

7 Anarchism

Anarchism is an ideology with many different traditions, but it is united in its rejection of the state, its opposition to coercive relationships and its belief that society without the state is both possible and desirable. This society should enable everyone to have the widest possible range of individual choices. This chapter will look at the origins, core ideas and strands of anarchism before summarising the areas of tension and agreement.

Exam tip

When studying anarchism, be careful not to interpret 'anarchy' in its modern sense, as chaos due to the collapse of law and order, leaving humanity to run wild. According to its original definition, 'anarchy' simply means 'without a leader/ruler' and describes a society without a state. Anarchists believe that an anarchist society would actually lead to greater order and less conflict. This is shown in the common anarchist symbol below, where the O represents order and unity.



Origins of anarchism

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- + Anarchism draws on both liberalism and socialism for many of its ideas: liberalism for its emphasis on individualism and freedom; and socialism for its traditional critique of capitalism as exploitative, and for its emphasis on communalism and co-operation.
- + The roots of anarchism as a coherent political idea can be found in the late eighteenth century, drawing on the growing sense of **individualism** and the desire for social progress.
- + The key catalysts for anarchism were the emergence of the modern state, nationalism, **capitalism** and the Industrial Revolution. It set itself in direct opposition to the oppression of capital, **the state** and the Church.
- + The nineteenth century saw the emergence of the most influential anarchist thinkers and the arrival of the anarchist movement:
 - + Max Stirner offered a stark and brutal form of individualism which rejected the state, society and all forms of coercion and restriction.
 - + Pierre-Joseph Proudhon insisted that only a society without a government could bring peace, order and stability, framed in his famous phrase 'Anarchy is order.'

Individualism The individual is of the utmost importance and is placed above the collective.

Capitalism A system whereby wealth in the form of money or assets, such as the means of production, is owned privately by an individual or corporation.

The state Anarchists accept Max Weber's definition of the state as a body which claims the monopoly over the legitimate use of a force within a given territory.

- + Mikhail Bakunin pushed Proudhon's ideas to the limits, arguing passionately for revolution to overthrow capitalism, the state and the Church, and to build an ordered society on the twin concepts of freedom and **solidarity**.
- + Peter Kropotkin aimed to ground anarchism in scientific principles and developed an anarchism more closely based on the Marxist principle 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'.
- + Emma Goldman looked to balance individualism with the interests of the collective (**collectivism**) and introduced a critical feminist dimension. Most anarchists, though not anarcho-capitalists, support collective or group ownership of property and industry, rejecting capitalism and exploitative individualism. While anarchists place individualism at the centre of their beliefs, they reject the idea that one individual is free to coerce or exploit/employ another.

Solidarity Bakunin described the single law of solidarity as 'No person can recognise or realise his or her own humanity except by recognising it in others and so co-operating for its realisation by each and all.'

Collectivism The idea that the collective rather than the individual is the main economic, social and political unit.

Main beliefs of anarchism

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The autonomy of the individual

Central to anarchism is the idea that the individual should rule themselves and refuse to be ruled by others. The crucial point for anarchists is that people *are* capable of governing themselves. The argument for autonomy is made in a four-step process:

- 1 In moral philosophy, all individuals are responsible for their own actions.
- 2 This assumes that all individuals are 'free' to make their own choices about how they act.
- 3 As the individual is rational, they should use that reason to reflect on what they ought to do, so that they can set their own laws for themselves about how to act.
- 4 In this way, individuals are free to act in line with the moral laws that they have decided for themselves.

This makes **freedom** the central theme of anarchism and the point of society is to give individuals the widest possible range of individual choices. A critical debate within anarchism is what freedom means, with tensions between different thinkers (see Table 7.1).

There is a sliding scale within anarchism from individualism to collectivism. Even Stirner, as the arch individualist, recognises the need for communal life, arguing that relations with others must be free, voluntary, always subject to cancellation and in 'my own personal interest'. For example, if the individual writes books, the individual requires others to read them.

Freedom For anarchists, this means being free from restraint to do as one likes and to fulfil one's dreams and potential. This freedom is only real when it is real for all.

Egoistical Humans are self-interested and self-reliant.

Table 7.1 The meaning of freedom according to different anarchist thinkers

Max Stirner	Each individual is unique and egoistical . There can be no restriction on freedom: 'Whether I am in the right or not there is no judge but myself' (<i>The Ego and Its Own</i> , 1844). He feared that freedom of the individual would be limited by social duty to the interests of the collective.
Proudhon and Goldman	Both Proudhon and Goldman sought a balance between the interests of the individual and the collective. Proudhon feared the tyranny of the collective, while Goldman feared the oppression of 'uniformity'. However, they argued that the natural complement to the individual is working with others to solve common problems.
Kropotkin and Bakunin	Kropotkin and Bakunin endorsed the widest possible freedom. However, their definition of individual freedom is that it can only be achieved in the company of others. Bakunin argued that 'the isolated individual cannot possibly become conscious of his freedom' (<i>Man, Society, and Freedom</i> , 1871).

