200, 207. For Stirner's views on education, see also his 1842 article *The False Principle of Our Education*, an English translation of which is available, edited by James J. Martin (Colorado Springs, 1967).

94   *The Ego and Its Own*, pp. 205–206.

95   Ibid., p. 6.

is permitted, 'even apostasy, defection', the breaking of oaths. The egoist will make oaths that please him – will 'join' the party – but break them just as readily – since the party is to him no more than a 'gathering' in which 'he takes part' and 'nothing *binding* (obligatory)'. (The same egoistic argument applies against the social contract, which, even if consented to, would not bind the egoist any more than any other oath or promise. For Stirner, 'Because I was a fool yesterday' does not oblige me to 'remain such my life long'.)[96]

Another relation of belonging is *love*. Love is the purest expression of the Christian idea; indeed, it is the Christian law. 'Love is a far-reaching religious demand' – it is our human 'duty'. The individual who does not meet his duty is no mere ordinary criminal, but a sinner against God (since 'God is love!'). Love can be distinguished as 'romantic' or 'sensual' by the nature of its object ('sacred' or 'profane'); but in either case, it is essentially a religious or Christian love, that is, love as 'possessedness'. It is love that is imposed (as a duty) or that imposes duties to an object that possesses us and is therefore alien to us. 'The possessedness of love lies in the alienation of the object, or in my powerlessness as against its alienness and superior power.' Put simply, the object of love (family, nation, humanity, etc.) possesses the individual, the individual does not possess it. Such love can be distinguished from what might be called (in inescapable Christian language) egoistic 'love'. Egoistic love imposes no duties to an alien object. It consists in the egoist's 'enjoyment' of an object or its 'property'. The difference between the two kinds of love is apparent when we explore two senses of the 'sacred' statement (and social *commitment*) 'I love you'. In the romantic sense, this means, according to Stirner, that you (as the object of love) possess me (or negate my 'ownness'). In the egoistic sense, it means that I (as egoist or 'owner') enjoy you (or *my love* of you); you are my possession. Once again, Stirner points to 'the hypocrisy, or rather self-deception' involved in romantic love.[97] Perhaps this is most evident in marriage as the (supposed) public affirmation of love. What marriage actually represents is the state's (and perhaps the church's) recognition or authorization of formal relations between its citizens. The 'lovers' must receive such permission from the state. Indeed, traditionally, the potential groom must receive a 'blessing' in the first place from the father of the bride; if he is to take a daughter into his possession, he must ask the father to give up his possession first. Marriage, far from an expression of romantic love, is arguably an expression of the husband's enjoyment of his wife, sanctioned by family, church, and state.

To this point, Stirner has concentrated his analysis on social relations (relations of belonging) or the relation of the individual to the '*world of men*'. Nevertheless, he recognizes that two more relations require some consideration: firstly, the relation of the individual to property (or 'what men call their own'); and, secondly, the relation of the individual to 'the world of the senses and of ideas'.[98] Thus, Stirner supplements his central *social* analysis with degrees of what we might call *economic* and *intellectual* analysis. We will comment on these very briefly – as they have only

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96   Ibid., pp. 175, 209–11.
97   Ibid., pp. 254–57, 260–61.
98   Ibid., p. 218.

marginal bearing on Stirner's anarchism as such – before we conclude this section by examining the 'social' relations that Stirner advocates.

Stirner distinguishes between 'outward' and 'inward' possessions, between 'things' and 'thoughts'. It is not possessions as such that he objects to, but 'sacred' possessions or 'consecrated goods' – possessions underwritten by society and state. By consecrated things, he means legalized property; consecrated thoughts include 'man's faith … his honour, his moral feeling – yes, his feeling of decency, modesty, etc.'. He recognizes no 'thing' that is not subject to competition, no 'thought' that is above criticism. (In championing competition and criticism without limits, unbounded by the 'modesty' of the eighteenth century bourgeoisie, Stirner emerges as the ultimate representative of radical nineteenth century 'bourgeois' thought.)

> … let the individual man lay claim to ever so many rights … what do *I* care for his right and his claim? … I respect neither a so-called right of property (or his claim to tangible goods) nor yet his right to the 'sanctuary of his inner nature' (or his right to have the spiritual goods and divinities, his gods, remain unaggrieved). His goods, the sensuous as well as the spiritual, are *mine*, and I dispose of them as proprietor, in the measure of my – might.[99]

Stirner praises Proudhon and the communists for their attack on the exclusivity of private property. But he argues that Proudhonian socialism does not challenge '*property* itself', 'only such and such property'. How else could private property constitute any kind of 'theft'?: 'How can one steal if property is not already extant?' 'Exclusive' property remains on the socialist and communist model – property that is exclusive of individuals. Proudhon and the communists, in asserting the sacredness of (socialized) property and the 'propertylessness of the individual', are 'enemies of egoism [and] on that account – Christians'. However, though he rejects all 'legal property', private or social property which 'lives by grace of the *law*', Stirner does not wish to 'cheapen' property in the true sense of what is 'mine' or my own. That is to say, he favours 'egoistic property', and this cannot exist so long as the state exists: 'Under the dominion of the state there is no property of *mine*' – there is only property that society or the state owns (socialism and communism), or to which the state grants the private citizen a title (republicanism and liberalism). In the latter instance, the state (which 'alone is proprietor') rewards the 'good citizen' with the title of ownership. However, 'it is mine … only so long as – the state has nothing against it'. The state always retains the *power* to reclaim *its* property, or to withdraw my 'right'.[100]

As the individual has been suppressed, so too has 'real' property, property that 'I can judge and dispose of as seems good to me', that 'I hold … *unconditionally*' (without legal 'right', through competition or on the basis of 'might'). The state exists by appropriating 'real' property and devaluing the individual – by 'exploiting me' and '*getting benefit* from me'. The great threat to the state, from this perspective, is that the individual should assert itself and its 'value'. Hence, the state 'has nothing to be more afraid of than the value of me' and must guard against 'every occasion

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99   Ibid., pp. 218–19.
100   Ibid., pp. 221–25.

that offers itself to me for *realizing value* from myself'. Materially, the state will attempt to 'appease' me. 'But this "appeasing" will be all, and if it comes into my head to ask for more [that is, for *what is mine*], the state turns against me with all the force of its lion-paws and eagle-claws: for it is the king of beasts, it is lion and eagle'.[101] In other words, the state exploits and oppresses the individual – it takes what is mine and crushes me if I am so insolent as to ask for it back.

Not only does the state monopolize property, or the right to grant titles of ownership; it also monopolizes – or seeks to monopolize – spiritual goods, thought. One is free to think or to propagate thought only by *permission* of the state, and insofar as one thinks 'the state's thoughts'. The state alone has the right to determine the 'legitimate' expression of thought. Liberals cry out for 'liberty of the press' – they demand this right *from* the state. But this demand merely affirms the state's right (to grant permissions), its authority – as well as the individual's relative powerlessness.

> … *liberty of the press*, the liberals' loud demand, is assuredly possible in the state; yes, it is possible only *in* the state, because it is a *permission*, and consequently the permitter (the state) must not be lacking. But as a permission it has its limit in this very state, which surely should not in reason permit more than is compatible with itself and its welfare…

Stirner observes that the state 'lets me philosophize freely only so far as I prove myself a "philosopher of state"; *against* the state I must not philosophize, gladly as it tolerates my helping it out of its "deficiencies"'.[102] The state 'tolerates' the voice of reform – the voice that effectively affirms it – but not the voice of 'insurrection' – the voice that *conspires* against it, that seeks independence *from* the state (as opposed to 'rights' in it).

An obvious problem for Stirner here is that in attempting to challenge bourgeois property (like bourgeois right and bourgeois love), he retains the category in radicalized egoistic form. Thus, egoistic property survives (as egoistic right and egoistic love did): 'should I cheapen property? No, as I was not respected hitherto … so property too has to this day not yet been recognized in its full [egoistic] value'.[103] Stirner has demonstrated the relation between property and the state. But how could *anything* remain of property (as a 'right', egoistic or otherwise) without the state? Can 'egoistic property' survive on the basis of 'egoistic right'? Can property – as opposed to possession – exist on the basis of competitive 'might'? This is a question that right-wing anarchists must face.

The final, and perhaps the most important, element of Stirner's egoism is his explanation of how egos might relate (if they do at all). Stirner argues against classical liberalism that history moves in the direction of egoism, not that of 'association'. Indeed, the latter is mankind's primitive condition, its historical point of departure: 'Not isolation or being alone, but society, is man's original state … society is our *state of nature*'. Nevertheless, there are 'social' relations of a kind in the egoistic condition. The 'dissolution of society' (beyond Godwin's mere 'dissolution of

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101 Ibid., pp. 223, 225–27.
102 Ibid., pp. 227, 251.
103 Ibid., p. 224.

government') does not signify the complete isolation of egos. The egoistic condition allows for '*intercourse* or *union*' – that is, the 'union of egos'. Any future 'association' would represent the deformation of this union: 'If a union has crystallized into a society, it has ceased to be a coalition; for coalition is an incessant self-uniting; it has become a unitedness, come to a standstill, degenerated into a fixity; it is – *dead* as a union'. The distinction between association and union is, therefore, a distinction between fixed relations and dynamic relations, between 'sacred' relations of belonging and instrumental relations of 'intercourse'. Associations or communities are fixed or established relations of belonging characterized by the 'subjection' of the individual. In society, I must yield to 'a power *above me*' – indeed, I must serve this power (and thereby empower it). Without yielding in this way, without recognizing any 'obligations' to the society, the society cannot continue to exist. It is 'my submissiveness [that] gives it dominion'.[104] It is, ultimately, my weakness (my 'sense of duty' etc.) that gives the society its power (or its 'authority').

The union of egos – in contrast to the fixed, authoritative, and 'sacred' community or society – is self-created, non-obligatory, and instrumental. The individual chooses to enter into (or to exit from) union with other individuals because it is useful (or no longer useful) for him or her to do so. The union is therefore 'my own creation, my creature'; it is not imposed upon me like the family or the state. Stirner adds: 'As I am not willing to be a slave of my maxims, but lay them bare to my continual criticism without *any warrant*, and admit no bail at all for their persistence, so still less do I obligate myself to the union for my future and pledge my soul to it … I remain *more* to myself than state, church, God, and the like; consequently infinitely more than the union too.' The individual persists with the union only so long as it proves of instrumental value *to the individual*: 'a union is only your instrument, or the sword with which you sharpen and increase your natural force'. In other words, the union is a practical instrument of power – not a moral determinant of right. Those individuals with whom one unites have no *moral* significance (they are not 'brothers' or 'equals' as human beings); they are simply 'usable' objects, 'only means and organs which we may use as our property!'[105]

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104 Ibid., pp. 271–72.
105 Ibid., pp. 273, 275–77.

