Chapter 6
Anarchism

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Origins and development

The word ‘anarchy’ comes from Greek and literally means ‘without rule’. The term ‘anarchism’ has been in use since the French Revolution, and was initially employed in a critical or negative sense to imply a breakdown of civilized or predictable order. Indeed, pejorative meanings continue to be attached to the term. In everyday language, anarchy is usually equated with chaos and disorder; and in the popular imagination, anarchists are not uncommonly seen as bomb-toting terrorists. Needless to say, anarchists themselves fiercely reject such associations. It was not until Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (see p. 200) proudly declared in What is Property? ([1840] 1971), ‘I am an anarchist’, that the word was clearly associated with a positive and systematic set of political ideas. Anarchists do advocate the abolition of law and government, but in the belief that a more natural and spontaneous social order will develop. As Proudhon suggested, ‘society seeks order in anarchy’. The link with violence is also misleading. At times, anarchists have openly, even proudly, supported bombings and terrorism. However, most anarchists believe violence to be mistaken and counterproductive, and many followers regard violence in any form as morally unacceptable.

Anarchist ideas have sometimes been traced back to Taoist or Buddhist ideas, to the Stoics and Cynics of Ancient Greece, or to the Diggers of the English Civil War. However, the first, and in a sense classic, statement of anarchist principles was produced by William Godwin (see p. 194) in his Enquiry Concerning Political Justice ([1793] 1971), although Godwin never described himself as an anarchist. During the nineteenth century, anarchism was a significant component of a broad but growing socialist movement. In 1864 Proudhon's followers joined with Marx's (see p. 126) to set up the International Workingmen's Association, or First International. The International collapsed in 1871 because of growing antagonism between Marxists and anarchists led by Michael Bakunin (see p. 197). In the late nineteenth century, anarchists sought mass support amongst the landless peasants of Russia and southern Europe and, more successfully, through anarcho-syndicalism, amongst the industrial working classes.

Syndicalism was a form of revolutionary trade unionism, popular in France, Italy and Spain, which made anarchism a genuine mass movement in the early twentieth century. The powerful CGT union in France was dominated by anarchists before 1914, as was the CNT in Spain, which claimed a membership of over two million during the Civil War. Anarcho-syndicalist movements also emerged in Latin America in the early twentieth century, especially in Argentina and Uruguay, and syndicalist ideas influenced the Mexican Revolution, led by Emiliano Zapata.

However, the spread of authoritarianism and political repression gradually undermined anarchism in both Europe and Latin America. The victory of General Franco in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–9, brought an end to anarchism as a mass movement. The CNT was suppressed and anarchists, along with left-wingers in general, were persecuted. The influence of anarchism was also undermined by the success of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in 1917, and thus by the growing prestige of communism within the socialist and revolutionary movements.

Anarchism is unusual amongst political ideologies in that it has never succeeded in winning power, at least at the national level. No society or nation has been modelled according to anarchist principles. Hence it is tempting to regard anarchism as an ideology of less significance than, say, liberalism, socialism, conservatism or fascism, each of which has proved itself capable of achieving power and reshaping societies. The nearest anarchists have come to winning power was during the Spanish Civil War, when they briefly controlled parts of eastern Spain and set up workers' and peasants' collectives throughout Catalonia. Consequently, anarchists have looked to historical societies that reflect their principles, such as the cities of Ancient Greece or Medieval Europe, or to traditional peasant communes such as the Russian mir. Anarchists have also stressed the non-hierarchic and egalitarian nature of many traditional societies – for instance, the Nuer in Africa – and supported experiments in small-scale, communal living within western society.

Anarchism's appeal as a political movement has been restricted by both its ends and its means. The goal of anarchism, the overthrow of the state and dismantling of all forms of political authority, is widely considered to be unrealistic, if not impossible. Certainly, the evidence of modern history from most parts of the world suggests that economic and social development is usually accompanied by a growth in the role of government, rather than its diminution or disappearance. Moreover, most view the notion of a stateless society as, at best, a utopian dream. Anarchists also reject as corrupt and corrupting the conventional means of exercising political influence: forming political parties, standing for elections, seeking public office and so on. As a result, they have deprived themselves of the advantages of political organization and strategic planning, often placing their faith instead in mass spontaneity and a popular thirst for freedom. Nevertheless, anarchism refuses to die. Precisely because of its uncompromising attitude to authority and political activism, it has an enduring, and often strong, moral appeal, particularly to the young. This can be seen, for example, in the prominence of anarchist ideas, slogans and groups within the emergent anti-capitalist or anti-globalization movement.

Against the state – central themes

The defining feature of anarchism is its opposition to the state and the accompanying institutions of government and law. Anarchists have a preference for stateless society in which free individuals manage their affairs by voluntary agreement, without compulsion or coercion. However, the ideological character of anarchism is blurred by two factors. First, anarchism is, arguably, stronger on moral assertion than on analysis and explanation. As anarchism is based upon the assumption that human beings are, at heart, moral creatures, instinctively drawn to freedom and autonomy, its energies have often been more directed towards awakening these moral instincts than to analysing the system of state oppression and explaining how it can or should be challenged. Second, anarchism is, in a sense, less a unified and coherent ideology in its

own right, and more a point of overlap between two rival ideologies – liberalism and socialism – the point at which both ideologies reach anti-statist conclusions. Anarchism thus has a dual character: it can be interpreted as either a form of 'ultraliberalism', which resembles extreme liberal individualism, or as a form of 'ultrasocialism', which resembles extreme socialist collectivism. Nevertheless, anarchism is justified in being treated as a separate ideology, in that its supporters, despite drawing upon very different political traditions, are united by a series of broader principles and positions. The most significant of these are the following:

- Anti-statism
- Natural order
- Anticlericalism
- Economic freedom.

