

Anarchism

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“
SPREAD
ANARCHY
”
Don't Tell Me What To Do!!

—Graffiti.^[1]

Anarchism is a political philosophy that advocates some form of political anarchy as preferable to active government. Modern anarchists argue that all governments exist only to perpetuate their power and apply this maxim equally to both democracies and dictatorships.

Any information relating to anarchists should be reported to your local police.^[2]

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Types of anarchism

Anarchists differ from Marxists, who believe that the state and class rule are synonymous, and a tool of the enforcement of one class' rule over another. Marxists feel a transitional state (the "dictatorship of the proletariat") is necessary to safe-guard the revolution until it has been finalized and will then wither away to a stateless, classless society, or communism. Anarchists by contrast favor going directly to a stateless society, arguing that a dictatorship of the proletariat will inevitably be a repressive, self-perpetuating state and will not

wither away. Mikhail Bakunin, a Russian anarchist who founded the anarcho-collectivist tendency, engaged in an ideological struggle with Karl Marx and his supporters in the 1870s inside of the International Workingmen's Association (the First International.) Marx won control, but the criticisms Bakunin leveled at Marx (such as its "transitional" absolute state becoming very permanent, with the danger that (pseudo)scientific "socialists" would become a new ruling class), have obviously proven extremely prescient.

Anarchists, like many ideologues, spend an inordinate amount of much time arguing over how many precisely-delineated strains of anarchist thought can dance on the head of a pin.

Mutualism

Mutualism was the anarchist school of thought starting with Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the first to call himself "anarchist" (though earlier thinkers had ideas much like his) and he wrote the book *What is Property?* in 1840, a critique of property-rights ideas, which contains the famous declaration "Property is Theft." Proudhon advocated mutual banks or a Bank of the People (similar to a credit union) for wage workers and independent craftsmen (in his time being driven out by mass production) to fund themselves. His mutualism supports what he called the "anti-capitalist free market" one with cooperative businesses competing and trading, while having a different conception of property, namely possession, or active use and occupancy instead. Mutualism has been revived as sort of a middle position bridging the gap between anarcho-socialist tendencies on the left and the market anarchism of the libertarian movement, with Kevin Carson as its best known modern theorist.

Anarcho Egoism

Egoism originated with Max Stirner in his 1844 book *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (in English, *The Ego and Its Own*; another translation might be *The Individual and His Property*) which argued for an extreme though moral rational self-interest, rejecting conventional morality and values besides this along with the usual opposition to hierarchies, the state, capitalism, organized religion, etc. Stirner's work was little known in his time (though he was a friend of Marx and Engels, who critiqued *The Ego and Its Own* in their early book *The German Ideology*,^[3]) being rediscovered later in the 1890s. Some have theorized he influenced Friedrich Nietzsche. Very few anarchists are egoists or Stirnerites. Egoism tends toward a might makes right philosophy and is rejected by most anarchists on that ground alone. More recently Ayn Rand appropriated the Egoism label for her own philosophy which she later named Objectivism; Rand's egoism has little to nothing to do with Stirner's and in any case she was outspokenly opposed to anarchism of any sort.

Individualist anarchism

Individualist anarchism was originated by American thinkers in the mid-19th century, around the time Proudhon and Stirner were writing. They held similar ideas to mutualism, although being more anti-collectivist than Proudhon. They were primarily supportive of independent craftsmen in opposing rising industrial capitalism, which at that point had not yet fully taken over so much as in Europe. William Greene, Benjamin Tucker and Lysander Spooner were the prominent thinkers here. Historians locate individualist anarchism as a mainly American phenomenon and the two classic histories on the subject^[4] trace its roots back to early American experiments in utopian living such as Modern Times and New Harmony, and further back to the thought of people like Henry David Thoreau and Thomas Jefferson.^[5]



The anarchy symbol. If you see this, there may be dangerous anarchist ruffians out and about.

