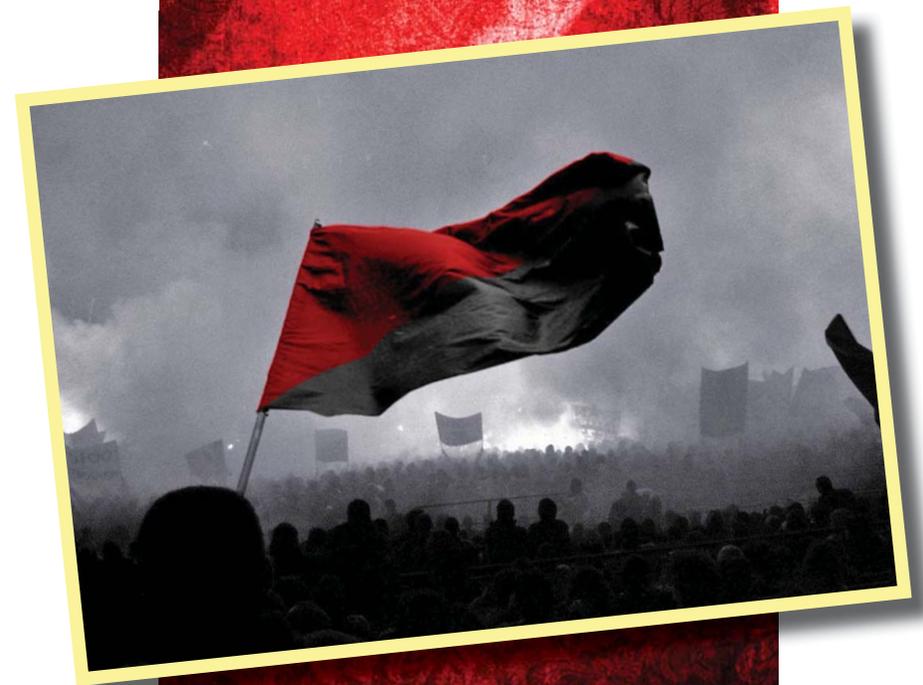


Lucien van der Walt
and Michael Schmidt

Socialism from Below

Defining Anarchism



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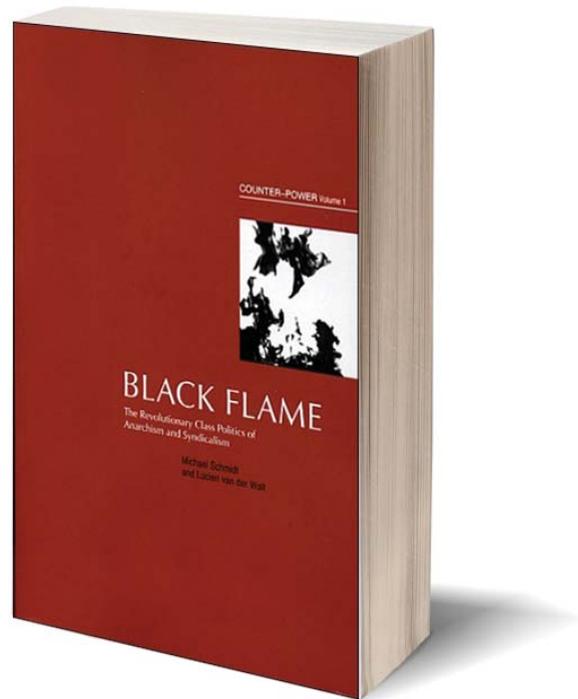
"Knowledge is the key to be free!"

Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism

by Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt

“Anyone interested in the theory and socio-philosophical background to anarchism and syndicalism will find the *Black Flame* an active reflective utterance and a valuable reference work for some years to come ...”

- Ian Liebenberg and Petrus de Kock in
South African Journal of Philosophy,
2010, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 195-208



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This pamphlet is Chapter 2 of the book *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Counter-Power vol. 1) by Lucien van der Walt and Michael Schmidt. All references to other chapters throughout this text are references to that book.

See: black-flame-anarchism.blogspot.com



218. Rocker, *Nationalism and Culture*, 527.
219. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*; see also Hobsbawm, *Revolutionaries*.
220. J. R. Mintz, *The Anarchists of Casas Viejas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), especially 1-9, 217ff.
221. Bookchin, *The Spanish Anarchists*, 13-14, 58.
222. Compare to Forman, *Nationalism and the International Labor Movement*, 33.
223. Bookchin, *The Spanish Anarchists*, 29-30.
224. See, for example, Godwin, *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, 18, 68, 98, 147, 327.
225. Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 471-72.
226. M. Bakunin, "On Co-operation," in *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism*, Book One, ed. D. Guerin (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1998), 181-82.
227. Bakunin, "Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis," 207.
228. See R. B. Fowler, "The Anarchist Tradition of Political Thought," *Western Political Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (1972): 741-42. Fowler—who accepted the canon of the seven sages—nonetheless rejected the notion that anarchism could be adequately defined as an opposition to the state or the exaltation of the individual. As an alternative, he suggested that anarchism be defined as a revolt against "convention" in favour of "natural truth"; *ibid.*, 747, 749. This approach, however, fails to come to terms with the socialist character of anarchism.
229. See, inter alia, M. Bakunin, "The Revolutionary Catechism," in *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, ed. S. Dolgoff (1866; repr., London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971); P. Kropotkin, *Organised Vengeance Called "Justice": The Superstition of Government* (London: Freedom Press, 1902).
230. P. Kropotkin, "Prisons and Their Moral Influence on Prisoners," in *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets: A Collection of Writings by Peter Kropotkin*, ed. R. N. Baldwin (1877; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1970), 220-21, 235.
231. Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*.
232. S. T. Possony, introduction to *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. K. Marx and F. Engels (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954), xix.

194. G. P. Maximoff, *The Programme of Anarcho-syndicalism* (1927; repr., Sydney: Monty Miller, 1985), 46,47.
195. P. Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 139-40.
196. Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits*, 127.
197. Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," 341.
198. Ibid., 342-43; see also 341.
199. Rocker, *Nationalism and Culture*, 213.
200. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 256.
201. Bakunin, "Letter to La Liberté," 276-77
202. Kropotkin, "Modern Science and Anarchism," 188.
203. Kropotkin, "Anarchist Communism," 52.
204. Bakunin, "The Policy of the International," 166-67.
205. Bakunin, "Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis," 209; see also Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," 335.
206. Bakunin, "The Programme of the Alliance," 249, 250-51.
207. P. Kropotkin, *The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793*, volume 1, ed. A. M. Bonanno (1909; repr., London: Elephant Editions, 1986), 22-23.
208. M. Bakunin, "The Programme of the International Brotherhood," in *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, ed. S. Dolgoff (1869; repr., London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), 152-54.
209. Bakunin, "Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis," 190.
210. F. Engels, "On Authority," in *Marx, Engels, Lenin: Anarchism and Anarcho-syndicalism*, ed. N. Y. Kolpinsky (1873; repr., Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 102-5.
211. Martin, introduction, xviii.
212. Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 421.
213. M. Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1995), 54.
214. M. Bakunin, "Worker Association and Self-Management," in *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism*, Book One, ed. D. Guerin (January 3, 1872; repr., Edinburgh: AK Press, 1998), 182.
215. See, for example, Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*, chapters 8, 9, 11.
216. Bakunin, "The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State," 270.
217. Guerin, *Anarchism*, 55; 153.



The aim of this chapter is twofold: to develop an understanding of the doctrine of anarchism and its origins; and to outline the core features of anarchist doctrine.

As noted in chapter 1, we stress anarchism's coherence and strength. We have also already suggested that anarchism is a revolutionary and libertarian socialist doctrine: advocating individual freedom through a free society, anarchism aims to create a democratic, egalitarian, and stateless socialist order through an international and internationalist social revolution, abolishing capitalism, landlordism, and the state.

In this chapter, we explain why we define anarchism in this way. Anarchism is commonly defined as an opposition to the state, or as an opposition to the state because it constrains the individual. It is also sometimes argued that anarchism sees the state as "responsible for all inequality and injustice."¹ We do not find these assertions to be useful. For one thing, they strip anarchism of its class politics and socialist content.² They also do not adequately address the specific features of the anarchist understanding of individual freedom.

For anarchists, individual freedom is the highest good, and individuality is valuable in itself, but such freedom can only be achieved within and through a new type of society. Contending that a class system prevents the full development of individuality, anarchists advocate class struggle from below to create a better world. In this ideal new order, individual freedom will be harmonised with communal obligations through co-operation, democratic decision-making, and social and economic equality. Anarchism rejects the state as a centralised structure of domination and an instrument of class rule, not simply because it constrains the individual or because anarchists dislike regulations. On the contrary, anarchists believe rights arise from the fulfilment of obligations to society and that there is a place for a certain amount of legitimate coercive power, if derived from collective and democratic decision-making.

The practice of defining anarchism simply as hostility to the state has a further consequence: that a range of quite different and often contradictory ideas and movements get conflated. By defining anarchism more narrowly, however, we are able to bring its key ideas into a sharper focus, lay the basis for our examination of the main debates in the broad anarchist tradition in subsequent chapters, and see what ideas are relevant to current struggles against neoliberalism.

Another consequence of defining anarchism loosely is the notion that anarchism is a movement existing throughout history, possibly rooted in human nature. We argue, though, that anarchism should be considered a relatively recent phenomenon. Specifically, it emerged from the 1860s onward within the context of the modern working-class and socialist movement, within the womb of the First International. There have certainly been libertarian currents throughout history, not to mention a great many struggles for individual freedom; these are an important part of humankind's heritage, and challenge contemporary views that human nature is inherently greedy or capitalist. Yet this libertarian history should not be conflated with the history of anarchism. Defining anarchism more narrowly and historicizing it makes it possible to identify the crucial moments in the broad anarchist tradition as it evolved over the last 150 years, the way in which anarchist and syndicalist ideas were applied in the real world, and the relevance of that tradition for the present.

► The Meaning of Anarchism: Debating the Literature

We begin with a survey of the way in which anarchism and syndicalism have been defined in the literature. Studies of anarchism and syndicalism have often suffered from an unclear definition of their subject matter. As mentioned in the previous chapter, one problem is the popular view of anarchism as a synonym for chaos, destruction, and the breakdown of all order.³ This is flawed, as anarchism is a social doctrine with a positive programme; opposed to the existing social order, it advocates a new one.

A second problem has been the tradition of defining anarchism as an outlook marked by its hostility to the state, as mentioned above. Roderick Kedward is representative of this dominant tradition. He asserts that the "bond that united all anarchists" was "antagonism to any situation regulated by imposition, constraint, or oppression," and that this was the basis for anarchist anti-statism.⁴ Corrine Jacker similarly claims that anarchists have a "romantic approach" and maintain that "the individual must be completely free; there must be no authority to dictate his behaviour or its limits"; anarchists oppose the state, continues

173. M. Bakunin, "Internationalism and the State," in *Marxism, Freedom, and the State*, ed. K. J. Kenafick (London: Freedom Press, 1990), 43.
174. Bakunin, "Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis," 192.
175. Bakunin, "Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism," 147.
176. M. Bakunin, "Preamble and Programme of the International Alliance of the Socialist Democracy," in *Bakunin on Anarchism*, ed. S. Dolgoff (1868; repr., Montreal: Black Rose, 1980), 427-28.
177. Bakunin, "Letter to La Liberté," 281.
178. M. Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy* (1873; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 51.
179. Bakunin, "Internationalism and the State," 43.
180. M. Forman, *Nationalism and the International Labor Movement: The Idea of the Nation in Socialist and Anarchist Theory* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1998), 33.
181. M. Bakunin, "Manifesto of the Russian Revolutionary Association to the Oppressed Women of Russia on Women's Liberation," in *Bakunin on Anarchism*, ed. S. Dolgoff (Montreal: Black Rose, 1980), 396-98.
182. Ibid.
183. Bakunin, "Preamble and Programme of the International Alliance of the Socialist Democracy," 427.
184. Bakunin, quoted in Guerin, *Anarchism*, 68.
185. Quoted in Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, 81.
186. Bakunin, quoted in Guerin, *Anarchism*, 68.
187. Bakunin, "Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism," 99.
188. Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," 343.
189. S. Cipko, "Mikhail Bakunin and the National Question," *Raven* 3, no. 1 (1990): 11.
190. Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," 343, 339.
191. P. Kropotkin, *War!* (London: William Reeves, 1914), available at http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/kropotkin/War!/war!l.html (accessed April 1, 2000).
192. Ibid.
193. R. Rocker, *Nationalism and Culture* (1937; repr., Cornucopia, WI: Michael E. Coughlin, 1978), 269, 253.

Peasantry," *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, no. 52 (2003): 3.

158. Bernstein, "Farewells to the Peasantry," 14, 16n10.
159. Bakunin, "Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis," 191-92, 204.
160. Clark, *The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin*, 280-81, 281-82.
161. P. Avrich, "The Legacy of Bakunin," in *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, ed. S. Dolgoff (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), xx-xxi; M. Statz, introduction to *Statism and Anarchy*, M. Bakunin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), xxxiii-xxxiv.
162. Bookchin, one of the more prominent recent writers influenced by anarchism, sought to erect a new "anarchist" strategy—freed of class struggle and hostile to the organised working class—by insisting that Bakunin distrusted the working class. See Bookchin, *The Spanish Anarchists*, 28,304-12; M. Bookchin, *To Remember Spain: The Anarchist and Syndicalist Revolution of 1936: Essays by Murray Bookchin* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1994), 25-26,29-33 .
163. Bookchin, *The Spanish Anarchists*, 28. See also M. Bookchin, "Deep Ecology, Anarcho-syndicalism, and the Future of Anarchist Thought," in *Deep Ecology and Anarchism: A Polemic*, ed. G. Purchase, M. Bookchin, B. Morris, and R. Aitchley (London: Freedom Press, 1993), 49-50; Bookchin, *To Remember Spain*, 25-26, 29-33 .
164. Bakunin, "Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis," 185,189.
165. Bakunin, "The International and Karl Marx," 294-295.
166. Bakunin, "The Policy of the International," 166-67.
167. Bakunin, "Three Lectures to Swiss Members of the International," 61-62.
168. M. Bakunin, "Geneva's Double Strike," in *Mikhail Bakunin: From out of the Dustbin: Bakunin's Basic Writings, 1869-1871*, ed. R. M. Cutler (1869?; repr., Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1985), 148.
169. *Ibid.*, 147.
170. M. Bakunin, "The Programme of the Alliance," in *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, ed. S. Dolgoff (1871; repr., London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), 249, 252; see also 253-54.
171. *Ibid.*, 255.
172. Bakunin, "The Policy of the International," 174.

Jacker, because "rules are an attempt to restrict an individual's freedom," and "another term for anarchism is *anti-statism!*"⁵

For Robert Hoffman, anarchists hold that "government creates and perpetuates both disorder and violence," and "*any* imperative authority, even that of a popular socialist government or the joint decision of an egalitarian community, must violate individual liberty," "justice," and "community." A person should "obey the dictates of his free will only."⁶ Marshall Statz contends that anarchism aimed at a society organised through free association, without imposed order, and was a "positive social doctrine" that embodied a "critique of human society as it exists and a vision of a better form of social order." Statz, however, reduced the "positive" programme to a variety of schemes to replace the state; anarchism allegedly regarded "political authority, and its modern embodiment the state, as the root of all evil."⁷

Terry Perlin put forward a similar argument, and introduced the supposed "anarchists of the 'right,'" "anarcho-capitalists," whose quest for individual freedom from the state shares the "common anarchist quest: for the freedom of the individual."⁸ These "anarcho-capitalists" essentially took free market ideas to the most extreme conclusions. Traditional economic liberalism, including neoliberalism, stressed the benefits of a free and unrestricted market, based on the relentless pursuit of individual self-interest, for individual liberty and economic efficiency. But it also stressed the need for a minimal state to enforce law and order, provide military defence, provide public goods, and deal with externalities. By contrast, "anarcho-capitalists," like the late Murray Rothbard, advocated the transfer of *all* the services provided by the state—including law and order—to private firms and associations.⁹

It may seem odd to place such figures alongside one another as part of a single movement and tradition, but it is entirely consistent with a definition of anarchism as an opposition to the state. The work that really established this definition as the dominant one was Paul Eltzbacher's *Anarchism: Exponents of the Anarchist Philosophy*, which appeared in 1900 and sought to identify the key features of anarchist thought. The conclusions of this work, one of the first academic studies of anarchism, "have become such a commonplace that they have been incorporated into almost every study of the subject up to the present day."¹⁰

Eltzbacher, a German judge, was interested in understanding anarchism, which appeared to his contemporaries as something quite new and mysterious.¹¹ In trying to develop a definition and analysis of anarchism, he started off well: his aim was to identify a number of thinkers as representative examples of

anarchists, and then derive the key principles of anarchism from an examination of their ideas. This use of a deductive method is probably ideal, but its analysis is always shaped by the representativeness of the data. It was when Eltzbacher made his selection of prominent anarchists that the problems arose. He made his choices “not upon the basis of any objective criteria, but rather examined the thought of those who the (informed) public opinion of the time regarded as the principal exponents of anarchism.”¹² The “(informed) public opinion” to which Eltzbacher turned was that of his close associates, who already assumed that anarchism was defined mainly by anti-statism. Eltzbacher did not, concomitantly, make enquiries within the self-described anarchist movement of the time.