Chapter 7

Theoretical Developments of Anarchism

We outlined the three foundational texts of anarchism in the previous chapter. There are obvious differences between Godwin (the utilitarian), Proudhon (the socialist), and Stirner (the egoist). Indeed, it is doubtful whether the three would acknowledge much common ground between themselves. (Stirner actually attacked Proudhon's socialism from his egoistic perspective,[1] and similar attacks on each other's premises are conceivable.) However, all three thinkers embodied the Enlightenment spirit of radical questioning and developed sophisticated critiques of authoritative relations in the modern (post-revolutionary) world. In doing so, they established an alternative tradition of radical political thought, one fundamentally distinct from both liberalism and socialism.

Sketching the theoretical development of anarchism from the mid-nineteenth century onward (and we attempt no more in this chapter) is complicated by two main factors. Firstly, anarchism developed in so many divergent directions – from the collectivistic to the individualistic, from the communist to the capitalist, from the terrorist to the pacifist, from the revolutionary to the reformatory, from the comprehensive to the 'single-issue', and so on – that it seems completely incoherent. Where should our summary begin, and where could it possibly end? And, secondly, such developments as there have been in the anarchist tradition appear entirely practical, or praxis-oriented; thus, there doesn't seem to be much development in the way of theory at all. An anarchist 'movement' has (or a number of 'anarchist' movements have) emerged; perhaps some 'ideology' has (or a number of 'anarchist' ideologies have) evolved. But little of philosophical significance is immediately apparent, beyond the idiosyncratic academic work of Robert Paul Wolff and a few others.

Without doubt, anarchism took further shape under historical circumstances: the industrial revolution, the Paris Commune, the Russian and Spanish revolutions, two world wars, the growth of consumerism, the collapse of state communism, and so forth. These were circumstances that could hardly be ignored. But, even theoretically, the 'real-historical' influence was inevitable in the post-Hegelian environment where Marx, in particular, made powerful claims for the priority of 'reality' over 'ideality', of human action over spiritual development. (This transformation notwithstanding, Marx shared with Hegel a belief in the significant, though not total, determination of history, a belief that would come to be opposed, more or less consistently, by anarchists from Bakunin onwards.) Of course, Marx was following Stirner in making such claims; but one of his major philosophical contributions was to demonstrate (in

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1   See *The Ego and Its Own* (ed.) David Leopold (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 221–23.

the *German Ideology* of 1846) that Stirner was, for all his talk of the real and the concrete, a spiritual obsessive, the last of the true Hegelians.[2]

Bakunin and Kropotkin

So it was that the first great anarchist thinker outside the Godwin-Proudhon-Stirner triumvirate, Mikhail Bakunin, should stand in such an ambiguous relation to Marx.[3] We might say that Bakunin was torn between the genius of Marx and the sensibility of Proudhon, or between new 'scientific' socialism (inspired by classical British economics, German idealism, and French socialism) and early 'philosophical' anarchism (inspired by the Enlightenment tradition of radicalism). Philosophically, given the influence of German idealism, Bakunin should have been closer to Stirner than Proudhon. However, instinctively, Bakunin always sympathized more with Proudhon, the Frenchman and humanist, a figure who, like him, experienced the conflicting pulls of thought and action, of philosophy and revolution. In fact, the main difference between Proudhon and Bakunin is that Proudhon would commit himself (for all his activism) to theory, while Bakunin would commit himself (for all his theorizing) to activism. In this sense, Bakunin is the most important figure in the initial transition from anarchist theory to anarchist praxis, from early anarchist philosophy to the later anarchist ideology and movement.

Bakunin developed anarchist philosophy and the critique of authority in three principal directions. Firstly, in the Enlightenment, Left Hegelian, and early anarchist traditions, he developed the critique of authority in terms of its religious, metaphysical, and generally mystical and irrational basis. He argued that while authority could be justified in certain instances (a point neither Godwin nor Stirner would accept), the authority of the state, above all, rested on the religio-metaphysical (or 'theologistic') mystification of human oppression (conquest, violence, etc.), or on the absurd legitimation of illegitimate social power. This kind of reasoning was by no means foreign to the early anarchist thinkers, but, under the influence of Hegel, Feuerbach, and Comte, Bakunin tried to supplement anarchist analysis with phenomenological, anthropological, and sociological argumentation. (Proudhon had prefigured the sociological development, under the influence of Saint-Simon and

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2   In this light, Kierkegaard, for example, seems altogether irrelevant, little more than a provincial and reactionary theologian. He seems especially so when compared with Nietzsche, who was to return to and reconsider Stirnerian themes later in the nineteenth century, and to have a profound influence on twentieth century anarchists like Emma Goldman and Herbert Read.

3   Secondary works on Bakunin include the following: E.H. Carr, *Michael Bakunin* (London, 1937); Eugene Pyziur, *The Doctrine of Anarchism of Michael A. Bakunin* (Milwaukee, 1955); Aileen Kelly, *Mikhail Bakunin: A Study in the Psychology and Politics of Utopianism* (Oxford, 1982); Richard B. Saltman, *The Social and Political Thought of Michael Bakunin* (Westport, 1983); Brian Morris*, Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom* (Montreal, 1993); Paul McLaughlin, *Mikhail Bakunin: The Philosophical Basis of His Anarchism* (New York, 2002); Mark Leier, *Mikhail Bakunin: The Creative Passion* (London, 2006).

Comte. But his attitude towards religion was somewhat ambivalent, and Bakunin therefore considered his analysis partial or inadequate.)

Bakunin developed the critique of authority, secondly, in terms of its relation to science; he was concerned with the relation between expertise or supposed theoretical authority and practical authority, especially the political authority of the state. Bakunin maintained that theoretical authority was justifiable, but denied that it ever justified political authority. Thus, he argued against what he termed the 'government of science'. Any such government would amount to the despotism of the wise, and would – in practice – be much more oppressive than republican and democratic forms of government. (Anarchists like Bakunin have consistently argued that limited government, while illegitimate and therefore undesirable in itself, is preferable to unlimited government; or, *at least*, that a republic is preferable to a monarchy or aristocracy.) Accordingly, despite the influence of Comte and, indeed, Marx, Bakunin rejected the political conclusions and aspirations of the new sociologists.

This brings us to Bakunin's third and most famous development of the critique of authority in terms of its relation to socialism; he was especially concerned with the relation between state or 'authoritarian' socialism and social freedom. Bakunin argued that the success of a state socialist or, say, Marxist revolution would result in social oppression by a new political (or 'administrative') class composed primarily of intellectual or 'scientific' socialists (and perhaps of *former* workers). It would produce the arrogant and pernicious rule of those who think they know better, or, again, the despotism of the wise. Bakunin denied that the (hypothetical) achievement of social equality could ever vindicate such social oppression, any more than the (hypothetical) achievement of individual freedom could ever vindicate social inequality. Moreover, he maintained that, in fact, an unfree society must necessarily be unequal (in terms of the distribution of social power), just as an unequal society must necessarily be unfree (because of the need to secure privilege). (The latter is a point that liberals and 'libertarians' cannot countenance. The Bakuninian vision of justice – of the inseparability of liberty and equality – is absolutely irreconcilable with the classical liberal attachment to freedom *in itself*.)

The influence of Marx made Bakunin rather antipathetic towards philosophy as such, or at least 'metaphysics'. However, the ethical insights of Proudhon convinced Bakunin that something was lacking in Marx's thought. Doubtless, Marx possessed a greater appreciation of 'real' history than Proudhon. However, from Bakunin's point of view, Marx was guilty of asserting his economistic claims (about social class, social change, etc.) dogmatically and refusing to acknowledge the fundamental importance of other determining factors of social reality (that is, *merely* 'ideological' factors). That is to say, Marx did not fully appreciate the complexity – indeed, the *moral* complexity – of reality. In any event, reading Bakunin, one senses a tension within his thought between a diluted kind of Marxian economism and an authentic anarchist scepticism. This tension has been explained away in terms of philosophical incompetence or even psychological disorder.[4] In fact, it marks the first attempt of anarchism to grapple with the new reality, that is, the reality of nineteenth-century

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4   The oddest psychological assessment of Bakunin is Arthur Mendel's *Michael Bakunin: Roots of Apocalypse* (New York, 1981).

industrialization. (Proudhon offers little theoretical assistance in this regard, as Marx was to demonstrate.) Inevitably, this new reality seemed to be more explicable in 'new' socialist than in 'old' liberal categories – in the category of equality (faced with exploitation), or 'humanization' (faced with 'alienation'), rather than liberty (faced with oppression). Bakunin's major contribution to left-wing analysis, however, was to retain a basic intellectual and moral commitment to the principle of liberty. This was a commitment inspired by Proudhon, a thinker Marx caricatured and dismissed quite unreasonably and unfairly.

The anarchist left that emerged under the direct influence of Bakunin (and the indirect influence of Proudhon) sought to reconcile eighteenth century 'bourgeois' radicalism and nineteenth century 'proletarian' socialism. (That is not to say, as we argued earlier, that anarchism itself, or the 'anarchist idea', is a mere synthesis of liberalism and socialism.) In Bakunin's case, this reconciliation isn't wholly successful. To some extent, Bakunin represents the worst aspects of the radical and socialist traditions – *arguably* a certain voluntarism, on the one hand, and a certain positivism, on the other. Nevertheless, he incorporated key aspects of both traditions as well – he understood both the exploitative dimension of liberalism and the oppressive dimension of socialism, and was unwilling to justify either in the name of the other. Perhaps he didn't manage to explain the relationship between exploitation and oppression satisfactorily, but in acknowledging the complexity of the new reality – in theory and, practically, within the First International – he inspired a new generation of anarchists.

Industrialization, and its unrivalled (if partial) explanation by Marx, led to the emergence of a leftist or 'social' anarchism. (We will say something of right-wing anarcho-individualism below.) But the left as a whole was fractured by Marx and Bakunin, and by 'communist' and 'collectivist' wings within the nineteenth century socialist movement. The distinction between Marxian communism and Bakuninian collectivism is both economic and political. Economically, it represents a distinction between the principle of distribution according to need (or 'solidarity') and the principle of distribution according to effort. Politically, it represents a distinction between the political revolutionary project of state 'sublation' – of realizing the (supposedly transitional) socialist state – and the social revolutionary project of state negation – of realizing 'anarchy', that is, according to Bakunin, a decentralized social order of authentically democratic, autonomous, and federated 'communes' or communities of free and equal individuals.

