

### Origin of Anarchism

- Debates about the origins of anarchism can be broken down into three main types. The first of these need not detain us long. There are those who claim that anarchism is essentially an all-pervasive universal and ahistorical libertarian disposition.
- It is argued that from the Ancient Greek writers onward we can find anarchist sentiments expressed. In the same vein it is also asserted that anarchist themes are to be found within ancient Chinese texts such as the *Tao te Ching*. The American anarchist writer John Clark describes this Taoist work as ‘one of the great anarchist.’
- General libertarian-inclined movements and thinkers, from the time of Socrates, are all in imminent danger of being incorporated into this ‘catch-all’ perspective. Sophists, ranters, anabaptists and counter-culture movements from the 1960s become part of the same libertarian disposition.
- There is an intellectual weak-mindedness here that ignores historical and sociological factors. A similarly shallow view can be found, at some point, in the explanation of most ideologies.
- There is a strong demand for an ‘ancient lineage’ in all ideologies which often overwhelms intellectual caution.
- The second perspective enjoys a more substantial credibility. It is rooted in the anthropological investigation that began in earnest in the nineteenth century with writers such as Lewis Morgan. Here, the basic claim is that anarchism either has strong parallels with, or (more forcefully) that anarchism can be found in embryo in, primitive acephalous forms of society throughout the world.
- The early example of the stronger thesis is to be found in Peter Kropotkin’s work *Mutual Aid* (1902). A modern form of the claim, with different intellectual roots, is represented by Michael Taylor’s *Community, Anarchy and Liberty* (1982). As Taylor argues: ‘During almost all the time since *Homo Sapiens* emerged, he has lived in stateless “primitive” communities’ (Taylor 1982, 33). Many of these societies can be described as primitive anarchies.
- Taylor distinguishes between certain types of primitive societies, finding that ‘acephalous’ societies approach ‘much more closely to the pure anarchy’.<sup>6</sup> Defending his thesis, Taylor remarks: ‘I do not see how anyone interested in anarchy or in community can or ought to avoid examining these communities, for they constitute the chief, almost the only historical examples of anarchy and quasi-anarchy and they are important examples of community on almost any account of the concept’ (Taylor 1982, 33).
- This view of the origins of anarchy presents a number of problems. There is still a facet of the ‘ancient lineage’ perspective here, although less pronounced, which lays it open to the charge of sociological and historical anachronism.

- A false conceptual universalism pervades this view, even though it is premised on the more respectable concepts of nineteenth-century anthropological positivism.
- There is also a certain ingenuousness concerning the types of organization. Because something is stateless, or headless, does not necessarily mean that it has to be placed under a very particular nineteenth-century rubric of anarchy.
- Why not conceive of it as another form of social organization? Why the desire to incorporate such phenomena into the categories of contemporary ideologies?
- Furthermore, the religious and social views of such primitive societies appear very different to the world of nineteenth- and twentieth century anarchy.
- Again there is an element of almost romantic parochialism in the attempt to assimilate such different worlds. Rousseau's noble savage appears to lurk behind the neat public-good arguments. The forms of belief and the forms of control in such primitive societies might in fact now be considered considerably worse than state control.
- Many of these primitive societies, despite not having over-arching authority, were immersed in sorcery, magic, cruelty, threat, mutual hostility, and certainly do not look like exemplars of mutual respect or liberty.
- As one investigation of such primitive groups argued: The absence of the State as a method of social organization does not *necessarily* involve the absence of those other undesirable features of western society that we would like to see abolished: competition, class division, status seeking, authoritarianism, restrictions on individual freedom, and so on.
- The acceptance of this myth is partly a result of the nineteenth-century tendency to seek universal mono causal explanations. (Pilgrim 1965, 367)
- The third view of the origins of anarchism locates it as a comparatively late offspring of the Enlightenment and the French Revolutionary era.
- Apart from William Godwin (1756–1836) – who certainly expressed much of the sense of the concept of anarchy, feeding into one of the diverse currents of the French Revolution – anarchy itself was a product of the later nineteenth century.
- Its forceful appearance in the 1880s was not fortuitous. Anarchy can be seen as a confluence of, or an interstice between, liberalism and socialism. As the German anarchist Rudolf Rocker aptly put it, anarchism is ‘the confluence of the two great currents which during and since the French Revolution have found such characteristic expression in the intellectual life of Europe: Socialism and Liberalism’.
- This does not mean that there is nothing distinctive about anarchy, yet it does signify considerable overlaps between it and other ideologies. The period of the anarchist movement can be dated from approximately the 1880s until the 1930s.
- The Spanish Civil War saw the last vigorous attempts to set up anarchistic communes, unless, that is, one includes the counter-culture movement of the 1960s.
- Anarchists were essentially involved on the edge of two major revolutions: in Russia and in Spain. In both cases they were fairly quickly eliminated.