The result was the fairly arbitrary selection of seven figures as the “recognised” anarchist teachers: Godwin, Stirner, Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Tucker, and Tolstoy.¹³ These are the figures subsequently identified, as mentioned in chapter 1, as the seven sages of anarchism.¹⁴ Having made his selection in this way, Eltzbacher then faced the problem of definition: what did these individuals have in common? Following an extensive and lucid analysis of each sage by Eltzbacher, the answer, it seemed, was very little.¹⁵

Godwin, a forgotten Enlightenment thinker, derived a generally anti-statist position from utilitarian principles in the 1790s.¹⁶ He argued that humans could be perfected through reason and education, and that government would wither away when all people had become sufficiently reasonable to exercise full personal autonomy, by which he meant the application of a utilitarian calculus to all activities.

In Godwin’s view, “Every well-informed friend of mankind” would “look forward to... the dissolution of political government, of that brute engine, which had been the only perennial cause of the vices of mankind.”¹⁷ He opposed class inequality on the same grounds: both poverty and wealth distracted people from the pursuit of pure reason.¹⁸ Godwin also opposed co-operation between people because it hampered the development and exercise of utilitarian reasoning.¹⁹ “Everything that is usually understood by the term co-operation, is, in some degree an evil,” claimed Godwin, and it followed that all unnecessary interaction should be carefully avoided, including “common labour and common meals,” “co-habitation,” and the “institution of marriage.”²⁰ While Godwin was on the Left, inasmuch as he defended the French Revolution, he believed that state coercion was a necessary evil until general rationality could be reached.²¹

In contrast, Stirner was an extreme individualist of the 1840s, asserting the right of the individual to do whatever she or he pleased.²² The mind must

135. Bakunin, “Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis,” 193-94.
136. Bakunin, “Letter to La Liberté,” 284.
137. Kropotkin, “Anarchist Communism,” 50.
138. Bakunin, “Letter to La Liberté,” 284.
139. Bakunin, “Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis,” 217.
140. Kropotkin, “Modern Science and Anarchism,” 170,186.
141. Bakunin, “Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis,” 185,189.
142. Bakunin, “The International and Karl Marx,” 294-95.
143. M. Bakunin, “The Policy of the International,” in *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, ed. S. Dolgoff (1869; repr., London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), 166-67.
144. Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 22; K. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852; repr., Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1983), 110-11.
145. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 110-11.
146. Steenson, *Karl Kautsky*, 102-11.
147. J. Joll, *The Second International, 1889-1914* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1966), 91; Steenson, *Karl Kautsky*, 3.
148. Steenson, *Karl Kautsky*, 135-36.
149. V. I. Lenin, “Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution,” in *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, ed. V. I. Lenin (1905; repr., Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), 451-52.
150. See, for example, *ibid.*, 480-83.
151. Mao Tsetung, “Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan,” in *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tsetung*, ed. Editorial Committee for Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tsetung (1927; repr., Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1971), 28,30.
152. Mao, “On the People’s Democratic Dictatorship,” 379.
153. For Lenin’s classic statement of this position, see Lenin, “Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution.”
154. Bakunin, “Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis,” 189,192.
155. *Ibid.*, 189-92, 197, 208-9.
156. *Ibid.*, 189-92,197,208-9; see also Bakunin, “Statism and Anarchy,” 346-50.
157. Harman, *A Peoples History of the World*, 615; H. Bernstein, “Farewells to the

109. Kropotkin, "Anarchist Communism," 71.
110. Bakunin, *The Capitalist System*, n.p.
111. Kropotkin, "Anarchist Communism," 55-56.
112. Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 13,15,19.
113. Miller, *Anarchism*, 5-10; Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 641, 653.
114. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 229, 232.
115. Bakunin, "Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis," 216-17.
116. Kropotkin, "Modern Science and Anarchism," 182-83.
117. F. Engels, "Letter to C. Cuno in Milan," January 24, 1872, in *Marx, Engels, Lenin: Anarchism and Anarcho-syndicalism*, ed. N. Y. Kolpinsky (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 71.
118. M. Bakunin, "The International and Karl Marx," in *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, ed. S. Dolgoff (1872; repr., London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), 318.
119. Kropotkin, "Modern Science and Anarchism," 149-50,181.
120. Bakunin, "Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism," 144.
121. Kropotkin, "Anarchist Communism," 52.
122. Kropotkin, "Modern Science and Anarchism," 165.
123. Lenin, "The State and Revolution."
124. Bakunin, "Letter to La Liberté," 281. See also Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," 330.
125. Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," 337.
126. Bakunin, "The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State," 269.
127. Kropotkin, "Anarchist Communism," 50.
128. Kropotkin, "Modern Science and Anarchism," 181.
129. *Ibid.*, 170.
130. Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," 338.
131. M. Bakunin, "Representative Government and Universal Suffrage," in *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, ed. S. Dolgoff (1870; repr., London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), 220-22.
132. Bakunin, "Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis," 194, 213-17.
133. Bakunin, "God and the State," 228.
134. Kropotkin, "Anarchist Communism," 49.

be freed of "spooks" and "wheels," meaning any and all abstract principles that impede individual gratification, including the notions of "the cause of mankind, of truth, of freedom, of humanity, of justice," the "cause of my people, my prince, my fatherland," and finally, "even the cause of Mind." Unbridled self-interest was the only true value; the only valid criterion for action was individual satisfaction; the only limit was the power of a given individual; even truth was the product of individual choice and thus entirely relative: "You alone are the truth, or rather, you are more than the truth, which is nothing at all before."²³ Stirner did not actually advocate the abolition of the state.²⁴ "My object is not the overthrow of an established order but my elevation above it, my purpose and deed are not... political or social but... directed toward myself and my ownness alone... an egoistic purpose and deed."²⁵ He advocated a "cult of unlimited self-will."²⁶ Reason was irrelevant, and the state was objectionable inasmuch as it halted the individuals' pursuit of pleasure and power. The state constrained the individual, but there was nothing wrong with one individual constraining another.

Tolstoy, the famous Russian novelist, derived his principles from Christian scriptures and favoured a withdrawal into a simple life of religious contemplation.²⁷ Taking Jesus Christ's admonition to "turn the other cheek" seriously, Tolstoy became a pacifist, and thus an advocate of non-violence and non-resistance in the face of conflict and force. His opposition to the state arose from two sources: the conviction that government was inherently violent, and the view that divine law must always be superior to both secular law and human reason. At the heart of Tolstoy's thinking was Christian mysticism, a quest for inner freedom through religious obedience and divine revelation, requiring withdrawal, wherever possible, from the evils and temptations of the world. His wish to withdraw from contact with the state followed, as did his dislike of private property and advocacy of chastity.

In short, even at the most basic level, there was not much in common between the first three sages discussed so far: Godwin was a rationalist, Stirner was an epistemological relativist, viewing truth as a matter of opinion, with the most widely accepted "truth" that imposed by the most powerful people; Tolstoy was a believer in divine revelation; Godwin and Tolstoy were ascetics, and Stirner was a libertine; Godwin opposed the class system for preventing the exercise of reason, Stirner disliked modern industry for mechanising life, and Tolstoy complained that capitalism replaced wholesome rural labour with the factory system and the quest for profit impeded salvation. The remaining four sages add more variation, falling into two main groups: Proudhon and Tucker, on the one side, and Bakunin and Kropotkin, on the other.

Proudhon, a self-taught French artisan of peasant stock, was somewhat influenced by the early nineteenth-century “utopian” socialist Charles Fourier (1772-1837), who advocated co-operative labour, communal ownership and living, sensual pleasure, and gender equality.²⁸ Proudhon used a broad labour theory of value—an approach that argued that only labour created new wealth, and that the price at which goods and services were sold corresponded to the amount of labour time that they embodied—to criticize capitalism.²⁹ This idea was not new, and can be found in the works of Smith and other early economic liberals. In Proudhon’s hands, it became a tool for social critique: if labour created all wealth, why did the labouring classes remain impoverished, while those classes that did not labour—made up of, say, bankers, landlords, and merchants—continually accumulated wealth?

For Proudhon, exploitation—in which the popular classes were not remunerated according to their labour, and the unpaid surplus accrued to other classes—took place through a range of mechanisms in the market, including interest, rent, and patent fees. Banks, for example, did not actually produce value but continually accumulated it by compelling the producers to pay interest. In turn, the state defended exploitation and undermined justice. Proudhon’s strategy for change was gradualist: he favoured the development of a non-capitalist sector, based on small individual proprietors as well as co-operatives that would undermine and then overwhelm capitalism. Proudhon placed great emphasis on the need to form a non-profit and co-operative Peoples Bank, funded by the producers that would lend money without interest, and envisaged a sort of “market socialism,” based on competition, in which producers would receive the full value of their labour.³⁰

Eventually, the state would become redundant, as self-government was carried out by the non-capitalist sector: “No longer having need of legislator or of sovereign, the *atelier* [workshop] will make the government disappear.”³¹ “Socialism,” Proudhon argued, “is the opposite of governmentality.... We want these associations to be... the first components of a vast federation of associations and groups united in the common bond of the democratic and social republic.”³² The market was really a means to an end, and would be controlled and levelled by society as needed.

Proudhon’s ideas, often known as mutualism, were widely influential in socialist and popular circles between the 1840s and 1880s in Europe and the Americas.³³ Tucker was the “leading American apostle of Proudhon’s doctrines,” which he called “individualist anarchism.”³⁴ He described himself as an “individualist anarchist” or a “philosophical anarchist,” and was also influenced by U.S. thinkers such as Josiah Warren, whose ideas were remarkably similar to those

the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism, ed. S. Dolgoff (1871; repr., London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), 236-37.

91. M. Bakunin, “Three Lectures to Swiss Members of the International,” in *Mikhail Bakunin: From out of the Dustbin: Bakunin’s Basic Writings, 1869-1871*, ed. R. M. Cutler (1871; repr., Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1985), 46-47.
92. P. Kropotkin, “Letter to Nettlau,” March 5, 1902, in *Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution: P. A. Kropotkin*, ed. M. A. Miller (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970), 296-97.
93. Kropotkin, “Modern Science and Anarchism,” 161-62.
94. Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 3, 37.
95. Bakunin, “Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism,” 118.
96. M. Bakunin, “Letter to La Liberté” in *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, ed. S. Dolgoff (1872; repr., London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), 289.
97. Kropotkin, “Anarchist Communism,” 56, 59.
98. It is therefore incorrect to define anarchism as a philosophy that holds that every individual should be entirely free to establish one’s obligations to society; given that anarchism advocated a social vision of freedom as realised through society and co-operation, it could not be in favour of absolute and unrestrained individual sovereignty. This misreading of anarchism as a doctrine of absolute autonomy is the key flaw in R. P. Wolff, *In Defence of Anarchism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970). While an interesting treatise, it is not really a treatise on anarchism.
99. Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 339.
100. M. Bakunin, *The Capitalist System* (1871; repr., Champaign, IL: Libertarian Labor Review, 1993), n.p.
101. Bakunin, “God and the State,” 238.
102. Bakunin, “Three Lectures to Swiss Members of the International,” 46.
103. Bakunin, “Statism and Anarchy,” 343.
104. Quoted in Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, 108.
105. M. Bakunin, “Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis,” in *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, ed. S. Dolgoff (1870; repr., London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), 189.
106. Kropotkin, “Anarchist Communism,” 55.
107. Bakunin, *The Capitalist System*, n.p.
108. *Ibid.*

70. Joll, *The Anarchists*, 58, 82.
71. Kedward, *The Anarchists*, 5.
72. Miller, *Anarchism*, 4, 45.
73. Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 136, 170.
74. *Ibid.*, 155; Joll, *The Anarchists*, 84.
75. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 3-4, 264.
76. Kropotkin, "Anarchist Communism," 46.
77. P. Kropotkin, *The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution* (1886; repr., Cyrmu, Wales: Practical Parasite Publications, 1990), 5-6; Kropotkin, "Anarchism," 295.
78. Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, chapter 1.
79. Woodcock, *Anarchy or Chaos*, 36.
80. M. A. Miller, introduction to *Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution: P. A. Kropotkin*, ed. M. A. Miller (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970), 6; see also J. M. Allen, "Ambivalent Social Darwinism in Korea," *International Journal of Korean History* 2 (2002): 1-24; R. Kinna, "Kropotkin's Theory of Mutual Aid in Historical Context," *International Review of Social History* 40, no. 2 (1995): 259-83.
81. Fleming, *The Anarchist Way to Socialism*, 2.
82. Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 13, 15, 19; Miller, *Anarchism*, 5-10; Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 641, 653.
83. Compare to M. Molyneux, "No God, No Boss, No Husband: Anarchist Feminism in Nineteenth-Century Argentina," *Latin American Perspectives* 13, no. 1 (1986): 123.
84. Joll, *The Anarchists*, 103.
85. For some of the key documents, see Guerin, *No Gods, No Masters*, 183-202.
86. Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits*, 97.
87. Kropotkin, "Anarchist Communism," 61.
88. M. Bakunin, "Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism," in *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, ed. S. Dolgoff (1867; repr., London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), 118.
89. Carr, *Michael Bakunin*, 434. Carr attributes this to the supposedly profound influence that Stirner had on Bakunin. There is no evidence that Stirner had any influence on Bakunin, least of all in Carr's study.
90. M. Bakunin, "God and the State," in *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by*

of the French activist. Like Godwin, Proudhon and Tucker were rationalists and atheists, and like him, they saw reason as a necessary means of securing social change. Unlike Godwin, they had a concrete strategy for change, favoured the creation of new institutions that would prefigure the desired future order, and saw society as the necessary matrix for individual freedom.

Let us move now to Bakunin and Kropotkin. Bakunin was the eldest son of a minor Russian noble. He studied in Russia and Germany in the 1840s with an academic career in mind, but became increasingly radicalised, met Marx and Proudhon, and was driven out of several countries for his political activities.³⁵ Arrested and returned to Russia, Bakunin received a life sentence, which was later commuted to exile in Siberia, and escaped in 1861. The first phase of Bakunin's career was characterised by pan-Slavic nationalism, but with the failure of the 1863 Polish uprising Bakunin moved toward a class struggle and internationalist position. His views were shaped by debates in Italy (where he founded the secret, socialist International Brotherhood), followed by participation in the pacifist League for Peace and Freedom, and then the First International. By this time, Bakunin had helped form the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy, which applied to join the First International en bloc. The First Internationals secretariat insisted that the Alliance dissolve and its sections join separately, but it seems certain that the Alliance continued to operate underground. There was nothing "imaginary" about Bakunin's "secret societies."³⁶

Like Bakunin, Kropotkin was from the Russian aristocracy—he was no less than a prince—and embarked on a military career, including ten years in the Russian civil service, mainly in eastern Siberia.³⁷ Increasingly disillusioned with the government, Kropotkin concentrated on scientific work and developed a formidable reputation as a geographer. Resigning his government post, he visited Switzerland, where he joined the anarchists. In Russia he promoted revolutionary ideas in the Chaikovsky Circle, part of the revolutionary *narodnik* ("populist") movement. Jailed in 1874, Kropotkin escaped, going to Switzerland and then to France, where he was jailed for three years for membership in the First International. After his release, Kropotkin moved to England, where he spent most of his remaining years, helping to found Freedom Press and the journal *Freedom*, both of which are still active. In 1914, the elderly Kropotkin came out in support of the Allies in the First World War, alienating himself from the great majority of anarchists and syndicalists, the "most unhappy event of Kropotkin's life," one of his "darkest moments."³⁸ In 1917, he returned to Russia. His funeral in 1921 was the last mass anarchist demonstration for many years in that country.

Despite the common presentation of Kropotkin as a gentle “anarchist saint” compared to Bakunin, the two did not differ on any substantial issues.³⁹ Both were advocates of social revolution through class struggle to abolish the state, capitalism, and economic and social inequality, and create a self-managed socialist economy and society, without a state, in which individual differences could flourish on the basis of social and economic equality. Their ideas will be discussed in more depth below, yet suffice it to say, both men were rationalists (indeed, atheists) and advocates of co-operation rather than Stirnerite individualism. They shared the mutualist opposition to capitalism, admiring Proudhon and sharing his view that freedom was a social product rather than something exercised in opposition to others, but saw exploitation as taking place in production (rather than through the market), advocated international class war (rather than gradual change), and favoured an economy planned from below (in place of the market mechanism); both described themselves as socialists.⁴⁰

Faced with such a diverse group of thinkers as a consequence of his method of choosing representative anarchists, Eltzbacher was in a quandary. He aimed to derive anarchist principles from an examination of their ideas, but he had ended up with a selection of people with radically different ideas. Rather than rethink his choices, however, Eltzbacher persevered and ended up with a definition of anarchism based on the lowest common denominator: an opposition to the state.⁴¹

This definition is even more nebulous than it may seem at first glance, for Eltzbacher admitted that his seven sages gave “totally different meanings” to “the negation of the State.”⁴² As our account has shown, there was certainly little agreement between the supposed sages on the reasons for opposing the state, or on the question of whether the state should be abolished, and if so, how. In some cases, for example, the opposition to the state follows from an opposition to hierarchical relationships between people (here we may include Proudhon, Tucker, Bakunin, and Kropotkin); in others, the state is opposed but authoritarian relationships are not (Stirner); and in still others, the opposition to the state is part of a withdrawal from a sinful world (Tolstoy).