Terminologically, the communist-collectivist split is complicated by Peter Kropotkin, who (like Elisée Reclus, another important nineteenth century anarchist theorist[5]) sought to develop a *communist anarchism* on a scientific basis – an anarchism committed to communist morality and economy and founded on the

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5   The major study of Reclus in English is Marie Fleming, *The Geography of Freedom: The Odyssey of Elisée Reclus* (Montreal, 1988). See also Camille Martin and John P. Clark (eds), *Anarchy, Geography, Modernity: The Radical Social Thought of Elisée Reclus* (Lanham, 2004).

new evolutionary science.[6] However, Kropotkin's communism was libertarian, in comparison with that of Marx (since he denied the need for state ownership and control), while his scientific conclusions were socialistic, in comparison with those of T.H. Huxley (since he denied the absolute 'law' of competitive struggle in natural and social evolution). His communism[7] might be considered more agrarian than industrial; accordingly, it had greatest influence in eastern and southern Europe. Indeed, in the 1930s in Spain, this 'agrarian' anarchism would come to fruition alongside the more industrial anarcho-syndicalism that was, in part (and though the influence has been exaggerated), inspired by Bakunin. Thus it was that two main models of social anarchism emerged, one (anarcho-communism) focused on small scale, localized cooperation, the other (anarcho-syndicalism) on large scale, centralized production. The former, representing an alternative to 'instrumental' approaches that are held by some to have degraded our natural environment, has had a significant influence on the emergence of 'eco-anarchism'.

Scientifically, Kropotkin's work on 'mutual aid'[8] did much to counterbalance the atomistic and competitive conclusions of social Darwinism, a doctrine, as Kropotkin saw it, of questionable scientific merit and ideological orientation. Kropotkin argued that cooperation was at least as important a factor as competitive and self-interested struggle in natural and, by extension, social evolution. Indeed, he held that those species and social groups that practice the greatest degree of cooperation are most successful in terms of survival and well-being. The scientific foundations of Kropotkin's anarcho-communism, then, were evolutionary and, to his mind, 'hard' foundations in comparison with the 'soft', economic foundations of Marx's communism. In fact, the naturalistic foundations of anarchism – as opposed to the 'metaphysical' economistic foundations of state socialism – had been emphasized by Bakunin before Kropotkin. By the end of the nineteenth century, we can say, therefore, that anarchist theory had been, in a manner of speaking, both industrialized and naturalized. These were the chief developments on the anarchist philosophy of Godwin, Proudhon, and Stirner (though Proudhon had arguably anticipated both developments, taking a pre-eminent role, once again, within the founding generation).

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6   English-language studies of Kropotkin include: George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumović, *The Anarchist Prince: A Biographical Study of Peter Kropotkin* (London, 1950) [republished, with supplementary material, as *From Prince to Rebel: Peter Kropotkin* (Montreal, 1990)]; Martin A. Miller, *Kropotkin* (Chicago, 1976); Caroline Cahm, *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism, 1872–1886* (Cambridge, 1989); Brian Morris, *Kropotkin: The Politics of Community* (Buffalo, 2003).

7   See, in particular, *The Conquest of Bread* [1892] (ed.) Marshall S. Shatz (Cambridge, 1995) and *Fields, Factories, and Workshops* [1899] (ed.) George Woodcock (Montreal, 1995).

8   See, in particular, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* [1902] (London, 1993).

Malatesta and 'New Anarchism'

Kropotkin's scientific anarcho-communism became anarchist orthodoxy by the turn of the twentieth century. Perhaps its appeal lay in both its apparent intellectual rigour (and Kropotkin's is probably the most impressive and coherent body of classical anarchist work) and its optimistic humanistic and libertarian conclusions. Errico Malatesta was the first major anarchist figure to break with Kropotkinian orthodoxy. Malatesta himself was a modest (if insightful) theorist, but his critique of the anarchist mainstream – *from within* – opened the way to new, twentieth century forms of anarchism that weren't dependent on nineteenth century doctrine. Thus, Malatesta signalled the transition from 'classical' anarchism to 'new' anarchism. (Malatesta's own career as an activist and propagandist spanned a lengthy and important period in left-wing history, from the 1870s to the early 1930s – or from the great disputes of the First International to Stalinist consolidation in the Soviet Union.)

Malatesta was greatly influenced by Bakunin and Kropotkin, but he maintained that anarchism should not be identified with such 'great' individuals or with any fixed – timeless and placeless – body of ideas. More specifically, what he attacked in classical anarchist doctrine[9] was excessive intellectual – rather than personal or political – reverence for Marx (especially in Bakunin's case) and excessive revolutionary optimism (especially in Kropotkin's case). Malatesta opposed the scientistic *determinism* on which this optimism rested, as well as the *dogmatism* he associated with such determinism. This determinism he detected not only in Marx's economism, but also in Bakunin's naturalism and Kropotkin's evolutionism. Dogmatism he associated with any exclusionary account of reality, any account that denied reality or fundamental meaning to supposedly 'meta-physical' elements, such as human will. To Malatesta, therefore, dogmatism signifies the absolute denial of that for which one cannot account; and he believed that this threatened the very basis of human morality.

Though Bakunin's naturalism and Kropotkin's evolutionism *are* 'exclusionary', it is not true to say that there is no conceivable naturalistic or evolutionary foundation for morality, or that Bakunin and Kropotkin made no progress in dealing with the problem. Bakunin devotes substantial portions of his major work, *The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution* (1870–71),[10] to the problem, while Kropotkin was working on an incomplete *Ethics* at the time of his death. However, Malatesta believes that this problem and all such philosophical controversies are best avoided, and that attending to them is more likely to undermine the anarchist case than to support it. In contemporary terms, he wishes to set aside the philosophical quest for 'foundations' and to concentrate on 'pragmatic' matters. Nevertheless, that is not to say that Malatesta is a forerunner of postmodern anarchism. He does not deny that there are epistemological or ethical foundations; he believes, rather, that anarchism should embrace the different philosophical standpoints that inspire it, and

9   His critique culminates in 'Peter Kropotkin: Recollections of an Old Friend' [1931], in *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas* (ed.) Vernon Richards (London, 1965), pp. 257–68. The latter is the major study and anthology of Malatesta in English.

10   *Archives Bakounine*, vol. 7 (ed.) Arthur Lehning (Leiden, 1982).

focus on social transformation. The purpose of anarchism is to realize a just society in the broadest sense, not to contemplate it.

Aside from figures like Murray Bookchin (who has developed an ambitious philosophy of eco-anarchism), many twentieth and twenty-first century anarchists have found Malatesta's 'new' brand of intellectually reticent but practically engaged anarchism appealing. But two criticisms of such anarchism are conceivable, and probably have some merit. First of all, the suspension of philosophical judgement recommended by Malatesta leaves anarchism open to the charge of being theoretically incoherent. That is not to say that Malatesta or any other anarchist is obliged to paint a complete picture of an alternative future society, but that, prophecies aside, the anarchist case for social transformation should be made as intelligibly and coherently as possible – if not (ideally) for the benefit of human understanding, at least (pragmatically) for the purposes of propaganda. One is inclined to assert that the failure of its advocates to represent it adequately is a major reason for anarchism's relative obscurity. In many instances, anarchists come across as simpletons devoid of ideas, while others succeed only in patronizing their audience with their intuitive wisdom. A second criticism of Malatesta's anarchism is that the prioritization of transformative action over critical reflection suggests that anarchism is an anti-intellectualistic form of activist purism; hence the impression of anarchism as change for its own sake or as destructive action without affirmative end – as effective nihilism aiming at the 'creation' of 'anarchy' in the pejorative sense. Of course, anarchists like Malatesta constantly assert the strong ethico-political motivations for their actions. The problem is that, precluding the kind of philosophical investigation that might enable them to become conscious of *what* exactly those motivations are and *how* to articulate them, it is rather difficult for others to take their supposed moral agency as anything more than puerile activism.

The above criticisms of Malatesta notwithstanding, theoretical advances were made within the 'new anarchist' tradition that he represents. Perhaps these advances were more piecemeal than comprehensive. If so, this reflected not only Malatesta's critique of the 'big ideas' of classical anarchism but also the philosophical mood of the time. The nineteenth century marked an apparent end to philosophical system-building. Only a few philosophers (such as Husserl, Heidegger, Whitehead, and Dewey) retained anything like traditional ambitions; but even their projects were narrower in focus than that of Hegel, perhaps the last great systematic philosopher. Generally, 'the analysis of this' and 'the phenomenology of that' became normal philosophical subject matter in the twentieth century. System-building had passed briefly into the new sociological tradition; but its pretences were soon exposed (by Bakunin among others). Only Marxism remained as a remotely serious intellectual 'system' by the early-twentieth century. But Marxist inquiry became more specialized as the Marxist system collapsed under the weight of its failure to explain new conditions of production and consumption. (Doubtless the perceived socio-economic failure of Marxism in practice, as well as the specific alliances and interventions of would-be Marxist regimes, had some bearing too.) Subsequently, the mainstream left took to localized inquiry and smaller scale social concerns. And it was at this point that 'new' Marxism and 'new' anarchism achieved a certain rapprochement (especially under the banner of libertarian socialism) in the era of

the New Left. Thus, the development of a new anarchism prefigured the emergence of the New Left as a whole. If the latter is characterized, vis-à-vis the Old Left, in terms of its preoccupation with modest social analysis or cultural critique (of gender, schooling, the arts, etc.), as opposed to rather immodest class analysis and economistic explanation, it could be argued that the new anarchists in the tradition of Malatesta had some (direct or indirect) role in this reorientation.

Among the most important new anarchists, as characterized above, is Emma Goldman.[11] Goldman is most famous for her development of a radical feminism or anarcho-feminism.[12] She sought to develop a feminism consistent with anarchist principles, but also an anarchism consistent with authentic feminist principles, which had previously been somewhat peripheral in anarchist thought (though they did gain some expression in the work of Godwin and Elisée Reclus). Goldman rejected the moderate feminism of the Suffragette Movement as inadequate, believing that females (while the full equals of males) were incapable of transforming a hopelessly unjust system (as if they comprised some superior or 'supernatural' moral power). Thus, like the classical anarchists before her, Goldman had no faith in political revolution (or the 'change of masters'), and less still in political reform (or the extension of political rights). Goldman argued that there was a more fundamental need to revolutionize our oppressive social relations (interpersonal, pedagogical, economic, and political), as well as our values. The ultimate goal of such a revolutionary process was the realization of individual sovereignty, albeit within the communal context. Thus, with other new anarchists like Herbert Read, Goldman attempted to synthesize the social and individualist traditions of anarchism, consciously drawing on the ideas of Stirner as well as those of Kropotkin. In other words, while she was committed to the classical tradition of social anarchism and to communal values, Goldman also warned of the tyranny of the crowd over the individual. Goldman was also a witness of post-revolutionary Russia and, like Alexander Berkman, Voline, and Rudolf Rocker, became one of the most important anarchist critics of Bolshevik authoritarianism.[13]

Noam Chomsky is a major contemporary new anarchist, in our sense.[14] Like Goldman, he was inspired by the classical tradition of anarchism (and especially

11   Secondary works on Goldman include: Richard Drinnon, *Rebel in Paradise: A Biography of Emma Goldman* (Chicago, 1961); Alix Shulman, *To the Barricades: The Anarchist Life of Emma Goldman* (New York, 1971); Alice Wexler, *Emma Goldman: An Intimate Life* (London, 1984); Alice Wexler, *Emma Goldman in Exile: From the Russia Revolution to the Spanish Civil War* (Boston, 1989); Candace Falk, *Love, Anarchy, and Emma Goldman*, revised edn (New Brunswick, 1990).