Opposition to the state

- + **The state.** Anarchists see the traditional nation-state as an artificial construct, separate from society, which acts as a tool of oppression and the cause of social conflict and unrest. Perhaps more accurately, this should be termed a 'compulsory association'.
- + **Authority.** The state claims authority: that is, the right to command and the right to be obeyed.
- + **Command.** This command by the state to obey the law restricts the autonomy of the individual. It strips them of responsibility for their actions, removing both their freedom and their rationality.
- + **Power.** The power of the state is visible in its laws and in the institutions that enforce those laws: the police, the courts and the military. It is also visible in the more hidden forces of control: ideology, in particular nationalism/patriotism, as well as education, formal organised religion, the traditional family unit and institutions such as marriage.
- + **Coercion.** The power of the state means its relationship to the individual is one of coercion: it forces the individual to comply, removing their ability to think for themselves and express their individual judgement. This leads Stirner to argue that 'I am free in no state' (*The Ego and Its Own*, 1844).
- + **Corrupting.** Power, in any form, is corrupting:
 - + Bakunin argued that power corrupts the human nature of those in power, who will develop contempt for the masses and an over-estimation of their own ability.
 - + Power brutalises the people, turning them into unthinking masses who meekly accept their position, becoming anti-social, aggressive and competitive in fighting for the scraps that fall from the table of the rich and powerful.
- + **Rejection of the state.** All anarchists reject the formal state in all its forms, whether it is a liberal democracy, a Marxist state, a nation-state or a capitalist state (Table 7.2). It is (just) conceivable to envisage an anarchist state, where citizenship is entirely voluntary, and any rules or guidelines are only followed by mutual consent and after full collective agreement. Any individual could of course withdraw from this state/community at any time and without any negative consequences. Individual autonomy is paramount.

Making links

The anarchist view of freedom can be contrasted with the liberal view. For anarchists, freedom can only be achieved without the state, whereas liberals have argued that the state is necessary to protect individual liberty.

Authority The right to exercise power.

Power The ability of one person to influence the actions of others, where that action goes against their own judgement.

Table 7.2 The arguments used by anarchists to reject the traditional state in all its forms

Liberal democracy	The social contract does not exist. No state can have power over anyone who rejects the contract and it is illogical to expect an individual to consent individually to each and every law. Government by consent (by election) is nonsense; if the people are truly sovereign, they will not hand over their autonomy to the state and there will be no government and no governed. As Emma Goldman observed, 'If voting changed anything, they'd make it illegal.' There are echoes here of liberal thinker John Stuart Mill's reference to the 'tyranny of the majority'.
Marxist state	Marxists and anarchists appear to have a great deal in common in terms of the end goal, as Marxists argue that the state will wither away. However, anarchists split from Marxists over the dictatorship of the proletariat, seeing this 'red' state as corrupting, with Bakunin arguing that 'socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality'. The march towards dictatorship in the Soviet Union confirmed for anarchists this view of any utopian socialist state.
Nation-state	Rudolf Rocker argued that 'the state created the nation, and not the nation the state'. Goldman saw nationalism and patriotism as ideological weapons to cultivate unthinking obedience to the state. They constituted a principal cause of division between people to undermine social harmony and solidarity. They also increased the coercive powers of the state to protect or control the masses.
Capitalist state	<p>Collectivist anarchism (see p. 109): the state is a relatively new creation that developed with the emergence of economic inequality, private property and class relations. The state is unjust as it is an expression of social conflict, managed by the few to protect their wealth and private property while keeping the masses in abject poverty.</p> <p>Anarcho-capitalism (see p. 109): the state is unjust as it is a parasite that is set up to rob individuals of their property via taxation backed up by threat of the law, police and jail.</p>

Making links

Emma Goldman's view that if voting changed anything they would make it illegal could be used to offer insights into low levels of voter turnout in the USA and the UK, potentially reflecting the views of some people that voting is a waste of time.

Opposition to and abolition of coercive relationships

- + **Coercive relationships.** Anarchists not only oppose the formal state and all forms of government operated by it, they also oppose all forms of coercive relationships within society, as they limit the choices of the individual. This has also led some anarchists to reject conventional marriage, which they view as inherently patriarchal in nature.
- + **Authority.** Coercive relationships in society are based on the idea that certain individuals and ideas have authority, so the people should do as they are told. A clear example would be the authority of church or business leaders, or indeed teachers.
- + **Revolt.** Anarchism is a revolt against existing society and those who guard it to allow the individual to be free:
 - + Proudhon rejected all 'official persons', such as the philosopher, the priest, the academic, the politician and the journalist, who see people as 'a monster to be fought, muzzled and chained down'.
 - + Stirner offered the most radical critique, arguing that the individual has to throw out 'the vagabonds of the intellect', by which he is referring to religion and existing morality – including existing sexual morality and the morality programmed into children by their parents and teachers. Only then is the individual free and autonomous.

Society without the state

Anarchists believe that, without the interference of the state and other coercive relationships based on models of authority, a harmony of interests will emerge among humans. This harmony is a spontaneous order, as humans are capable of creating social order far more effectively than one imposed by authority.