Anarcho-collectivism

Anarcho-collectivism was begun by the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (mentioned above). While naming Proudhon as "the father of us all" he felt mutualism was not far enough, particularly as capitalism expanded in the time since, along with the state. Bakunin was also opposed to religion, declaring that "the idea of God denies humanity. God being everything, man is nothing," and "if God really existed it would be necessary to abolish him" turning Voltaire's dictum on its head. More generally, he opposed organized religion, one of his most notable works being *God and the State* (1882), a position held by many anarchists since who view the church as another oppressive hierarchy alongside the state. Bakunin's anarcho-collectivism criticized Marxism as something that would lead to a new ruling class party hierarchy, while advocating full collective worker management of production, a doctrine later expanded on by the anarcho-communists and anarcho-syndicalists.

Anarcho-communism

Anarcho-communism was founded by Prince Pyotr Kropotkin of Russia (who dropped his noble title at the age of twelve). His vision was of a moneyless, gift economy made up of free communes in an equal society, following the same dictum as Marx of "to each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" though in a voluntary, democratic manner. Other thinkers like Emma Goldman and Errico Malatesta expanded upon anarcho-communism. Kropotkin's anarcho-communism refers more to voluntary communal living in communes and free sharing of everything, as opposed to the Marxist-Leninist conception of a dictatorship of the proletariat. Kropotkin's book *Mutual Aid: A Factor In Evolution* posits an equal role for cooperation in driving evolution as opposed to competition alone, and can be seen as a salvo against social Darwinism. Steven Jay Gould felt he was onto something here^[6]

Christian anarchism/anarcho-pacifism

Leo Tolstoy, the Russian known for writing great literature such as *War and Peace*, was also a dedicated anarchist who helped to organize peasant communes (mirs), and free, democratically-run schools for their education among many other things. His book *The Kingdom of God is Within You* set forth his own radical interpretation of the Christian Gospels, believing that Jesus wished to liberate people from oppression peacefully and redistribute wealth back in the hands of its creators, essentially an earlier version of liberation theology. However Tolstoy also opposed violence absolutely, even in self-defense or to defend others, which influenced Gandhi later. Other anarchists, while admiring Tolstoy's great work in helping Russian peasants and his compassionate moral code, believe this is an overly idealistic view that would require a "community of saints", arguing that failing to protect innocents by force if absolutely necessary is itself a moral evil. Many would agree that nonviolence is still a good tactic, even that it should be the first used, but do not go so far as Tolstoyans. Some groups such as the Anabaptists (Hutterites, Amish and Mennonites) are very similar in their beliefs to Tolstoy, pacifist along with holding possessions in common. They are not strictly anarchist, however, and usually believe the state is legitimate and ordained by God but that Christians are to be a separate people and not participate in the functions of it except as strictly required (i.e. paying taxes, etc).

Anarcho-syndicalism

Anarcho-syndicalism is a tendency which believes that direct democratic trade unions could overthrow capitalism and the state (possibly with a general strike), afterward federating among themselves freely to create a non-hierarchical society. Anarcho-syndicalists view industrial unionism as the vehicle through which the state can both be overthrown, and around which society would be organized after the revolution. Production would thus continue without disruption, with workplaces democratically managed by workers and collectively owned.

Anarcho-syndicalism has some similarities to De Leonism, with the main difference being that De Leon rejected anarchism and would have the state re-organized as a "dictatorship of the proletariat" rather than abolished entirely.

Anarcho-capitalism

Some people call themselves "anarcho-capitalists", and wish for capitalism without a government. Anarcho-capitalists believe that an anarchic system of competing private contractors can perform all of the functions of government better than a coercive government can. Anarcho-capitalism is a form of extreme laissez-faire capitalism. Most anarchists dismiss it as not being a type of anarchism, and being instead an oxymoron, since anarchists usually reject capitalism as another form of hierarchy and as something that exists only because of the state.^[7] Many anarcho-capitalists also seem to be obsessed with replicating the most coercive functions of government in the market via private defense agencies and private courts and prisons; whereas other anarchists view "national defense", police, and prisons as the most heinous aspects of the state and things they most want to abolish.

There does exist a "market anarchist" tendency on the left wing of the modern libertarian movement who agree, and reject the capitalist label. They may use terms like autarchist, agorist, or mutualist to describe themselves. For them, a completely laissez-faire free market (which would emerge in the absence of the state) is not the same thing as capitalism (which exists by the grace of the state through such things as corporate personhood and gunboat diplomacy). Many market anarchists also reject trying to replicate the most coercive functions of the state in the free market.