Anti-statism

Sébastien Faure, in Encyclopédie anarchiste, defined anarchism as 'the negation of the principle of Authority'. The anarchist case against authority is simple and clear: authority is an offence against the principles of freedom and equality. Anarchism is unique in that it endorses the principles of absolute freedom and unrestrained political equality. In this light, authority, based as it is upon political inequality and the alleged right of one person to influence the behaviour of others, enslaves, oppresses and limits human life. It damages and corrupts both those who are subject to authority and those who are in authority. Since human beings are free and autonomous creatures, to be subject to authority means to be diminished, to have one's essential nature suppressed and thereby succumb to debilitating dependency. To be in authority, even the so-called expert authority of doctors and teachers, which flows from the unequal distribution of knowledge in society, is to acquire an appetite for prestige, control and eventually domination. Authority therefore gives rise to a 'psychology of power', based upon a pattern of 'dominance and submission', a society in which, according to the US anarchist and social critic Paul Goodman (1911–72), 'many are ruthless and most live in fear'.

In practice, the anarchist critique of authority usually focuses upon political authority, especially when it is backed up by the machinery of the modern state. All other political ideologies believe that the state fulfils some worthy or worthwhile purpose within society. For instance, liberals regard the state as the protector of individual rights; conservatives revere the state as a symbol of order and social cohesion; and socialists have seen it as an instrument of reform and the source of social justice. Anarchists, in contrast, believe that such views seriously misunderstand the nature of political authority and the state, and also fail to appreciate the negative and destructive forces that are embodied in the institutions of law and government. The flavour of this anarchist critique is conveyed by one of Proudhon's famous diatribes:

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

(Quoted in Marshall, 1993, p. 245)

The state is a sovereign body that exercises supreme authority over all individuals and associations living within a defined geographical area. Anarchists emphasize that the authority of the state is absolute and unlimited: law can restrict public behaviour, limit political activity, regulate economic life, interfere with private morality and thinking, and Perspectives on …

The state

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

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

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

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

Fascists, particularly in the Italian tradition, see the state as a supreme ethical ideal, reflecting the undifferentiated interests of the national community, hence their belief in totalitarianism (see p. 227). The Nazis, however, saw the state more as a vessel that contains, or tool that serves, the race or nation.

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

Fundamentalists have adopted a broadly positive attitude towards the state, seeing it as a means of bringing about social, moral and cultural renewal. The fundamentalist state is therefore regarded as a political manifestation of religious authority and wisdom.

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

The basis of this critique of the state lies in the anarchist view of human nature. Although anarchists subscribe to a highly optimistic if not utopian view of human potential, they are also deeply pessimistic about the corrupting influence of political authority and economic inequality. Human beings can be either 'good' or 'evil' depending on the political and social circumstances in which they live. People who would otherwise be cooperative, sympathetic and sociable, become nothing less than oppressive tyrants when raised up above others by power, privilege or wealth. In other words, anarchists replace the liberal warning that 'power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely' (Lord Acton) with the more radical and alarming warning that power in any shape or form will corrupt absolutely. The state, as a repository of sovereign, compulsory and coercive authority, is therefore nothing less than a concentrated form of evil. The anarchist theory of the state has nevertheless also attracted criticism. Quite apart from concerns about the theory of human nature upon which it is based, the assumption that state oppression stems from the corruption of individuals by their political and social circumstances is circular, in that it is unable to explain how political authority arose in the first place.

Natural order

Anarchists not only regard the state as evil, but also believe it to be unnecessary. William Godwin sought to demonstrate this by, in effect, turning the most celebrated justification for the state – social contract

William Godwin (1756–1836)

UK philosopher and novelist. Godwin was a Presbyterian minister who lost his faith and eventually became a professional writer, Caleb Williams (1794) being his most successful novel. He led an intellectual circle that included his wife, Mary Wollstonecraft (see p. 252) and a group of aspiring writers, among whom were Wordsworth and Shelley, his son-in-law.

Godwin's political reputation was established by Enquiry Concerning Political Justice ([1773] 1971) which, by developing a thorough-going critique of authoritarianism, constituted the first

full exposition of anarchist beliefs. Godwin developed an extreme form of liberal rationalism that amounted to an argument for human perfectibility based on education and social conditioning. Though an individualist, Godwin believed that humans are capable of genuinely disinterested benevolence.

theory – on its head. The social contract arguments of Hobbes (see p. 76) and Locke (see p. 39) suggest that a stateless society, the 'state of nature', amounts to a civil war of each against all, making orderly and stable life impossible. The source of such strife lies in human nature, which according to Hobbes and Locke is essentially selfish, greedy and potentially aggressive. Only a sovereign state can restrain such impulses and guarantee social order. In short, order is impossible without law. Godwin, in contrast, suggested that human beings are essentially rational creatures, inclined by education and enlightened judgement to live in accordance with truth and universal moral laws. He thus believed that people have a natural propensity to organize their own lives in a harmonious and peaceful fashion. Indeed, in his view it is the corrupting influence of government and unnatural laws, rather than any 'original sin' in human beings, that creates injustice, greed and aggression. Government, in other words, is not the solution to the problem of order, but its cause.