For individualist anarchists (see p. 108), order emerges through the meeting of individual interests:

- + Individuals are egoistical; they have self-ownership, autonomy and the freedom to determine their own identity.
- + Individuals come together in free, voluntary contracts that work in their own interest and can be revoked at any time.
- + Individuals, by coming together, increase their own strength and fulfil themselves more completely than they could in isolation.

For collectivist anarchists (see p. 109), order emerges when the state and authority are overthrown and humanity's natural tendencies are allowed to grow:

- + Proudhon believed the individual holds within them 'the principles of a moral code that goes beyond the individual', which allows for voluntary co-operation to solve common problems.
- + Bakunin believed that the conscience and reason of humans would lead them all to choose to work collectively.
- + Kropotkin found in nature the concept of mutual aid, where the most successful species work together. Humanity has natural tendencies to sociability and co-operation.

Exam tip

You could use Bakunin's quote, 'the idea of God implies the abdication of human reason and justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty' (*God and the State*, 1882), to illustrate the idea that the Church's relationship to its believers is one of coercion and control.

Making links

The importance of anarchism's opposition to coercive relationships can be seen in the waves of direct action by pressure groups including militant feminism, black and LGBTQIA+ liberation movements, radical environmental groups and the anti-capitalist and globalisation movements – the most famous being the Mexican Zapatistas and the Occupy movement.

Exam tip

You could illustrate the idea that harmony is a spontaneous order by using Proudhon's view that freedom is the mother not the daughter of order.

The idea that society without the state is both possible and desirable has led to anarchism being closely linked with **utopianism**:

- + Utopianism can be seen as a particular way of political thinking, where the construction of an ideal future society allows us to see the failings of current arrangements and the path to achieving that ideal.
- + In a negative sense, utopianism is seen as unrealistic thinking that provided a vision of the future that is based on false assumptions or not grounded in reality.

Now test yourself

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- 1 Why do anarchists believe that their beliefs will lead to a peaceful and orderly society?
- 2 What did Stirner mean when he wrote 'I am free in no state'?
- 3 Why and how has anarchism been linked to utopianism?
- 4 Outline two ways in which the state can be seen to be unjust by anarchists.

Utopianism The belief in the ideal or perfect society, Utopia.

Exam tip

You could use the ongoing Zapatista rebellion in Mexico or the Rojava rebellion in Syria as examples of societies based on anarchist principles which show that anarchism is potentially achievable.

Main strands of anarchism

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Individualist anarchism

- + People are self-seeking or egoistical.
- + The individual and autonomy are at the centre of this approach.
- + Autonomy should not be restricted in any way, so the existing state, and existing societal and economic relations, must be replaced. There must be the widest possible choice for all individuals.
- + There is a real fear that the individual will be made subject to the desires of the collective. Goldman feared the 'uniformity' of society strangling freedom, whereas Proudhon saw the end of private property leaving the individual at the mercy of the wishes of the majority.
- + A meeting of mutual interests through voluntary contracts will provide a natural and spontaneous order.
- + Individualist anarchism is a broad stream of ideas with two separate, identifiable currents: egoism and anarcho-capitalism (see Table 7.3). It is clear that although both strands put the individual, freedom and autonomy first, there is a clear disagreement over the role of private property and capitalism.

Key thinker

Max Stirner (1806–56)

Max Stirner is perhaps the most radical and challenging of all anarchist thinkers in his defence of individualism and freedom for all, not just himself, in *The Ego and Its Own* (1844).

- + The state restricts freedom: 'I am my own only when I am master of myself.'
- + Stirner attacked all 'fixed ideals' or 'spooks' which limit our autonomy, arguing that 'God, conscience, duties and laws are all errors which have been stuffed into our minds and hearts.'
- + One of the key ideals that must be overthrown is the concept of private property and the division of labour between the owner and the worker.
- + All should be free, but freedom is not something that someone gives you; it comes from self-liberation. Stirner was focused on the individual rebel, not the revolution.
- + The rebel's personal act of revolt involves clearing out the fixed ideals so that the existing state, society and the economy perish and start to rot.
- + Stirner offered no clear blueprint for the new society but argued that the more people become egoists, the more they will recognise the uniqueness of others, creating natural order.
- + This 'Union of Egoists' is based on equality and freedom, where individuals come together in voluntary agreements in their own interest while sacrificing nothing.

Table 7.3 The main currents within the individualist anarchist tradition

Egoism (associated with Max Stirner)	Anarcho-capitalism (associated with Murray Rothbard)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ The individual is the ego, which is a concept of self-ownership, autonomy and freedom to determine one's own identity. ✚ There can be no restrictions on the ego, so all 'fixed ideas' about the political, social and economic world must be cleared from our minds. ✚ These 'spooks' of the mind include authority, the state, the church, morality, private property and capitalism. ✚ By throwing out the 'spooks' of the mind, existing ideas will crumble into dust, taking the institutions with them. ✚ This will leave a 'Union of Egoists' where individuals come together in voluntary arrangements that suit their own interests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Individual freedom is the supreme value and an end in itself. Liberty is central to the thriving and flourishing of each person. ✚ The ideal society is stateless, as the state is incompatible with liberty because it has the power to tax and control over the powers of coercion. ✚ The state should be replaced by the market, which is an invisible hand that will allow private interests to coincide to create general good through voluntary and mutually beneficial exchanges. ✚ In this case, all current functions of the state would be replaced by market-based services. ✚ Education, roads, policing, law courts and environmental protection could all be provided more efficiently through the market as it offers both choice and competition.