Eltzbacher’s approach, as noted above, was nonetheless influential, and his conclusion reinforced a common view that anarchism was simply anti-statism.⁴³ The trend toward a vague definition of anarchism received a further boost from the anarchists themselves: there was a tendency, emanating from within the broad anarchist tradition, to present the movement as a universal feature of human history. From the early twentieth century onward, prominent anarchists produced a number of historical narratives of the movement. In these

52. Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 13, 15, 19; compare to D. Miller, *Anarchism* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1984), 5-10.
53. Miller, *Anarchism*, 3.
54. P. Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge* (London: New Left Books, 1975).
55. K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848; repr., Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954), 56-57.
56. Lenin, “The State and Revolution,” 257,281.
57. N. Bukharin, *The ABC of Communism* (1922; repr., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), 74-75.
58. Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, 189, 201.
59. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 629.
60. Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, 189,194,201.
61. Hoffman, introduction, 5; D. Novak, “The Place of Anarchism in the History of Political Thought,” in *Anarchism*, ed. R. Hoffman (1958; repr., New York: Atherton Press, 1970), 22,24-30.
62. Marshall explicitly describes Gandhi as an anarchist, but argues that he did not call for the “immediate abolition of State and government,” nor did he “reject the notion of a State in a transitional period”; see Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 422, 425, 442, 591-93.
63. *Ibid.*, 3, 564-65. Marshall admits that not all of his “anarchists” favour positive freedom (that is, the freedom to act, which implies “equality and social justice”) as well as negative freedom (that is, the freedom from direct external coercion, which can take place in an inegalitarian context); see *ibid.*, 36-37.
64. A. Carter, *The Political Theory of Anarchism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 1-11, 25, 26, 63-73.
65. Thus, the section on the state draws almost entirely on Kropotkin; the section on law mainly uses Tolstoy; the part on federalism and nationality takes from Proudhon; the portion on the individual pulls from Stirner; and the part on morality again draws from Tolstoy. See *ibid.*, 29-38, 41-46, 61-63, 89-95.
66. Fleming, *The Anarchist Way to Socialism*, 16.
67. *Ibid.*, 17-19.
68. For example, Vizetelly, *The Anarchists*.
69. Fleming, *The Anarchist Way to Socialism*, 19.

38. Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 203; Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits*, 69.
39. See, for example, Joll, *The Anarchists*, 151; Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 172.
40. M. Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," in *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, ed. S. Dolgoff (1873; repr., London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), 332; P. Kropotkin, "Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles," in *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets: A Collection of Writings by Peter Kropotkin*, ed. R. N. Baldwin (1887; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1970), 46, 61; Kropotkin, "Anarchism," 285.
41. Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, 189, 201.
42. *Ibid.*, 189, 191.
43. Fleming, *The Anarchist Way to Socialism*, 20.
44. J. J. Martin, editor's preface to *Anarchism: Exponents of the Anarchist Philosophy*, P. Eltzbacher (London: Freedom Press, 1960), vii.
45. See Kropotkin, "Anarchism," 287.
46. Nettlau's numerous works have long been out of print. Only a few volumes of his masterwork were published in his lifetime—there were reissues in German in the 1970s by Topos Verlag, along with several others in a small print run. The 1980s saw another partial printing by Verlag Detlev Auvermann KG; these editions are difficult to obtain. Currently, a new edition by the Bibliotheque Thelem is in the works. A projected English edition, announced in the 1990s, never materialised. Nettlau's multivolume Bakunin biography was issued only once, in a run of fifty copies; see the editor's notes to Nettlau, *A Short History of Anarchism*. Nettlau's papers formed the early core of the archives of the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam.
47. Considerant was "the actual founder of the Fourierist movement"; editor's note to Nettlau, *A Short History of Anarchism*, 374, 1-13. Regarding Stirner, Bellegarrigue, and Dejacque, see *ibid.*, 14-98.
48. See, inter alia, M. Vallance, "Rudolf Rocker: A Biographical Sketch," *Journal of Contemporary History* 8, no. 3 (1973): 75-95.
49. Even Kautsky, the SDP's great theorist, flirted with anarchism in the 1870s; see G. P. Steenson, *Karl Kautsky 1854-1938: Marxism in the Classical Years*, 2nd ed. (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), 39-41.
50. R. Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2004), also available at http://www.spunk.org/library/writers/rocker/sp001495/rocker_asl.html (accessed November 12, 2000), chapter 1.
51. G. Woodcock, *Anarchy or Chaos* (London: Freedom Press, 1944), 25-26.

narratives, anarchism was typically described as present throughout human history, starting in ancient Asia and Europe, moving through the medieval period, and then heading into modernity.

Like other movements, the anarchists had begun to create what can only be considered a legitimising myth for the movement: portraying anarchism as common to all places, peoples, and times, this meta-history helped undermine charges that anarchism was alien, bizarre, or contrary to human nature. The cast on this universal stage included ancient philosophers like Lao-tzu, religious heretics like the Anabaptists, and thinkers like Godwin and Stirner, followed by movements from the First International onward, including syndicalism. To group these together, one must have a fairly loose definition of anarchism; the overlap with Eltzbacher's approach is fairly clear, and it is worth noting that Kropotkin was impressed with Eltzbacher's treatise.⁴⁴

Given his prestige, Kropotkin's claim that the "tendency" toward anarchism "had always existed in mankind" was widely accepted, particularly when it appeared in the 1910 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.⁴⁵ The anarchist historian Max Nettlau gave further weight to this line of thinking in a series of works from 1925. Born in Austria, his father a gardener for the royal family, Nettlau became an anarchist around 1881, and earned a doctorate in linguistics. Unexpectedly inheriting a small fortune in 1892, he devoted his life to research on anarchism, writing an extensive *Bibliography of Anarchism* (1897), a multi-volume biography of Bakunin, and a nine-volume history of anarchism, appearing from 1925 onward, and summarised in a companion volume, *A Short History of Anarchism*.⁴⁶ He also helped found Freedom Press.

The companion volume to Nettlau's history dealt extensively with anarchism's historical development *before* 1864, and Nettlau believed that while "few people have yet attained a true understanding of the anarchist idea," the "anarchist concept" and "anarchist principles" could be found in ancient Greece as well as among Utopian and scientific writers of the eighteenth century (including Godwin), Utopian socialists like Fourier, his great disciple Victor Considerant (1808-1893), Proudhon and other nineteenth-century writers including Stirner, Anselme Bellegarrigue (ca. 1820-1865?), and Joseph Dejacque (1821-1864).⁴⁷ It is only in chapter 8 (of Nettlau's eighteen chapters) that we come to a discussion of the period of Bakunin's role in the First International.

The same general approach could be found in other anarchist writings, such as those of Rudolf Rocker in the 1930s. Born in Mainz, Germany in 1873, Rocker was a bookbinder by trade, and active as a youth in the German SDP.⁴⁸ Anarchism made occasional appearances in the SDP, and Rocker was involved with a left-

wing faction, the *Jungen* (“Young Ones”), which had libertarian leanings.⁴⁹ In 1890, Rocker was expelled from the SDP, became an anarchist, and ended up in London in 1895, where he was active among Jewish immigrant communities, editing the Yiddish-language anarchist paper *Arbayter Fraynd* (“The Workers’ Friend”) and taking an active role in unionism. Interned as an “enemy alien” in 1914, Rocker was deported to Germany in 1918, where he became a leading figure in the syndicalist unions. In 1922, he was elected secretary of the newly formed syndicalist International Workers’ Association (IWA), but had to leave Germany in 1933 following the Nazi takeover, passing away in the United States in 1958. The IWA was a continuation of pre-war initiatives for a syndicalist international, and its member unions were drawn mainly from Latin America and Europe.

In his classic *Anarcho-syndicalism*—one of the best single accounts of anarchism and syndicalism—Rocker claimed that “anarchist ideas are to be found in every period of known history,” before repeating roughly the same narrative as Kropotkin and Nettlau.⁵⁰ In 1944, George Woodcock—later known for his scholarship on anarchism, but then an ardent anarchist—likewise found in Taoism the “first anarchistic doctrine,” and discovered “anarchism before the rise of an anarchist movement” in the views of the radical Diggers sect in seventeenth-century England as well as Godwin and Proudhon.⁵¹

Given this backdrop, it is not surprising that many of the standard works on anarchism—we have in mind those of Roderick Kedward, James Joll, Peter Marshall, David Miller, and Woodcock—insist that there was something necessarily incoherent about anarchism. Both Miller and Woodcock speak of anarchism’s “singular disagreement” on “revolutionary methods” and the “economic organisation” of the future.⁵² Miller even suggests that anarchism is not in fact an ideology but a “point of intersection of several ideologies.”⁵³ The same view of anarchism allows writers like Paul Feyerabend, an advocate of epistemological relativism and an opponent of scientific method, to describe his “anything goes” philosophy as an “anarchist” approach to knowledge.⁵⁴ Grouping Stirner with Bakunin unavoidably suggests incoherence—but is such grouping justified?

► The Need for a New Approach

Having outlined the ways in which anarchism is generally discussed in the literature, we would like to draw attention to some of the problems associated with these approaches. It is here that our discussion of the seven sages approach

in *Selections from the Writings of Benjamin R. Tucker*, ed. B. R. Tucker (1926; repr., Millwood, New York: Kraus Reprint Company, 1973). By anarchism, Tucker meant mutualism.

35. Most English-language biographies of Bakunin are overtly hostile to their subject. Representative examples include A. Kelly, *Mikhail Bakunin: A Study in the Psychology and Politics of Utopianism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); A. Mendel, *Michael Bakunin: Roots of Apocalypse* (New York: Praeger, 1981). While manifestly unsympathetic and not altogether accurate in its presentation of Bakunin’s views, the best biography in English is probably still E. H. Carr, *Michael Bakunin*, rev. ed. (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1975). A more balanced discussion of Bakunin’s views may be found in A. W. Gouldner, “Marx’s Last Battle: Bakunin and the First International,” *Theory and Society* 11, no. 6 (1982): 853-84. A study that demonstrates Bakunin’s abilities as a political activist is T. R. Ravindranathan, “Bakunin in Naples: An Assessment,” *Journal of Modern History* 53, no. 2 (1981). A useful recent treatment is B. Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom* (Montreal: Black Rose, 1996). There is also much interesting material in standard works on anarchism like Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*; Joll, *The Anarchists*; Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*; Woodcock, *Anarchism*. See also J. Guillaume, “A Biographical Sketch [Bakunin],” in *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, ed. S. Dolgoff (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971).
36. For contrary views, see Carr, *Michael Bakunin*, 421 -23; Joll, *The Anarchists*, 87.
37. Kropotkin has been the subject of several excellent biographies. See, in particular, M. A. Miller, *Kropotkin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976; J. A. Rogers, “Peter Kropotkin, Scientist and Anarchist” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1957); G. Woodcock and I. Avakumovic, *The Anarchist Prince* (London: Boardman, 1950). Also useful is C. Cahm, *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism, 1872-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Again, standard works on anarchism are also useful; see Joll, *The Anarchists*; Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*; Woodcock, *Anarchism*. For interesting discussions of Kropotkin, see Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits*; G. Purchase, *Evolution and Revolution: An Introduction to the Life and Thought of Peter Kropotkin* (Sydney, Australia: Jura Media, 1996). Some autobiographical material maybe found in P. Kropotkin, *In Russian and French Prisons* (1887; repr., New York: Schocken Books, 1971); P. Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (1899; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1980).

useful starting point is J. Lavrin, *Tolstoy: An Approach* (London: Methuen and Co., 1944). See also the relevant sections of Joll, *The Anarchists*; Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*; Woodcock, *Anarchism*.

28. Utopian socialism included authoritarians as well as libertarians. Claude Saint-Simon (1760-1825), for example, advocated a regimented and hierarchical socialism directed by an elite made up of the most talented; see R. Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (1915; repr., New York: Free Press, 1962), 344.
29. Proudhon was a prolific writer, and his ideas were not always consistent; it is important to note that he moved to the Right in the 1850s, returning to his original positions in the 1860s. He did not oppose collective ownership, notwithstanding a common stereotype. Key texts are excerpted in D. Guerin, ed., *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism*, Book One (Oakland: AK Press, 1998). There are numerous quotations in Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, chapter 4. A useful anthology is S. Edwards, ed., *Selected Writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1969). An excellent commentary on Proudhon's ideas is scattered throughout D. Guerin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970). Also useful is D. W. Brogan, *Proudhon* (London: H. Hamilton, 1934). For good discussions of Proudhon, with the accent on biography, see Joll, *The Anarchists*; Woodcock, *Anarchism*.
30. This is precisely how David MacNally described Proudhon in his critique of liberal economics and contemporary market socialism; see D. MacNally, *Against the Market: Political Economy, Market Socialism, and the Marxist Critique* (London: Verso, 1993).
31. Thorpe, "The Workers Themselves," 4.
32. Quoted in Guerin, *Anarchism*, 45.
33. See, inter alia, Bookchin, *The Spanish Anarchists*; J. Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931* (Austin: Texas University Press, 1978); National Confederation of Labour, *Resolution on Libertarian Communism as Adopted by the Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo, Zaragoza, 1 May 1936* (Durban: Zabalaza Books, n.d.).
34. For an introduction to Tucker, see, in particular, Paul Avrich's essays "Proudhon and America" and "Benjamin Tucker and His Daughter," both in P. Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988). The quote is from *ibid.*, 140. For his key essay, see B. R. Tucker, "State Socialism and Anarchism: How Far They Agree, and Wherein They Differ,"

is particularly pertinent. An outline of figures like Godwin, Proudhon, Stirner, Bakunin, Tucker, Kropotkin, and Tolstoy demonstrates clearly that they cannot be taken as representative of a single doctrine, unless that doctrine is defined at a general level that obscures the radical differences between these thinkers.

On one level, the result is that a number of writers see nothing odd about grouping extreme individualists like Stirner, radical economic liberals like Rothbard, and revolutionary socialists like Bakunin and Kropotkin into a single tradition. If these figures form a single tradition, however, that tradition *must* lack a coherent theoretical corpus, suffer from major internal contradictions, and prove a manifest inability to find common ground on the meaning of and rationale for individual freedom and anti-statism.

One problem with such an approach is that it fails to provide an effective definition. Definitions should identify the common features of the subject under definition; this approach fails to do so, and suffers from internal incoherence. Definitions should also be able to clearly delineate the category being defined from other categories. It is on this external level, the level of the boundary, that the vague definition of anarchism as anti-statism also fails. It is eminently logical, using this definition, to include classical Marxism within the anarchist category, given that this doctrine's ultimate objective is a stateless society without alienation and compulsion.

The Communist Manifesto, for example, stressed that the final stage of history, the communist society, would be stateless—"the public power will lose its political character"—and based on individual freedom—"we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."⁵⁵ This communist society, in the classical Marxist tradition, is the final result of history. According to Lenin, the "dictatorship of the proletariat... will begin to wither away immediately after its victory"; "We do not at all differ from the anarchists on the question of the abolition of the state as the *aim*"⁵⁶ Likewise, Nikolai Bukharin claimed that the "State will die out... the proletarian State authority will also pass away."⁵⁷

If anarchism can encompass economic liberals, Marxists, radical Christians, Taoism, and more, it is hardly surprising that the standard works on anarchism describe it as "incoherent." Such an approach is not useful. Given that there are few intellectual traditions that do not have at least some negative comments about the state and some positive views on the individual, it is not easy to specify an upper limit on the traditions that may be assimilated, in some form, to the anarchist category. Eltzbacher only had seven selections, but there is no real reason to stop there: once Eltzbacher's definition is accepted, it is a short

step to Marshall's work, where the "anarchist" gallery includes the Buddha, the Marquis de Sade, Herbert Spencer, Gandhi, Che Guevara, and Margaret Thatcher. And if the notion of anarchism can cover so vast a field—and let us not forget that the case can be made to include Marx and his heirs—then the definition is so loose as to be practically meaningless.

It is, moreover, striking to note the consistent absence of the classical Marxists from these works on anarchism. If it is logical to include Stirner and Rothbard, it is surely so to include Marx, Engels, and their successors. Accepting Eltzbacher's definition of anarchism, applying it consistently, must mean that Mao and Stalin have every right to a place among the sages; the logic is inescapable, for both wanted to "negate the State for our future."⁵⁸ Yet none of the standard works on anarchism includes the duo; on the contrary, classical Marxism is always presented as the absolute antithesis of anarchism. This is a most revealing point.