Anarcha-feminism

Not a separate tendency per se, this was partly based on the works of Emma Goldman, herself a dedicated feminist who advocated rights to birth control, abortion, free love, open relationships along with equality for women in general long before such issues were considered acceptable for discussion, let alone to enact. Goldman argued prominently that voting rights for women by themselves would change nothing, that equality had to come along with a broader social revolution. Anarcha-feminists have followed her reasoning, critiquing sexism as simply another form of hierarchy (patriarchy here) while struggling for the same goals as other anarchists, especially devoted to making sure women have the same rights in anarchist movements and the idea of gender equality receives focus along with the rest. Free love advocacy and womens' liberation have a long history within anarchism going back to individualist anarchists Ezra Heywood and Moses Harman, whose freethought periodicals *The Word* and *Lucifer the Light-Bearer* were persecuted by Anthony Comstock under the Comstock Act for their open discussions of birth control and denunciation of marital rape^[8], and continued to be influential through the writings of Emma Goldman and Ben Reitman, who were also prosecuted under the Comstock Act with Reitman sentenced to prison for advocating birth control.^[9]

Green anarchism

Green anarchists believe an ecological society living in harmony with the earth is incompatible with either capitalism or the state. They often look to Kropotkin's communal ideas as a potential model for an ecological society, absorbing other influences as well from individualist anarchism to anarcho-syndicalism to distributism. Most green anarchism divides between those following Murray Bookchin's Kropotkin-influenced writings, and those who tend more toward Edward Abbey's less well defined (and probably more libertarian and individualist anarchist) preference for direct action over theory. This is sometimes portrayed as a divide between the "garden" or "urban village" model of environmentalism (Bookchin), and the "wilderness" model (Abbey)^[10].

Anarcho-primitivism

Primitivists go even further than green anarchists, viewing civilization itself, from modern labor-saving technologies to language as anti-ecological hierarchical institutions. They advocate the complete abolition of industry, capitalism, and even agriculture, returning to a hunter-gatherer mode of life which they argue is more leisurely, free, and in tune with nature. They believe wilderness and wild life have a right to exist for their own sake, therefore such a lifestyle is least destructive by humans. John Zerzan is probably the most prominent thinker of the primitivist tendency, although Bob Black also contributes greatly. The methods of how to achieve this primitive back-to-nature society are contentious. The British primitivist magazine *Green Anarchy* once praised Unabomber Ted Kaczynski (arguably close to primitivism in his views) and the Aum Shinrikyo cult in Japan who released Sarin gas in the Tokyo subway. Needless to say, most green anarchists and those of other tendencies reject primitivism.

Insurrectionary anarchism

Insurrectionary anarchism is a recent innovation and seems to be influenced by postmodern philosophy, nihilism, guerrilla warfare tactics, and anarcho-primitivism with some Kropotkin and Stirner thrown in. It is a murky area difficult to understand for those not already steeped in postmodernism. Insurrectionary anarchists tend to define themselves in contrast to organizational anarchists such as anarcho-syndicalists. Any form of organization at all is suspect, probably at least proto-statist if not explicitly so, and deserving of deconstruction through the lens of postmodernism - so a permanent revolution, in the form of ever-shifting affinity groups that never coalesce into anything permanent and never-ending guerrilla insurrection, is needed.

An obscure insurrectionary anarchist manifesto from France, *The Coming Insurrection*, became an unlikely best-seller in the U.S. because of Glenn Beck mentioning it several times and calling it the most evil book he has ever read. Glenn Beck's sneaky promotion-through-denunciation of this book probably has something to do with the fact that he *agrees* with its profoundly nihilistic opposition to liberalism, though not with its proposed solution.

Modern anarchism

A few modern anarchists believe that humans can best live their lives without being told what to do by anyone, and oppose democracy. They generally have no idea how things like abortion and scientific-based policy would be decided, and oppose all rules. There is also a "lifestyle anarchist" tendency for whom anarchy has more to do with punk, veganism, shoplifting and squatting as radical acts etc., and a more puerile "kiddie anarchist" tendency for whom anarchy means things like the *The Anarchist Cookbook*, hacking and phreaking, and the Unabomber manifesto. Both tend to appeal mainly to teenagers, who either eventually either make the leap to more serious anarchist theory or just grow out of it.