12   See, in particular, *Anarchism and Other Essays* [1910], revised edn (New York, 1969).

13   See Goldman's *My Disillusionment in Russia* [1923], complete edn (New York, 1970), Berkman's *The Bolshevik Myth* [1925] (London, 1989), and, above all, Voline's *The Unknown Revolution, 1917–1921*, trans. Fredy Perlman (Montreal, 1975). Rocker's *Die Bankrotte des Russischen Staatskommunismus* (1921) is untranslated.

14   Studies of Chomsky which explore his politics include: Milan Rai, *Chomsky's Politics* (London, 1995); Robert F. Barsky, *Noam Chomsky: A Life of Dissent* (Cambridge, 1997); Peter Wilkin, *Noam Chomsky: On Power, Knowledge, and Human Nature* (New

Bakunin); he has also been influenced by the classically-oriented anarcho-syndicalism of Rocker. However, Chomsky shares Malatesta's misgivings about big ideas, and his own contribution to anarchist thought is – on the face of it – rather limited. Chomsky has never attempted to develop a general theory of anarchism. In fact, he doubts that there is any such thing (viewing anarchism as an historical and historically developing trend rather than a fixed body of ideas),[15] and is deeply sceptical about the 'scientific' pretensions of political theory in general. But what Chomsky has contributed to anarchist thought is a profound critical analysis of media propaganda as a method of social control in 'open' societies.[16] He has supplemented this with a mass of detailed material on current affairs (from the Vietnam War to the present) and their presentation in the media. Chomsky developed a 'Propaganda Model' with Edward Herman in response to what he regards as a fundamental social problem of our time. He calls this 'Orwell's Problem': the problem of how we possess such limited (social) knowledge given such rich evidence (or information). This is seemingly the opposite problem to another that has preoccupied Chomsky as a professional linguist: 'Plato's Problem', or the problem of how we possess such rich (linguistic) knowledge given such limited evidence (or experience).[17] The Propaganda Model focuses on the influence of wealth and power on the Western media, and specifies various factors that determine how information is 'filtered out'. These include the concentration of media ownership, the profit motive, media dependence on advertising revenue, media reliance on information provided by political and economic powers as well as 'experts', 'flak' as a means of discipline, and – formerly – the ideology of anti-communism (which has arguably been replaced by an ideology of anti-terrorism).

Bookchin

The only contemporary anarchist – indeed, the only anarchist of the twentieth century – to develop a more or less comprehensive anarchist philosophy is Murray Bookchin.[18] No new anarchist, he might be termed a neo-classical anarchist, an

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York, 1997); James McGilvray, *Chomsky: Language, Mind, and Politics* (Cambridge, 1999); Neil Smith, *Chomsky: Ideas and Ideals* (Cambridge, 1999); Alison Edgley, *The Social and Political Thought of Noam Chomsky* (London, 2000); James McGilvray (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Chomsky* (Cambridge, 2005); Carlos Otero, *Chomsky's Revolution: Cognitivism and Anarchism* (Oxford, 2007).

15   See 'Notes on Anarchism', *For Reasons of State* (London, 1973), pp. 151–66.

16   See, in particular, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York, 1988), co-written with Edward S. Herman.

17   Chomsky specifies these two problems as his central intellectual concerns in the Preface to *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use* (New York, 1986), pp. xxv–xxix.

18   As important a thinker as Bookchin is, remarkably, there is still no major secondary study of him. His own *Remaking Society: Pathways to a Green Future* (Montreal, 1989) provides the best introduction to his thought. The following are of some relevance: John P. Clark (ed.), *Renewing the Earth: The Promise of Social Ecology* (London, 1990); David Watson, *Beyond Bookchin: Preface for a Future Social Ecology* (New York, 1996); Janet

anarchist in the tradition of Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin. However, Bookchin's anarchism marks a radical transformation in anarchist thought, and is inspired by a sense of crisis – of *ecological crisis* – that is quite foreign to the great nineteenth century thinkers. Thus, Bookchin's anarchism is not a response to mere social crisis (the crisis of modern oppression), but a more fundamental and far-reaching crisis: a crisis not just for our species, but for the planet itself. The assumption made (and demonstrable in principle) is that certain social practices, and the beliefs that underpin them, risk environmental disaster and the extinction of advanced life on Earth. The beliefs in question are basically *anthropocentric*: diverse beliefs about the priority of mankind over nature. The practices that follow are basically *instrumental*: diverse practices involving the use of natural (and by extension human) 'resources' for the immediate satisfaction of human beings (or social groups).

Bookchin has tried to uncover the origins of such beliefs and practices. By a process of anthropological inquiry,[19] he locates their origins at that moment in social development when dominative relations and hierarchical structures emerged. He argues that it is inconceivable that the notion of nature's domination by mankind could have predated the domination of human by fellow human. Thus, the ecological crisis has its ultimate origin in social oppression (and its ultimate solution in social transformation). This is the basic premise of Bookchin's *social* ecology, a premise that sets him apart from both environmentalists and so-called 'deep ecologists'. The former (including green party politicians) seek reformatory and instrumental solutions to a crisis that demands a revolutionary response to instrumental practice as such. The latter (Arne Næss and his descendants) Bookchin accuses of both mystical or irrational biocentrism and misanthropic attitudes. While humans are responsible for the ecological crisis, Bookchin holds that they also have a unique capacity to become conscious of it and to overcome it. Such a capacity entitles humans to dignity and – indeed – freedom.[20]

In terms of 'basic' philosophy – of logic and metaphysics – Bookchin calls himself a 'dialectical naturalist'.[21] He claims that this position enables him to overcome the dualism of nature and humanity, the metaphysical cleavage in which the ecological crisis has its roots. Dialectical naturalism is the doctrine according to which society or 'second nature' is an evolutionary product that emerged dialectically (or through contradiction between the real and the potential) from the material 'substratum' of 'first nature'. (Matter itself, therefore, is not the formless stuff of mechanical materialism, but rich in potential.) He argues, moreover, that reason, freedom, and morality are potentialities of second nature.

Biehl, *The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism* (Montreal, 1997); Bob Black, *Anarchy After Leftism* (Columbia, 1997); Andrew Light (ed.), *Social Ecology After Bookchin* (New York, 1998).

19   See *Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*, 2nd edn (Montreal, 1991).

20   See *Re-enchanting Humanity: A Defence of the Human Spirit against Antihumanism, Misanthropy, Mysticism, and Primitivism* (London, 1995).

21   See *The Philosophy of Social Ecology: Essays on Dialectical Naturalism*, revised edn (Montreal, 1995).

In social philosophy, Bookchin argues (anthropologically and historically) for a 'legacy of freedom' that has existed throughout human history in contradiction to the 'legacy of domination'. This libertarian tradition – most obvious in the revolutionary movements about which Bookchin has recently written[22] – has culminated, in terms of modern ideology, in anarchism. Bookchin has attempted to make this tradition (or its more fruitful social form) relevant in the modern context of 'post-scarcity', or to drag social anarchism out of the nineteenth century in order to account for modern conditions of production and consumption.[23] (In this, Bookchin has been accused either of being mistaken or being Americocentric.) Bookchin counterposes his social anarchism to individualistic, primitivist, and postmodern forms – or, collectively, 'lifestyle anarchism' (as represented by John Zerzan, Hakim Bey, and others).[24] These forms of anarchism he regards as socially irrelevant and morally self-indulgent expressions of capitalist culture.

Bookchin's main innovation in political philosophy is his development of 'libertarian municipalism' as a political vision for an 'ecological society'.[25] He claims to rejuvenate politics in the classical sense, a sense that is, he maintains, altogether distinct from the modern sense of politics as 'statecraft'. His ideal is that of authentic participatory *citizenship* in decentralized democracies or (federated) 'municipalities', as opposed to that of '*constituenthood*' in the centralized and bureaucratic state (where 'participation' is limited to indulging the 'authoritative' aspirations of 'party-men'.) This explicitly *political* dimension of Bookchin's anarchism sets him apart from 'apolitical' anarchists like the individualists, and also anarcho-syndicalists, whose rather antiquated focus is on the transformative role of the factory rather than the polity. Thus, Bookchin is a 'republican' anarchist in the literal sense.

Individualistic and Postmodern Anarchism

Bookchin's anarchism is the latest and perhaps the most sophisticated philosophical expression of social anarchism. But there is a very different tradition of 'individualistic anarchism' inspired by Stirner and, perhaps, classical liberalism. In so far as this form of 'anarchism' is inspired by classical liberalism,[26] its anarchist credentials (or

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22 See Bookchin's four volume *The Third Revolution: Popular Movements in the Revolutionary Era* (London, 1996–2005).

23 See *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* [1971] (Montreal, 1986).

24 See *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (Edinburgh, 1995).

25 See *From Urbanization to Cities: Toward a New Politics of Citizenship* (London, 1995).

26 This is David Miller's interpretation. See *Anarchism* (London, 1984), p. 30: 'individualist anarchism … can usefully be seen as an outgrowth of classical liberalism … these anarchists … took the liberal idea of individual sovereignty and extended it until it became incompatible with the idea of the state'. He goes on to explore the ideology developed by Josiah Warren, Lysander Spooner, Stephen Pearl Andrews, Benjamin Tucker, David Friedman, and Murray Rothbard. This ideology may be internally coherent, as Miller argues, but it isn't properly anarchist (see below). The only common feature between anarchists and

the anarchist credentials of figures from the utopian Josiah Warren to the 'anarcho-capitalist' Murray Rothbard) are highly questionable. The attempt to liberate sovereign individuals, civil society, or the market from *even* the minimal state – or limited governmental interference – is a radical liberal or so-called 'libertarian' project. It is a project founded on the liberal concern with limits rather than the anarchist concern with legitimacy. Consequently, though the 'libertarian' comes out against 'government', he or she has no insight into the problem of authority itself – into its nature and its moral foundation. The 'libertarian' is so transfixed by the politico-economic problem of government-individual or state-market relations that the fundamental socio-ethical problem of authority slips away. This is precisely why libertarians are unsceptical about, for example, the possibility that capitalism might *require* various forms of mystified social control, such as the practical authority exercised by privatized arms of the state ('protective associations', for instance) or the theoretical authority exercised by 'experts' on market economics. Therefore, the 'libertarian' represents liberal *anti-statism*, or 'anarchism' abstracted from anarchist critique or from authentic scepticism towards authority. They may capture the (mystified) spirit of anarchism, but cannot comprehend it.