The obvious reason for excluding classical Marxism—and for presenting it as the antithesis of anarchism—would be its strategy of the proletarian dictatorship. Indeed, some writers do try to suggest that this strategy helps to define anarchism, with Marshall observing that "most anarchists" believe that the means of change must prefigure the ends desired.⁵⁹ Again, however, we quickly run into difficulties. *Strategy* is specifically excluded as a defining feature of anarchism in the standard works and presented as the area where anarchists disagree most. For Eltzbacher, the "seven teachings here presented have nothing in common" regarding the means to "negate the State."⁶⁰ The anarchists, Hoffman argued, lacked "the agreement about doctrine and programme that have generally united men in comparable movements," while Derry Novak claimed it is "the nature of anarchism" to lack a "general programme" and a coherent theory.⁶¹ Even Marshall is careful to stress that he is not speaking about all anarchists in relation to the means shaping the ends, and his account labels as anarchist a number of figures who were in favour of a transitional state, not least Godwin and Gandhi.⁶² This is not so different from classical Marxism.

Yet even if the argument that the means must prefigure the ends was accepted as a binding criterion for inclusion in the anarchist camp, there remain other striking and unexplained absences from the tradition as constructed by Eltzbacher, Nettlau, and others. A notable example is the tradition of council communism, a libertarian form of Marxism that rejects the state as a revolutionary instrument, and advocates international and self-managed working-class revolution from below. Why is council communism not, then, included under the anarchist umbrella? It cannot be simply that the council communists refused to accept an anarchist label, for the standard works on anarchism include many figures who did not adopt the anarchist name, among them Godwin, Stirner, and Tolstoy.

14. This term is used in works as early as E. A. Vizetelly, *The Anarchists: Their Faith and Their Record* (Edinburgh: Turnbull and Spears Printers, 1911).
15. See Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, 184-96.
16. See W. Godwin, *Enquiry concerning Political Justice, with Selections from Godwin's Other Writings*, ed. and abridged K. Cordell Carter (1798; repr., London: Clarendon Press, 1971). It should be noted that Godwin revised this work several times—in 1793, 1796, and 1798—and this text is based on the third edition. The editor's introduction to this volume is useful, but John Clark's analysis of Godwin is indispensable; see J. P. Clark, *The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977). A fair account of Godwin is presented in Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, chapter 3. Discussions of Godwin are a standard feature of most general histories of anarchism; see Joll, *The Anarchists*; Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*; Woodcock, *Anarchism*.
17. Godwin, *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, 222.
18. *Ibid.*, 23-26, 109, 282-91, 292-95.
19. Clark, *The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin*, 82-85.
20. Godwin, *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, 301-3; see also 140-41. See also Clark, *The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin*, 82-85.
21. See, for example, Godwin, *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, 125, 132-33, 138-39, 262-63, 266, 290.
22. The standard edition is M. Stirner, *The Ego and His Own* (1844; repr., New York: Benjamin R. Tucker Publishers, 1907). Yet the introduction is of limited use; J. L. Walker, introduction to *The Ego and His Own*, ed. M. Stirner (New York: Benjamin R. Tucker Publishers, 1907). The introduction to the 1963 edition is essential reading; J. J. Martin, introduction to *The Ego and His Own*, ed. M. Stirner (New York: Libertarian Book Club, 1963). Besides the discussion of Stirner in Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, chapter 4, see also the relevant sections of Joll, *The Anarchists*; Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*; Woodcock, *Anarchism*.
23. Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 3,472.
24. For a contrary view, see Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, 67-70.
25. Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 421.
26. Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 91.
27. Tolstoy's output was formidable. Marshall S. Statz provides an edited version of his key work—the 1893 "The Kingdom of God Is Within You"—in M. Statz, ed., *The Essential Works of Anarchism* (New York: Bantam, 1971). Another

Notes:

1. Kedward, *The Anarchists*, 6.
2. See also Fleming, *The Anarchist Way to Socialism*, 20-21.
3. "N. evildoer ... destroyer, nihilist, anarchist... pyromaniac ... ruffian ... knave ... murderer"; R. A. Dutch, *Roget's Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases*, rev. ed. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1962), 598.
4. Kedward, *The Anarchists*, 5-6.
5. C. Jacker, *The Black Flag of Anarchy: Anti-statism in the United States* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), 1-2.
6. R. Hoffman, introduction to *Anarchism*, ed. R. Hoffman (New York: Atherton Press, 1970), 2, 9, 10.
7. Statz, introduction, xi-xii, xiii.
8. Perlin, *Contemporary Anarchism*, 109.
9. The roots of so-called "anarcho-capitalism" lie primarily in the Austrian school of neo-classical economics, with the work of Ludwig von Mises a major influence. Rothbard praised Mises as "the pre-eminent theorist of our time," the victor in many battles "on behalf of free markets and sound money," the writer of "the most important theoretical critique ever levelled at socialism," the ardent opponent of the revolutionary struggles in Austria in the late 1910s, mentor of the great economic liberal Frederick von Hayek, and the great exponent of the view that state welfare schemes and the regulation of the market inevitably lead to dictatorship; see M. Rothbard, *Ludwig von Mises: Scholar, Creator, Hero* (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 1988), available at <http://www.mises.org/rothbard/scholarhero.pdf> (accessed June 30, 2006), 4, 7, 19, 23-24, 27-31, 46-47. Also revealing of Rothbard's capitalist extremism was his critique of Milton Friedman, perhaps the single most important advocate of neo-liberalism. Rothbard viewed Friedman as excessively egalitarian, because he suggested that the state should levy income tax, provide a minimal welfare system (including welfare for the disabled), maintain public parks and schools, and tackle corporate monopolies. See M. Rothbard, "Milton Friedman Unravelling," *Journal of Libertarian Studies*, 16, no. 4 (2002): 37-54 (originally published in 1971).
10. Fleming, *The Anarchist Way to Socialism*, 19.
11. *Ibid.*, 17.
12. *Ibid.*, 19.
13. Eltzbacher, *Anarchism*, 7.

Above, we said that the exclusion of classical Marxism from standard accounts of anarchism would be revealing. We believe that we have shown this to be so in several ways. First, the consistent exclusion of classical Marxism only makes sense if the writers of the standard works implicitly apply criteria like strategy to their definition of anarchism, and this in turn means that these works have conceded that there are serious difficulties in defining anarchism merely as an opposition to the state. Second, the tendency of the standard works to continually expand the field covered by the term "anarchism" to vast proportions, while arbitrarily excluding both classical Marxism and libertarian strains like council communism, demonstrates that the definition is vague, inadequate, and inconsistently applied. Marshall's account illustrates these points well: having insisted that anarchism "is anti-dogmatic" and "does not offer a fixed body of doctrine based on one particular world view," he goes on to suggest that so-called "anarcho-capitalists" are not really anarchists because they ignore the anarchist "concern for economic equality and social justice," notwithstanding the fact that the latter "concern" is not part of his own definition of anarchism.⁶³

In short, the mainstream definition of anarchism fails some of the most basic requirements of a definition, lacking the ability to effectively exclude from the category phenomena deemed external to those being examined. At the same time, the pattern of continual but implicit modifications to the definition by writers who define anarchism as anti-statism shows that even these analysts find this definition of limited value. The effect of these modifications is, however, to muddy the waters even further.

A good definition is one that highlights the distinguishing features of a given category, does so in a coherent fashion, and is able to differentiate that category from others, thereby organising knowledge as well as enabling effective analysis and research. The usual definition of anarchism fails on all these grounds. So far we have argued that it has criteria that are simply too vague to really distinguish anarchism from other bodies of thought and action, resulting in anarchism being defined so loosely that it is not clear what should be included and what should not, and why some things are included and others are not.

Definitions, however, serve an important purpose besides simply classifying data. They provide the basis for analysis and research, and here the standard definition of anarchism is also not effective. Second, there is the problem of explanation. Presenting anarchism as a universal feature of society makes it difficult indeed to explain why it arises in particular historical contexts, to delineate its boundaries, or analyse its class character and role at a particular time. What, after all, did the Taoists have in common with the anarchists of the First International? If we group such radically disparate moments and

movements under the heading of anarchism, we can do little to identify the social basis of anarchism or the reasons for its rise and fall in particular situations.

A tendency to project anarchism on to a wide range of disparate figures also results in serious problems for the theoretical analysis of the tradition. If the anarchists include figures as different as the seven sages, or practically every figure in the past who could somehow be construed as advocating anti-statism or individual freedom, then anarchism *must* seem incoherent and therefore cannot be subjected to a rigorous theoretical interrogation. This was the problem Eltzbacher faced, and it remains real today.

Consider April Carter's *The Political Theory of Anarchism*, which proves less a demonstration that there is some sort of anarchist political theory than an account of how the supposed sages were at odds on basic issues such as the nature of society, the use of violence, class struggle, industrialisation, urbanisation, and democracy.⁶⁴ In the end, the book is really a series of monographs on different themes—federalism, the individual, and so on—each drawn exclusively from a single theorist, with no explanation of why these theorists should be thought to share a larger paradigm.⁶⁵ If we wish to consider anarchism as a set of ideas relevant to current progressive struggles against neoliberalism, we must have a clear understanding of what ideas we mean by anarchism.

► **Starting Again: Socialism, Bakunin, and the First International**

We suggest that the apparently ahistorical and incoherent character of anarchism is an artefact of the way in which anarchism has been studied, rather than inherent in anarchism itself. Using a deductive method, but taking more care in our selection of the representatives of anarchism, we can develop a different, more accurate, and more useful understanding of anarchism.

Where, then, to start, and how should the anarchists be selected? It is Eltzbacher's approach that perhaps ironically provides a guide. Eltzbacher's interest in anarchism emerged against the backdrop of the rise of a self-described anarchist movement in the late nineteenth century. A "general awareness of an anarchist' position did not exist until after the appearance of its representatives in the late 1870s," and anarchism "initially appeared to contemporaries to be a new phenomenon."⁶⁶

It was precisely this development, this "new phenomenon," that led to the first studies of anarchism. While the movement was seen at first as a harmless revival

a lost idyllic past; anarchism, like liberalism and Marxism, embraces rationalism and progress. Nothing better expresses this linkage than the notion of "scientific socialism," a term widely used by Marxists, but actually coined by Proudhon.²³²

Not only is it the case that anarchism *did not* exist in the pre-modern world; it is also the case that it *could not* have, for it is rooted in the social and intellectual revolutions of the modern world. And as modernity spread around the globe from the northern Atlantic region, the pre-conditions for anarchism spread too. By the time of Bakunin, the Alliance, and the First International, the conditions were ripe for anarchism in parts of Europe, the Americas, and Africa; within thirty years, the modernisation of Asia had opened another continent.

In the following chapters, having developed a clear understanding of anarchism, we will examine its intellectual history, the debates that took place within anarchism, the links between anarchism, syndicalism, and the IWW, and the ways in which the broad anarchist tradition dealt with questions of community organising, the unemployed, race, nationality, imperialism, and gender. Part of this involves delineating different currents within anarchism: having rejected earlier subdivisions like "philosophical anarchism," we propose new ones, like mass anarchism and insurrectionist anarchism. For now, though, we turn to the relationship between Proudhon, Marx, and anarchism.

in the second half of the nineteenth century. Anarchism was against social and economic hierarchy as well as inequality—and specifically, capitalism, landlordism, and the state—and in favour of an international class struggle and revolution from below by a self-organised working class and peasantry in order to create a self-managed, socialist, and stateless social order. In this new order, individual freedom would be harmonised with communal obligations through co-operation, democratic decision making, and social and economic equality, and economic co-ordination would take place through federal forms. The anarchists stressed the need for revolutionary means (organisations, actions, and ideas) to prefigure the ends (an anarchist society). Anarchism is a libertarian doctrine and a form of libertarian socialism; not every libertarian or libertarian socialist viewpoint is anarchist, though.

Both the anarchist analysis and vision of a better society were underpinned by a rationalist worldview and a commitment to scientific thought, albeit mixed in with a hefty dose of ethics. Anarchism was and is a political ideology, and one that embraces rationalist methods of analysis to inform its critique, strategy, and tactics. Its large moral component, however, is also important—and cannot be scientifically proven to be correct. Just as Marx’s claim to have shown exploitation through wage labour in no way proves that exploitation is wrong—that was a moral judgment, not an empirical fact—so Bakunin’s and Kropotkin’s class analysis did not, in fact, show that individual freedom was right or necessary.

► In Conclusion: The Modernity of Anarchism

It is possible to identify libertarian and libertarian socialist tendencies throughout recorded history, analyse the ideas of each tendency, and examine their historical role. Yet anarchism, we have argued, is not a universal aspect of society or the psyche. It emerged from within the socialist and working-class movement 150 years ago, and its novelty matters. It was also very much a product of modernity, and emerged against the backdrop of the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism. The ideas of anarchism themselves are still profoundly marked by the modern period and modernist thought. Its stress on individual freedom, democracy, and egalitarianism, its embrace of rationalism, science, and modern technology, its belief that history may be designed and directed by humankind, and its hope that the future can be made better than the past—in short, the idea of progress—all mark anarchism as a child of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, like liberalism and Marxism. Pre-modern libertarian ideas were expressed in the language of religion and a hankering for

of older Utopian ideas, it was increasingly viewed as a sinister and subversive force, and explained in criminological and psychological terms; only in the early twentieth century did anarchist ideology itself become a serious object of enquiry, with Eltzbacher blazing the trail and shaping the course of twentieth-century accounts.⁶⁷

This, in turn, opened the door to a series of historical accounts of anarchism, both by scholars and anarchist ideologues.⁶⁸

That the anarchist movement only emerged as an identifiable and self-identified current, a social movement, and a political force from the late 1860s onward is beyond any serious dispute. Eltzbacher himself stressed that anarchism was a new phenomenon.⁶⁹ Notwithstanding their claims that anarchism can be found throughout history (and seemingly unaware that they were contradicting themselves), both the standard works on the subject and the mythological histories developed by some of the anarchists made the same point, dating anarchism to the First International, Bakunin, and the Alliance.

Joll stated that it was only after 1848 that the “modern revolutionary movement begins,” and that it was “in the 1860s that the anarchist movement began to be a practical political force.”⁷⁰ Kedward spoke of the “great age of the anarchists in Europe and America... between 1880 and 1914.”⁷¹ Miller referred to the “eruptions of anarchist activity occurring throughout Europe from the 1860s,” and traced the “origins of anarchism as an organised political force” to splits in the First International.⁷² Woodcock wrote that the “anarchist movement” arose in the First International, and was the “creation” of Bakunin.⁷³ It was in the First International that the “central Marxist-Bakuninist conflicts over political action and the state” were established, and the “great schism” between classical Marxism and anarchism took place.⁷⁴ Even Marshall, who used an extremely loose definition of anarchism, argued that it was Bakunin who “turned anarchism into a theory of political action, and helped develop the anarchist movement” into a popular force.⁷⁵

The same starting point is also conceded in works that propound the legitimising myth of universal anarchism. While making a claim for the universality of anarchism, Kropotkin also noted that anarchism was the outgrowth of nineteenth-century socialist and democratic movements, and was “the no-government system of socialism.”⁷⁶ It was in the First International that socialism moved from “Governmentalism” to a new conception, “formulating itself little by little in the Congresses of the great Association and later on among its successors,” and so “modern anarchism” was born.⁷⁷ For Rocker, in “modern anarchism we have 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.”⁷⁸ It “was with the rise of Mikhail Bakunin that revolutionary anarchism emerged as a social doctrine and that an anarchist movement grew in Europe and became the vanguard of revolutionary endeavour.”⁷⁹

It is therefore reasonable to take the 1860s and the First International as the womb of the anarchist movement; it is also reasonable to take Bakunin, the key figure in the movement at that time, and Kropotkin (after Bakunin’s death, “unquestionably the most widely read and respected anarchist theorist” in the world) as suitable representatives of the anarchist tradition, and the basis from which to identify the main ideas of anarchism.⁸⁰ By doing so, we can also delineate which figures and movements should be included within the broad anarchist tradition.

In particular, it is crucial to note that it was within the *socialist* milieu that the ideas identified with Bakunin, Kropotkin, and the anarchist movement emerged, and given that the First International was a working-class movement, that it was in the *working-class* movement and the unions that anarchism was born. This is a significant point, one that draws attention to a key consequence of Eltzbacher’s position: he removed class struggle and anti-capitalism from anarchism. As Marie Fleming observes, “The importance of the socialist impulse within the thought of the European anarchists” was consistently ignored, an approach that is still commonly expressed by the tendency of scholars to juxtapose the terms anarchist and socialist.⁸¹ It is this that allows Woodcock to describe the question of capitalism as merely a “limited region” over which anarchists had no consensus, Miller to suggest that while the anarchists opposed “existing economic systems” they differed on the question of whether to abolish capitalism or institute a resolutely free market, and Marshall to speak of “anarcho-capitalists.”⁸² Once it is recognised that anarchism was and is part of the socialist movement, it makes no sense to use phrases like “a fusion of anarchist and socialist ideas.”⁸³

The First International was founded in London in 1864, largely at the hands of disciples of Proudhon and some English unionists. While he was not involved in the initiative to establish the organisation, Marx was invited to sit on its general council. He did not represent any major section of the First International, but was a hard worker and impressive thinker, and was able to take control with the aid of his followers along with political socialists of various types, and the mutualists soon lost any substantial influence in the central section.

