

enforce people's contribution to the general good, as everyone naturally wants to do productive work, if they can find something they enjoy.

Many communist anarchists believe that human behaviour is motivated by a combination of egoism and sympathy. Society develops towards greater sympathy and more refined moral ideals through a confrontation between ideals and reality. Some anarchists added an evolutionary argument, viz. that when groups compete, the more co-operative groups survive. There is therefore a natural pressure towards the development of greater solidarity.

As with Marxism and philosophical anarchism, we can question whether human beings can develop to a point where they can live peaceably without laws that are enforced by a coercive body.

someone to behave 'morally' is surely the way in which people learn to become moral themselves. Reason alone is not going to do this, as Godwin thought. So the state is not incompatible with the attempt to develop their capacity for private judgment. For both reasons, laws are needed to influence the choices people make about how to behave.

For anarchy to be the best development of freedom, we must think both that people can be brought to a point of personal development such that they will voluntarily respect the freedom of others; and that such individual development can continue, down the generations, without a structure of law. Both these ideas can be questioned.

Individualist anarchism

The starting point of individualist anarchism is that each person is sovereign over their own body and property. No one can impose an obligation on another person coercively. Instead, the only legitimate relations between individuals are voluntary – exchange, contract, and gift. The liberty and sovereignty of the individual are violated by the nature of the state.

Individualist anarchists tend to assume egoism. Social harmony in society without a state will be secured by getting people to see their self-interest clearly. For example, we come to see that this is the best way to secure our autonomy. We can replace many of the functions of the state with the market, which, driven by egoism, will bring equality, ensure stability and restrain destructiveness. We pay an agency to protect us and resolve individual conflicts, and agencies compete in the market for customers. We voluntarily buy or do not buy their services.

We can object that such a society will be unjust. It is not clear that respecting other people's autonomy is in my self-interest. So I have no reason to prefer an agency that is *fair* in its resolution of conflicts; I will prefer one that finds in my favour. And when the individuals belong to different agencies, how is the conflict to be resolved?

We can also object that the idea of individual sovereignty conflicts with natural relations of family, affection, and community.

Communist anarchism

At the heart of communist anarchism is quite the opposite view of human relations, viz. that our proper relationship to other people is one of solidarity. Sympathy, affection, co-operation and mutual aid should govern our behaviour. That they do not now is the *result* of living under the state and under capitalism, which emphasise competition and antagonism. The very idea that individuals are sovereign over themselves is an effect of the state. Real freedom consists in having the opportunity to satisfy what we need and desire.

Communist anarchists continue the critique of the state made by Marxists, but add that the state is not *merely* the instrument of capitalism, but uses force directly for its own purposes and benefit. What is needed, to replace the state, is no more than the extension and enlarging of existing social institutions. The basic form of association would be a local 'commune'. Communes could be arranged in a federal structure to facilitate exchange of goods, consistency of rules, etc. However, no federal decision would be implemented against the will of the local commune. The issue of punishing crimes would not really arise, as most crimes (except crimes of passion, which can be dealt with locally) would not occur, given economic equality. Furthermore, there would be no need to

choose. There need not be just one body providing these functions – there could be competition between associations. They could be run by everybody together. As noted above, there is no agreement between different anarchist theories on the nature of these collective bodies.

Despite the powerful criticisms of the state, the anarchist alternative has struck many people as too idealist. Anarchism can only seem attractive if you assume people are peaceful, altruist and co-operative. But this theory of human nature is clearly too optimistic! If human beings were so benevolent, then why don't we already live in an anarchist society, rather than in a state? So even if the state is an evil, it is a necessary evil.

However, anarchists do not (all) have such a rosy picture of human nature. And they all endorse one of the following answers to why we have not yet achieved an anarchist society:

1. Enlightenment: Human beings can make progress through reason, but we have not yet (or only just now) collectively achieved the point at which we realize that our self-interest is better served by freely co-operating with one another and respecting each other's liberty;
2. Idealism: Human consciousness evolves over time, and we can make progress in our moral ideas and character. We have not yet (or only just now) achieved the moral character needed to support an anarchist society.
3. Materialism: How human beings behave is affected by the material conditions in which they live, as Marx argued. Anarchism only becomes a real possibility as a response to late capitalism.

In what follows, we briefly consider three anarchist theories to illustrate the variety of arguments made for anarchism. The similarities between certain arguments and either liberal or Marxist views should be noted.

Godwin: philosophical anarchism

Anarchism is perhaps most famously associated, in the English-speaking world, with William Godwin. He argued for 'principle of private judgment'. He argues that only one's own judgment can impose a duty on one. We must each decide what justice requires and how to bring it about. All government, with its imposition of duties through law, is incompatible with the principle of private judgment. Even a direct democracy, in which all the people vote in each individual law, doesn't respect it, because the judgment of the minority is overridden by the majority.