Of course, there are genuine forms of individualist anarchism, of anarchism founded on individualistic or even egoistic principles. Stirner's anarchism, discussed above, is by far the best and most persuasive example. But an interesting twentieth century example is the aesthetic anarchism of Herbert Read, an anarchism influenced by Stirner, Nietzsche, and also psychoanalysis.[27] Read argues that social progress is measured by the development of the aesthetic personality, or of individuality in the proper sense. (Accordingly, we judge cultures in terms of their 'representative individuals', and consider Greek civilization and the Renaissance period to be especially worthy of admiration.) In 'primitive' societies, individuality takes an impoverished, atomistic form. In poorer civilizations, the individual is submerged in the (religious, political, military, or socio-economic) group. But the future offers the hope of *free and creative individuality*. This implies the negation not only of the state (or the individual's reduction to a citizen-'unit'), and of both capitalist and socialist economism (or the individual's reduction to a producer / consumer-'unit'), but of all forms of social oppression (including schooling, to which Read paid much attention). Read disagrees with Stirner on one fundamental point, however. For him, the authentic individual is not the wholly autonomous egoist, but the individual governed by 'natural law' (over and above the 'arbitrary law' of the state); and this law establishes the principle of 'equity' as the basis of social order or 'harmony'. Read, though aware of the philosophical and practical problems involved, therefore advocates that a social 'system of equity' replace the existing 'system of law'. And

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such 'libertarians' is opposition to the state, and this kind of opposition is (contrary to what many scholars believe) *not definitive of anarchism*, as we argued earlier.

27   See *The Philosophy of Anarchism* (London, 1940). On Read himself, see: George Woodcock, *Herbert Read: The Stream and the Source* (London, 1972); James King, *The Last Modern: A Life of Herbert Read* (London, 1990); David Goodway (ed.), *Herbert Read Reassessed* (Liverpool, 1998).

in this, though Read is fundamentally an individualist, we see that he attempts to synthesize his individualism with elements of classical social anarchism.

A final, contemporary theoretical development of anarchism is postmodern anarchism. This comes in two principal forms: Todd May's 'poststructuralist anarchism'[28] and Saul Newman's 'postanarchism'.[29] May and Newman try to synthesize traditional anarchist 'anti-authoritarianism' with postmodern 'anti-essentialism'. (They differ, however, in who they regard as the true inheritors of classical anarchism: May looks to Foucault, Deleuze, and Lyotard, while Newman looks – even more contentiously – to Derrida and Lacan.) What the postmodern synthesis involves is stripping anarchism of its Enlightenment 'humanism'. (In the contemporary context, therefore, there is a massive gulf between postmodern anarchism and the neo-classical anarchism of Bookchin, who situates anarchism definitively within the Enlightenment tradition.) May and Newman respect anarchism's insights into the ubiquity and diffusion of power – its awareness that social power is not limited to the state (as liberalism implies) or capitalism (as socialism implies), and that critique and change must be social, not merely political or economic. But they deny that an anarchist ethic – or a faith in rational progress – can be rooted in human nature, as the classical anarchists believed; thus, anarchism must be 'environmentalized', 'contextualized', or 'relativized'. Whether this leaves much in the way of an anarchist ethic, or much room for revolutionary agency, is open to question. And whether 'human nature' can be written off quite so easily (without any engagement with – one might even say knowledge of – the natural sciences) is even more questionable. But a more general criticism of postmodern anarchism arises here, which is that it does not appear to add very much to new anarchism – the non-dogmatic and open-ended form of anarchism inspired by Malatesta – apart from the scholastic verbiage of a fashionable philosophy.[30] New anarchism achieved intellectual clarity, if nothing else; postmodern anarchism is – for most – a kind of impenetrable professional discourse.

We have summarized the development of anarchist thought in six general categories above: early anarchist philosophy (Godwin, Proudhon, Stirner); classical anarchism (Bakunin, Kropotkin); new anarchism (Malatesta, Goldman, Chomsky); neo-classical anarchism (Bookchin); individualist anarchism (Read); and postmodern anarchism (May, Newman). Of course, in such a brief summary there are significant omissions: Elisée Reclus, Leo Tolstoy, Alex Comfort, Paul Goodman, Colin Ward, John Zerzan, and others. One might even add other important categories of anarchist thought. However, inadequate though our summary of theoretical developments is, it is to be hoped that it gives the reader *some* idea not only of the breadth of anarchist philosophy, but also of its depth.

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28   See *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* (University Park, 1994).

29   See *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power* (Lanham, 2001).

30   Little enough is said about the scholasticism of the postmoderns, the degree to which they write within the specialized framework and in the 'technical' vocabulary of their 'school'. Indeed, coincidentally or not, this school seems to flourish especially well where the Thomists once ruled.

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The Problem of Authority in Social Context

In the previous chapters, we offered a series of analytical and historical arguments about anarchism. Analytically, we argued: (1) that anarchism is a form of 'moral scepticism', a sceptical position regarding authority and the moral claims made for it; (2) that authority is a form of social power that entitles those who possess it to issue content-independent and binding directives that its subjects have a duty to follow; (3) that authority comes in moral (spiritual and temporal), theoretical (or 'non-executive'), and practical (or 'executive') forms; and (4) that anarchists reject all traditional claims – instrumental and non-instrumental – for the legitimacy of the practical authority of the state. Historically, we argued: (5) that anarchism was inspired (theoretically) by the Enlightenment (practically) by the French Revolution, and also – as is generally overlooked – by the radical enlightenment philosophy of Left Hegelianism; (6) that anarchism was originally developed in the utilitarian thought of Godwin, the socialist thought of Proudhon, and the egoistic thought of Stirner; and (7) that anarchist theory was 'industrialized' and 'naturalized' by Bakunin and Kropotkin, 'relativized' by Malatesta and the new anarchists who followed him, and philosophically reinvigorated by Bookchin above all. These analytical and historical claims come down to the following: anarchists – in the spirit of Enlightenment rationality and reasoning – acknowledge the justifiability of authority, but maintain their right to question its justification in each and every instance *and* to challenge those instances which are unjustified by any recognizable standard (which are 'unjustifiable').

Objections

Our arguments about the nature and history of anarchism raise a number of potential objections. Firstly, it is questionable whether the account of anarchism offered here – or whether our definition – is *really* representative of the anarchist tradition or of any known figure within that tradition. Admittedly, a degree of philosophical license has been enjoyed: intellectual order has been imposed on a somewhat diffuse body of ideas. Nevertheless, to order is not to falsify or fabricate; and to strive for coherence is not to invent something entirely new. The overall account of anarchism offered here may be unfamiliar, but the essential ingredients of it are derived from the intellectual tradition in question. And the principal idea that distinguishes that tradition is, we reiterate, scepticism towards authority.

Assuming that this is so, a second objection might be that anarchists (as sceptics) unfairly place the burden of justification *exclusively* on their opponents (those who recognize, exercise, or defend authority). Sceptics occupy a rather comfortable position where they can attack everybody else without (supposedly) having to justify their own (concealed) assumptions; but these are in fact as questionable as any other assumptions (and perhaps even more so for being concealed). If anarchists refuse to question or to defend their assumptions, this objection is well founded. However, anarchist scepticism is not to be understood in this sense as a privileged position, itself beyond doubt. It is one position among many, no better *in itself* than any other. It is subject to the same intellectual demands as every other position. This is precisely why we have set out here to present a coherent philosophical account of anarchism. We seek to engage with those who defend authority *on the basis of respect*. Those anarchists who refuse to do so – who believe they do not need to justify themselves – presumably feel some sense of intellectual or moral superiority. We do not.

Even anarchists who attempt to engage with others respectfully – to defend themselves as well as to attack others – are open to the objection that they lack alternatives, or even a willingness to speculate about them. Anarchism, then, is no more than criticism – rational and respectful criticism at best. There are two basic responses to this objection. The first *formal* response is that the objection is usually rhetorical and rather disingenuous. It is the simplistic and automatic response of the most mindless conservative – a means of fobbing off every question and preventing any degree of intellectual progress. Asking (or effectively *stating*), 'Yes, but what's the alternative?' – when one has no expectation of an answer or willingness to consider an answer – is a rhetorical device for cutting off discussion. A second *moral* response is to defend the integrity of one's criticism. It is not obvious that all moral criticism requires a statement of alternatives – that the questioner is obliged to answer his or her own question in some complete or speculative sense. For example, if one asks somebody to provide a justification for murder or concludes that murder is wrong for lack of any remotely convincing justification, it hardly makes sense for one's interlocutor to reply, 'Yes, but what's the alternative?' The 'alternative' is *not to do it*.[1] One is under no obligation to present an entire theory of human agency simply because one questions – or even rejects – a specific kind of action or the right to perform it. If it there were such an obligation, no moral judgement would be permissible in the absence of complete moral understanding.

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1   We indicated a certain parallel between anarchist reasoning and atheistic reasoning above. Questioning the existence of God is sometimes met with a similar response, a similar sentiment, 'But if not God, what?' – as if the non-believer is obliged to offer an alternative cosmology, metaphysics, ethics, and so on. Indeed, the supposed obligation to supply (or incredibly heavy burden of supplying) all these things is a sufficient and quite cynical reason for many to believe. 'God' provides a convenient and burden-free answer to everything; therefore, we 'must' believe. (A familiar form of this argument is framed in ethical terms: 'If God does not exist, then there is no [ready-made] morality. Therefore, [for fear that everything might be permitted,] we must believe.') However, the atheist consistently maintains that the 'alternative' to God – if there is no remotely convincing reason for belief – is simply *no God*.

In any event, anarchists offer reasons as to why they (generally) refrain from speculation about alternatives. Basically, they regard speculation about future social forms as a kind of Procrustean reasoning – an attempt to prescribe alternatives without due respect for future reasoning and freedom. Nevertheless, anarchists do attempt to construct *present* alternatives – to undertake more or less ambitious social experiments in non-authoritarian ways of living. These experiments are, needless to say, open to question and criticism. Frequently, indeed, they fail. But they do illustrate the constructive side of anarchism *in the here and now*.

The constructive aspect of anarchism – or even its fundamental sense of the possibility of intellectual, moral, and social progress – raises another objection: that anarchism is utopian.[2] Utopianism is apparently the tendency to imagine an unrealizable state of (future) perfection. It is held to be irrational (precisely because of its unrealizability), and also dangerous (because of the hopeless and increasingly desperate attempts to realize it in the real world). Assuming that utopianism is necessarily so – and that it cannot also be a highly productive form of reasoning – we may wonder whether anarchism is actually utopian. Given what we have said about the resistance of anarchists to futuristic speculation, it would appear that anarchism is not just non-utopian but even *anti-utopian*. Nevertheless, anarchism *is* rooted in an Enlightenment sense of 'perfectibility'. This, as we have already noted, however, is not a belief in future perfection; it is a belief in *open-ended progress*. It is not a fantasy about the future perfection of mankind and society; it is a belief in mankind's ability to improve itself and society *without known limits*. Thus, Condorcet writes:

> … no bounds have been fixed to the improvement of the human faculties … the perfectibility of man is absolutely indefinite … [And] the progress of this perfectibility, henceforth above the control of every power that would impede it, has no other limit than the duration of the globe upon which nature has placed us.[3]

Anarchism, inspired by the Enlightenment belief in *limitless* progress, it is not a utopian position that could ever pronounce (in the manner of contemporary liberalism) an end to history. By definition, it is open-ended and therefore a philosophy *without end*. That is not to say that anarchists operate at given points of history without certain goals in mind – goals that they believe offer a realizable and preferable alternative to the existing social order. But anarchists have no reason to suppose or argue that injustice will ever be entirely alleviated. Instead, they make it their purpose to expose and to overcome whatever injustices arise under given social circumstances. Such a task may seem Sisyphean and likely to lead to despair, but anarchists maintain that the underlying progress secured in the historical development of society – far from inevitable, as it is the cooperative work of generations of real, living individuals who

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2   To some extent, therefore, anarchism is damned if it does and damned if it doesn't: condemned for its lack of alternatives (when it refrains from speculation about the future) and condemned for its utopianism (when it appears to speculate about the future). Sometimes anarchists are criticized in both ways *simultaneously*, as in Aileen Kelly's *Mikhail Bakunin: A Study in the Psychology and Politics of Utopianism* (Oxford, 1982).