Kropotkin argued, they created new evils, acting as “schools of crime” and abuse that transformed their inmates into habitual offenders.²³⁰

► Anarchism Redefined: Socialism, Class, and Democracy

Having rejected the contention that anti-statism and a belief in individual freedom constitute the defining features of anarchism, we have suggested that a more adequate definition of anarchism can be derived from an examination of the intellectual and social trend that defined itself as anarchist from the 1860s onward. Given that anti-statism is at best a *necessary* component of anarchist thought, but not a *sufficient* basis on which to classify a set of ideas or a particular thinker as part of the anarchist tradition, it follows that Godwin, Stirner, and Tolstoy cannot truly be considered anarchists. Thinkers and activists who follow in the footsteps of these writers cannot, in turn, be truly considered anarchists or part of the anarchist tradition, even if they may perhaps be considered libertarians.

It follows from there that commonly used categories such as “philosophical anarchism” (often used in reference to Godwin or Tucker), “individualist anarchism” (used in reference to Stirner or the mutualists), “spiritual anarchism” (used in reference to Tolstoy and his co-thinkers), or “lifestyle anarchism” (usually used in reference to latter-day Stirnerites) fall away. Because the ideas designated by these names are not part of the anarchist tradition, their categorisation of variants of anarchism is misleading and arises from a misunderstanding of anarchism. Likewise, adding the rider “class struggle” or “social” to the word anarchist implies that there are anarchists who do not favour class struggle or who are individualists, neither of which is an accurate usage.

There is only one anarchist tradition, and it is rooted in the work of Bakunin and the Alliance. The practice of speaking of class struggle anarchism or social anarchism is probably sometimes necessary, but it does imply that there is a legitimate anarchist tradition that is against class struggle or is anti-social, which is incorrect. In a number of polemics, Bookchin set out to distinguish the “social anarchist” tradition from a host of individualist and irrationalist tendencies that have tried to claim the anarchist label, and provided a powerful critique of these currents. Yet Bookchin still referred to these tendencies as “lifestyle anarchism,” conceding their place in a larger anarchist tradition.²³¹ This was a mistake.

It is our view that the term anarchism should be reserved for a particular rationalist and revolutionary form of libertarian socialism that emerged

Those who disagreed with those values were under no obligation to remain within a society with which they were at odds; equally, that society was under no obligation to maintain such persons. To allow some to enjoy the rights and benefits of a co-operative commonwealth, while allowing these same individuals to refuse to fulfil their duties according to their abilities, was tantamount to resurrecting social and economic inequalities and exploitation—precisely the evils of class that the new world was meant to abolish. Likewise, to allow some individuals to disregard the rights and freedoms of others—even if they otherwise fulfilled their social duties—would amount to a restoration of hierarchy.

An anarchist society would be well within its rights to exercise legitimate coercive power against harmful acts—acts criminal in the manner that they are understood today, such as rape or murder, or in terms of the new morality, such as exploitation. If authority was defined as obedience to a moral principle, anarchism was not against authority; if individual freedom was defined as freedom from every restriction, anarchists were not in favour of individual freedom.²²⁸ Bakunin and Kropotkin tended to assume that in an egalitarian and libertarian social order, based on values of equality, solidarity, and responsible individuality, crime would generally decline sharply.²²⁹ Inequality would not exist to prompt desperate theft and acts of violence; ruthless competition would no longer exist to generate rage and violence; the envy and greed of the capitalist market would not exist to generate ruthless acquisition.

Nonetheless, some crime would still exist. An open and libertarian economic and social order would provide numerous avenues for conflict resolution in cases of minor crimes. It was also suggested that the power of public pressure would restrain people from criminal actions, and the withdrawal of co-operation would suffice to discourage the repetitions of such actions when they occurred. The existence of a popular militia and a dense network of associational life would also tend to prevent crime, as the isolation and alienation of modern society would be a thing of the past.

In more serious cases, the militia could be invoked to intervene, and some form of trial would presumably take place within a structure set up for this purpose. If the criminal was found to be mentally ill and therefore could not be held accountable for their actions, the solution would be some form of medical treatment.

Otherwise, some measures would have to be taken: possibly compensation, maybe a period of isolation or exile, or perhaps permanent expulsion from the anarchist society. The use of prisons was, however, out of the question; as

It was only with the entry of Bakunin and his circle that Marx's domination began to be challenged. The Alliance, though formally dissolved, continued to operate, and provided the pole around which a growing number of people and currents critical of political socialism began to cohere. The Belgian delegate Cesar de Paepe, the Swiss James Guillaume (1844-1916), Adhemer Schwitzgubel (1844-1895), and the French activist Jean-Louis Pindy (1840-1917) were among those who, along with Bakunin, played a key role in formulating the anarchist conception at the meetings of the First International. Guillaume was a schoolteacher and historian who took an energetic part in the First International, worked closely with Bakunin, withdrew from political activity in 1878, later resurfaced in 1903 as a prominent figure in French syndicalism, and died in 1916.

Bakunin and the Alliance made their first appearance at the 1869 Basel congress of the First International, which Bakunin dominated with his striking oratory and personal force. Bakunin's victory over Marx—centred on the relatively trivial issue of inheritance rights—opened the struggle with Marx in earnest, for Marx had been challenged successfully for the first time on matters of policy and doctrine.⁸⁴ This meeting saw important early discussions of syndicalism by Pindy, and a crucial debate on the state by de Paepe and Schwitzgubel.⁸⁵

By 1871, the First International was divided into Marxist and Bakuninist sections, and it split the following year along these lines. Both factions subsequently claimed to be the real First International, although the anarchists, who were the large majority of the First International's adherents and sections, and counted among its ranks the largest national federations of sections, certainly had the stronger grounds for their claim. Not every group affiliated with the Bakuninist section was anarchist, but the anarchists were the majority in what became known as the "Saint-Imier International," which lasted until 1877. The Marxist-led faction, headquartered in New York, lingered on until 1876. Bakunin died in 1876, and was buried in Berne, Switzerland.

This new movement, this self-consciously "anarchist" tradition, defined itself from the start in a clear manner, with a detailed social analysis along with strategies and tactics to change society. The new doctrine had none of the incoherence often attributed to it. In terms of its intellectual influences, only Proudhon, out of Eltzbacher's other sages, influenced anarchism. Marx, too, was an important influence, although the bitterness between the anarchists and the Marxists led many to downplay his ideas. Godwin and Tolstoy played no role.

While the key figures in the anarchist movement were Bakunin and Kropotkin, neither claimed to be the originator of anarchism, insisting—like subsequent anarchists—that their philosophy stemmed directly from the experiences of the

working class and peasantry. Such an identification of the anarchist idea with great individuals has been regarded by anarchists as suggesting infallible texts or teachers, undermining the collectivist nature of anarchism as a social creed rather than an individual revelation, and deifying individuals. When the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* (“Free Voice of Labour”), an American Jewish anarchist paper, planned to publish a supplement of Kropotkin photographs, Kropotkin himself objected on the grounds that he refused to be made into an icon.⁸⁶

Both Bakunin and Kropotkin defined anarchism as an anti-capitalist ideology and a form of socialism. Bakunin’s writings before 1870 tend to use the term revolutionary socialism rather than anarchism, and sharply distinguish his collectivist and anti-authoritarian approach from the authoritarian socialism of Marx. Kropotkin is equally emphatic: “We are communists,” but “our communism is not that of the authoritarian school; it is anarchist communism, communism without government, free communism.”⁸⁷ This identification with the socialist movement is extremely significant. Later, of course, many anarchists rejected labels like socialist and communist because of their associations with social democracy and Communism, but this should not be understood to mean that anarchism was not socialist.

In place of capitalism and centralised state control, the anarchists favoured a stateless, self-managed, and planned economy in which the means of production were controlled by the working class and peasantry, class divisions had been abolished, and distribution took place on the basis of need. This would provide a situation of social and economic equality that would enable genuine individual freedom to exist. There was no sign of any hankering after the pre-modern era; the anarchists aimed at a rational, democratic, and modern society.

► Against Hierarchy

The basic premise of all of the anarchist arguments was a deep and fundamental commitment to individual freedom. For the anarchists, however, freedom could only exist, and be exercised, in society; equally, inegalitarian and hierarchical social structures made freedom impossible. It followed that the anarchist ideal was a society based on social and economic equality as well as self-management, in which individual freedom could truly exist. Bakunin declared that the anarchist “insists on his positive rights to life and all of its intellectual, moral and physical joys” because “he loves life and wants to enjoy it in all of its abundance.”⁸⁸

*Like virtually all of the intellectuals of his day, he acknowledged the importance of science as a means of promoting eventual human betterment; hence the embattled atheism and anti-clericalism that pervades all his writings. By the same token, he demanded that the scientific and technological resources of society be mobilised in support of social cooperation, freedom, and community, instead of being abused for profit, competitive advantage, and war. In this respect, Mikhail Bakunin was not behind his times, but a century or two ahead of them.*²²³

The rationalist impulse in anarchism—which locates anarchism firmly within the modern world, rather than the pre-modern ones of moral philosophy and religion, and situates it, moreover, in the world of nineteenth-century socialism—was shared with the mutualists and Godwin, with his stress on reason and the belief that even politics could be a precise science.²²⁴ Rationalism was, however, absent from the thinking of Tolstoy and Stirner; Stirner was a relativist for whom “truth awaits and receives everything from you, and itself is only through you; for it exists only—in your head.”²²⁵

► Crime and Social Order

Woodcocks claim that anarchists opposed majority rule and direct democracy is, when seen against this backdrop, most unconvincing. Bakunin was quite clear that “we too seek co-operation: we are even convinced that co-operation in every branch of labour and science is going to be the prevailing form of social organisation in the future.”²²⁶ Anarchism would be nothing less than the most complete realisation of *democracy*—democracy in the fields, factories, and neighbourhoods, co-ordinated through federal structures and councils from below upward, and based on economic and social equality. With the “abolition of the state,” Bakunin commented, the “spontaneous self-organisation of popular life, for centuries paralysed and absorbed by the omnipotent power of the state, would revert to the communes”—that is, to self-governing neighbourhoods, towns, cities, and villages.²²⁷

An anarchist society must also include a measure of legitimate coercive power exercised against those who committed harmful acts against the commonwealth—that is, acts against the social order and the freedom of other individuals. In particular, the linkage between rights and duties had to be maintained. Given that the anarchist society would be a voluntary association, membership assumed a basic commitment to the goals and values of that society.

another.²¹⁵ Federation would also allow association on the basis of national and cultural interests and differences, and form part of a “future social organisation” that was “carried out from the bottom up, by free association, with unions and localities federated by communes, regions, nations, and, finally, a great universal and international federation.”²¹⁶

Federalism linking neighbourhoods and workplaces, producers with other producers as well as consumers, would allow large-scale but participatory and democratic economic planning. There would not be a state co-ordinating production from above through a central plan or a market co-ordinating production through the price system but a vast economic federation of self-managing enterprises and communities, with a supreme assembly at its head that would balance supply and demand, and direct and distribute world production on the basis of demands from below. The anarchists favoured, as Daniel Guerin astutely noted, worldwide planning based on “federalist and non-coercive centralisation.”²¹⁷ For Rocker,

*What we seek is not world exploitation but a world economy in which every group of people shall find its natural place and enjoy equal rights with all others. Hence, internationalisation of natural resources and territory affording raw materials is one of the most important prerequisites for the existence of a socialistic order based on libertarian principles.... We need to call into being a new human community having its roots in equality of economic conditions and uniting all members of the great cultural community by new ties of mutual interest, disregarding the frontiers of the present states.*²¹⁸

We mentioned above Bakunin and Kropotkin’s commitment to rationalism along with the use of advanced technologies in the new society. This arose partly from a broader anarchist commitment to rationalist and scientific ways of thinking. The notion—presented, for example, in Eric Hobsbawm’s research on the Spanish anarchists—that the anarchist movement was millenarian and irrational is not sustainable.²¹⁹ Subsequent research has challenged Hobsbawm’s analysis as flawed “on virtually every point,” perhaps as a consequence of Hobsbawm’s general hostility to anarchism.²²⁰ In Spain, as elsewhere, anarchism acted as a culture of “radical popular enlightenment” that placed a “high premium on scientific knowledge and technological advance,” and “expounded continually on such themes as evolution, rationalist cosmologies, and the value of technology in liberating humanity.”²²¹ This goes back to Bakunin and his circle. Contrary to the view that he disparaged formal education and Enlightenment ideals, Bakunin was a rationalist and modernist.²²² As Bookchin described him,

It is simply not true to claim, like E. H. Carr in his rather hostile biography, that Bakunin was an extreme individualist influenced by Stirner.⁸⁹ Bakunin envisaged freedom as a product of society, not a revolt against society by individuals, arguing:

Society, far from decreasing ... freedom, on the contrary creates the individual freedom of all human beings. Society is the root, the tree, and liberty is its fruit. Hence, in every epoch, man must seek his freedom not at the beginning but at the end of history.... I can feel free only in the presence of, and in relation with other men....

*I am truly free only when all human beings, men and women, are equally free, and the freedom of other men, far from negating or limiting my freedom, is, on the contrary, its necessary premise and confirmation.*⁹⁰

He saw the struggle against extreme individualism as an essential part of the anarchist project: “In every Congress” of the First International, “we have fought the individualists... who claim, along with the moralists and bourgeois economists, that man can be free ... outside of society.... He is ... a social animal.... Only in society can he become a human being ... freedom ... is the product of the collectivity.”⁹¹

Along similar lines, Kropotkin rejected the “misanthropic bourgeois individualism” he identified with people like Stirner.⁹² This approach, of every person for herself or himself, was not freedom at all but simply the right of the strong to oppress the weak. What Kropotkin favoured instead was “true individuality,” which could only be developed “through practising the highest communist sociability.” It “is easy to see” that Stirner’s approach was simply a “disguised return” of “privileged minorities.” The “privileged minorities” could only survive if backed by a state power, and so “the claims of these individualists necessarily end in a return to the state idea and to that same coercion which they so fiercely attack.”⁹³

In other words, genuine individual freedom and individuality could only exist in a free society. The anarchists did not therefore identify freedom with the right of everybody to do exactly what one pleased but with a social order in which collective effort and responsibilities—that is to say, obligations—would provide the material basis and social nexus in which individual freedom could exist. This is entirely at odds with Stirner’s views. Stirner believed that “the egoist” thinks “only of himself” only of “my cause” and not of anything more, whether that be “the Good Cause, then Gods cause, the cause of mankind, of truth, of freedom, of humanity, of justice; further, the cause of my people, my prince, my fatherland; finally, even the cause of Mind, and a thousand other causes.” The “name of

egoist” must be applied to the “man who, instead of living to an idea,—*i.e.* a spiritual thing,” is always “sacrificing it to his personal advantage.”⁹⁴

Between the notion of freedom articulated by Stirner and that of the anarchists lies an abyss. For Bakunin, a persons “duties to society are indissolubly linked with his rights.”⁹⁵ The watchwords of popular emancipation were freedom and solidarity. Such solidarity was “the spontaneous product of social life, economic as well as moral; the result of the free federation of common interests, aspirations and tendencies.” Most important, he emphasised, it “has as its essential basis *equality and collective labour*—obligatory not by law, but by the force of realities—and collective property.”⁹⁶ Kropotkin likewise insisted that “all must be put on the same footing as producers and consumers of wealth,” and “everybody” must contribute to “the common well-being to the full extent of his capacities.”⁹⁷

Such, in short, was the aim of anarchism: not “misanthropic bourgeois individualism” but a deep love of freedom, understood as a social product, a deep respect for human rights, a profound celebration of humankind and its potential, and a commitment to a form of society where a “true individuality” was irrevocably linked to “the highest communist sociability.” This interlinking of rights and duties opens the door to the exercise of a degree of *legitimate* coercive power in an anarchist society—an issue that will be examined below.⁹⁸

The anarchist view that freedom was exercised through and implied obligations to society was not shared by Godwin, who saw society as a threat to freedom and looked forward to a world of isolated rational individuals. Stirner was also an individualist, but of rather a different sort than Godwin. He believed that unbridled self-interest was the only true value, and saw idealism as a cynical mask, celebrated criminals, and claimed might made right: “Everything over which I have might that cannot be torn from me remains my property; well, then let might decide about property, and I will expect everything from my might!”⁹⁹ Here, freedom was not a withdrawal from society but a doctrine of revolt against others.

► Against Capitalism and Landlordism

The anarchists aimed, said Bakunin, “to organise society in such a manner that every individual, man or woman, should find, upon entering life, approximately equal means for the development of his or her diverse faculties and their utilization in his or her work.”¹⁰⁰ And “freedom,” he wrote, is “above all, eminently social, because it can only be realised in society and by the strictest

freedom, achieved through co-operation, to exist. It would be international, not “anarchism in one country;” and stateless, with production, distribution, and general administration carried out from below through self-management.

Democratic local groups at the workplace and in the neighbourhood would be the nucleus of the social movement that would create libertarian socialism. As the revolution took place, these groups would form the basis of the new society. Wherever possible, these groups would deal with local matters in their own way, democratically—for instance, to determine working hours, local parks, school festivals, and so forth.