- In the example of the Ukrainian anarchists led by Nestor Makhno after the Russian Revolution, their success was prolonged through war conditions. Whether Makhno's movement was genuinely anarchist, given the extreme conditions of the war, is debatable.
- Some writers have contended, as suggested, that a return to anarchist themes can be seen in the counter-culture movements of the 1960s, as well as in the anti-capitalist, anti globalization and new social movements of the 1990s, to the present day.
- The only difficulty which occurs here is that many of these latter movements, although clearly ideological and influential in certain sectors, are as yet difficult to read. The movements, to date, appear to contain elements of a more negative localized resistance to global forces, combined with positive forms of anarchism, ecology, feminism and socialism.
- The ideas of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri on the diffuse, leaderless and unstructured character of '*multitude*' encapsulates some of this sense of deep internal complexity; although these particular authors see this multitude category as signaling a new and potentially emancipatory politics.
- Issues such as growing industrialization, globalized capitalism, nuclear power, pollution, the threat of global ecological crisis, the escalation of state power and warfare, have clearly radicalized a new generation with, what might appear at times to be, anarchistic ideas.
- Anarchist writers from the 1950s (or in some cases from the 1930s), such as Paul Goodman, Herbert Read, Alex Comfort, Colin Ward, Noam Chomsky and Murray Bookchin, all addressed similar themes from within a methodical anarchist perspective.
- A new generation of journals, such as *Black Rose*, *Harbinger*, *Telos* and *The Raven*, have continued to promote the anarchist critique. In addition, the Freedom Press, Black Rose and AK Press continue to publish large amounts of anarchist-related literature.
- The question as to why anarchism developed from the 1860s and 1870s is complex, the answer often being specific to particular societies. For example, the reasons for the development of Russian anarchism might be very different to the reasons for the development of the American, Spanish or French variants.
- To some extent there is also an intellectual dimension to the origin of different forms of anarchy, a point that will be discussed in the next section. Thus the origin of individualist anarchism has closer intellectual affinities to classical liberalism, whereas communist and collectivist anarchism were forged in the heated intellectual debates with Blanquism and Marxism in the International.
- From the 1880s onwards, anarchism's appeared in all European societies, as well as in India, South America, Japan and the USA (see Marshall 1993, 496ff). It is not really possible to uncover a transparent rationale underlying the development of anarchism.
- A rough guide would include the following points. In the nineteenth century we see certain crucial historical developments.