Anarchists have often sympathized with the famous opening words of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (see p. 165) Social Contract ([1762] 1913), 'Man was born free, yet everywhere he is in chains.' At the heart of anarchism lies an unashamed utopianism, a belief in the natural goodness, or at least potential goodness, of humankind. From this perspective, social order arises naturally and spontaneously; it does not require the machinery of 'law and order'. This is why anarchist conclusions have only been reached by political thinkers whose views of human nature are sufficiently optimistic to sustain the notions of natural order and spontaneous harmony. For example, collectivist anarchists stressed the human capacity for sociable and cooperative behaviour, while individualist anarchists highlight the importance of enlightened human reason. Not uncommonly, Utopianism

A utopia (from the Greek outopia, meaning 'nowhere', or eutopia, meaning 'good place') is literally an ideal or perfect society. Although utopias of various kinds can be envisaged, most are characterized by the abolition of want, the absence of conflict and the avoidance of oppression and violence. Utopianism is a style of political theorising that develops a critique of the existing order by constructing a model of an ideal or perfect alternative. Good examples are anarchism and Marxism. Utopian theories are usually based on assumptions about the unlimited possibilities of human self-development. However, utopianism is often used as a pejorative term to imply deluded or fanciful thinking, a belief in an unrealistic and unachievable goal.

this potential for spontaneous harmony within human nature is linked to the belief that nature itself, and indeed the universe, are biased in favour of natural order. Anarchists have thus sometimes been drawn to the ideas of non-western religions such as Buddhism and Taoism, which emphasize interdependence and oneness. The most influential modern version of such ideas is found in the notion of ecology, particular the 'social ecology' of thinkers such as Murray Bookchin (see p. 287). Social ecology is discussed in Chapter 9 in relation to eco-anarchism.

However, anarchism is not simply based upon a belief in human 'goodness'. In the first place, anarchist theories of human nature have often been complex and acknowledged that rival potentialities reside within the human soul. For instance, in their different ways, Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin (see p. 203) accepted that human beings could be selfish and competitive as well as sociable and cooperative (Morland, 1997). Although the human 'core' may be morally and intellectually enlightened, a capacity for corruption lurks within each and every human being. Second, anarchists have paid as much attention to social institutions as they have to human nature. They regard human nature as 'plastic', in the sense that it is shaped by the social, political and economic circumstances within which people live. Just as law, government and the state breed a domination/subordination complex, other social institutions nurture respect, cooperation and spontaneous harmony. Collectivist anarchists thus endorse common ownership or mutualist institutions, while individualist anarchists have supported the market. Nevertheless, the belief in a stable and peaceful yet stateless society has usually been viewed as the weakest and most contentious aspect of anarchist theory. Opponents of anarchism have argued that, however socially enlightened institutions may be, if selfish or negative impulses are basic to human nature and not merely evidence of corruption, the prospect of natural order is nothing more than a utopian dream.

Anti-clericalism

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

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

Finally, religion seeks to impose a set of moral principles upon the individual and to establish a code of acceptable behaviour. Religious belief requires conformity to standards of 'good' and 'evil', which are defined and policed by figures of religious authority such as priests, bishops or popes. The individual is thus robbed of moral autonomy and the capacity to make ethical judgements. Nevertheless, anarchists do not reject the religious impulse altogether. There is a clear mystical strain within anarchism. Anarchists can be said to hold an essentially spiritual

conception of human nature, a utopian belief in the virtually unlimited possibilities of human self-development and in the bonds that unite humanity, and indeed all living things. Early anarchists were sometimes influenced by millenarianism, a belief in the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God after 'a thousand years'. Modern anarchists have often been attracted to religions such as Taoism and Zen Buddhism, which offer the prospect of personal insight and preach the values of toleration, respect and natural harmony.

Economic freedom

Anarchists have rarely seen the overthrow of the state as an end in itself, but have also been interested in challenging the structures of social and economic life. Bakunin argued that 'political power and wealth are inseparable'. In the nineteenth century, anarchists usually worked within the working-class movement and subscribed to a broadly socialist social philosophy. Capitalism was understood in class terms: a 'ruling class' exploits and oppresses 'the masses'. However, this 'ruling class' was not, in line with Marxism, interpreted in narrow economic terms, but was seen to encompass all those who command wealth, power or privilege in society. It therefore included kings and princes, politicians and state officials, judges and police officers, and bishops and priests, as well as industrialists and bankers. Bakunin thus argued that in every developed society three social groups can be identified: a vast majority who are exploited; a minority who are exploited but also exploit others in equal measure; and 'the supreme governing estate', a small minority of 'exploiters and oppressors pure and simple'. Hence nineteenth-century anarchists identified themselves with the poor and oppressed and sought to carry out a social revolution in the name of the 'exploited masses', in which both capitalism and the state would be swept away.

However, it is the economic structure of life that most keenly exposes tensions within anarchism. Although many anarchists acknowledge a kinship with socialism, based upon a common distaste for property and inequality, others have defended property rights and even revered

Michael Bakunin (1814–76)

Russian anarchist and revolutionary. Bakunin was born into a prosperous aristocratic family. He renounced a military career and after philosophical studies was drawn into political activism by the 1848–9 revolutions. By the 1860s he had renounced Slav nationalism for anarchism and spent the rest of his life as an agitator and propagandist, famous for his interest in secret societies and his endless appetite for political intrigue.