A few anarchists after Bakunin and Kropotkin evidently believed that this required an almost total decentralisation of production and the creation of self-sufficient local economies—a position that raises many doubts. Even at a local level, total autonomy is not possible. Decisions regarding which goods to produce, for example, obviously affect consumers who are not involved in production. The more sophisticated an economy, the more every workplace forms part of a complex chain of production and distribution. Many services also cannot be produced and consumed only at a local level, such as transportation and communications. Finally, unequal resource endowments mean that it is difficult to envisage industrial production taking place on the basis of local autonomy and isolation, and points to the danger of reproducing regional and international disparities in income and living standards.

Bakunin and Kropotkin were keenly aware of these problems, and certainly did not envision an international anarchist revolution creating a world of isolated villages. Seeing the new society as making use of the most advanced technologies, and aware of the possibility that regional unevenness would provide a recipe for future conflicts, they saw the need to plan distribution and production, and co-ordinate production chains as well as large-scale public services. Free federation between local groups was seen as the key means of allowing co-ordination and exchange without a state or market. Councils of mandated delegates accountable to local groups would link the federation.

Bakunin stressed that “revolutionary delegations” from “all the rebel countries” would help knit together the “free federation of agricultural and industrial associations” from “the bottom up.” Society would be “reorganised” “from the bottom up through the free formation and free federation of worker associations, industrial, agricultural, scientific and artistic alike,” “free federations founded upon collective ownership of the land, capital, raw materials and the instruments of labour.”²¹⁴ Kropotkin expected multitudes of organisations to exist, ranging from chess clubs to scientific societies, and that they would link up with one

What is important to note at this stage is that the broad anarchist tradition accepted a measure of coercion. This is a key issue, ignored by approaches that reduce anarchism to individualism and anti-statism, or define anarchism as an opposition to any constraints on any individual. A basic distinction is drawn, usually implicitly, in anarchist thinking between *hierarchical* power and exploitation, which exercises force and coercion to perpetuate a basically unjust and inequitable society, and legitimate coercive power, derived from collective and democratic decision making used to create and sustain a libertarian and socialist order. The former category refers to the *repressive* actions of the dominant classes and their institutional complexes; the latter refers to *resistance* and emancipatory direct action.

These two simply should not be collapsed as undifferentiated “authoritarianism,” as Engels suggested. He believed the anarchists to be hypocritical in opposing “authority” while advocating revolution: “A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is an act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part.”²¹⁰ But this confuses the violence and coercion used to create and maintain an unjust situation, and the violence of resistance. It is somewhat akin to treating murder and self-defence as identical.

It is on this point that anarchists differed sharply from Tolstoy’s doctrine. Tolstoy advocated non-resistance. But even anarchist pacifists practice resistance and seek to coerce the class enemy, albeit peacefully. For Tolstoy, religious contemplation, rather than direct action, was key. As for Stirner, his message was “personal insurrection rather than general revolution.”²¹¹ Indeed, he had no real interest in the actual abolition of the state: “My object is not the overthrow of an established order but my elevation above it, my purpose and deed are not... political or social but... directed toward myself and my ownness alone ... an egoistic purpose and deed.”²¹² Stirner’s own project, in fact, emerged in a debate with the socialism of Wilhelm Weitling and Moses Hess in which he invoked egoism against socialism.²¹³

► For a New World

As discussed above, the anarchists stress the need to create a new social order based on social and economic equality, self-management, and individual freedom, sometimes termed “anarchist communism,” libertarian socialism, or libertarian communism. The actual details of the new society are often vague, but they can certainly be distinguished from the policies of the old East bloc. Libertarian socialism would be a social order that allowed genuine individual

equality and solidarity among men.”¹⁰¹ “A person who is dying from starvation, who is crushed by poverty, who every day is on the point of death from cold and hunger and who sees everyone he loves suffering likewise but is unable to come to their aid, is not free; that person is a slave.”¹⁰²

But such a free society did not exist yet. Every individual did *not* find “upon entering life” equal access to the means of life but instead a world scarred by inequality and privilege; for the wealthy few, life could be a joy, but for the mass of the people, for the working class and peasantry, it was a struggle to survive, a world of destitution among plenty. “True individuality” simply could not exist for ordinary people under the existing social conditions, for equality and solidarity did not exist.

At the heart of the problem were typically interlocked systems of class domination and exploitation. Most obviously, there were the systems of capitalism and landlordism. For the anarchists, the capitalists or bourgeoisie were powerful in the modern world, but where economies were less developed, older pre-capitalist landowning elites (generally hereditary aristocracies or nobilities) also played an important role. It is not possible to understand the anarchist position on the peasantry unless it is noted that the socialist impulse in anarchism was not simply an anti-capitalist one but entailed a critique of landed wealth as well.

The capitalists and landlords were two elites that could easily coexist—indeed, many of the great landholders developed into rural capitalists—and it is in this context that the common use of the term “middle class” to refer to capitalists in nineteenth-century anarchist writing must be understood. They did not use the term middle class in either of the ways common in the twentieth century—to signify relatively comfortable layers of society, or to refer to the middling layers of professionals, small business people, and middle management—but rather to distinguish the new capitalists from the aristocrats. The same usage may also be found in older Marxist writing, yet has generally fallen away in later years.

The landlords and capitalists made up a substantial part of the ruling class of the modern world, but there was a third element to this class, according to the anarchists: the managers of the state apparatus. This “bureaucratic aristocracy,” these “cynical bureaucratic martinets,” were also “enemies of the people,” and just as involved in the domination and exploitation of the popular classes.¹⁰³ From this perspective, presidents, kings, generals, members of parliament, directors, and mayors were as much a part of the ruling class as the industrialists.

Landlordism and capitalism were directly responsible for making the “strictest equality and solidarity” impossible. Anarchists identified the peasantry as

victims of landlordism: because the peasantry did not generally own their own land, they were compelled to pay rents in the form of labour, produce, or money where a landlord or corporation held title, or pay taxes where the state or the peasant held land title. In both cases, the peasantry were compelled to turn over a significant part of their produce to the dominant groups for the right of farming the land on which they lived. And in order to survive, the peasantry were often compelled to borrow money, particularly in lean seasons, and sell goods on the market at low prices in good seasons with bumper harvests; many were, in addition, compelled to enter wage labour to make ends meet.

Trapped in a web of domination and exploitation, the peasantry constituted an oppressed class. As Kropotkin declared:

*But the golden age is over for the small farmer. Today he hardly knows how to make ends meet. He gets into debt, becomes a victim of the cattle-dealer, the real-estate jobber, the usurer; notes and mortgages ruin whole villages, even more than the frightful taxes imposed by State and commune. Small proprietorship is in a dreadful condition; and even if the small farmer is still owner in name, he is in fact nothing more than a tenant paying rent to money-dealers and usurers.*¹⁰⁴

Bakunin noted the peasants' "instinctive hatred of the 'fine gentlemen and ... bourgeois landlords, who enjoy the bounty of the earth without cultivating it with their own hands.'" ¹⁰⁵ Kropotkin complained of the injustice of a system in which a person may only farm if "he gives up part of [the] product to the landlord." ¹⁰⁶

The system of landlordism was as intolerable as capitalism, which oppressed the working class. The problem with capitalism was not its use of modern technology, for the anarchists were greatly in favour of new technologies that could eliminate drudgery and reduce working time. The problem was the pervasive social injustice and oppressive hierarchy embedded in the class system. In other words, the problems lay in the economic and social relations under which technology was used, not with the technology itself.

Capitalists and state officials controlled the means of production and dominated capitalist production. Asked Bakunin, "Is it necessary to repeat here the irrefutable arguments of Socialism which no bourgeois economist has yet succeeded in disproving?" "Property" and "capital" in "their present form" meant that "the capitalist and the property owner" had the power and the right, guaranteed by the state, to "live without working," while the worker was already "in the position of a serf." ¹⁰⁷ (In comparing the worker to a serf, Bakunin was

that even the most ardent reformers hardly dare to attack them in their writings...

*In short, it is the birth of completely new ideas concerning the manifold links in citizenship—conceptions which soon become realities, and then begin to spread among the neighbouring nations, convulsing the world and giving to the succeeding age its watchword, its problems, its science, its lines of economic, political and moral development.*²⁰⁷

This brings us to the complicated issue of the use of force and violence in the revolution. For Bakunin and Kropotkin, the revolution would certainly always involve some violence, the result of the resistance of the old order to the new. It would thus, sadly but unavoidably, be necessary to organise for the armed self-defence of the masses; the alternative would be brutal counter-revolution. The two anarchists believed that military action had to reflect libertarian forms of organisation as far as possible, and that the functions of self-defence had to be carried out by a large proportion of the population in order to prevent the emergence of a separate armed and hierarchical force that could be the seed of a new state. In place of a modern hierarchical army, they advocated a militia, democratic in content and popular in character, in which officers would be elected and should have no special privileges. This would not be a dictatorship of the proletariat in the classical Marxist sense but the armed self-defence of the organs of revolutionary counter-power created by the popular classes; it was not a state, at least as the anarchists understood the term.

Bakunin stressed the need for the "dissolution of the army, the judicial system ... the police," to be replaced by "permanent barricades," co-ordination through deputies with "always responsible, and always revocable mandates," and the "extension of the revolutionary force" within and between the "rebel countries."²⁰⁸ The workers and peasants, he declared, would unite by "federating the fighting battalions," so that "district by district" there would be a common co-ordinated defence against internal and external enemies.²⁰⁹

Most anarchists and syndicalists seemed to accept this general approach. Some certainly hoped that the revolution would be as peaceful as possible, and many under-estimated the extent of armed resistance that the ruling classes would certainly mount. There were, however, some among the syndicalists who believed that the revolutionary general strike would enable a peaceful revolution; there were also a small number of pacifist anarchists who believed that violence in any form was both unnecessary and unacceptable, in that it generated a new apparatus of privilege and power. We will discuss the debates on the defence of the revolution in more detail in chapters 6 and 7.

through direct action, and if the struggle must prefigure the future society, then the organisations, actions, and ideas have to be consistent with anarchism.

The anarchists maintained that the means shape the ends. The movement for revolution had to contain all the key values of anarchism: internal democracy, self-management, and as far as possible, social and economic equality, and its goals could not be achieved through authoritarianism and hierarchy. Such a movement could obviously not take the form of a political party aimed at taking state power, an elite vanguard party aimed at establishing revolutionary dictatorship, or a guerrilla movement aimed at imposing itself on the masses.

What was critical was a movement for self-emancipation by and for the working class and peasantry, an expression of the organised will of the popular classes, which would themselves be the architects of the new order rather than the passive recipients of salvation from above. The revolution, Kropotkin argued, could only be “a widespread popular movement” in “every town and village,” in which the masses “take upon themselves the task of rebuilding society” through associations operating on democratic and anti-hierarchical principles.²⁰² To look above to leaders or the state for freedom was simply to prepare the ground for the rise of a ruling class. “Free workers require a free organisation,” and this organisation must be based on “free agreement and free co-operation, without sacrificing the autonomy of the individual to the all-pervading influence of a state,” asserted Kropotkin.²⁰³

The “material conditions” and “needs” of the popular classes generated, contended Bakunin, a fundamental antagonism to capitalism and landlordism as well as the state, and a desire for “material well-being” and to “live and work [in] an atmosphere of freedom” created the potential to remake the world through revolution.²⁰⁴ Yet this was not enough. The popular classes were “poverty-stricken and discontented,” but in the depths of the “utmost poverty” often “fail to show signs of stirring.”²⁰⁵ What was missing was a “new social philosophy,” a “new faith” in the possibility of a new social order and the ability of ordinary people to create such a society.²⁰⁶ A revolutionary counter-culture embodying the “new faith” was vital, according to Kropotkin, and it distinguished revolutions from sporadic outbreaks and revolts:

A revolution is infinitely more than a series of insurrections... is more than a simple fight between parties, however sanguinary; more than mere street-fighting, and much more than a mere change of government.... A revolution is a swift overthrow, in a few years, of institutions which have taken centuries to root into the soil, and seem so fixed and immovable

referring to the unfree peasants of feudal Europe who were legally bound to particular estates and unable to move freely).

This was a system of exploitation, which the anarchists evidently understood as the transfer of resources from a productive class to a dominant but unproductive one. Exploitation in the capitalist system took place at work and through the wage system. The worker was paid a wage that in theory covered one’s basic needs. Yet the actual value produced by the worker at work was always higher than the wage received by the worker; a baking worker, for example, might help produce several hundred loaves of bread per day, but would receive the cash equivalent of perhaps two loaves of bread per day. The difference went to the capitalist who owned the bakery.

Unlike the serf, the worker was controlled in part through the labour market; lacking property on which to subsist, the worker was forced to work for another, and as Bakunin put it, the “terrible threat of starvation which daily hangs over his head and over his family, will force him to accept any conditions imposed by the gainful calculations of the capitalist.” Private property in the means of production therefore meant, for Bakunin, “the power and the right to live by exploiting the work of someone else, the right to exploit the work of those who possess neither property nor capital and who thus are forced to sell their productive power to the lucky owners of both.”¹⁰⁸ For Kropotkin, “Owing to our wage system” the “sudden increase in our powers of production ... resulted only in an unprecedented accumulation of wealth in the hands of the owners of capital; while an increase in misery for great numbers, and an insecurity of life for all, has been the lot of the workmen.” It was a “sad mockery” and a “misrepresentation,” said Kropotkin, to call the labour contract a “free contract,” for the worker accepted the contract from “sheer necessity,” the “force” of need.¹⁰⁹

The serfs at least had direct control over the work process and managed many of their affairs through the village. The waged worker did not. The drive to maximise exploitation was always wedded to authoritarian workplace regimes. For “once the contract has been negotiated,” Bakunin argued, “the serfdom of the workers is doubly increased,” because the “merchandise” that the worker had “sold to his employer” was “his labour, his personal services, the productive forces of his body, mind, and spirit that are found in him and are inseparable from his person—it is therefore himself”:

From then on, the employer will watch over him, either directly or by means of overseers; every day during working hours and under controlled conditions, the employer will be the owner of his actions and

*movements. When he is told: "Do this," the worker is obligated to do it; or he is told: "Go there," he must go. Is this not what is called a serf?*¹¹⁰

Finally, domination through both the labour market and labour process was often supplemented by various forms of extra-economic coercion that were used to control and bond labour: debt, controls over movement, forced labour, and so forth.

Linked to these issues was the question of distribution. Under capitalism, goods and services were distributed through the market; they were commodities that had to be bought before they could be used. Access was conditional on the ability to pay, rather than on actual need. An unemployed person without a wage had no specific right to the goods or services one needed to survive, while the wages of the employed workers were at best just able to cover ones basic needs. One result was an apparent situation of "over-production": more goods and services were produced than could be sold, because the working class, a sizable part of the population, had such limited purchasing power. Another was war and imperial conquest. Kropotkin argued that a system where workers were "unable to purchase with their wages the riches they are producing," an artificial situation of over-production, resulted in "wars, continuous wars ... for supremacy in the world market," as each country sought new markets for its surplus goods and services to the elites of other countries.¹¹¹

From the above it is quite clear that the class issue—what Bakunin called the "social question"—was uppermost in the minds of the anarchist movement. The anarchists, consequently, viewed class struggle as a necessary part of social change, and saw in the victims of class domination and exploitation—the working class and peasantry—the agents of that change. Capitalism was no mere "limited region" of "economic organisation" over which the anarchists could not agree, as Woodcock suggests.¹¹² It was, and remains, at the heart of the anarchist critique of the modern world. Miller's assertion that while the anarchists opposed "existing economic systems" they differed on the question of whether to abolish capitalism or institute a resolutely free market is equally problematic, as is Marshall's attempt to find a home in the anarchist tradition for those extreme liberals who adopt the oxymoron "anarcho-capitalist."¹¹³

Economic liberalism, with its belief that a competitive free market based on maximising self-interest produces optimal results for most people—the idea central to its current incarnation as neoliberalism—is not anarchist. Stirner, who translated into German Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and the writings of Smith's French disciple, J. B. Say, was not an advocate of the free market, despite Marshall's claim to the contrary.¹¹⁴ What he shared with economic liberalism,

of a broader international struggle. A social revolution must be international in scope, and oppressed nationalities "must therefore link their aspirations and forces with the aspirations and forces of all other countries."¹⁹⁸ Given this perspective, most (but by no means all) anarchists were hostile to nationalism: "All nationalism is reactionary in nature, for it strives to enforce on the separate parts of the great human family a definite character according to a preconceived idea."¹⁹⁹

The anarchist stress on the importance of creating substantive equality through a new social order that was both libertarian and socialist, and on internationalism, also differentiates anarchism from the ideas of people like Godwin, Stirner, and Proudhon. Both Godwin and Stirner made an abstract individual the centre of their analysis, and generally paid little attention to the social context that made freedom possible. Godwin wanted an end to private property because it hindered the development of reason, while Stirner did not see socialism as a goal. Proudhon was an outspoken misogynist and anti-feminist who believed that a "woman knows enough if she knows enough to mend our shirts and cook us a steak."²⁰⁰ His views were also infused with nationalist and racial prejudices. We will examine the broad anarchist tradition and its relationship to issues of race, imperialism, and gender in more depth in chapter 10.