- Most important was the growth and increasing centralization of nation states, something which a number of ideologies, including liberalism, have found profoundly worrying. In addition, there was the marked expansion of industrial capitalism and the tremendous social, economic and political upheavals and distress attendant upon it.
- One consequence of this, particularly in more rural societies, was a clash between industrial and agricultural ways of life. It was not by accident that anarchism had, until the 1930s, its most vigorous support in the more rural, peasant-based societies of India, Russia, Spain and Italy.
- The above social development coincided with a powerful European revolutionary tradition. Certain dates in this tradition became part of the iconography of socialism and anarchism, each with its accompanying hagiography and provoking violent disagreement as to its true meaning.
- The European revolutions of 1789, 1830, 1848, 1871, 1917 and 1930 were seen as a developmental sequence imbued with a sacred teleology of liberation. This iconography was given its imprimatur and propagandized in the great debates of the First, Second and Third Internationals from the 1860s onwards.
- The anarchists saw themselves as part of this process of liberation. In many cases their opposition to the state and to wide-scale industrialism took its cue from an opposition to Marxism, which it saw as betraying the task of liberation and selling out to a form of state capitalism.
- **The Nature of Anarchism**
- Anarchism, like socialism, is subject to a great deal of critical contestation. Most commentators, and many anarchists themselves, recognize a diversity of view. This is to be expected in one sense, given the strong belief in liberty of opinion implicit within much anarchist argument. Also, like most ideologies, there are a number of ways in which the movement can be categorized. We can either classify anarchisms according to the particular ideas and goals promulgated, or by the particular tactics employed, that is, pacifist or violent (see Friedrich 1972). This particular fraught debate has carried through into recent debates on anti-capitalist and anti-globalization strategies in the the 2000s (Day 2005). There is, in addition, considerable disagreement as to the number of schools of anarchy.
- Here preference is to distinguish between individualist, collectivist, communist, mutualist and anarcho-syndicalist versions. These might be described as classical forms of anarchy (see Crowder 1991).<sup>10</sup> The typology adopted here includes some subvariants. For example, one of the more popular versions of individualist anarchist thinking in the USA, in the last two decades of the twentieth century, was associated with the name of Murray Rothbard and acquired the nomenclature ‘anarchocapitalism’ (Rothbard 1978). There are other possible variants on this scheme.
- There has, for example, been some minority interest in developing a concept of postmodern anarchy (see May 1994). This identifies the idea with the subtle critique of

the pervasiveness of power in modern society that has been mounted by postmodern writers such as Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Jean-François Lyotard. This critique is seen to have roots in anarchist thinking. Whether one can make a strong link between classical anarchy and poststructuralism remains an open question. Further, anticapitalism, anti-globalization and aspects of new social movements have also been considered by some as a unique development of anarchism (see Day 2005; Franks

- 2006). Some of the earlier more extreme ‘propaganda of the deed’ anarchists in the 1880s and 1890s verged upon nihilist anarchy. In the late twentieth century, the American anarchist Murray Bookchin described himself as an ‘eco-anarchist’. Others have also spoken of ‘feminist anarchism’. I have chosen to follow a more established typology. Thus, postmodern anarchy, nihilist anarchism, eco-anarchism, anti-capitalist anarchism and feminist anarchism will not be considered as separate categories of anarchism. While there is a much stronger case to be made for Bookchin, the present account will treat him as a unique exponent of communist anarchism (with a strong interest in eco-anarchism) (see Bookchin 1986b, 92 and Bookchin 1992).
- Individualist anarchy can be clearly observed in American writers such as Josiah Warren, Benjamin Tucker, Albert Jay Nock and Murray Rothbard. Rothbard does not fit so easily within this category on account of his particular obsession with capitalism. Although individualists differ markedly on many issues, the common thread that holds them in an uneasy alliance is their rigorous commitment to the sovereign individual, and, in many cases, their affirmation of the central importance of individual liberty. In the American tradition there is also an assertion of the value of private property. However, their firmest commitment is to a pristine individualism. Beyond this, disparities arise. Apart from the central importance of the individual, the ideas of Max Stirner do not fit very easily with other individualist anarchists (see Leopold introduction to Stirner 2000). The same point holds for William Godwin and Leo Tolstoy, who, despite their focus on the individual, do not cohere with the American conception of individualism.
- Collectivist anarchism was primarily associated with the ideas of Mikhail Bakunin (Kelly 1982; Leier 2006). Apart from his idiosyncratic pan-Slavist ideas and anti-German sentiments, Bakunin was celebrated for his belief in revolutionary spontaneity, his theoretical solemnization of the destructive urge, his virulent anti-Marxism and his conception of revolutionary anarchist dictatorship. In organizational terms Bakunin believed in the collectivization of the means of production, where distribution would be determined by the criteria of work. Peter Kropotkin thus argued that collectivist anarchists had a very different conception of justice to the communist anarchists, who thought in terms of need (Kropotkin 1914, 217ff).
- Communist anarchism is one of the strongest components of anarchist thought to the present day. Kropotkin is the best-known early exponent of this variant. Others included Errico Malatesta, Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, Colin Ward and Murray Bookchin (see Ward 2004; Fellner 2005; Guérin ed. 2005; Goldman 2006). Communist