The reality is that the various military industrial complexes have filled the world with AK 47s and the like make it much more difficult to achieve those ends because one warlord heavily armed can make it very difficult for 1,000 anarchists to do their own thing. But, as Bloody Mary sings in *South Pacific*, "If you don't have a dream, how you gonna have a dream come true?"

Some are called "anarchists without adjectives" not desiring to follow any one tendency but welcoming all ideas. "Anarchists without adjectives" generally focus on de-legitimizing the state rather than on one particular conception of anarchist society, believing that all else will naturally follow and a world without government will likely be heavily mixed.

Because most modern anarchists are not interested in forcing their ways on others they tend frequently to blend into the background, living their anarchist lives happily out of the spotlight. Well, except for the free skool movement and various communes and revolutions. The prime example would be the establishment of anarchist communes starting in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War, in which production and innovation were reported to have increased fairly dramatically. Workers seized control of the factories, peasants the farm land, free schools were set up to teach in new ways and universal literacy began to be achieved. They were eventually undermined by lack of funding due to state capitalist Russia controlling their money supply, attacks by the Stalinist-controlled Spanish Republican government and finally the victory of Franco, supported by many in the West. This was helped by infighting of the groups on the Republican side, plus lack of support. The 19th century anarchist belief in the Propaganda of the Deed (such as tossing a bomb or shooting some Royal Person) has largely fallen into disrepute, though it was very common at the turn of the last century, with several heads of state assassinated this way, giving us the "bomb-throwing" anarchist stereotype, which is unfortunate.

Anarchist organizations

Those who make no effort to understand Anarchism generally suppose that the very term "anarchist organization" posits a hierarchical structure which is anathema to the egalitarian virtues of the anarchist world view. This is not the case. Anarchists believe that human beings can organize themselves along non-hierarchical lines. Anarchists are not against organization, but rather oppose hierarchy, and do not advocate the 'lawlessness' and disintegration of society which the term 'anarchy' conjures up. Anarchist organizations strive for a maximal degree of direct democracy and the accountability of officers to the rank and file.

See also

- Anarchy
- Socialism
- Mobocracy
- Libertarianism, a term originally used by anarchists, such as "libertarian socialism" to distinguish it from authoritarian versions. Now used by radical classical liberals and supporters of laissez-faire capitalism. The former use is now ironically seen as an oxymoron by them, just as anarchists feel about such "right"-libertarian ideologies.

Footnotes

1. ↑ [1] (https://fbcdn-sphotos-a.akamaihd.net/hphotos-ak-ash4/314580_304582379571222_205344452828349_1170609_630232771_n.jpg?dl=1)
2. ↑ This is a joke in reference to the Westminster, U.K. police issuing a memo stating just that (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/jul/31/westminster-police-anarchist-whistleblower-advice>).
3. ↑ Marx, Karl, and Engels, Friedrich: *The German Ideology*, 1846 (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/>)
4. ↑ *Native American Anarchism* by Eunice Minette Schuster and *Men Against the State* by James J. Martin
5. ↑ Schuster (but not Martin, who as an Egoist rejected Christianity out of hand as being in any way compatible with anarchism) also finds its roots ultimately in non-conformist Christian groups during the colonial era who went in the same anarcho-pacifist direction later taken by Tolstoy. The anarcho-capitalist theorist Murray Rothbard tends to agree with Schuster here and points to the few successes in people living peacefully without government in early American history mostly being Quakers.
6. ↑ Gould, Steven Jay: "Kropotkin Was No Crackpot", *Natural History* 106, June 1997, p. 12-21 (<http://www.marxists.org/subject/science/essays/kropotkin.htm>)
7. ↑ InfoShop Anarchist FAQ (<http://www.infoshop.org/page/AnarchistFAQSectionF>)

8. ↑ McElroy, Wendy: *XXX: A Woman's Right to Pornography*, St. Martin's Press, 1997
9. ↑ PBS American Experience, People & Events: Ben Reitman (1879-1942) (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/goldman/peopleevents/p_reitman.html)
10. ↑ Bookchin, Murray and Foreman, Dave: *Defending the Earth: A Dialogue Between Murray Bookchin and Dave Foreman*, South End Press, 1991

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