► Counter-power and Counter-culture

For the anarchists, class struggle had to be anti-statist and anti-authoritarian; it had to be a self-managed struggle conducted outside of and against the state, as noted earlier. The state was an instrument created for the domination of the few over the many, and Bakunin argued that anarchists sought the "destruction of the state" as an "immediate" goal, for the "state means domination, and any domination presupposes the subjugation of the masses" and a "ruling minority."²⁰¹ It was also particularly important that the struggle for a new society embody within itself the seeds of the new order, so that the basic framework of the new society would have already been created within and through the struggle against the old order of things.

The character of the revolution was in large part *prefigured* by the ideas and practices of the movements of the popular classes that pre-existed it, and its course was shaped by the actions of those movements. This required the creation of organs of counter-power able to supplant the organs of ruling class power, and the creation of a revolutionary counter-culture that rejected the values of the status quo. If organisations and ideas are crucial, and they come together

*The opening of new markets, the forcing of products, good and bad, upon the foreigner, is the principle underlying all the politics of the present day throughout our continent, and the real cause of the wars of the nineteenth century.*¹⁹²

Later anarchists held similar views. Rocker claimed that it was “meaningless to speak of a community of national interests, for that which the ruling class of every country has up to now defended as national interest has never been anything but the special interest of privileged minorities in society secured by the exploitation and political suppression of the great masses.” For behind nationalist ideas, wrote Rocker, are “hidden ... the selfish interests of power-loving politicians and money-loving businessmen for whom the nation is a convenient cover to hide their personal greed and their schemes for political power.”¹⁹³

Grigori Petrovitch “G. P” Maximoff (1893-1950) contended that “so-called national interests ... are in fact the interests of the ruling classes” for whom the right “to independent sovereign existence, is nothing but the right of the national bourgeoisie to the unlimited exploitation of its proletariat.” Furthermore, the new national states “in their turn begin to deny national rights to their own subordinate minorities, to persecute their languages, their desires and their right to be themselves,” and in “this manner ‘self-determination’ ... also fails to solve the national problem” itself; “it merely creates it anew.”¹⁹⁴ Maximoff, who graduated as an agronomist in 1915 in Petrograd, became involved in the revolutionary movement of his day.¹⁹⁵ He played a key role in the Union of Anarcho-syndicalist Propaganda and the subsequent Confederation of Russian Anarcho-syndicalists, and edited the weekly *Golos Truda* (“Voice of Labour”). The paper had been initially published in the United States as the organ of the anarcho-syndicalist Union of Russian Workers, a group with around ten thousand members.¹⁹⁶ In 1917, it was transplanted to revolutionary Russia. Maximoff was forced into exile from Russia in 1921, but he remained an important part of the anarchist movement in Germany, France, and the United States.

For Bakunin, then, the achievement of national liberation had to be linked to the broader struggle for an international revolution. If nationality was separate from the state and a natural feature of society, it did not need the state for emancipation, and as Bakunin argued, the unity of a nationality could only occur naturally, and could not be created from above through statist projects of “nation-building.”¹⁹⁷

Equally, if liberation from national oppression involved class struggle, then it could not stop at the borders of a state or even a nationality but had to be part

however, was the notion that the unrestricted pursuit of personal advantage is a virtue in itself, a basic sentiment of laissez-faire capitalism.

The anarchists, by contrast, had nothing but contempt for capitalism and loathed economic liberals. Bakunin referred to economic liberals as the “passionate lovers of all freedom which they can use to their advantage” who “demand the unlimited right to exploit the proletariat and bitterly resent state interference.”¹¹⁵

Kropotkin rejected the “middle class economists” who promoted the doctrine of the free market, in which the state should refrain from involving itself in the economy. “While giving the capitalist any degree of free scope to amass his wealth at the expense of the helpless labourers, the government has *never* and *nowhere* ... afforded the labourers the opportunity to ‘do as they pleased.’” In a class system, the free market was nothing but a means to exploitation, something to be put aside whenever it suited the ruling class: “‘Non-interference,’ and more than non-interference,—direct support, help and protection,—existed *only* in the interests of the exploiters.”¹¹⁶

► Against the State

For the anarchists, the class system, affecting the majority of people, was the most fundamental obstacle to true individuality. Many commentators, both hostile and sympathetic, have nonetheless reduced anarchism to anti-statism. According to Engels, the anarchists argued that “it is the state which has created capital, that the capitalist only has his capital by grace of the state ... the state is the chief evil ... which must be done away with and then capitalism will go to blazes of itself.”¹¹⁷ This approach fails to understand *why* anarchists opposed the state. It cannot be claimed that anarchists rejected the state simply because it imposed social order and rules, nor that they attribute all social ills to the state.

Rather, the anarchist critique of the state arises partly from an opposition to hierarchy and partly from a class outlook. The state is seen as a defender of the class system and a centralised body that necessarily concentrates power in the hands of the ruling classes; in both respects, it is the means through which a *minority* rules a majority. It follows that the abolition of the state is one of the preconditions for a libertarian and socialist order. The view that the state was an organ of class domination was one that anarchists shared with Marxists. But there were also critical differences between the traditions. The state, Bakunin argued:

*“...has always been the patrimony of some privileged class or other; a priestly class, an aristocratic class, a bourgeois class. And finally, when all the other classes have exhausted themselves, the state becomes the patrimony of the bureaucratic class and then falls—or, if you will, rises—to the position of a machine; but it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of the state that there should be some privileged class devoted to its preservation.”*¹¹⁸

For Kropotkin, the state was nothing but the concentrated power of the ruling class, and in the modern period, “the chief bulwark of capital.”¹¹⁹

Bakunin was certainly convinced that a parliamentary system was preferable to a dictatorship because it allowed more scope for individual freedom and popular self-activity:

“We are firmly convinced it is true that the most imperfect republic is a thousand times better than the most enlightened monarchy. In a republic there are at least brief periods when the people, while continuously exploited, is not oppressed, in the monarchies, oppression is constant. The democratic regime also lifts the masses up gradually to participation in public life—something the monarchy never does.”

Yet, for Bakunin, while a parliamentary system was an important reform that benefited the popular classes, it still did not create a means to remove the basic inequalities of power and wealth in society:

*Nevertheless, while we prefer the republic, we must recognise and proclaim that whatever the form of government may be, so long as human society continues to be divided into different classes as a result of the hereditary inequality of occupations, of wealth, of education, and of rights, there will always be a class-restricted government and the inevitable exploitation of the majorities by the minorities. The State is nothing but this domination and this exploitation, well regulated and systematised.*¹²⁰

The establishment of a parliamentary government did not change the basic class character of the state: it was as much a form of “class-rule” as “absolute monarchy.”¹²¹ Laws created by the state were, in general, not a means providing equal rights and protection for all but served the interests of those who thrived on inequality and oppression; all “legislation made within the state,” Kropotkin insisted, “has to be repudiated because it has always been made with regard to the interests of the privileged classes.”¹²² Only laws forced on to the state *from without*, by the direct action of the popular classes, could benefit the masses.

free of Turkey, there were “no nobles, no big landowners, no industrialists and no very wealthy merchants” at independence; a “new bureaucratic aristocracy,” drawn from the educated young patriots, soon emerged as the ruling class in the new state. The “iron logic” of their position transformed them into “cynical bureaucratic martinets” who became “enemies of the people,” a ruling class.¹⁸⁸ This is a point that would seem to be confirmed by the experience of many post-colonial countries, where the leading cadres of the independence movements used state power and developed into new ruling classes—often proving as repressive as their colonial forebears.

The rhetoric of independence, freedom, and national unity would become a cover for the activities of the new rulers, and a cudgel to beat the working class, the peasantry, and the poor. Bakunin observed that “the bourgeoisie love their country only because, for them, the country, represented by the State, safeguards their economic, political and social privileges.... Patriots of the State, they become furious enemies of the mass of the people.” Thus, for Bakunin, national liberation without social revolutionary goals would simply be an elite transition, transferring power from a foreign to a local ruling class.¹⁸⁹

Moreover, newly independent states would continually re-create the problem of conquest and national oppression: “to exist, a state must become an invader of other states ... it must be ready to occupy a foreign country and hold millions of people in subjection.”¹⁹⁰ For Bakunin, the state system would continually generate war, to which Kropotkin added the point that wars were also waged in the economic interests of ruling classes: “men fight no longer for the good pleasure of kings; they fight to guarantee the incomes and augment the possessions of their Financial Highnesses, Messrs. Rothschild, Schneider and Co., and to fatten the lords of the money market and the factory”¹⁹¹

It was precisely because capitalism tended to produce more than could be sold, argued Kropotkin, that ruling groups clashed in search of sources of raw materials and new markets:

What Germany, France, Russia, England and Austria are struggling for at this moment, is not military supremacy but economic supremacy, the right to impose their manufactures, their custom duties, upon their neighbours; the right to develop the resources of peoples backward in industry; the privilege of making railways through countries that have none, and under that pretext to get demand of their markets, the right, in a word, to filch every now and then from a neighbour a seaport that would stimulate their trade or a province that would absorb the surplus of their production....

It was through the revolution that the final “emancipation of all” would be achieved: women would no longer be economically dependent on men, as their basic needs would be provided by society, and they would therefore be “free to forge their own way of life.” The abolition of the state along with the creation of social and economic equality would see the “authoritarian juridical family” disappear, to be replaced by free and consensual relationships and the “full sexual freedom of women.”¹⁸² The Alliances programme stressed that it sought “above all” the “economic, political and social equality of both sexes.” The “children of both sexes must, from birth, be provided with equal means and opportunities for their full development, i.e. support, upbringing and education,” for “next to social and economic equality” this measure was critical for creating “greater and increasing natural freedom for individuals, and [would] result in the abolition of artificial and imposed inequalities.”¹⁸³

Bakunin also declared “strong sympathy for any national uprising against any form of oppression,” stating that every people “has the right to be itself... no one is entitled to impose its costume, its customs, its languages and its laws.”¹⁸⁴ He doubted whether “imperialist Europe” could keep the subject peoples in bondage: “Two-thirds of humanity, 800 million Asiatics asleep in their servitude will necessarily awaken and begin to move.” Decolonisation was perfectly acceptable: “The right of freely uniting and separating is the first and most important of all political rights.”¹⁸⁵

Given his commitment to class struggle and socialism, however, he asked, “In what direction and to what end” would and should such struggles evolve?¹⁸⁶ For Bakunin, national liberation had to be achieved “as much in the economic as in the political interests of the masses.” If the national liberation struggle is carried out with “ambitious intent to set up a powerful State,” or if “it is carried out without the people and must therefore depend for success on a privileged class,” it will become a “retrogressive, disastrous, counter-revolutionary movement.” He believed that “every exclusively political revolution—be it in defence of national independence or for internal change ... —that does not aim at the immediate and real political and economic emancipation of people will be a false revolution. Its objectives will be unattainable and its consequences reactionary”¹⁸⁷

Bakunin maintained that the “statist path involving the establishment of separate ... States” was “entirely ruinous for the great masses of the people” because it did not abolish class power but simply changed the nationality of the ruling class. Where local capitalists and landlords were weak at independence, a new ruling elite could quickly coalesce through the new state itself. Bakunin illustrated this with a striking discussion that remains relevant. In Serbia, which had broken

Even these laws were compromises that restrained the ruling class yet did not overthrow it. The field of law must then be understood as shaped by class struggles, yet dominated by the ruling class, and unable to provide the means of popular emancipation.

In the classical Marxist tradition, the state is defined in fairly simple terms as a “body of armed men” serving the dominant class, from which it can be concluded that the working class, led by the revolutionary party, must form its own dictatorship of the proletariat to change society.¹²³ This state would later wither away, but it was a necessary intermediate stage between capitalism and the free communism of the future. For the anarchists, this strategy failed to take account of the fact that the state was not simply a “body of armed men” but also and always a highly centralised structure that inevitably concentrated power in the hands of a directing elite. “It would be obviously impossible for some hundreds of thousands or even some tens of thousands or indeed for only a few thousand men to exercise this power.”¹²⁴ A strong state could have “only one solid foundation: military and bureaucratic centralisation.”¹²⁵

If that was the case, then even the most radical government must perpetuate the rule of a (class) minority over a (class) majority. One effect was a crippling of popular self-activity and self-organisation, with the state “a vast slaughterhouse or enormous cemetery, where all the real aspirations, all the living forces of a country enter generously and happily,” but are “slain and buried.”¹²⁶ A “centralised government” concentrated power in “parliament and its executive,” and was also unable to deal with the concerns of ordinary people, “all the numberless affairs of the community.”¹²⁷

If “state ... and capitalism are inseparable concepts ... bound together ... by the bond of cause and effect, effect and cause,” then even a revolutionary state must generate a capitalist system of some sort.¹²⁸ Just as an economically dominant class entails a state, a state entails an economically dominant class. State centralisation was not accidental but rather followed from the role of the state as an instrument of the dominant minorities—of ruling classes—which could only rule if administrative power was concentrated in their hands. The State was both a defender of the class system, and itself a central pillar of ruling class power.

The emancipation of the working class and peasantry required a radically democratic form of social organisation that maximised popular self-activity and self-management—and this was entirely at odds with the state. The state, argued Kropotkin, “having been the force to which the minorities resorted for establishing and organising their power over the masses, cannot be the force

which will serve to destroy those privileges.”¹²⁹ This critique of the state as both a ruling-class organisation and the destroyer of individual freedom is quite different from the rejection of the state as an enemy of individual autonomy—the view, again, held by Godwin, Stirner, and Tolstoy

► The Rejection of State Socialism

The political conclusion that followed was that the state was as much an obstacle to the abolition of the class system as landlordism and capitalism. While opposed to economic liberalism, the anarchists did not look to increased state intervention as a solution. The choice between the market and the state was an empty one. The state was not, and could not become, an instrument of fundamental social change. Regardless of their ideology, intent, or social origins, those who held state power would always be part of a dominant class. Bakunin commented that “the people will feel no better if the stick with which they are being beaten is labelled the ‘peoples stick’... No State ... not even the reddest republic—can ever give the people what they really want.”¹³⁰

A strategy premised on the capture of state power—whether by electoral action or revolution—would, in other words, simply repeat the social evils present in the existing states: class domination through authoritarian centralisation. It is in this context that Bakunin described universal suffrage as an “immense fraud” and a “puerile fiction,” at least with regard to the distribution of power and wealth in society: “The day after election everybody goes about his business, the people go back to toil anew, the bourgeoisie to reaping profits and political conniving.”¹³¹

When decision making occurs without the “intervention” of the people, the “people are committed to ruinous policies, all without noticing.” The results of the election of a new government, even one openly committed to advancing the interests of the majority, would be “very moderate,” and the ruling party would become part of the machinery of class domination, adopting patriotism in place of internationalism, forming alliances with “bourgeois liberal” parties, and restricting its aspirations to minimal reforms that do not upset the ruling class.¹³²

Instead of the ruling party changing the state, the state would change the ruling party. Bakunin argued that parliamentarians would be corrupted by their “institutional positions” and unaccountable to their constituencies, and it is a “characteristic of privilege and of every privileged position to kill the hearts and minds of men.”¹³³ This would apply regardless of the mandates given to

Eastern Europe), Bakunin hoped for a situation where “the German, American and English toilers and those of other nations” would “march with the same energy towards the destruction of all political power.”¹⁷⁷ He had “no doubt that the time will come when the German proletariat itself” would renounce statist politics and join the international labour movement, “which liberates each and everyone from his statist fatherland.”¹⁷⁸ In his view, despite the differences between the German kaiser, the Russian czar, or the French emperor, all were fundamentally united in their determination to maintain the class system.

This is one of the great insights of the broad anarchist tradition: if the ruling classes practice international solidarity with one another on fundamental issues, so should the popular classes. This is a remarkably early statement of the idea of “globalisation from below” to change the world.

For Bakunin and Kropotkin, it was the state system that artificially inflamed national hatreds and rivalries, and consequently, “the necessarily revolutionary policy of the proletariat must have for its immediate and only object the destruction of states.” How could anyone “speak of international solidarity when they want to keep states—unless they are dreaming of the universal state, that is to say... universal slavery like the great emperors and popes—the state by its nature being a very rupture of this solidarity and a permanent cause of war”?¹⁷⁹ Anarchists, however, go beyond simply making abstract calls for an end to prejudice and hatred; as we shall see in chapter 10, the broad anarchist tradition generally believed that the struggle for popular unity *also* required a struggle against institutionalised discrimination and oppression on the basis of race and nationality.

This follows from the anarchist commitment to freedom and equality, and is also expressed in the broad anarchist movement’s feminist impulse. There were certainly anarchists and syndicalists who paid only lip service to women’s emancipation, and the early movement often failed to challenge the sexual division of labour that confined women to particular occupations and roles. In principle, however, the anarchists wanted to unite men and women in the class struggle, and championed equal rights for women as well as measures to improve women’s position in society. Bakunin’s stance on women was “far ahead of that of most of his contemporaries.”¹⁸⁰ He noted that the law subjected women to men’s “absolute domination,” women were not given the same opportunities as men, and the “poor underprivileged woman” suffered most. Given his class politics, though, Bakunin believed that working-class and peasant women’s interests were “indissolubly tied to the common cause of all exploited workers—men and women”—and were quite different from those of the ruling classes, the “parasites of both sexes.”¹⁸¹

national boundaries. The state was a tool of the wealthy and powerful, not a voice of a people or nation, and therefore the struggle should not be confined to state borders; the basic interests of the popular classes were essentially alike everywhere, and thus the struggle cannot be confined to one country; isolated struggles can no more succeed in one country than they can in one trade.