3   'Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Human Mind', in Isaac Kramnick (ed.), *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* (Harmondsworth, 1995), p. 388.

build on the experience of their predecessors – is the best that can be achieved and enough to inspire hope in mankind.

The above conception of anarchism as a philosophy without end – that is, as a body of social belief 'that does not articulate a *specific* and *detailed* social theory' for all times and all places – leaves it open to the accusation that it is 'formless'. But, as Noam Chomsky writes,

> One might … argue rather differently: that at every stage of history our concern must be to dismantle those forms of authority and oppression that survive from an era when they *might* have been justified in terms of the need for security or survival or economic development, but that now contribute to – rather than alleviate – material and cultural deficit. If so, there will be no doctrine of social change fixed for the present and future, nor even, necessarily, a specific and unchanging concept of the goals towards which social change should tend. Surely our understanding of the nature of man or of the range of viable social forms is so rudimentary that any far-reaching doctrine must be treated with great scepticism, just as scepticism is in order when we hear that 'human nature' or 'the demands of efficiency' or 'the complexity of modern life' requires this or that form of oppression and autocratic rule.
>
> Nevertheless, at a particular time there is every reason to develop, in so far as our understanding permits, a specific realization of this definite trend in the historic development of mankind, appropriate to the tasks of the moment.[4]

It might be objected, for all this, that anarchism – at least as presented here – is a highly abstract position, entirely removed from the issues of the day. Our talk of 'authority' and 'legitimacy' is all very nice, but rather esoteric. This objection needs to be considered in some depth. We will try to determine whether, and to what extent, the philosophically articulated or 'sophisticated' form of anarchism presented here is socially relevant. Four contemporary social problems – in the areas of politics, international relations, the environment, and economy – will be examined to see to what extent the anarchist critique has bearing.

Politics

Political democracy, meaning popular access to and selection for political office, is judged by anarchists to have failed us as 'democratic citizens', both on its own terms and on the terms of the meaningful democracy that most anarchists espouse. For anarchists, meaningful democracy is not merely 'political'. It might be termed 'social democracy', had that expression not been politically debased by reformist socialists. Instead, therefore, John Dewey's conception of 'democracy as a way of life' fits the anarchist bill. Hence, anarchists see democracy as extending into every aspect of social life – from the educational to the economic. Under existing social conditions, democracy is said by anarchists to end at the school gate or the office door. Behind these, hierarchical structures and authoritative relations prevail, justified, if at all, on economic grounds of necessity, efficiency, and effort. We will come back to these

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4   'Notes on Anarchism', *For Reasons of State* (London, 1973), p. 152. Emphasis added.

themes below, but our immediate concern is to evaluate the success or failure of political democracy on its own terms, and to see what level of popular satisfaction there is with this mode of 'recognition'.

Political democracy, judged on its own terms (as a basic political value *in itself*), is not to be judged (consequentially) in terms of its outcomes (successful or otherwise), but in terms of *engagement*. This is obviously reflected, quite basically, in electoral turnout figures (which, according to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, are in global decline); but it is also reflected in related elements such as levels of public debate, competition for and accessibility of office, accountability of representatives, and so on. In other words, if people do not engage seriously or, at a minimum, even bother to vote at all, then the political system has failed and those who claim a democratic mandate lack popular legitimacy – lack authority.[5] Hence the very real if cynically motivated anxieties of the political classes about dwindling turnouts in elections at all levels.

Various measures can and have been adopted in response to the turnout problem. One is, of course, to make voting compulsory on the Australian model, if this can be claimed to add anything like legitimacy in an allegedly free and open society.

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5   The US presidential election in 2000 raised the turnout issue and a number of related issues (concerning the popular vote, America's antiquated electoral system, election funding, etc.). Basically, in the case of George W. Bush, a president was 'chosen' who received fewer votes than his main rival (Al Gore won 48.38% of the popular vote to Bush's 47.87%) and ultimately secured office by the will of the Supreme Court rather than the will of the people. In any case, the 'will of the people' was expressed by the tiny majority, or even minority, of the voting age population (VAP) that bothered to vote. According to the US Federal Election Commission, VAP turnout was 51.3%; according to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, it was a mere 49.27%. While that represents a slight improvement on the 70 year low of the 1996 election, it remains a dire figure and (according to the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate) the third lowest (after 1996 and 1988) in the post-War period. Generally, participation in US Presidential elections has been declining over the last forty years.

Add to the above the fact that George W. Bush is the son of a former CIA director and president, and the brother of the governor of the state in which he supposedly crossed the winning line, and political democracy in the would-be 'model democracy' appears less than inspiring. And then there is the economic aspect of US democracy: 'Presidential candidates in the 2000 US election spent $343 million on their campaigns, up from $92 million in 1980. Including spending by political parties, more than $1 billion was probably spent on the 2000 campaigns ... In the 2000 US election cycle, corporations gave $1.2 billion in political contributions – about 14 times the already considerable amount contributed by labour unions and 16 times the contributions of other interest groups' [*Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World* (2002 UNDP Report), pp. 4–5]. At best, this suggests that US democracy is wasteful and inefficient; at worst, it suggests that it has been hijacked by the corporate sector.

Political commentators have noted how weak Bush's authority was when he took office, given the controversial circumstances of his 'election', to say nothing of widespread doubt about the system itself. But they have added that it was strengthened by his handling of '9-11', 'Operation Iraqi Freedom', and so on. Even if that were true, it would be nothing more than a *post factum* and non-democratic legitimation of his authority.

Another is to appeal to the lowest common denominator and (like Bill Clinton and, more recently, Tony Blair) make desperate pleas to the sophisticated political audiences delivered by MTV and the like. Then there are spurious intellectual discussions about 'voter apathy' and so on, as if such factors could possibly explain and somehow justify massive disengagement from our political processes. Indeed, such discussion is hugely insulting to those who choose to abstain from the political lottery on principle or out of plain disgust (and who, incidentally, might participate in dramatic numbers if a 'none of the above' option were offered on the ballot, a solution to the turnout problem that has been vigorously thwarted since it would make an implicit rejection of the political process as it stands more explicit). We cannot simply assume that half the eligible population is too bored or too lazy to participate in political life, say, *once every four years*; that demands a pretty extreme assumption of disinterest and lethargy. There is little doubt that a great number feel that the mode of 'participation' available to them is inauthentic[6] – and that the 'choice' they might be a party to would make them culpable for its consequences. As such, non-participation can be seen as a very modest form of moral revolt, since it undermines the legitimacy of those who exercise political authority and the very institutions that embody this authority.

The familiar claim – or 'moral' exhortation – that 'if you don't vote, you've no right to complain' surely has it the wrong way around. Is it not true to say that if you *do* play the game, you've no right to complain about the rules or the result subsequently? Might it be that up to half the adult population (excluding those who vote with almost no faith whatsoever in the process[7]) is dissatisfied with the game itself? Might it be that this game does not satisfy their 'desire for recognition', that it is not 'completely satisfying'? Might it be that the game is seen as nothing but an expensive sideshow put on by the few who can afford it and have a vested interest

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6   As the UNDP puts it (ibid., p. 1), 'Even where democratic institutions are firmly established, citizens often feel powerless to influence national policies ... In 1999 Gallup International's Millennium Survey asked more than 50,000 people in 60 countries if their country was governed by the will of the people. Less than a third of the respondents said yes. And only 1 in 10 said that their government responded to the people's will.' One imagines that these sentiments have only been reinforced in many countries (in which governmental policy ran counter to public opinion) since 'Gulf War II'.

7   Their reasoning – if voting isn't simply a matter of habit – is that it is better to vote for 'the best of a bad bunch' than not to vote at all and allow the worst-case scenario to materialize. A recent instance of this phenomenon on a wide scale was the 2002 presidential run-off in France between Jacques Chirac and Jean-Marie LePen, when massive portions of the French population voted for the widely detested (and allegedly criminal) Chirac on the grounds that the alternative was even worse. It is easy to sympathize with this position on practical grounds, but it does rather indicate the fact that democratic politics has become a moral wasteground where the only remotely 'moral' principle that applies is the 'lesser of two evils' principle. Needless to say, political technocrats will remind us of the distinction between the political and moral realms, which we might accept were there not more to the democratic tradition than that – and if we didn't have to listen to the sickening moral sermons of politicians like Tony Blair who, in a most undemocratic fashion, always claim to have authoritative or privileged access to moral truth.

in it to pacify or placate the on-looking majority? And might it be that neither the tinkering of political scientists nor the 'good intentions' of liberal reformers can remedy the inherent ills of this game?

Anarchists voice precisely such doubts about political democracy. Fundamentally, they are sceptical about the authority claimed by democratic politicians, authority which is now – *in practice* – recognized by fewer and fewer citizens of democratic states.

International Relations

Our contemporary world – for a variety of political, economic, and cultural reasons – would seem to be characterized by what Samuel P. Huntington famously called the 'clash of civilizations', a clash between the West and the rest, and notably between the West and the Islamic world. In fact, as Huntington observes, the Western conflict with Islamic civilization is anything but new: it 'has been going on for 1,300 years' and 'is unlikely to decline'. Why is this so? According to Huntington:

> Most important, the efforts of the West to promote its values of democracy and liberalism as universal values, to maintain its military predominance, and to advance its economic interests engender countering responses from other civilizations.[8]

Perhaps 'countering responses' are justifiable as responses to what Muslims and others see as Western imperialism. But what form do they take? Hardly that of classical warfare, given the military might that Islamic states would face (and that Iraq was 'defeated' by), and given that many of these states have pro-Western governments (or client governments of the West) which are therefore unrepresentative of their peoples and their anti-Western sentiments. Insofar as Islamic and 'Islamicist' responses have involved violence, they have been designated 'terrorist'. The Western 'war on terror' amounts to a violent campaign by significant Western states against violent non-state agents in the Islamic world, a campaign that, as it attempts to quash terrorism, clearly perpetuates it. But what does the language of war and terrorism mean here? What are the implicit moral distinctions?