Ego The concept of the individual based on the idea that life should only be lived in the interest of the self rather than in the interest of others.

Exam tip

You don't need to know more than the five specified thinkers (Stirner, Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin and Goldman), but you can use additional thinkers like anarcho-capitalist Murray Rothbard where relevant. Brief reference to anarcho-capitalists can particularly enhance an essay about how anarchists view the economy, and also when considering whether all anarchists are also socialists.

Making links

It is often argued that individualist anarchism is liberalism pushed to the extremes. However, although anarchists and liberals both endorse the individual and autonomy, anarchists do *not* support the night-watchman state of the classical liberals as it is still a restriction on autonomy and freedom.

Collectivist anarchism

The collectivist anarchist tradition applies to all types of anarchism that hold in common the following ideas:

- ✚ Human nature is essentially social, with **altruistic** tendencies that lead humans to want to work together rather than compete against each other.
- ✚ At the same time, collectivists recognise that human nature is shaped by the world around us. The domination of the many by the few has created the faults in human nature that we see today.
- ✚ The absence of the state and of relationships based on dominance (like capitalism, which is a relationship between master and wage slave) will allow true human nature to flourish and grow.
- ✚ The collectivist anarchist tradition rejects the private ownership of the means of production and distribution, believing that the individual can only be truly free through equal and free relationships with others.

Altruistic Relating to the part of human nature that leads individuals to care for others and act in others' interests rather than their own.

Collectivist anarchism is a wide river of ideas that breaks down into four main streams – mutualism, collectivism, anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho-communism (see Figure 7.1). The key differences emerge over economic organisation



Figure 7.1 The four streams of collectivist anarchism

Making links

Direct action pressure groups like Occupy (formed on anarchist principles), which have sprung up in opposition to the state and capitalism, are good examples to use as evidence of anarchist principles in action. They also make a synoptic link with both UK and US pressure groups. The Occupy activist and anarchist David Graeber coined the slogan 'We are the 99%', which has helped shape modern political debate about inequality and capitalism. The slogan refers to the idea that 1% of the population has a growing slice of wealth, power and work, while for 99% the fear of losing your job is greater than the prospect of ever finding a fulfilling one.

Mutualism

- + **Mutualism** is proposed as an alternative to both capitalist and socialist forms of economic organisation.
- + Private property in capitalism is a relationship of domination, where the owner dominates the worker through low wages that do not accurately reflect their labour, high rents and high rates of interest. Private property is to be replaced with possessions. These involve the right to ownership based on use (e.g. the tools you use in your work, the house you live in). This form of property is vital, as under collective ownership of property the individual becomes the servant of the collective and so is oppressed.
- + There would be individual ownership of farmland and small-scale production. Large-scale production would be achieved through co-operatives (voluntary organisations run and owned by the workers). Commodities could be exchanged based on labour notes (listing the number of hours of labour that went into the product), which is equal and fair.
- + The individual would keep the fruits of their labour: from each according to his ability, to each according to his deeds (work).
- + Co-operatives would form together into voluntary **federations** to support each other, building solidarity and mutual aid.
- + This strategy is reformist, with the idea that the new basis for society can be built within the shell of the existing state, eventually replacing the state and capitalism.

Exam tip

Don't confuse collectivist anarchism with collectivism. Collectivist anarchism is a range of anarchist ideas, of which collectivism is only one.

Mutualism A system of voluntary association for the free and fair exchange of goods and services at cost (i.e. without profit).

Federations Unions of free, self-governing, spontaneously formed bodies of people on the basis of equality.

Key thinker

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–65)

Proudhon is regarded as the starting point for anarchism, developing an anarchism that was non-violent, rational and anti-utopian, as it was based on a potential within existing society. He argued for small-scale voluntary socialist associations that would in turn create a network within the existing state that would over time render obsolete both the traditional state and the capitalist economy. His work has inspired both the individualist and the collectivist traditions.

- + 'Property is theft' – the concept of property allows owners to exploit users, such as property owners charging a high rent for a flat, or factory owners paying wages that are far lower than the actual value of the labour because they own the factories and tools/machines.
- + 'Property is despotism' – property creates social relations based on domination, leading to the exploitation of humans by humans.
- + 'Possessors without masters' – the idea of a society where individuals have the right to possess the land, property or tools which they use.
- + Workers' associations and co-operatives – co-operative associations where each worker has an equal share in the co-operative, which is managed by the workers and where each worker is rewarded for the work done.
- + Federations – workers' associations and co-operatives voluntarily join together in federations for administration purposes.
- + A mutual bank – a people's bank would provide free credit to co-operatives, allowing workers to create their own means of production.
- + Building the new world – the new world of the people's bank and workers' co-operatives can be built in the shell of the existing world and, over time, replace the existing structures of the state, society and the economy.
- + 'Anarchy is order' – the idea that without the power of the state and authoritarian relationships in society, natural order will spontaneously emerge.