anarchism is committed to the common ownership principle, in terms of property, production and housing. In the case of Kropotkin, distribution is premised on need. Such a commitment overlaps with some aspects of reformist socialism and social liberalism. Communist anarchists also assert the necessity of social solidarity and cooperative dispositions. Such notions are seen to be implicit in human nature. This tendency is repeated by Bookchin in his writings and linked with themes of ecological balance and harmony (see Bookchin 1982, 1986b, 1992).

- The first communist anarchist work to present this case was Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*. Freedom remains a slightly ambivalent issue in communist anarchy. It is usually related to the moral growth and self-development of the individual within a community, which might be better understood as a positive concept of liberty, yet there are exceptions to this within some communist anarchist writings.
- Finally, like collectivist anarchism, communist anarchy disapproves of market activity and the private production of goods. Mutualist anarchy was associated with the 'father of anarchy', Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Proudhon's views changed during his lifetime. He later even balked at the title 'anarchist'. His early views on anarchy can be summarized by the term 'mutualism'. He surmised that political organization premised on the state would be replaced by economic organization. Governments and states would disappear and individuals would relate to one another through mutual economic contracts. Mutualism, sometimes also called 'guaranteeism', was a form of contractarian anarchy. The only organization which would not be contractual was the family, which remained unradicalized, hierarchical and patriarchal. Women were, by and large, excluded from the benefits of anarchy. Men would possess private property (so long as they were not exploiting or abusing others), and work for themselves. They could start businesses by borrowing credit, without interest, from a 'mutual credit bank'. Their products could also be exchanged for credit notes guaranteed by the bank. Distribution would be unpatterned and dependent upon work and productivity. Despite this, there was still a background of substantive egalitarianism and liberty. Contracts could not be made under economic duress or under conditions of unequal liberty.
- The final strain of anarchism is anarcho-syndicalism, which grew out of the broader and slightly older movement of syndicalism (see Jennings 1990). The term 'syndicalism' has two meanings. On the one hand, it can denote simply trade unionism in a neutral sense. On the other hand, it signifies revolutionary or militant trade unionism, devoted to the overthrow of capitalism and the state. The usual mechanism of overthrow was the general strike. Syndicalism envisaged the eventual reconstruction of society according to a non-state, federalized format, premised on existing syndicalist producer groups. This movement had been growing during the 1880s and 1890s in France. In the early 1900s it spread to the USA with the famous Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies), acquiring highly effective, if idiosyncratic, exponents in Eugene Debs and Daniel de Leon (Marshall 1993, 500–1). It also developed in Italy, Spain, Australia, Latin America

and Britain among other countries. In Britain its effect was felt most intensely in the South Wales coalfields before 1914, though its precise role and effect in fomenting industrial unrest is still hotly disputed (see Morgan 1975; Holton 1976). Because of its militant anti-political and anti-state stance, syndicalism attracted the support and interest of some anarchists, though not all. Some were drawn by its deeply anti-political organizational roots within the working class. Communes did not have to be constructed; revolutionary culture and popular decentralist structures were already in place. After a 1907 anarchist congress in Amsterdam many anarchists tried to unify with syndicalism, hence the title ‘anarcho-syndicalism’. Some, such as the German anarchist Rudolf Rocker, regarded anarcho-syndicalism as the future path for anarchy to take. Others, in mainstream syndicalism, such as Victor Griffuehles, and in mainstream anarchism, such as Malatesta and Kropotkin, repudiated any relationship between anarchism and syndicalism. Basically anarcho-syndicalism rejected all state-orientated politics – parties, parliaments, democracy, and the like. It also displayed a strong anti-intellectual tendency, rejecting bourgeois education and forms of thought. It advocated class war and the destruction of capitalism by armed violence and general strikes. Producer groups would form the nuclei of the new society. These would be democratically self-organized and self-directing federated associations of workers who would create their own social, political and economic culture and do so even before the revolution.