Bakunin's anarchism was based on a belief in human sociability, expressed in the desire for freedom within a community of equals and in the 'sacred instinct of revolt'. He embraced a view of collectivism as self-governing communities of free individuals, which put him at odds with Marx and his followers. However, Bakunin's real importance is more as the founder of the historical anarchist movement than as an original thinker or an anarchist theoretician.

competitive capitalism. This highlights the distinction between the two major anarchist traditions, one of which is collectivist and the other individualist. Collectivist anarchists advocate an economy based upon cooperation and collective ownership, while individualist anarchists support the market and private property.

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

Collectivist anarchism

The philosophical roots of collectivist anarchism lie in socialism rather than liberalism. Anarchist conclusions can be reached by pushing socialist collectivism to its limits. Collectivism (see p. 109) is, in essence, the belief that human beings are social animals, better suited to working together for the common good than striving for individual self-interest. Collectivist anarchism, sometimes called social anarchism, stresses the human capacity for social solidarity, or what Kropotkin termed 'mutual aid'. As pointed out earlier, this does not amount to a naïve belief in 'natural goodness', but rather highlights the potential for goodness that resides within all human beings. Human beings are, at heart, sociable, gregarious and cooperative creatures. In this light, the natural and proper relationship between and amongst people is one of sympathy, affection and harmony. When people are linked together by the recognition of a common humanity, they have no need to be regulated or controlled by government: as Bakunin proclaimed, 'Social solidarity is the first human law; freedom is the second law'. Not only is government unnecessary, but in replacing freedom with oppression, it also makes social solidarity impossible.

Philosophical and ideological overlaps between anarchism and socialism, particularly Marxist socialism, are evident in the fact that anarchists have often worked within a broad revolutionary socialist movement. For example, the First International, 1864–72, was set up by supporters of Proudhon and Marx. A number of clear theoretical parallels can be identified between collectivist anarchism and Marxism. Both fundamentally reject capitalism, regarding it as a system of class exploitation and structural injustice. Both have endorsed revolution as the preferred means of bringing about political change. Both exhibit a preference for the collective ownership of wealth and the communal organization of social life. Both believe that a fully communist society would be anarchic, expressed by Marx in the theory of the 'withering away' of the state. Both, therefore, agree that human beings have the ultimate capacity to order their affairs without the need for political authority.

Nevertheless, anarchism and socialism diverge at a number of points. This occurs most clearly in relation to parliamentary socialism. Parliamentary socialists have long since lost faith in the

revolutionary potential of the working masses, believing instead the numerical strength of the working class has make a 'socialism though the ballot box' possible, if not inevitable. In addition, they see the state in a positive light, as the principal means through which capitalism is reformed or 'humanized'. Anarchists, on the other hand, dismiss parliamentary socialism as a contradiction in terms. Not only is it impossible to advance the cause of socialism through the corrupt and corrupting mechanisms of government, but also any expansion in the role and responsibilities of the state can only serve to entrench oppression, albeit in the name of equality and social justice.

The bitterest disagreement between collectivist anarchists and Marxists centres upon their rival conceptions of the transition from capitalism to communism. Marxists have called for a 'dictatorship of the proletariat', a transitional period between a proletarian revolution and the achievement of full communism, during which the proletariat will have to arm and organize itself against the threat of counter-revolution. This proletarian state will nevertheless 'wither away' as capitalist class antagonisms abate. In this view, state power is nothing but a reflection of the class system, the state being, in essence, an instrument of class oppression. Anarchists, on the other hand, regard the state as evil and oppressive in its own right: it is, by its very nature, a corrupt and corrupting body. Anarchists therefore draw no distinction between bourgeois states and proletarian states. Genuine revolution, for an anarchist, requires not only the overthrow of capitalism but also the immediate and final overthrow of state power. The state cannot be allowed to 'wither away'; it must be abolished.

Mutualism

The anarchist belief in social solidarity has been used to justify various forms of cooperative behaviour. At one extreme, it has led to a belief in pure communism, but it has also generated the more modest ideas of mutualism, associated with Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. In a sense Proudhon's libertarian socialism stands between the individualist and collectivist traditions of anarchism, Proudhon's ideas sharing much in common with those of US individualists such as Josiah Warren (1798–1874). In What is Property?, Proudhon came up with the famous statement that 'Property is theft', and condemned a system of economic exploitation based upon the accumulation of capital. Nevertheless, unlike Marx, Proudhon was not opposed to all forms of private property, distinguishing between property and what he called 'possessions'. In particular, he admired the independence and initiative of smallholding peasants, craftsmen and artisans. Proudhon therefore sought to establish a system of property ownership that would avoid exploitation and promote social harmony.

Mutualism is a system of fair and equitable exchange, in which individuals or groups can bargain with one another, trading goods and services without profiteering or exploitation. Social interaction is therefore voluntary, mutually beneficial and harmonious, requiring no regulation or interference by government. Proudhon's followers tried to put these ideas into practice by setting up mutual credit banks in France and Switzerland, which provided cheap loans for investors and charged a rate of interest only high enough to cover the cost of running the bank but not so high that it made a profit. Proudhon's own views were largely founded upon his

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–65)

French anarchist. Proudhon was a largely self-educated printer, who was drawn into radical politics in Lyons before settling in Paris in 1847. As a member of the 1848 Constituent Assembly, Proudhon famously voted against the constitution 'because it was a constitution'. He was later imprisoned for three years, after which, disillusioned with active politics, he concentrated on writing and theorizing.