Exam tip

You can see mutualism as a balance between individualist and collective anarchist traditions, as it wishes to protect the individual from the collective while opposing capitalism and its version of private property.

Exam tip

Be careful in essays not to misunderstand Proudhon's famous quote 'property is theft', which is often misapplied to present Proudhon as an opponent of all forms of private property. In reality, he was a strong supporter of possessions, based on use rights.

Collectivism

- + Collectivism, like mutualism, is a sub-strand of the collectivist anarchist tradition, and it is most closely associated with Mikhail Bakunin.
- + It differs from mutualism in arguing that all private property should be collectivised into common ownership that is self-managed by the workers. Workers would keep the products of their labour, as in mutualism, so the main principle would be 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his work'.
- + Society would be ordered from the bottom up through voluntary collectives into a great federation to administer the production and distribution of all goods.
- + Collectivism is revolutionary, arguing that the masses need to rise up to destroy the existing political, social and economic structures.

Key thinker

Mikhail Bakunin (1814–76)

Bakunin was a revolutionary activist and thinker who saw himself as a fanatical lover of liberty and who shaped collectivist anarchism, most famously in his unfinished work, *God and the State* (1882).

- + He rejected the individualism of liberalism, arguing that true freedom is only possible when economic and social equality exists.
- + Freedom is not a product of being isolated and independent, but is realised through connections with others.
- + Bakunin rejected all forms of authority, hierarchy and the state, as they all assume that the masses are

incapable of governing themselves. Only by returning power to the collective – the masses – and through self-management by the workers in their collectives can freedom exist.

- + He opposed the church and religion, arguing that 'if God is, man is a slave'.
- + He opposed the capitalist state as 'the organised authority, domination and power of the possessing classes over the masses'.
- + The socialist state would simply replace one oppressive master with another, where the individual would be forced to submit to the collective interests of the 'Red bureaucracy'; this warning was an accurate prediction of the Soviet state under Stalin.

- ✚ He opposed capitalism, seeing labour as a 'sort of voluntary and transitory serfdom' and private property as the right to live 'by exploiting the work of someone else'.
- ✚ Bakunin believed in the power of the masses to rise up and overthrow the state, and saw a key role for anarchists in inspiring the collective struggle.
- ✚ He saw revolution as necessary, probably initially needing to use violence to create the conditions for the new society, as 'the passion for destruction is a creative passion, too'.
- ✚ The general strike was a key method for the revolution, as it would create the 'great cataclysm which forces society to shed its old skin'.

Anarcho-syndicalism

- ✚ Anarcho-syndicalism merges the currents of **syndicalism** and anarchism, drawing its inspiration from Mikhail Bakunin.
- ✚ Mass meetings, factory committees and workers' councils should be established, as they will create, in Bakunin's words, 'not only the ideas but also the facts of the future' because these bodies will form the basis of the new society.
- ✚ The unions should fight for improved conditions, using direct action such as strikes, occupations and sabotage of the factory by workers, and so become the 'elementary school of socialism', in the words of Rudolf Rocker.
- ✚ The new world order can only be created by revolution, not reform, and this would involve 'taking over of the management of all plants by the producers themselves' (Rocker).

Syndicalism The practice of workers organising into unions to fight for their interests by taking direct action.

Communes Associations where the members own everything in common, including the fruits of the individual's labour.

Anarcho-communism

- ✚ Private property and capital must be abolished and replaced by common ownership.
- ✚ Anarcho-communists extend common ownership to the fruits of an individual's labour. This does not mean that people will be sharing hairbrushes, but that all products are 'at the disposal of all, leaving to each the liberty to consume them as he pleases in his own home' (Kropotkin, *The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution*, 1884).
- ✚ Anarcho-communism is based on the principle 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'.
- ✚ Society will be based on small, localised **communes** that are self-managing, with all the wealth under common ownership.
- ✚ Membership of communes is voluntary and communes will voluntarily enter into federations to work together at local, regional and international level, but with the key decisions always lying with the individual communes.

Exam tip

You can use the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) as an example of anarcho-syndicalist principles in action during the Spanish Civil War from 1936. Free collectives successfully organised both industrial production and agriculture in Catalonia until the experiment was smashed by the nationalist forces under General Franco.

Key thinker

Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921)

Peter Kropotkin was the key exponent of anarcho-communism and through his book, *Mutual Aid* (1902), he attempted to provide a scientific basis for anarchist theory.