Godwin accepted act utilitarianism, which provides a second objection. Under a government, we are incapable of fully developing our capacity to live according to the free exercise of our private judgment. The development of people's intellectual capacity for private judgment is, in part, the greatest good. Therefore, we can never achieve the greatest good under government. As we develop our judgment, we see that we must do all we can to bring about the greatest good. Moral and political improvement will result from our understanding what is the greatest good and how to bring it about. As each person's knowledge increases, so they do not need to live under the laws of a state.

We can object that until people freely judge to seek the greatest good, then utilitarianism requires us to impose duties on them, so the state is necessary for now. Second, forcing

quickly accepted, ideas can also influence social reality. The state, then, is not *necessarily* determined by the capitalist substructure, but can be independent of it and even affect it.

And, second, this is what has happened. Marx's prediction of a communist society has turned out false, while capitalism has changed greatly, for instance in the creation of the welfare state and in the evolution of classes. Workers own shares in companies and work has shifted from industry to information technology, services and leisure. In this evolution in society, the state has played a part. Marx may respond that this has not led to emancipation, that the state continues to support a means of production that is alienating.

Other theories will also challenge Marx's very strong conception of human nature and theory of alienation. Is Marx right that we can make an objective judgment about people being alienated without taking into account their personal view on the matter? For human happiness to increase, is revolution required or only, as Mill argues, education? If we are not alienated, perhaps the state is not necessarily oppressive.

Finally, even if we agree that Marx is largely right, can we also agree that there is an alternative to the state? Is a stateless, communist society of equals humanly possible?

ANARCHISM

Anarchism does not name a single political theory, as different 'schools' of anarchism hold very different views about human nature and the nature of anarchist society. However, they all advocate that the state should be abolished and replaced by social organizations.

What is distinctive about the state, such that anarchists object to it? David Miller (*Anarchism*, Ch. 1) provides an excellent summary:

1. The state is sovereign, claiming complete authority to define the rights and obligations of its citizens.
2. The state is compulsory. Members are forced to recognize their obligations.
3. The state claims a monopoly on force. No other use of force is justified.
4. The state is a distinct body. Its role and functions are separated from other social roles and functions generally, and the people composing it (politicians, bureaucrats, armed forces, police) tend to form distinct class.

The most fundamental anarchist objection is that the state violates and undermines liberty. It exercises far more coercion than is required for human beings to live together. It enacts laws that benefit itself, not citizens. It is excessively punitive, punishing people for breaking even unjustified laws. It is also destructive, fighting wars for its own protection and aggrandizement. Some anarchists add that it is exploitative, unjustly taking wealth from those who produce it and either keeping it for its own activities or placing it in the hands of an economically privileged class.

Of course, states are useful, providing protection of individuals against others and coordinating productive work. But anarchists argue that for both of these essential functions, *we do not need the state*. We need some form of collective body or bodies, but these need not claim sovereignty and need no more power than what is required for their specific function. They can be voluntary, with people allowed to join or leave as they

expressing his creative powers, and would involve producing things that aimed to meet the needs of ourselves and others.

This situation cannot be remedied by liberal 'political emancipation'. Liberal ideas of rights and justice as themselves alienating, based on the thought that the individual needs protecting from harm by others, and freedom is freedom from interference. This conflicts with the fundamental nature of human beings as *communal*. We find freedom not in being separate from each other, but in positive relations with each other. Liberal rights undermine these relations, so cannot solve oppression.

A second way the state is oppressive is through the *illusion* of community, 'equal before the law'. This idea glosses over the very real power difference between classes. If a genuine community of equals came into existence, which Marx called a 'communist revolution', then the state would *cease to exist*.

Freeden identifies five core concepts in Marx's theory:

1. equality, which he understands in terms of people's needs being met equally, which is quite different from liberalism's moral equality or equality of opportunity;
2. welfare, fulfilling our 'species being', the importance of which is shown by the analysis of alienation;
3. the importance of meaningful creative work;
4. community, as our network of relations with others determines how our lives go;
5. history, the historical development of modes of production and co-operation and of political ideas.

Marx on justice

Despite his analysis of the role of the state in oppressing the worker, Marx doesn't call capitalism unjust. Yet surely oppression, by definition, is unjust. This puzzle can be explained by three things.

First, Marx did not want to use liberal conceptions of justice as upholding rights in cases of conflict. The communist society would be 'beyond' justice, not having the kinds of disputes justice is needed to resolve. Each person would contribute to the community according to their ability and receive according to their need. (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*)

Second, Marx believed that the evolution of societies occurred according to historical developments in the economic substructure. For this reason, he argued that capitalism is a *necessary stage* we must pass through in order to develop the communist society.

Third, his arguments were based not on an appeal to moral ideas, but an analysis of these historical developments in the means of production. Social change will be driven by changes in material circumstances (substructure) rather than changes in ideas (superstructure).