Proudhon's best-known work, What is Property? ([1840] 1970) attacked both traditional property rights and communism, and argued instead for mutualism, a cooperative productive system geared towards need rather than profit and organised within self-governing communities. Nevertheless, towards the end of his life, Proudhon sought an alliance with the labour movement, and in The Federal Principle (1863) acknowledged the need for a minimal state to 'set things in motion'.

admiration for small communities of peasants or craftsmen, notably the watchmakers of Switzerland, who had traditionally managed their affairs on the basis of mutual cooperation.

Anarcho-syndicalism

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

Syndicalist theory drew upon socialist ideas and advanced a crude notion of class war. Workers and peasants were seen to constitute an oppressed class, and industrialists, landlords, politicians, judges and the police were portrayed as exploiters. Workers could defend themselves by organizing syndicates or unions, based upon particular crafts, industries or professions. In the short term, these syndicates could act as conventional trade unions, raising wages, shortening hours and improving working conditions. However, syndicalists were also revolutionaries, who looked forward to the overthrow of capitalism and the seizure of power by the workers. In Reflections on Violence ([1908] 1950), Georges Sorel (1847–1922), the influential French syndicalist theorist, argued that such a revolution would come about through a general strike, a 'revolution of empty hands'. Sorel believed that the general strike was a 'myth', a symbol of working-class power, capable of inspiring popular revolt.

Although syndicalist theory was at times unsystematic and confused, it nevertheless exerted a strong attraction for anarchists who wished to spread their ideas among the masses. As anarchists entered the syndicalist movement they developed the distinctive ideas of anarcho-syndicalism. Two features of syndicalism inspired particular anarchist enthusiasm. First, syndicalists rejected conventional politics as corrupting and pointless. Working-class power, they believed, should be

exerted through direct action, boycotts, sabotage and strikes, and ultimately a general strike. Second, anarchists saw the syndicates as a model for the decentralized, non-hierarchic society of the future. Syndicates typically exhibited a high degree of grassroots democracy and formed federations with other syndicates, either in the same area or in the same industry.

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

Anarcho-communism

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

Anarcho-communism is rooted in highly optimistic beliefs about the human capacity for cooperation, most famously expressed by Peter Kropotkin's theory of ‘mutual aid’. Kropotkin attempted to provide a biological foundation for social solidarity by a re-examination of Darwin's theory of evolution. Whereas social thinkers such as Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) had used Darwinism to support the idea that humankind is naturally competitive and aggressive, Kropotkin argued that species are successful precisely because they manage to harness collective energies though cooperation. The process of evolution thus strengthens sociability and favours cooperation over competition. Successful species, such as the human species, must, Kropotkin concluded, have a strong propensity for mutual aid. Kropotkin argued that while mutual aid had flourished in, for example, the city-states of Ancient Greece and Medieval Europe, it had been subverted by competitive capitalism, threatening the further evolution of the human species.

Although Proudhon had warned that communism could only be brought about by an authoritarian state, anarcho-communists such as Kropotkin and Malatesta (1853–1932) argued that true communism requires the abolition of the state. Anarcho-communists admire small, self-managing communities along the lines of the medieval city-state or the peasant commune. Kropotkin envisaged that an anarchic society would consist of a

Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921)

Russian geographer and anarchist theorist. The son of a noble family who first entered the service of Tsar Alexander II, Kropotkin encountered anarchist ideas whilst working in the Jura

region on the French–Swiss border. After imprisonment in St Petersburg in 1874 he travelled widely in Europe, returning to Russia after the 1917 Revolution.

Kropotkin's anarchism was imbued with the scientific spirit and based upon a theory of evolution that provided an alternative to Darwin's. By seeing mutual aid as the principal means of human and animal development, he claimed to provide an empirical basis for both anarchism and communism. Kropotkin's major works include Mutual Aid (1897), Fields, Factories and Workshops (1901) and The Conquest of Bread (1906).

collection of largely self-sufficient communes, each owning its wealth in common. From the anarcho-communist perspective, the communal organization of social and economic life has three key advantages. First, as communes are based upon the principles of sharing and collective endeavour, they strengthen the bonds of compassion and solidarity, and help to keep greed and selfishness at bay. Second, within communes decisions are made through a process of participatory or direct democracy, which guarantees a high level of popular participation and political equality. Popular self-government is the only form of government that would be acceptable to anarchists. Third, communes are small-scale or 'human-scale' communities, which allow people to manage their own affairs through face-to-face interaction. In the anarchist view, centralization is always associated with depersonalized and bureaucratic social processes.

Individualist anarchism

The philosophical basis of individualist anarchism lies in the liberal idea of the sovereign individual. In many ways, anarchist conclusions are reached by pushing liberal individualism (see p. 30) to its logical extreme. For example, William Godwin's anarchism amounts to a form of extreme classical liberalism. At the heart of liberalism is a belief in the primacy of the individual and the central importance of individual freedom. In the classical liberal view, freedom is negative: it consists in the absence of external constraints upon the individual. When individualism is taken to its extreme it therefore implies individual sovereignty, the idea that absolute and unlimited authority resides within each human being. From this perspective, any constraint upon the individual is evil, but when this constraint is imposed by the state, by definition a sovereign, compulsory and coercive body, it amounts to an absolute evil. Quite simply, the individual cannot be sovereign in a society ruled by law and government. Individualism and the state are thus irreconcilable principles.