- This autonomy had been vigorously advocated in the late 1890s by Fernand Pelloutier, the leading light of early French syndicalism, as one important component of his concept of the *Bourse du Travail*. The *Bourse* was envisaged as a meetinghouse within a locality for workers of all syndicates. It had many functions: as a labour exchange, meeting-place, holding a strike chest, and as an educational centre with a library. As well as serving practical and strategic functions, the *Bourse* would also enable a new workers’ culture to be built. Before moving on to discuss features of anarchist thought, one problem within this scenario of ‘schools of anarchy’ needs to be reviewed. Can all the above schools be described as anarchist? Within the literature there have been a number of attempts to limit the field.
- Apart from the communist anarchists, nearly all the schools of anarchy are subject to this attempt at restriction. For example, from the time of its inception many considered that anarcho-syndicalism was outside the main anarchist movement. Yet, even if anarcho-syndicalism is considered to be part of anarchy, writers who are popularly associated with this school, such as Georges Sorel, Edouard Berth and Hubert Lagardelle, are often dismissed as having contributed little to it. Thus Rudolf Rocker commented that none of these figures had ‘any mentionable influence’ on either anarchy or anarcho-syndicalism (Rocker 1989, 134). Another commentator, David Miller, remarks that syndicalism was ‘always an alliance between ideologically disparate elements’, and that it was ‘not explicitly anarchist in character’ (Miller 1984, 125, 132). Yet Rocker, amongst others, did not share this latter view. He saw anarcho-syndicalism as the vital centre of anarchy.

- Another particular favourite for exclusion is Max Stirner. As John Carroll noted in his introduction to Stirner's *The Ego and His Own* (1844): 'intellectual studies of anarchism have tended to exhibit a deep hostility to the philosopher of the self' (Carroll introduction to Stirner 1971, 33; also Leopold introduction to Stirner 2000). Carroll suggests that Stirner might better be considered a nihilist than an anarchist, and he is not alone in this assessment. He continues: 'Stirner's uncompromising advocacy of self-realization sets him apart from other anarchist philosophers, especially Proudhon and Kropotkin.' Not all agree with this judgement, however. John Clark, in his study *Max Stirner's Egoism*, contends that Stirner's 'influence on individualist anarchism has continued to the present, and I strongly suspect that it is in fact growing' (Clark 1976, 89; see also Patterson 1971). Again, Jerry Gaus and John W. Chapman have suggested that not only should 'anarcho-syndicalism' be ruled out, but also individualist 'anarcho-capitalism' (Gaus and Chapman in Pennock and Chapman eds 1978, xxv). This point is repeated in an essay later in the same volume by David Wieck, who comments that the latter movement is 'entirely outside the mainstream of anarchist theoretical writings' (Wieck in Pennock and Chapman eds 1978, 215).
- Those within the communist anarchist movement have been particularly keen to expunge individualist anarchists, such as Rothbard. It is obviously uncomfortable to find themselves as bedfellows with such antipathetic ideas. Rothbard himself did not appear to be worried by this critique, and clearly saw his own affinities as lying squarely within an individualist libertarian anarchism. If one looks more closely at the anarchist movement, this process can be repeated *ad infinitum*.
- Most communist and collectivist anarchists expressed distaste for Proudhon's contractarian anarchism, which was seen to evince a 'shopkeeper's mentality' (Graham in Goodway ed. 1989, 163). They also felt uncomfortable with his labour theory of value, his notion of a market-based commutative justice, his patriarchal view of the family, his striving to become a parliamentary candidate, his support of the South and slavery in the American Civil War and, not least, his later belief in the role of a federal state. In the same vein, anarchist commentators, including Vernon Richards and Daniel Guérin, have seen Bakunin's collectivism as conforming more to a Marxist position than to anarchism (Richards in Malatesta 1984, 209; also Guérin in Goodway ed. 1989, 118). This process of mutual repudiation and delimitation is potentially endless and does not appear to be a very profitable path to follow.
- Finally, it is worth remarking that various schools of anarchism have existed in a tense, overlapping and immensely complex relationship with both Marxism, liberalism and more recently ecology (see Thomas 1980).