- ✚ Kropotkin aimed to give a philosophical basis to anarchism through his study of the natural world.
- ✚ In *Mutual Aid*, he argued that the view of nature as being based, like capitalism, on competition between individuals was not accurate.
- ✚ The struggle for survival is best achieved by mutual aid among the members of a species and so it is the best route for individuals to take.
- ✚ Kropotkin applied this to humanity to show that mutual aid is crucial both for humanity's survival and for its ongoing evolution. Society is natural and voluntary co-operation is natural.
- ✚ The removal of coercive institutions will allow natural society to flourish and it will be one of spontaneous order which will nourish humanity's social and co-operative nature.
- ✚ Kropotkin used this evidence to make a case for anarcho-communism based on the following ideas:
 - ✚ private property to be replaced by common ownership.
 - ✚ free communism – the commune is a voluntary organisation where people freely share the products of their labour and common resources with others, as this is in their best interest.
 - ✚ a free federation of communes that work together in the spirit of mutual aid and solidarity.
 - ✚ communes are based on mass participation by their members to build new societies around the ideas of liberty, equality and solidarity.

Now test yourself

TESTED

- 5 Outline the three different ways the state and coercive relationships will be abolished according to Stirner, Proudhon and Bakunin.
- 6 How did Bakunin differ from Marx as regards the bringing about of a stateless society?
- 7 Why does Proudhon consider property to be theft?
- 8 How do mutualism, collectivism and anarcho-communism differ in their approach to private property?

Revision activity

Create a table to show the main areas of agreement and difference between mutualism, collectivism, anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho-communism.

Core ideas of anarchism

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Human nature

Areas of agreement

- + Human nature – or at the very least the potential of human nature – should be seen optimistically.
- + Social order can arise naturally from human nature and does not require the presence of rules imposed from above by the state or other coercive institutions.
- + Human nature is 'plastic' and moulded by the social, political and economic environment. The traits of envy, greed and resentment are created by the coercive institutions of the modern society and state.

Areas of tension

Individualist anarchism

- + Human nature is egoistical as all individuals are self-seeking and desire to be autonomous and shape their own unique identity.
- + Individualists support the end of the state and all coercive institutions so that the individual can be free to express their true nature.
- + Anarcho-capitalists argue that the market provides the mechanism to allow the full expression of the individual.
- + Stirner favoured a Union of Egoists, where relationships between egos are voluntary and always in the self-interest of the individual in line with their human nature.

Collectivist anarchism

- + Human nature is essentially social and co-operative.
- + Kropotkin, Bakunin and Proudhon all had a complex view of human nature that saw within it the potential for goodness and for corruption.
- + The political, social and economic environment shapes human nature.
- + Kropotkin found evidence for the sociability of humanity in how mutual aid benefits individuals within a species in nature.
- + Both Proudhon and Bakunin saw within humanity a natural sense of justice that would inform our relations with others in a society without a state.

The state

Areas of agreement

- + The traditional state or 'compulsory association' should be rejected in any form, as it is unjust, controlling, coercive and corrupting.
- + A society without a compulsory state will be a society of natural order and harmony.
- + The rejection of the state is necessary to create liberty.
- + The rejection of the state means that any attempt to capture it through either the ballot box or the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat (see p. 43) is doomed to failure. This has real implications for anarchist strategies to bring about a society without government.

Making links

The rejection of democracy and of achieving power via traditional political parties links in with the topics of political participation and political parties in both Papers 1 and 2. Unlike the followers of all other political ideas, anarchists have no wish to contest elections and thereby participate in government.

Areas of tension

Individualist anarchism

- + Individualists see the state as coercive and controlling, limiting the autonomy of the individual.
- + Stirner was opposed to the state in all forms, as it claims to be sovereign but only the ego can be sovereign over itself. He argued for self-liberation, where the individual rebel stops believing in fixed ideals and authority. This form of individual rebellion will see the ideas that support the state and coercive relationships crumble away to create the Union of Egoists.
- + Anarcho-capitalists like Rothbard see the state as a predatory body that does not produce anything but steals from those who do. It seizes wealth through taxation, backed by coercion; 'the threat of the jailhouse and the bayonet' (Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, 1974).
- + For Rothbard, the state must be removed, leaving the free market to be a place of free exchange between individuals for their own benefit. This free exchange means everyone benefits and the living standard flourishes.

Collectivist anarchism

- + The state develops a body to protect private property and the inequalities between the few and the many. It is coercive, controlling and unjust.
- + The power of the state is always corrupting of human nature for both the governing classes and the governed.
- + Bakunin saw the capitalist state as guaranteeing the power and right of the few to exploit the many. At the same time, he saw the dictatorship of the proletariat leading to 'slavery and brutality' as it was socialism without freedom.
- + Proudhon argued that the overthrow of the state would be evolutionary and non-violent. He believed the building of co-operatives and a people's bank in the shell of the old society would sow the seeds for the growth of the new society.
- + Kropotkin, Goldman and Bakunin saw direct action such as strikes, occupations, industrial sabotage and non-payment of taxes as actions that teach people about the true nature of the state. This creates a spirit of revolt which, when tied to increasing misery and oppression by capitalism and the state, will lead to a revolution. This revolution will inevitably require some elements of violence to destroy the state and existing institutions such as private property.
- + Anarcho-syndicalists see trade unions as the key associations that will bring down the state through the mass strike, and form the basis of the new society.