Although these arguments are liberal in inspiration, significant differences exist between liberalism and individualist anarchism. First, while liberals accept the importance of individual liberty, they do not believe this can be guaranteed in a stateless society. Classical liberals argue that a minimal or 'nightwatchman' state is necessary to prevent self-seeking individuals form abuse one another by theft, intimidation, violence or even murder. Law thus exists to protect freedom, rather than constrain it. Modern liberals take this argument further and defend the state intervention on the grounds that it enlarges positive freedom. Anarchists, in contrast, believe that individuals can conduct themselves peacefully, harmoniously and prosperously without the need for government to 'police' society and protect them from their fellow human beings. Anarchists differ from liberals because they believe that free individuals can live and work together

constructively because they are rational and moral creatures. Reason dictates that where conflict exists it should be resolved by arbitration or debate and not by violence.

Second, liberals believe that government power can be tamed or controlled by the development of constitutional and representative institutions. Constitutions claim to protect the individual by limiting the power of government and creating checks and balances amongst its various institutions. Regular elections are designed to force government to be accountable to the general public, or at least a majority of the electorate. Anarchists dismiss the idea of limited, constitutional or representative government. They regard constitutionalism (see p. 41) and democracy as simply facades, behind which naked political oppression operates. All laws infringe individual liberty, whether the government that enacts them is constitutional or arbitrary, democratic or dictatorial. In other words, all states are an offence against individual liberty.

Egoism

The boldest statement of anarchist convictions built upon the idea of the sovereign individual is found in Max Stirner's The Ego and His Own ([1845] 1971). Like Marx, the German philosopher Stirner (1806–56) was deeply influenced by ideas of Hegel (1770–1831), but the two arrived at fundamentally different conclusions. Stirner's theories represent an extreme form of individualism. The term ‘egoism’ can have two meanings.

It can suggest that individuals are essentially concerned about their ego or ‘self’, that they are self-interested or self-seeking, an assumption that would be accepted by thinkers such as Hobbes or Locke. Self-interestedness, however, can generate conflict amongst individuals and justify the existence of a state, which would be needed to restrain each individual from harming or abusing others.

In Stirner's view, egoism as a philosophy that places the individual self at the centre of the moral universe. The individual, from this perspective, should simply act as he or she chooses, without any consideration for laws, social conventions, religious or moral principles. Such a position amounts to a form of nihilism, literally a belief in nothing, the rejection of all political, social and moral principles. This is a position that clearly points in the direction of both atheism and an extreme form of individualist anarchism. However, as Stirner's anarchism also dramatically turned its back on the principles of the Enlightenment and contained few proposals about how order could be maintained in a stateless society, it had relatively little impact on the emerging anarchist movement. His ideas nevertheless influenced Nietzsche (see p. 218) and twentieth-century existentialism.

Libertarianism

The individualist argument was more fully developed in the USA by libertarian thinkers such as Henry David Thoreau (1817–62), Lysander Spooner (1808–87), Benjamin Tucker (1854–1939) and Josiah Warren. Thoreau's quest for spiritual truth and self-reliance led him to flee from civilized life and live for several years in virtual solitude, close to nature, an experience described in Walden ([1854] 1983). In his most political work, Civil Disobedience ([1849] 1983), Thoreau approved of Jefferson's liberal motto, ‘That government is best which governs

least', but adapted it to conform with his own anarchist sentiment: 'That government is best which governs not at all'. For Thoreau, individualism leads in the direction of civil disobedience: the individual has to be faithful to his or her conscience and do only what each believes to be right, regardless of the demands of society or the laws made by government. Thoreau's anarchism placed individual conscience above the demands of political obligation. In Thoreau's case, this led him to disobey a US government he thought to be acting immorally in both upholding slavery and waging war against other countries.

Benjamin Tucker took libertarianism (see p. 91) further by considering how autonomous individuals could live and work with one another without the danger of conflict or disorder. Two possible solutions to this problem are available to the individualist. The first emphasizes human rationality and suggests that when conflicts or disagreements develop they can be resolved by reasoned discussion. This, for example, was the position adopted by Godwin, who believed that truth will always tend to displace falsehood. The second solution is to find some sort of mechanism through which the independent actions of free individuals could be brought into harmony with one another.

Extreme individualists such as Josiah Warren and Benjamin Tucker believed that this could be achieved through a system of market exchange. Warren thought that individuals have a sovereign right to the property they themselves produce, but are also forced by economic logic to work with others in order to gain the advantages of the division of labour. He suggested that this could be achieved by a system of 'labour-for-labour' exchange, and set up 'time stores' through which one person's labour could be exchanged for a promise to return labour in kind. Tucker argued that 'Genuine anarchism is consistent Manchesterism', referring to the free-trade, free-market principles of Richard Cobden (1804–65) and John Bright (1811–89). By the late nineteenth century, individualist anarchists in the USA had come to suggest that the 'invisible hand' of the market was capable of ordering all social interaction, relieving the need for political organization altogether.