These questions have scarcely been touched upon by Western philosophers and political scientists, who appear willing as ever – especially in time of 'war' – to toe the official line. Bertrand Russell, writing during World War I, castigates intellectuals for exactly this tendency: 'In modern times, philosophers, professors, and intellectuals generally undertake willingly to provide their respective governments with those ingenious distortions and those subtle untruths by which it is made to appear that all good is on one side and all wickedness on the other.' Thus 'learned men' seem 'as incapable of justice as any cheap newspaper [and] as full of special pleading and garbled history'.[9] Or, in other words, academia and CNN are on a par in times like these.

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8   From 'The Clash of Civilizations?', in Frank J. Lechner and John Boli (eds), *The Globalization Reader* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 30–31.

9   *Justice in War-Time* (Nottingham, 1917), p. 1.

In any case, a definition of terrorism would be helpful to begin with, before we discuss the supposed gulf between it and state violence. We suggest the following: *Terrorism is the use or threatened use of individually indiscriminate violence intended to produce popular fear within a specific population that in turn might lead to a desired political end.* Thus, the *means* of terrorist activity is *relatively* random violence – though never absolutely random, since that would hardly lead to any end in particular. Terrorists are usually indifferent to individuality (at this concrete level, they are indiscriminate), but conscious of nationality, geography, class, office, and so on (at this more abstract level, they are discriminate: they are threatening a specific population that might somehow achieve their goals for them, if only as a means of removing their threat). The *end* of terrorist activity, on the other hand, is a political reconfiguration of some sort, an end that is presumably immediately unattainable by other means (such as the diplomatic or the electoral). In terms of ends, then, terrorism can be placed alongside *assassination*, for example, in the category of *political violence*. However, assassination and terrorism are not the same, and the former is not a sub-category of the latter. Assassination is political violence by other means: that is, by means of *individually discriminate* violence that does not, therefore, produce widespread terror. (To distinguish the two is not to offer a moral defence of, say, assassination. It is simply to avoid the common and irrational habit of referring to everything we (or the political classes) disapprove of as 'terrorism'.)[10]

The above is, we take it, what the term 'terrorism' describes or denotes. As such, terrorism is generally regarded as immoral, even by non-pacifists. Those who advocate political transformation or social revolution by, if necessary, violent means may reject terrorism on the grounds that individually indiscriminate violence is *never* justifiable. However, the term 'terrorism', as it is used in political and journalistic circles, connotes something rather different, that is, something more specific and arbitrary. In this sense, terrorism refers not to individually indiscriminate violence that might bring about a desired political end as such; that is, it does not refer to the entire *class* of such *actions*. Instead, it points to the source of this violence; that is, it refers to a specific *agency*. Use of the term 'terrorism' here immediately evokes the image of the terrorist qua extra-state party. That is to say, terrorism connotes a narrow kind of action performed by an agency other than the state.

There is an obvious conflict between the ethical denotation and political connotation of the term 'terrorism' and therefore a conflict between those who use the word in a *broad ethical sense* (to refer to an entire class of actions) and those who use it in a *narrower political sense* (to refer to these actions *only* when performed by *some* political or extra-political agents). The word is used in the ethical sense by moral philosophers; political scientists tend to use it in the political sense. An occasional effort is made by political scientists to resolve this conflict by referring to 'state-*sponsored* terrorism', that is, terrorism somehow underwritten by '*rogue* states' (and, perhaps, non-rogue states in their more 'naïve', 'ill-advised', or 'unfortunate'

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10   In practice, of course, there is often a very fine line between assassination and terrorism. Assassination attempts – or supposed assassination attempts by means of 'smart' or 'precision' weaponry – are often so reckless that they effectively constitute terrorism.

adventures *of the past*). Still, for such people, terrorism represents something alien to the state proper. By contrast, moral philosophers, who insist that the term 'terrorism' be used consistently and not simply according to our own interests (that is, as a term of propaganda), are quite willing to apply the term to state actions that meet the definition. Hence the expression 'state terrorism'.

Why is it that the association of terrorism with the state in its 'legitimate' Western form seems odd or even contradictory from the political perspective? This question can be answered easily if, after Max Weber, we characterize the state in terms of its '*monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force'.[11] Of course, much more can be said about the state than this – as we have seen, this characterization is inadequate in itself. Nevertheless, it may be that what distinguishes the state from other forms of social power is that its power – which amounts to domination within the political sphere – is claimed to be and is widely recognized as being *legitimate*. The state, it appears, possesses a *right*, indeed an *exclusive* right, to perform certain acts, including (as Weber stresses) acts of violence. This is the nature of the state's *authority* over and above its evident power.

From the perspective of the political scientist, who takes the legitimacy of the state's authority as a given, what is objectionable about terrorism is not its violence or even indiscriminate violence as such (since this is held to be legitimate in certain cases, that is, when performed by a particular agency – the state), but the agency which performs this violence. The terrorist, as the political scientist sees it, violates the state's exclusive right to, or threatens its monopoly over, 'physical force'. The moral philosopher (and the anarchist is fundamentally such) is inevitably suspicious about claims to special agency, especially when this mere special agency is held to legitimate acts that would otherwise be regarded as immoral. From this perspective, terrorist acts are not legitimated simply because they are acts of state or of a supposedly privileged agency. For the moral philosopher, therefore, acts must be evaluated on their own terms, not according to the person or institution that performs them. Ethics is fundamentally concerned with *what* (or moral action), not *who* (or moral agency as such). Hence, moral philosophers are uneasy about the political or partial use of the term 'terrorism', especially when this use is conveyed in a moral *tone*. There is, as the anarchist maintains, no morality in the notion that terrorism describes what 'they' do, but not what 'we' do, when what 'they' do and what 'we' do is identical in kind.[12]

Environment

Demonstrating the extent to which various human practices have diminished biodiversity and undermined the sustainability of advanced life on our planet is a controversial scientific task. However, few would dispute by now that we have

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11 *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (ed.) Talcott Parsons (New York, 1964), p. 154.

12 As Noam Chomsky puts this 'universal principle' of politics: 'We do it; it's counterterror, a just war, and so on. They do it; it's terror.' [John Junkerman and Takei Masakazu (eds), *Power and Terror: Post-9/11 Talks and Interviews* (New York, 2003), p. 61.]

damaged and continue to damage our natural environment by pollution, deforestation, 'development' of farmland and wilderness, etc. Hence the 'ecological crisis', a crisis that poses a pressing problem for contemporary social and political thought, anarchism included. This crisis raises the obvious practical question of whether our practices endanger (or merely impact negatively upon) life in the short- or long-term. It also raises the moral question of whether we bear any responsibility to future generations for our current practices. Indeed, many practical and moral questions emerge when we enter the domain of environmental philosophy, and most of them are beyond us here. All that needs to be noted in this context is that anarchists suspect that there are links between the modern ecological crisis and basic ideas and practices characteristic of the other 'progressive' ideologies, liberalism and socialism.

Two positions that are taken to have contributed to the degradation of the natural world typify liberalism and socialism. The first *metaphysical* position is *anthropocentrism*, the belief that mankind has a privileged place in the world or the universe and is, somehow, accorded priority – be it by God or by natural law. The second – and clearly closely related – *practical* position is *instrumentalism*, the belief that the natural world is solely an object for man's (rational-industrial) use; it has use-value only, that is to say, no inherent value. In the classical liberal theory of Locke, these positions are quite explicit:

> *God gave the world to men* in common; but since *he gave it them for their benefit, and the greatest conveniences of life they were capable to draw from it*, it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. *He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational (and labour was to be his title to it)*; not to the fancy or covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentious.

In the case of Locke, then, instrumentalism is founded on an *industrial imperative* from God (and the language of command and subjection here is highly suggestive): 'God and his reason *commanded* [man] to *subdue* the earth.' Locke clearly states that nature has effectively no inherent value and only gains value through human intervention, through the mediation of the human industrial spirit:

> … labour makes the far greater part of the value of things we enjoy in this world[13]; and the ground which produces the materials is scarcely to be reckoned in as any, or at most but a very small part, of it. So little, that even amongst us land that is left wholly to nature, that hath no improvement of pasturage, tillage, or planting, is called, as indeed it is, *waste*; and we will find the benefit of it amount to little more than nothing.[14]

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13   'In this world' is significant, because, despite the supposition that liberalism is worldly and commonsensical, its classical formulation is basically theological. (In fact, it is specifically Protestant, for 'there is no judge upon earth between the supreme magistrate and the people'.) Thus we are bound to consider, above all, those things 'which are necessary to the obtaining of God's favour'. In comparison, 'nothing in this world ... is of any consideration'. [From John Locke's *A Letter Concerning Toleration* in David Wootton (ed.), *Political Writings* (Harmondsworth, 1993), pp. 421, 424.]

14   From *The Second Treatise of Government* in Wootton, pp. 277, 282 (§§32, 34, 42). Emphasis added, except to the word 'waste' which is emphasized in the original.

Karl Marx also holds the anthropocentric and instrumental positions. For him, mankind has a unique role as *productive mediator* of nature. He claims in *The German Ideology* that we can be distinguished from all other species by our ability to 'produce [our own] means of subsistence':[15] by our ability to shape and *dominate* nature – and to create a realm of *freedom* – rather than merely conform to nature – as a realm of instinct and *necessity*. This leads Marx to attempt to reconcile materialism and idealism – or to *idealize* materialism. According to Marx, then, while we are products of nature or natural beings (to this limited extent Marx might accurately be called a materialist), nature is also essentially a product of us – of our productive activity – and, therefore, it is not something objective or given (this is the sense in which Marx is a '*historical* materialist'). With such a low estimation of nature – once again, as a realm of necessity, of 'slavery' – it is small wonder that Marx should conclude that 'Nature [is] simply an object *for* mankind' or 'a matter of utility'.[16]

Belief in our privileged place in a natural world without inherent value easily leads to a desire on our part to 'dominate', 'master', 'conquer', or 'control' nature (in developed society, through highly organized and hierarchical forms of production). However, as we have seen, some anarchists have argued that such concepts in themselves are derivative of social life. Without the historical emergence of hierarchical relations and a social concept of domination, it is argued, mankind would never have come to entertain thoughts of 'dominating' an environment that provides for all his needs and therefore sustains his very existence. In this sense, there is perceived to be a close relationship between social relations that are, as we have argued above, mystified in terms of 'authority' and natural degradation brought about by human intervention – intervention of a kind both encouraged and justified by the major ideologies of our time.