Key thinker

Emma Goldman (1869–1940)

Emma Goldman was a revolutionary and anarchist thinker who made major contributions to anarchism, particularly with the incorporation of sexual politics. Her thoughts are best summarised in her collection, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (1910).

- + Goldman was associated early in her career with the tactical use of violence in the revolutionary struggle. Such acts were used as an example to inspire revolt and were based on the idea that the ends justify the means.
- + Later, following her experience in Russia during the revolutionary period of 1919–21, Goldman revised her views, seeing violence as a necessary evil in the process of social transformation.
- + Violence was a justifiable act of defence by the revolution, but 'it is quite another thing to make a principle of terrorism, to institutionalise it, to assign it the most vital place in the social struggle'.
- + Goldman argued that only an anarchist revolution, not the ballot box, would free women from the unequal and repressive relations between sexes.
- + Women should free themselves by being personalities, not sexual objects, refuse the right to anyone over their body, only bear children if and when they want to, and refuse to be a servant to a husband, family, society, the church or the state.
- + Women must free themselves from the straitjacket of public opinion in acts of self-expression, so that they can achieve freedom.

Society

Areas of agreement

- + Society without the state will lead to natural, spontaneous harmony; natural order. This emerges from the anarchist view of human nature.
- + Existing society is coercive and existing political, economic and social institutions must be replaced to create freedom for all.
- + Society exists for man, not man for society; society exists to serve the interests of humanity and to allow the individual the widest possible freedom.
- + Freedom and equality are the basis of the new society (except for anarcho-capitalists), but there is no clear blueprint for the anarchist society, as this will develop and evolve naturally.

Areas of tension

Individualist anarchism

- + Individualists fear the power of the collective over the individual.
- + Goldman saw uniformity – through habits, tastes, dress, thoughts and ideas (essentially public opinion) – as a key threat to individuals.
- + Proudhon made the case for possession as a key defence for the individual against the collective.
- + Stirner argued for the removal of all the ‘spooks’, so that the individual can truly be autonomous.
- + Goldman saw a new social order ‘based on the released energies of the individual and the free association of liberated individuals’.
- + Stirner saw the new society as the Union of Egoists.
- + Rothbard saw society without a state, so that society is ordered through the invisible hand of the market.

Collectivist anarchism

- + The state and existing social and economic institutions promote the domination of humans by humans, so they must be removed.
- + Natural order will emerge due to the social nature of humanity, where individuals can only achieve their full liberty through co-operation with others.
- + Bakunin argued, ‘I am truly free only when all human beings, men and women, are equally free’ (*Man, Society, and Freedom*, 1871).
- + The new society needs to be based on self-managing communes, organised together in voluntary communes in a relationship of mutual aid and co-operation.
- + Society will be ordered from the bottom up, not the top down.
- + This form of organisation will nourish and grow the social aspect of human nature.

The economy

Areas of agreement

- + Economic freedom is central to the freedom of the individual.
- + Private ownership of the means of production is opposed as it creates an exploitative relationship between the few and the many (except for anarcho-capitalists).
- + Inequality is opposed as it is a cause of conflict in society (except for anarcho-capitalists).

Areas of tension

Individualist anarchism

- + Stirner saw private property and capitalism as part of the ‘fixed ideals’ that limit autonomy, so they should be destroyed.

- + For Stirner, when humanity 'reaches the point of losing respect for property, everyone will have property'. So, when all are free, all will be equal and able to enter into voluntary contracts to further their own ends.
- + Equality was important to Stirner: 'Can they really be "Egoists" who have banded together when one is a slave or a serf of the other?'
- + Proudhon made the case for use rights or possession, so that the individual is not forced to submit to the will of the collective. Possession, rather than capitalist private property, is the basis of freedom.
- + Rothbard saw any private property that was legally gained or earned as justified. He argued that the state should be removed from the market, so that free competition becomes the mechanism to create freedom and social order.
- + Anarcho-capitalists are unique among anarchists in believing that freedom can exist without equality.

Collectivist anarchism

- + Proudhon and the mutualists oppose private property and capitalism. Private property is replaced by possession, with large-scale production organised by workers' associations or co-operatives alongside small-scale producers.
- + Workers should keep the fruits of their labour. Exchange is based not on money but on labour notes, which record the value of the labour that went into the produce.
- + Co-operatives are organised into voluntary federations that work together to support each other. Collectivists, like Bakunin, go further, taking all property into common ownership. However, they agree with mutualists that the labourer should keep the products of their labour: to each according to his deeds (work).
- + Kropotkin pushed this further, advocating all property under common ownership so that all products are at the disposal of the whole community. The basis for this is 'to each according to his needs'.
- + Bakunin and Kropotkin saw communes as self-managing but joining together voluntarily into federations on the basis of mutual aid and co-operation.

Now test yourself

TESTED ☐

- 9 Why do the individualist and collectivist traditions of anarchism view the future anarchist society as one of natural order and peace?
- 10 Why do collectivist anarchists usually support the use of direct action and violence to advance their aims?
- 11 How do mutualism and collectivism differ slightly?

Revision activity

Write brief definitions for anarcho-capitalism, egoism, anarcho-communism, collectivism and mutualism. Use no more than two sentences for each term.