Anarcho-capitalism

The revival of interest in free-market economics in the second half of the twentieth century led to increasingly radical political conclusions. New right conservatives, attracted to classical economics, wished to 'get government off the back of business' and allow the economy to be disciplined by market forces, rather than managed by an interventionist state. Right-wing libertarians such as Robert Nozick (see p. 97) revived the idea of a minimal state, whose principal function is to protect individual rights. Other thinkers, for example Ayn Rand (1905–82), Murray Rothbard (1926–95) and David Friedman, have pushed free-market ideas to their limit and developed a form of anarcho-capitalism. They argue that government can be abolished and be replaced by unregulated market competition. Property should be owned by sovereign individuals, who may choose if they wish to enter into voluntary contracts with others in the pursuit of self-interest. The individual thus remains free and the market, beyond the control of any single individual or group, regulates all social interaction.

Anarcho-capitalists go well beyond the ideas of free-market liberalism. Liberals believe that the market is an effective and efficient mechanism for delivering most goods, but argue that it also

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

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

Tensions within Anarchism

Individualist anarchism	v.	Collectivist anarchism
ultra-liberalism	–	ultra-socialism
extreme individualism	–	extreme collectivism
sovereign individual	–	common humanity
civil disobedience	–	social revolution
atomism	–	class politics
egoism	–	cooperation/mutualism
contractual obligation	–	social duty
market mechanism	–	communal organization
private property	–	common ownership
anarcho-capitalism	–	anarcho-communism

Roads to anarchy

Anarchists have been more successful in describing their ideals in books and pamphlets than they have been at putting them into practice. Quite commonly, anarchists have turned away from active politics, concentrating instead upon writing or on experiments in communal or cooperative living. Anarchists have not only been apolitical, turning away from political life, but also positively antipolitical, repelled by the conventional processes and machinery of politics. The problem confronting anarchism is that if the state is regarded as evil and oppressive, any attempt to win government power or even influence government must be corrupting and unhealthy. For

example, electoral politics is based upon a model of representative democracy, which anarchists firmly reject. Political power is always oppressive, regardless of whether it is acquired through the ballot box or at the point of a gun. Similarly, anarchists are disenchanted by political parties, both parliamentary and revolutionary parties, because they are bureaucratic and hierarchic organizations. The idea of an anarchist government, an anarchist political party or an anarchist politician is therefore a contradiction in terms. As there is no conventional 'road to anarchy', anarchists have been forced to explore less orthodox means of political activism.

Revolutionary violence

In the nineteenth century, anarchist leaders tried to rouse the 'oppressed masses' to insurrection and revolt. Michael Bakunin, for example, led a conspiratorial brotherhood, the Alliance for Social Democracy, and took part in anarchist risings in France and Italy. Other anarchists, for example Malatesta in Italy, the Russian Populists and Zapata's revolutionaries in Mexico, worked for a peasant revolution. However, anarchist risings ultimately failed, partly because they were based upon a belief in spontaneous revolt rather than careful organization. By the end of the nineteenth century, many anarchists had turned their attention to the revolutionary potential of the syndicalist movement, and, during the twentieth century anarchism, increasingly lost support to the better organized and more tightly disciplined communist movement.

Nevertheless, some anarchists continued to place particular emphasis on the revolutionary potential of terrorism and violence. Anarchist violence has been prominent in two periods in particular, in the late nineteenth century, reaching its peak in the 1890s, and again in the 1970s. Anarchists have employed 'clandestine violence', often involving bombings or assassinations, designed to create an atmosphere of terror or apprehension. Amongst its victims were Tsar Alexander II, King Humbert of Italy, Empress Elizabeth of Austria and Presidents Carnot of France and McKinley of the USA. The typical anarchist terrorist was either a single individual working alone, such as Emile Henry, who was guillotined in 1894 after placing a bomb in the Café Terminus in Paris, or clandestine groups such as the People's Will in Russia, which assassinated Alexander II. In the 1970s, anarchist violence was undertaken by groups such as Baader–Meinhof in West Germany, the Italian Red Brigades, the Japanese Red Army and the Angry Brigade in the UK.

The use of violence to achieve political ends has been endorsed or accepted by political groups and movements of various kinds. Anarchist violence has nevertheless been distinctive in that bombings and assassinations have been thought to be just and fair in themselves and not merely a way of exerting political influence. In the anarchist view, violence is a form of revenge or retribution. Violence originates in oppression and exploitation, perpetrated by politicians, industrialists, judges and the police against the working masses. Anarchist violence merely mirrors the everyday violence of society and directs it towards those who are really guilty. It is therefore a form of 'revolutionary justice'. For example, the Red Brigades in Italy set up 'people's courts' and held 'proletarian trials' before assassinating victims such as former Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro. Violence is also seen as a way of demoralizing the ruling classes, encouraging them to loosen their grip upon power and privilege. In addition, violence is a way of raising political consciousness and stimulating the masses to revolt. Russian populists believed

violence to be a form of 'propaganda by the deed', a demonstration that the ruling class is weak and defenceless, which, they hoped, would stimulate popular insurrection amongst the peasants.

However, in practice, anarchist violence has been counterproductive at best. Far from awakening the masses to the reality of their oppression, political violence has normally provoked public horror and outrage. There is little doubt that the association between anarchism and violence has damaged the popular appeal of the ideology. Furthermore, violence seems an unpromising way of persuading the ruling class to relinquish power. Violence and coercion challenge the state on territory upon which its superiority is most clearly overwhelming. Terrorist attacks in both the 1890s and the 1970s merely encouraged the state to expand and strengthen its repressive machinery, usually with the backing of public opinion.