As Bakunin asserted: “The question of the revolution ... can be solved only on the grounds of internationality.”¹⁶⁹ It was necessary to forge the most powerful “ties of economic solidarity and fraternal sentiment” between the “workers in all occupations in all lands.”¹⁷⁰ He saw in international bodies such as the First International the nucleus of an international movement and the basis of a new international order. Such a body could eventually “erect upon the ruins of the old world the free federation of workers’ associations,” “the living seeds of the new society which is to replace the old world.”¹⁷¹ Again and again, Bakunin argued for a “serious international organisation of workers’ associations of all lands capable of replacing this departing world of *states*”¹⁷²

Bakunin believed that there “exists only one law which is really obligatory for all members, individuals, sections and federations of the International,” and that was “the international solidarity of the toilers in all trades and in all countries in their economic struggle against the exploiters of labour.” He continued: “It is in the real organisation of this solidarity, by the spontaneous organisation of the working masses and by the absolutely free federation, powerful in proportion as it will be free, of the working masses of all languages and nations, and not in their unification by decrees and under the rod of any government whatever, that there resides the real and living unity of the International.”¹⁷³

Such “real and living unity” required unity between skilled and less skilled workers as well as the unity of the popular classes around the world. For Bakunin, the division between the urban working class and the peasantry was the “fatal antagonism” that has “paralysed the revolutionary forces”—a problem that any serious revolutionary project had to defeat.¹⁷⁴ While Bakunin was by no means free of prejudices of his own, he made a principle of popular unity across the lines of race and nationality: “What do we mean by respect for humanity” but “the recognition of human right and human dignity in every man, of whatever race” or “colour”?¹⁷⁵ “Convinced that the real and definitive solution of the social problem can be achieved only on the basis of the universal solidarity of the workers of all lands; the Alliance rejects all policies based upon the so-called patriotism and rivalry of nations.”¹⁷⁶

Despite an occasional tendency to stereotype the Germans and praise the Slavs (understandable perhaps given his commitment to the decolonisation of

the party, the wages paid to the parliamentarians, or the existence of other mechanisms to keep the parliamentarians accountable to their constituents. Paying parliamentarians a worker’s wage or making provision for constituents to recall “bad” parliamentarians between elections would not change the situation.

When Bakunin wrote, widespread suffrage was a rarity everywhere, including in Europe. By Kropotkin’s time there had been real changes, yet the situation still seemed to bear out Bakunin’s views. “Much hope of improvement,” remarked Kropotkin, “was placed... in the extension of political rights to the working classes,” but “these concessions, unsupported by corresponding changes in economic relations, proved delusions.”¹³⁴

The anarchists also rejected the classical Marxist strategy of the proletarian dictatorship as a means to destroy class society. The use of the state, a centralised instrument of power, would mean a small revolutionary elite would operate as a ruling group, replicating an important feature of the class system that anarchists wished to destroy: rule by minority. Further, freedom could not be introduced from above but required self-emancipation through co-operation and struggle. “I am above all an absolute enemy of revolution by decrees,” said Bakunin, “which derives from the idea of the revolutionary State, i.e., reaction disguised as revolution.” Why “reaction disguised as revolution”? Simply because authoritarian means could not be used to promote emancipatory ends: “decrees, like authority in general, abolish nothing; they only perpetuate that which they were supposed to destroy.”¹³⁵

Even if a revolutionary dictatorship crushed the older elites, the new regime would itself be a class system, fundamentally as bad as any that preceded it. For “the proletariat,” Bakunin wrote, “this will, in reality, be nothing but a barracks: a regime, where regimented workingmen and women will sleep, wake, work, and live to the beat of a drum.”¹³⁶ For Kropotkin, such a state would be “as great a danger to liberty as any form of autocracy” because government would be “entrusted with the management of all the social organisation including the production and distribution of wealth.”¹³⁷

Bakunin and Kropotkin repeatedly suggested that revolutionary “socialist” governments would, in fact, be forms of state capitalism. Bakunin spoke of the opportunities for the “shrewd and educated,” who would “be granted government privileges,” and the “mercenary-minded,” who would be “attracted by the immensity of the international speculations of the state bank, [and] will find a vast field for lucrative, underhanded dealings.”¹³⁸ “The State, having become the sole proprietor” of the means of production, “will then become the

only banker, capitalist, organiser, and director of all national labour, and the distributor of its products.”¹³⁹ The spectre of “centralised state-capitalism,” “preached under the name of collectivism,” a “form of the wage system,” always haunted Kropotkin’s writings.¹⁴⁰

Slavery within would be matched by slavery without, as the revolutionary state competed with other states, forcing the new ruling elite to become patriots, warmongers, and aspiring imperialists; thus, a Marxist regime in Germany would become the bearer of a new pan-Germanism, and Marx would become the “Bismarck of socialism.” After a twentieth century that has seen the invasion and military occupation of Eastern Europe by the USSR, border clashes between the USSR and the People’s Republic of China (which led to more troops being deployed by the USSR along the Chinese border than the border with Western Europe by the 1970s), and war between the self-described socialist regimes of Cambodia and Vietnam, many would say that Bakunin was right.

For anarchists, the repression, social inequalities, and militarism of the self-described regimes of “actually existing socialism” and “people’s democracies” of the twentieth century are not temporary “distortions” or a “degeneration” of an otherwise-emancipatory Marxist practice. They are the logical outcomes of an authoritarian and statist politics. The means shape the ends; an authoritarian strategy, based on centralisation, dictatorship, and militarisation, necessarily leads to a centralised, dictatorial, and militarised regime. A self-managed and popular revolution from below, on the contrary, has the real potential to create a new and radically democratic society. The need for the means to match the ends, and the possibility of a radical anti-capitalist politics that rejects the state, are two of anarchism’s major insights for contemporary struggles.

► Elements of the Social Revolution

How, then, did these anarchists propose to change society? They did not always agree on the best strategy—an issue that we will explore in later chapters. Consequently, strategy cannot be a defining feature of anarchism. What anarchists did share, however, were a set of principles to frame strategy and tactics: class struggle, internationalism, self-determination, anti-statism, and anti-authoritarianism.

“In my last lecture I told you that you were privileged workers ... you are better paid than workers in large industrial establishments, you have spare time, you are ... free and fortunate ... not absolutely so but by comparison.... And I hasten to add that you deserve so much the more merit to have entered the International.... You prove thereby that you are thinking not just of yourselves.... It is with great happiness that I bear this witness.”

He believed that the progress of capitalism—specifically the mechanisation of industry—would ultimately undermine the situation of all “privileged workers,” and saw solidarity between the skilled and unskilled as therefore critical:

“But let me tell you that this act of unselfish and fraternal solidarity is also an act of foresight and prudence ... big capital [will] ... overrun your industry... And so you, or at least your children, will be as slavish and poor as workers in large industrial establishments now.”¹⁶⁷

For Bakunin, the basic logic of the capitalist system was not to create secure layers of privileged workers but rather to pit the “slavish and poor” against those who were more “free and fortunate,” inevitably undermining the conditions of the latter. It is understandable, from this perspective, why Bakunin always regarded the relatively privileged workers as only a small layer, a “little working class minority,” and clear that he believed them incapable of single-handedly defending their conditions against the onslaught of the ruling class. Bakunin’s position was at odds with the view, held by many modern-day nationalists, that capitalism and the state could co-opt large sectors of the working class; the “aristocracy of labour” were a besieged minority, and Bakunin believed that only through the broadest possible class unity could the interests of the popular classes *as a whole* be defended and advanced.

The notion of a “labour aristocracy” has generally not been important to anarchism, which has tended to argue that the interests of the popular classes are essentially the same worldwide. It was through the “association” of the workers in “all trades and in all countries” that the vision of “full emancipation” becomes possible.¹⁶⁸

► Internationalism, Social Equality, and Anti-imperialism

Anarchism is an internationalist movement. Just as the working class and peasantry were international, and just as capitalism and landlordism existed internationally, it is necessary to wage and co-ordinate struggles across

class system, but had no model of how such a society would operate, assuming that “both production and distribution can be an entirely personal matter.” He maintained that co-operation undermined rationality, favoured “gradual” change, and rejected “the possibility of any sort of working-class organisation which might be used to spread the ideas of justice and equality.”¹⁶⁰ Both Godwin and Tolstoy were great believers in individual reason, and assumed that all rational people must necessarily come to the correct conclusions if confronted with clear arguments and supporting evidence. Thus Tolstoy wrote to both the Russian czar and prime minister, urging them to introduce radical reforms. The mutualists saw society in class terms, but did not envisage change as coming through class struggles.

Clearly, it is necessary to reject the view that anarchists did not favour class struggle, or reduce social evils to the state. It has also sometimes been claimed that Bakunin was hostile to the industrial working class, seeing students, intellectuals, criminals, and the long-term unemployed as a better revolutionary element. This claim has been made by many scholars, including the esteemed historian of anarchism, Paul Avrich, the translator of the standard edition of Bakunin’s *Statism and Anarchy*, Marshall Shatz, and E. H. Carr, biographer of Bakunin.¹⁶¹ Activists who draw deeply on the anarchist tradition, but who see class struggle as no longer relevant, like the late radical environmentalist and libertarian socialist Murray Bookchin, have also repeated it.¹⁶²

There is no basis for such claims. Bookchin’s notion that Marx placed his hopes in the formation of a stable industrial working class while Bakunin “saw in this process the ruin of all hopes for a genuinely revolutionary movement” is a caricature.¹⁶³ Bakunin did, it is true, voice suspicions of the “upper strata” of workers in “certain better paying occupations” who had become “semi-bourgeois.”¹⁶⁴ He also contrasted this “little working class minority,” the “aristocracy of labour,” the “semi-bourgeois” workers, with the “flower of the proletariat,” the great “rabble of the people,” the “underdogs,” the “great, beloved, common people,” who he believed Marx, perhaps unfairly, dismissed as a criminal lumpen-proletariat.¹⁶⁵

Nevertheless, Bakunin stopped short of formulating any clear theory of a “labour aristocracy”—a theory of the sort that suggests that a privileged layer of workers betrays the working class as a whole. Even while speaking of an “aristocracy of labour,” he stated that there were “rare and generous workers,” “true socialists,” in its ranks.¹⁶⁶ He actively sought to recruit skilled and well-paid workers to the anarchist movement, having a great deal of success among the watchmakers of the Jura region in Switzerland, and commended these workers for their stance:

► The Popular Classes

As is clear from the preceding discussion, anarchists saw the struggle of the popular classes—the working class and peasantry—as the basic motor of change. It would be futile to expect the ruling class to act against its own vested interests in the current system. Even when ruling classes were oppressed by other ruling classes and powerful states, their interests lay in expanding their *own* scope for exploitation and domination. A class struggle from below, assuming a radically democratic form and taking place outside of and against the state, and aiming to replace capitalism and the state with collective ownership of the means of production, collective and participatory decision-making, and an international, federal, and self-managed socialist system is at the heart of anarchism.

Bakunin emphasised that “the only two classes capable of so mighty an insurrection” as was required to remake society are “*the workers and the peasants!*”¹⁴¹ It was essential that ordinary people, working class and peasant alike, organise as a bloc of oppressed classes independently of their class enemies. Bakunin and Kropotkin had immense faith in the “flower of the proletariat,” the great “rabble of the people,” the “underdogs,” the “great, beloved, common people,” the masses.¹⁴² It was in the “great mass of workers ... unable to obtain a better station in life” that the “will” and “power” needed to make the revolution was to be found.¹⁴³ The enormous growth of the working class in modern times, the continued existence of the peasantry, and the increasing class divisions of the present signal that the historical agents identified by Bakunin and Kropotkin remain a force with which to reckon.

Anarchism’s stress on the revolutionary potential of the peasantry differentiated it from the views of the early Marxists. Marx and Engels predicted the demise of the peasantry, and argued that the peasantry were inherently unable to organise, for their “mode of production isolates them from one another, instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse”; they “do not form a class” capable of “enforcing their class interests in their own name.”¹⁴⁴ This supposedly predisposes peasants to seek salvation from above by an “unlimited governmental power” that “sends them rain and sunshine from above.”¹⁴⁵ The agrarian question had to be resolved as a secondary part of the “proletarian” revolution, and it could not be resolved without the leading role of the working class.

The appropriate agrarian strategy was fiercely debated among classical Marxists, and the SDP was deeply divided on the issue of the peasantry. While some activists were keenly interested in winning the peasantry, the party majority followed Kautsky’s view that the peasantry constituted a declining class and was relatively unimportant to the party’s fortunes, and that the party should not

adopt a programme of reforms aimed at the peasantry¹⁴⁶ Kautsky, the “pope of socialism,” did “more to popularise Marxism in western Europe than any other intellectual” besides Engels.¹⁴⁷

Kautsky’s views on the agrarian question were designed for industrial Germany, and he believed that a different approach was needed for less developed countries like Russia where capitalism was not yet dominant. Here, the task of the day was a bourgeois democratic revolution: the capitalist class must take power, uproot feudal barriers to trade and industry, and undertake agrarian and legal reforms. The peasantry could aid this process, although they would be destroyed by the subsequent development of capitalism.¹⁴⁸ Capitalism, in turn, was a necessary step towards socialism.

Lenin agreed with Kautsky, arguing that as a “bourgeois revolution expresses the needs of capitalist development,” it was “*in the highest degree advantageous to the proletariat?*”¹⁴⁹ Operating in backward Russia, where urban industry was an island in a vast peasant sea, the Bolsheviks naturally looked to the peasants for allies, but proposed that the peasants take their lead from the working class, itself led by the vanguard party.¹⁵⁰ In the thought of Mao, the leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the peasantry were regarded as critical to the bourgeois democratic revolution against the imperialist and “feudal forces” that hampered capitalist development.¹⁵¹ Again, however, the peasants must be “led by the working class and the Communist Party,” with the latter, Mao contended, structured as an armed guerrilla formation (a “people’s army”) given the Chinese conditions.¹⁵² In the context of colonial and semi-colonial countries, the bourgeois democratic revolution was termed a *national* democratic revolution to stress its anti-imperialist character.

The two-stage approach to the revolutionary process in the less developed colonial and semi-colonial countries—first, a national democratic revolution, and only later a proletarian one—was codified by the Communist International (Comintern, or sometimes called the Third International) in the late 1920s.¹⁵³ Yet this strategy followed from the classical Marxist view that capitalism was a necessary evil that would create the working class that could install the dictatorship of the proletariat as well as the advanced industries that made socialism viable—positions that we will discuss in more depth in the next chapter. Classical Marxists, in short, traditionally saw the peasantry as a doomed class, unable to make a revolution without outside leadership, whether by capitalists or Communists.

By contrast, the anarchists always identified the peasantry as a potentially revolutionary class and the natural ally of the working class. Bakunin admitted

that peasants were frequently “egoistic and reactionary,” full of “prejudices” against the revolution, often fiercely attached to private property, and quite possibly harder to organise than urban workers.¹⁵⁴ But the peasants had a history of struggle, a deep hatred of their oppressors, and a common cause with the working class. Steps must be taken to draw the peasants into the revolutionary movement by applying the “determined treatment of revolutionary socialism” to the “rash of measles” of reactionary sentiment.¹⁵⁵

The peasants could be won over to the struggle for social transformation through agitation, joint organisation with the working class, and a revolutionary programme. The key was not a programme of reforms under the present system but one of radical redistribution of “state and Church lands and the holdings of the big landowners,” and the suspension of “all public and private debts.”¹⁵⁶ By the end of the twentieth century, it certainly seems clear that the classical Marxist rejection of the peasantry was flawed. Anarchists can point to the importance of the peasants in the major social upheavals of the last few centuries—including the Russian and Chinese revolutions—and the existence of radical peasant currents that have gone far beyond the narrow politics that Marxism would suggest.

Anarchists can also point to the continued significance of the peasantry, for even by the most severe calculations there are perhaps still two billion peasants and petty commodity producers, while half of the world’s population lives in regions numerically dominated by the peasantry—China, South Asia and continental Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Central America.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, in some parts of Africa and Latin America there has even been some “re-peasantisation” as industrial workers retrenched during the current economic decline and neoliberal restructuring have returned to farming.¹⁵⁸

The peasantry and working class, then, are the anarchists’ engines of revolution—not a political party, a revolutionary vanguard party, a benevolent government, or a great leader. It was necessary, Bakunin insisted, to unite the working class and peasantry, so often divided by their cultures, ways of life, and the machinations of the powerful. There was “no real conflict of interest between these two camps.”¹⁵⁹

On the contrary, they had a common class interest in rebellion—just as landlords, capitalists, and state managers formed an alliance of the oppressors, so too should the working class and peasants form a front of the oppressed in a revolutionary struggle.

This class politics is another point of difference between the anarchists and people like Godwin, Stirner, and Tolstoy. Godwin pointed to an equitable, non-