Objections

Marx's view of the state as oppressor has been strongly challenged, both by other political thinkers and by changes in society in the last 150 years. First, the one-way relation between substructure and superstructure has been roundly rejected. Social reality certainly has an influence on ideas, at least ideas about society, but as many Marxists

MARXISM

Theory of history

To understand Marx's view of the state, we need to start at the beginning. First, we are alive, so we need material goods, such as food and shelter. But unlike other animals, we *produce* our 'means of subsistence'. So, second, historically, the satisfaction of our original needs – how this is done and what it required, e.g. tools – leads to new needs, e.g. the means to produce those tools. Third, people create more people, they reproduce; and again, this occurs in particular ways, depending on circumstances. Finally, both production and reproduction are not only natural but also social activities, i.e. they involve certain ways, arrangements, 'modes' of co-operating with others.

Marx argues that the different *modes of production* and *modes of co-operation*, which he called the economic 'sub-structure', determine the nature of each society. These modes develop as society evolves, in particular, involving the division of labour, within the family, between mental and physical labour, between agriculture, commercial and industrial activity. These divisions of labour, and the corresponding modes of co-operation are basic facts. Social customs, laws, education, religion, culture, and the institutions of state, Marx called the 'superstructure'. It constant evolves out of how people live their lives. To understand the state, we must understand how it is related to the modes of production in society.

The state, at any time, is based on the power relations between classes within society. The modern state is based on capitalism, with an inequality of power between the capitalists – those *who own the means of production* – and the workers. The workers get paid a salary by the capitalists, but they don't own what they produce, and the capitalists keep the profit made by selling what is produced.

The power of the dominant class is supported in two ways: through the state as a set of institutions and through an 'ideology', a set of ideas about the state and society. Both protect the interests of the dominant class and seek to justify the distribution of power. First, in capitalism, those with capital have political influence. The state is biased, not a neutral umpire, nor an embodiment of inherited wisdom. Second, the ideas we have are historical products, determined by the economic sub-structure; they are not the products of 'pure reason' or any such thing. Political theories (such as liberalism and conservatism) that defend capitalism and its liberal democratic state protect the interests of capitalists.

Oppression and emancipation

The state supports and justifies a mode of production which oppresses the workers. In capitalism, the worker suffers from 'alienation', a kind of estrangement resulting in a loss.

The worker is alienated, first, from the products of his labour, which are taken away by the capitalist. Second, Marx argues that meaningful, creative work is central to a flourishing life; but the worker's activity is meaningless and repetitive – so he is alienated from his work. Third, this meaningless production also alienates him from his 'species-being', Marx's term for true human nature – our powers and needs. Fourth, capitalism alienates people from each other, because the aim is to create things to be sold not things that will satisfy our mutual needs.

Someone who is alienated may not realize this, and may not consciously feel their loss. However, under different arrangements, their lives would be more fulfilled. Work which is not alienated would involve the worker enjoying both his work and its product,

Human nature and political organisation: Marxism and anarchism

COMPETING VIEWS OF HUMAN NATURE AND OF THE PURPOSE OF THE STATE

On ideology

Political ideologies, such as ‘liberalism’, ‘conservatism’, ‘Marxism’ and ‘anarchism’ can be studied and classified, mostly along the left-right spectrum, as providing plans of action for the creation of public political institutions, of seeking to justify various political arrangements, and as binding individuals to society. And for this reason, they are inevitably associated with power. Ideologies tend to be attached to social groups (but not necessarily classes). They provide a picture of society, one that simplifies the complexities of social reality, but this is necessary in order to provide guidance in making political decisions. Michael Freedon (*Ideologies and Political Theory*) argues that ideologies are different organizations of political concepts that give them particular meanings.

Political concepts have, through historical usage, become complex. Each has a number of components, e.g. ‘liberty’ includes ideas of absence of coercion, freedom from interference, opportunity, autonomy, rational choice, self-determination, and so on. Different societies have understood and used of the concept of liberty in these different ways. There isn’t one ‘right’ interpretation of the concept of liberty, or even of each component. Philosophers and politicians will emphasize those aspects of liberty they feel are important.

This is part of the idea of ‘essential contestability’. Political concepts are essentially (not accidentally) ones that people disagree over for two reasons. First, because political concepts (e.g. equality, liberty, democracy, justice) are evaluative concepts, and people disagree over values. Second, because of the component structure. Each component has different possible descriptions, and people also disagree over which components the concept ‘ought’ to have.

Ideologies, then, are groups of such concepts, organized and understood in such a way as to make the interpretation of each concept support the others. Different ideologies make different political concepts central, e.g. liberalism starts from liberty, socialism from community. Each ideology ‘decontests’ concepts, which provides them with more specific meanings, which allows them to be used in guiding political decisions. It is difficult to know what to do on the basis that liberty is absence of constraint; but if you understand the type of constraint that should be absent as physical coercion by others rather than, say, individual addictions, this provides more guidance on the type of policies to pursue.

Ideologies often use theories of human nature to decontest political concepts. The particular interpretation of liberty or rights appeals to aspects of what it is to be human – which of our faculties and what aspects of our situation are important. What these arguments are and how they work is best seen through the examples we turn to now.