Economics

It might be considered behind the times and tiresome to raise the topic of the social injustice wrought by an economically exploitative system. Granted, there is nothing new in the phenomenon or in the critique of it. What is relatively new, however, is the despair that characterizes much – though thankfully not all – of the left today (to say nothing of the population in general). By no means does this left resemble the *Old Left*, with its *economistic* critique of the capitalist mode of *production* and revolutionary strategies for a new socialist society. Neither does it resemble the *New Left*, with its *cultural* critique of the advanced capitalist mode of *consumption*. Perhaps the New Left lacked genuine revolutionary vitality, but it provided a profound and influential analysis of the decline of Western culture. The Old Left, on the other hand, struggled to keep pace with social developments and new complexities in class structure and interests. But, in its day, it exhibited a progressive passion for social justice and social change that we have hardly seen since.

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15   'The German Ideology', in *The Marx-Engels Reader* (ed.) Robert C. Tucker, 2nd edn (New York, 1978), p. 150.

16   *Marx's Grundrisse* (ed.) David McLellan, 2nd edn (London, 1980), p. 99. Emphasis added.

A substantial portion of the left now could be called the '*Post-Left*' – a label that may appeal to the philosophical fashion sense of some, but that highlights how far removed they are from their ancestors on the left, in terms of both critical acumen and revolutionary conviction. All that marks the 'leftism' of the Post-Left is a *vague intuition of social injustice* and an *oppositional attitude*. Nevertheless, these are significantly tempered by a deep sense of *despair*: near-metaphysical disbelief in the possibility of fundamental social change – and contempt for the very idea of progress.

There are at least two reasons that account for such despair and, to some degree, the culture of cynicism more generally. Firstly, the current generation has seen how the previous generation of would-be rebels and revolutionaries has either descended into parody or simply merged with – or even become – the status quo. There are plentiful examples from political and pop-cultural life, from Daniel Cohn-Bendit's deterioration into Euro-parliamentary mediocrity to Bob Dylan's into tedious rock inertia. Moreover, the indulgence of those who previously lampooned the culture industry in their own celebrity has led many to doubt the very sincerity and morality of such social critics.

The second reason for despair on the left is the seeming omnipresence and omnipotence of the liberal ideology, which is adjudged to be neither satisfying nor tolerable, but unavoidable and insurmountable (at least for the distant foreseeable future). Liberalism is, that is to say, a potent fact of our lifetimes. Thus, the Post-Left accepts Francis Fukuyama's conclusion of (effective) historical finality, but protests with the little antagonistic energy that it can muster – in the form of cynical disengagement from conventional social life, retreating into futile sub-culture or complete isolation.

Obviously the Post-Left offers nothing but a road to nowhere: a route without intellectual or revolutionary hope. Utter despair is no more rational than the millenarian optimism of liberal ideologues, however – it is simply the other side of the same coin, a resentful acceptance of the same historical conclusion. In any case, there is no reason to believe that history is actually at an end. There are those in every generation who feel the need to believe in its world-historical significance – whether as something representing the height of human achievement or the depths of human depravity. But such generations (if there are any in the proper sense) are exceptional and can really only be judged by future generations with historical hindsight.

All that our generation can achieve – all that is open to human endeavour – is a maximum in the way of social and intellectual *progress*. This entails, in the first place, a *renewal of Enlightenment*, a reaffirmation of our belief in the '*perfectibility*' of humankind. As well as a renewal of Enlightenment, social anarchists also urge a *renewal of the left*, a revitalization of our commitment to the achievement, by revolutionary means if necessary, of a more just and equal society. The possibility of such a society is widely believed to have disappeared with the Berlin Wall. As the Iron Curtain came up, the clichéd argument continues, the attendant contempt for individual freedom in an egalitarian social experiment was revealed to all. Whatever the merits of this argument vis-à-vis Marxist brands of leftism, it has little pertinence to social anarchism, which remains a relatively unblemished (or authentic libertarian) brand of socialism.

Such praise for anarchism will probably leave liberals aghast. For some time, liberals have thought of themselves as monopolizers of the moral high ground, and have justified their 'unavoidable' moral oversights and compromises with pragmatic, pluralistic, and contract arguments. Anarchists, however, regard the *liberal tolerance of inequality* – and, in the case of John Rawls, the attempt to build this into a theory of justice[17] – as morally insupportable.

Vast and increasing inequalities of income and wealth are indicative of our times and create domestic and international tensions that require new 'class analysis', more sophisticated than of old (with its largely redundant notions of 'proletarian revolution' etc.), but no less indebted to the Old Left for that.[18] Social anarchists argue that the proliferation of wealth (and 'economic growth') is not innocuous, not the product of innocent speculation and social investment, but fundamentally the result of the exploitation of social and natural resources – such exploitation being secured by the state. Aggregate gains and 'trickle-down effects' – such as these are – do not conceal relative divergence and the rising potential for social conflict on the national and international scales; neither can these (at best) short-term benefits justify environmental destruction. The 'growth of the middle class' with its cherished spending power is not a universal, a benign, or an irreversible phenomenon that rules out social tension and guarantees human happiness. In large part, the growth of the middle class in the West obscures the internationalization of production, the diffusion of wage-slavery. But the contemporary middle class is not without its own difficulties; it is increasingly victim to work stress, job insecurity, and effective debt slavery – and all that before it attempts to 'switch off' from work and enjoy its precious and dwindling 'free time'.

Social anarchists challenge capitalism on cultural grounds as well as economic and ecological grounds. In this sense, they carry forward the New Left critique of

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17   Rawls builds the 'strongly egalitarian conception' that is the 'difference principle' into his second principle of justice. It is explained as follows: 'Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are ... to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged.' This effective justification for (more or less limited) inequality is arguably counter-intuitive, and definitely at odds with the social anarchist conception of justice. [*A Theory of Justice* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 76, 302.]

18   See, for example, *Human Rights and Human Development* (UNDP 2000 Report), p. 6: 'Global inequalities in income increased in the 20th century by orders of magnitude out of proportion to anything experienced before. The distance between the incomes of the richest and poorest country was about 3 to 1 in 1820, 35 to 1 in 1950, 44 to 1 in 1973, and 72 to 1 in 1992. A recent study of world income distribution among households shows a sharp rise in inequality – with the Gini coefficient deteriorating from 0.63 in 1988 to 0.66 in 1993 (a value of 0 signifies perfect equality, a value of 1 perfect inequality). Gaps between rich and poor are widening in many countries – in the Russian Federation the Gini coefficient rose from 0.24 to 0.48 between 1987–88 and 1993–95. In Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States it rose by more than 16% in the 1980s and early 1990s. It remains very high in much of Latin America – 0.57 in Ecuador, 0.59 in Brazil and Paraguay.' It is hard to believe that inequality is justified in all such cases by trickle-down effects when, in 1998, 1.2 billion people were still living in absolute poverty (ibid., p. 4).

the spiritual dehumanization (and biological disorder[19]) associated with capitalist consumption. This has hardly abated since the heyday of the New Left. Indeed, it has intensified to the extent that the left itself has been partly commodified in terms of 'alternative' lifestyles and cultural forms, readily supplied by Amazon.com, Tower Records, MTV, etc.

In general, we are being subjected to the globalization of low culture, while our intellectuals preach all-equivalence – arguing that truth is relative and the attempt to exercise aesthetic and moral judgement is snobbish and intolerant. The provision of news and information, for example, has been 'dumbed down' to a previously unimaginable degree, and the line between Hollywood fiction and journalistic fact is increasingly blurry. Between the latest action blockbuster and a Fox News 'embedded' exclusive – or, at an 'advanced' level, between some sentimental Oscar-bait and a John Simpson BBC news report – locating the line is no easy task.[20] In search of the facts, sceptical and curious citizens turn to the web for scraps of truth, and struggle to separate the journalistic wheat from the chaff. But their eagerness to educate themselves and their hostility to the mainstream, corporate- and state-owned media assures us that the rational pursuit of objective reality hasn't been forsaken in a world of hyper-propaganda and philosophical relativism.

The great and unquestionable belief of advanced capitalist culture – preached by missionaries at *The Economist* and elsewhere – is in capitalism itself. That is to say, capitalism is not a mere mode of production, but has become a system of belief; it is now its own ideology. Indeed, ideologically, it is akin to a religion.[21] It is a system of effective worship devoted to an abstraction, its absolute or divine essence: *The Market*. The Market does not exist as such; it is an abstraction from the reality of real human practices. It is not a falsehood, but neither has it any independent reality in itself. It is a thought, an idea. Moreover, it is an idea held up as the ultimate, the highest (economic) reality – something to be striven for and served, something, indeed, for which human sacrifices (in the way of equality and, perhaps, attendant social harmony) must be made. In return for such sacrifices great gifts are bestowed upon man: economic growth, technological wizardry, political freedom, etc. So powerful are these bountiful gifts – so wondrous is the Market itself – that they

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19   Biological and ecological issues clearly arise at the level of consumption as well as that of production. Thus, we continue to poison ourselves and our environment with pre-packaged processed food, making even trusted natural foodstuffs experimental objects of genetic modification. The few treatments we have for our medical ailments – some of them self-inflicted – are, while profitable, in many cases ineffective, counter-productive, or unavailable to those who most need them. Saving lives is obviously no justification for violating the sacredness of 'Intellectual Property Rights'.

20   In case this seems unduly anti-Anglo-American, I should remark that 'cultured' Continental Europe can take little more credit, as Silvio Berlusconi's television spews out trash that would be laughed off American screens, while French cinema humiliates itself with sub-Hollywood productions.

21   Like all religions, it has its morality. And, like all religious moralities, a basic moral demand is faith. Anti-capitalism (otherwise known as 'anti-globalization') is therefore dismissed as being 'profoundly immoral' [see Peter Martin, 'The Moral Case for Globalization', in *The Globalization Reader*, p. 12].

trickle down even to the least fortunate. Man himself is made in the image of his Market-God. He is a free, rational, self-interested economic agent (not, for example, a political animal, as the Aristotelian understanding would have it). He is naturally industrious – and he is rewarded by the Market-God to the extent that he applies his (unequally distributed) productive talents.

The attributes of the Market-God have been rationally apprehended by its devout theologians: *The Economists*. Their God-given wisdom is such that they have grasped the true path to godliness and have brought the good word, their 'laissez-faire' Gospel, to the unenlightened masses, who henceforth stand to inherit the earth (if only they will make the necessary sacrifices, which, of course, the clerical classes themselves somehow manage to evade). Latterly, however, truly faithful followers of the Market-God – the *Neo-Liberals* – have endeavoured to reform the capitalist religion. Stripping away Keynesian falsehood (the statist brand of papism), they have revealed the plain, unmediated truths of their religion and shown that the heavenly (the God-Market) has no need of mundane mediation (by worldly 'Government').

Anarchists like Max Stirner and Mikhail Bakunin exposed the theologico-metaphysical foundations of the oppressive practices of their own day. In doing so, they firmly aligned themselves with the Enlightenment tradition. Contemporary anarchists are faced with much the same task: to expose the 'superstitious' and frankly absurd nature of many of our social beliefs – principally our beliefs about the legitimacy of various forms of exploitation, domination, and authority – even when these beliefs are themselves presented as the fruit of enlightened reason. In challenging these beliefs, anarchists facilitate a rational and moral challenge to the social order itself.

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