### **Core Values of Anarchism**

- ❖ 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 (unclear) 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 analyzing 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 ‘ultra-liberalism’, which resembles extreme liberal individualism, or as a form of ‘ultra-socialism’, 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.
- ❖ 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, and interfere with private morality and thinking, and so on.
- ❖ The authority of the state is also compulsory. Anarchists reject the liberal notion that political authority arises from voluntary agreement, through some form of ‘social contract’, and argue instead that individuals become subject to state authority either by being born in a particular country or through conquest.
- ❖ Furthermore, the state is a coercive body whose laws must be obeyed because they are backed up by the threat of punishment. For the Russian-born US anarchist Emma Goldman (1869–1940), government was symbolized by ‘the club, the gun, the handcuff, or the prison’.
- ❖ The state can deprive individuals of their property, their liberty and ultimately, through capital punishment, their 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 Theory on its head.
- ❖ The social contract arguments of Hobbes and Locke 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 judgment 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 'Social Contract', '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 theorizing that develops a critique of the existing order by constructing a model of an ideal or perfect alternative. Good examples are anarchism and Marxism.
- ❖ Utopian theories are usually based on assumptions about the unlimited possibilities of human self-development. However, utopianism is often used as a pejorative term to imply deluded or fanciful thinking, a belief in an unrealistic and unachievable goal.
- ❖ 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).
- ❖ 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. 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.
- ❖ 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/Socialist 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 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 made a ‘socialism through 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 centers 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.
- ❖ Nevertheless, anarcho-collectivism has taken a variety of forms. The most significant of these are:
  - a) Mutualism
  - b) Anarcho-Syndicalism
  - c) Anarcho-Communism

**a. 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.

**b. Anarcho-Syndicalism**

- ❖ Although mutualism and anarcho-communism exerted significant influence within the broader socialist movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's, 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-hierarchical society of the future. Syndicates typically exhibited a high degree of grassroots democracy and formed federations with other syndicates, either in the same area or in the same industry.
- ❖ 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.

### c. 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 through cooperation.
- ❖ The process of evolution thus strengthens sociability and favours cooperation over competition. Successful species, such as the human species, must, Kropotkin concluded, have a strong propensity for mutual aid.
- ❖ Kropotkin argued that while mutual aid had flourished in, for example, the city-states of Ancient Greece and Medieval Europe, it had been subverted by competitive capitalism, threatening the further evolution of the human species.
- ❖ Although Proudhon had warned that communism could only be brought about by an authoritarian state, anarcho-communists such as Kropotkin and Malatesta (1853–1932) argued that true communism requires the abolition of the state.
- ❖ Anarcho-communists admire small, self-managing communities along the lines of the medieval city-state or the peasant commune. Kropotkin envisaged that an anarchic society would consist of a collection of largely self-sufficient communes, each owning its wealth in common.
- ❖ From the anarcho-communist perspective, the communal organization of social and economic life has three key advantages.
- ❖ First, as communes are based 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 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 ‘night watchman’ state is necessary to prevent self-seeking individuals from abusing 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 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.
- ❖ However, Anarcho-Capitalism has taken a number of forms. The most important of these are:
  - a. Egoism
  - b. Libertarianism
  - c. Anarcho-Capitalism
- ❖ **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 and twentieth century existentialism.

## **B 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.

### **C 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 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 'Neighborhood Watch' have helped to transfer responsibility for public order from the police to the community.

Tensions within <b>Anarchism</b>	
<b>Individualist anarchism</b>	<b>v. Collectivist anarchism</b>
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