Direct action

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

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

Non-violence

In practice, most anarchists see violence as tactically misguided, while others, following Godwin and Proudhon, regard it as abhorrent in principle. These latter anarchists have often been attracted to the principles of non-violence and pacifism developed by Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) and Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948). Although neither of them can properly be classified as anarchists, both, in different ways, expressed ideas that were sympathetic to anarchism. In his political writings, the Russian novelist Tolstoy developed the image of a corrupt and false

modern civilization. He suggested that salvation could be achieved by living according to religious principles and returning to a simple, rural existence, based upon the traditional life-style of the Russian peasantry. Communes were founded to spread Tolstoy's teachings, central to which was the principle of non-violence. For Tolstoy, Christian respect for life required that 'no person would employ violence against anyone, and under no consideration'.

Gandhi campaigned against racial discrimination and led the movement for India's independence from the UK, eventually granted in 1947. His political method was based upon the idea of satyagraha, or non-violent resistance, influenced both by the teachings of Tolstoy and Hindu religious principles. Although not an anarchist theorist, Gandhi believed that government represents 'violence in a concentrated form' because it is based upon compulsion and coercion. He worked for a life founded upon the principle of love, which he regarded as the 'law of our being'. His ideal community was the traditional Indian village, a society both self-governing and largely self-sufficient. Its symbol, the spinning wheel, which is both the source of its livelihood and a mark of its independence, has been incorporated into the Indian flag.

The principle of non-violence was crucial to Gandhi's philosophy for two reasons. First, it reflected the sanctity of all human life, indeed of all living beings. A society regulated by love must, for Gandhi, be based upon compassion and respect. Second, non-violence was a political strategy. To refrain from the use of force, especially when subjected to intimidation and provocation, demonstrates the strength and moral purity of one's convictions. In the campaign against British rule, non-violent resistance was a powerful weapon, mobilizing popular support for independence within India itself and around the world. However, the anarchists who have been attracted to the principles of pacifism and non-violence have tended to shy away from mass political activism, preferring instead to build model communities that reflect the principles of cooperation and mutual respect. They hope that anarchist ideas will be spread not by political campaigns and demonstrations, but through the stark contrast between the peacefulness and contentment enjoyed within such communities, and the 'quiet desperation', in Thoreau's words, that typifies life in conventional society.

Anarchism in the twenty-first century

It would be easy to dismiss the whole idea of anarchism in the twenty-first century as a mere fantasy. After all, anarchism cannot be said to have existed as a significant political movement since the early twentieth century, and even then it failed to provide the basis for political reconstruction in any major society. However, the enduring significance of anarchism is perhaps less that it has provided an ideological basis for acquiring and retaining political power, and more that it has challenged, and thereby fertilized, other political creeds. Anarchists have highlighted the coercive and destructive nature of political power, and in so doing have countered statist tendencies within other ideologies, notably liberalism, socialism and conservatism. In fact, in this sense, anarchism has had a growing influence upon modern political thought. Both the new left and the new right, for instance, have exhibited libertarian tendencies, which bear the imprint of anarchist ideas. The new left encompassed a broad range of movements that were prominent in the 1960s and early 1970s, including student activism, anticolonialism, feminism and environmentalism. The unifying theme within the new left was the goal of 'liberation', understood to mean personal fulfilment, and it endorsed an activist style

of politics that was based upon popular protest and direct action, clearly influenced by anarchism. The new right also emphasizes the importance of individual freedom, but believes that this can only be guaranteed by market competition. Anarcho-capitalists have sought to highlight what they see as the evils of state intervention, and have been prominent in the rediscovery of free-market economics.

Does this mean that anarchism in the twenty-first century is destined to be nothing more than a pool of ideas from which other political thinkers and traditions can draw at will? Is anarchism now only of philosophical importance? A more optimistic picture of anarchism's future can be painted. In some respects, the continuing practical significance of anarchism is merely concealed by its increasingly diverse character. In addition to, and in some ways in place of, established political and class struggles, anarchists have come to address issues such as pollution and environmental destruction, consumerism, urban development, gender relations and global inequality. Many of these concerns, indeed, are expressed by the modern anti-capitalist or anti-globalization movement, which, though

Noam Chomsky (born 1928)

US linguistic theorist and radical intellectual. Chomsky's Syntactic Structures (1957) revolutionized the study of linguistics through the theory of transformational grammar, which proposes that humans have an innate capacity to acquire language. Chomsky's political radicalism is grounded in anarchist beliefs, in particular in faith in the moral sensibilities of private citizens and a distrust of all human institutions. His critique of arbitrary authority is most clearly articulated through his criticism of US foreign policy as neo-colonialist and militaristic, developed in over 30 books, including American Power and the New Mandarins (1969), New Military Humanism (1999) and 9/11 (2003). His attack on US democracy places considerable emphasis on the capacity of the media to manipulate ordinary citizens, as argued in Manufacturing Consent (with Edward Herman, 1988). Chomsky is the USA's most prominent political dissident.

a broad coalition of ideological forces, has marked anarchist features. For example, Noam Chomsky, the most important theoretical influence upon the anti-globalization movement develops his ideas on the basis of anarchist assumptions. To argue that anarchism is irrelevant because it has long since ceased to be a mass movement in its own right is perhaps to miss the point. As the world becomes increasingly complex and fragmented, it might be that it is mass politics itself that is dead. From this perspective, anarchism, by virtue of its association with values such as individualism, participation, decentralization and equality, may be better equipped than many other political creeds to respond to the challenges of postmodernity.

Further reading

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