Key debates within anarchism

REVISED ☐

Is anarchism a single doctrine?

- + The argument is made that anarchism is too diverse a range of ideas to be considered one single idea, as all that holds it together is a rejection of the state.
- + Anarchism is united by its rejection of the traditional state as well as by its rejection of all coercive relationships. Anarchists believe in the autonomy of the individual, the widest possible freedom of choice for all, and that society without the state will be naturally harmonious and ordered.
- + The future society will be based on voluntary agreements between individuals and there is no clear blueprint for the organisation of the new world order.
- + Anarchism is a wide river with many currents. There are differences between the collectivist and individualist traditions and differences within each tradition.

- + The key division between individualist and collectivist anarchism is over the individual and liberty. Individualists fear that the individual will be made a slave to the collective, whereas collectivists see individuals as being truly free only through collective work and links to others.

Making links

Is anarchism really just ultra-socialism?

- + Most anarchists, in line with socialism, reject capitalism as a system of class exploitation, reject private property in favour of collective ownership, and have faith in a stateless society where equality and freedom for all will lead to a natural order.
- + Key thinkers from the collectivist tradition, such as Goldman, Kropotkin and Bakunin, agree with Marxism that a revolution is needed to bring about change.
- + The anarchist tradition sees attempts to capture the state by revolution or the ballot box in order to deliver socialism from above as doomed to fail because the state is corrupting of human nature.
- + For anarchists, socialism can never be achieved by the state; it can only emerge from free association and co-operation between individuals, workplaces and communities.

Is anarchism really just ultra-liberalism?

- + The individualist anarchist tradition, in common with liberalism, has a positive view of human nature, believing individuals who are self-seeking should be autonomous and will use their freedom to positive ends.
- + Anarcho-capitalism is a radical version of classical liberalism's free-market capitalism.
- + Although liberals are suspicious of the state, they see the night-watchman state as protecting liberty, whereas individualist anarchists see the state as incompatible with liberty and autonomy.
- + Most anarchists see capitalism and private property as exploitative, so they wish to overthrow both, believing equality is necessary for liberty. Liberals hold private property as a central principle, support capitalism and see inequality as justifiable.

Is anarchism only achievable through violence and revolution?

Arguments for and against the idea that anarchism requires a revolution are summarised in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4 Anarchism needs a revolution: arguments for and against

Arguments for	Arguments against
The traditional state and other entities with an interest in the existing order (e.g. big business and institutional religion) will automatically fight to preserve their power and control over individuals. Only an armed struggle can overthrow the state.	An anarchist society can emerge peacefully and gradually as small, voluntary associations grow and over time displace the existing coercive political and economic structures.
Many anarchist thinkers have called for violent revolution, most notably perhaps Kropotkin and Goldman. The latter is especially associated with the idea of 'the propaganda of the deed'. To striking workers in 1893 she said, 'Demonstrate before the palaces of the rich; demand work. If they do not give you work, demand bread. If they deny you both, take bread.'	Not all anarchist thinkers have supported violence or revolution to achieve their objective of removing the coercive state. Some, such as Proudhon, briefly a member of the French parliament, have favoured a peaceful transition. Stirner was more focused on egotistical individualism than political activism.
Anarchism is largely aligned with the economic ideas of socialism/communism, which will inevitably lead to a capitalist counter-revolution and reaction.	Not all anarchists embrace a socialist economic system (e.g. anarcho-capitalists).
Where anarchists have tried to seize power and remodel society, they have been violently opposed (e.g. during the Spanish Civil War). Protests such as those by the Occupy movement are routinely broken up forcibly by the authorities.	Anarchist groups and movements can exist peacefully in the shape of small-scale, largely self-sufficient communes or co-operatives.

Revision activity

- 1 Create a set of flashcards for all the key terms in this chapter.
- 2 Write a paragraph explaining the links and differences between:
 - a) socialism and the collectivist anarchist tradition
 - b) the individualist anarchist tradition and liberalism.

Now test yourself

TESTED 

12 Copy and complete the following table with the main ideas of the key thinkers.

Thinker	Human nature	The state	Society	The economy
Max Stirner				
Pierre-Joseph Proudhon				
Mikhail Bakunin				
Peter Kropotkin				
Emma Goldman				

Exam practice

- 1** 'Anarchism is not a single doctrine.' Analyse and evaluate this statement with reference to the anarchist thinkers that you have studied. In your answer, you should draw on material from across the whole range of your course of study in politics. [25]
- 2** 'All anarchists are socialists.' Analyse and evaluate this statement with reference to the anarchist thinkers that you have studied. In your answer, you should draw on material from across the whole range of your course of study in politics. [25]

Summary

You should now have an understanding of:

- ✚ the core anarchist principles of autonomy of the individual, opposition to and abolition of coercive relationships, opposition to the state and society without the state
- ✚ the contributions of the five key thinkers (Stirner, Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin and Goldman) to the development of anarchism
- ✚ the tensions and agreements between the individualist and collectivist anarchist traditions, and within them
- ✚ the extent to which anarchism is a single coherent idea