within the groups at the base of a society or at the top – empowered the few at the expense of the many.

This is reflected on Bakunin's discussion of union bureaucracy and how to combat it. In the Geneva section of the International, the construction workers' section "simply left all decision-making to their committees [...] In this manner power gravitated to the committees, and by a species of fiction characteristic of all governments the committees substituted their own will and their own ideas for that of the membership." The union "sections could only defend their rights and their autonomy in only one way: the workers called general membership meetings. Nothing arouses the antipathy of the committees more than these popular assemblies [...] In these great meetings of the sections, the items on the agenda was amply discussed and the most progressive opinion prevailed." In addition, delegates elected by the membership had to fulfil "their obligations to their respective sections" by "reporting regularly to the membership the proposals made and how they voted" and "asking for further instructions (plus instant recall of unsatisfactory delegates)."[68]

In short, to "contract a relationship of voluntary servitude" was inconsistent with anarchist principles as "the freedom of every individual is inalienable" and so associations could have no other footing "but the utmost equality and reciprocity."[69] Like Proudhon, Bakunin saw the need for directly democratic – self-managed – associations for the capitalist workplace created "master and slave" relationships for "the worker sells his person and his liberty for a given time."[70] The workplace had to be a free association of individuals who organise their joint work as equals and so he was "convinced that the co-operative will be the preponderant form of social organisation in the fu-

[68] Bakunin, *Anarchism*, 246–7
[69] *Selected*, 147, 68
[70] *Philosophy*, 187

On Anarchist Organisation

Anarcho

November 16, 2019

An anarchist organisation made decisions without giving power to the few. Anarchists "recognise all natural authority, and all influence of fact upon us, but none of right; for all authority and all influence of right, officially imposed upon us, immediately becomes a falsehood and an oppression." The "only great and omnipotent authority, at once natural and rational, the only one we respect, will be that of the collective and public spirit of a society founded on equality and solidarity and the mutual respect of all its members." Freedom "is something very positive, very complex, and above all eminently social, since it can be realised only by society and only under conditions of strict equality and solidarity."[64]

He contrasted this with Marxists who, he argued, were "champions of order established from the top downwards, always in the name of universal suffrage and the sovereignty of the masses, for whom they save the honour and privilege of obeying leaders, elected masters." The state, then, was "the minority government, from the top downward, of a vast quantity of men"[65] while in an anarchy the "whole people govern" and so "there will be no one to be governed. It means that there will be no government, no State."[66] Therefore anarchists do "not accept, even in the process of revolutionary transition, either constituent assemblies, provisional governments or so-called revolutionary dictatorships; because we are convinced that revolution is only sincere, honest and real in the hands of the masses, and that when it is concentrated in those of a few ruling individuals it inevitably and immediately becomes reaction."[67]

Thus, like Proudhon, Bakunin contrasted collective decision making with representative government. The latter – whether

[64] *Philosophy*, 241, 255, 268.
[65] *Selected*, 237–8, 265.
[66] *Philosophy*, 287.
[67] *Selected*, 237

and all privileged, licensed, official, and legal influence, even though arising from universal suffrage" because "it can turn only to the advantage of a dominant minority of exploiters against the interests of the immense majority in subjection to them." However, he was well aware of the need for individuals to associate together into groups and make decisions. This meant *how* we organised was what mattered for "man in isolation can have no awareness of his liberty. Being free for man means being acknowledged, considered and treated as such by another man. Liberty is therefore a feature not of isolation but of interaction, not of exclusion but rather of connection".[61]

Long before Rosa Luxemburg made the same distinction,[62] Bakunin contrasted two kinds of discipline, an "authoritarian conception of discipline" which "signifies despotism on the one hand and blind automatic submission to authority on the other" and another "not automatic but voluntary and intelligently understood [which] is, and will ever be, necessary whenever a greater number of individuals undertake any kind of collective work or action." The latter was "simply the voluntary and considered co-ordination of all individual efforts for a common purpose" and did not preclude "a natural division of functions according to the aptitude of each, assessed and judged by the collective whole" but "no function remains fixed and it will not remain permanently and irrevocably attached to any one person. Hierarchical order and promotion do not exist, so that the executive of yesterday can become the subordinate of tomorrow." In this way "power, properly speaking, no longer exists. Power is diffused to the collectivity and becomes the true expression of the liberty of everyone, the faithful and sincere realisation of the will of all".[63]

[61] *Selected*, 131, 135, 147.

[62] "Organisational Question of Social Democracy," *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), Mary-Alice Waters (ed.), 119–20.

[63] Bakunin, *Anarchism*, 414–5.

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federations of workers' councils organised at the point of production in the fight against exploitation and oppression:

> "Workers, no longer count on anyone but yourselves [...] You bear within you today all the elements of the power that must renew the world [...] Abstain from all participation in bourgeois radicalism and organise outside of it the forces of the proletariat. The basis of that organisation is [...] the workshops and the federation of the workshops [...] and their federation not just nationally, but internationally. The creation of *chambres de travail* [...] the liquidation of the State and of bourgeois society [...] Anarchy, that it to say the true, the open popular revolution [...] organisation, from top to bottom and from the circumference to the centre"[59]

An anarchist organisation "must be a people's movement, organised from the bottom up by the free, spontaneous action of the masses. There must be no secret governmentalism, the masses must be informed of everything [...] All the affairs of the International must be thoroughly and openly discussed without evasions and circumlocutions." This is in contrast to "the principle of *authority*, that is, the eminently theological, metaphysical, and political idea that the masses, *always* incapable of governing themselves, must at all times submit to the benevolent yoke of a wisdom and a justice imposed upon them, in some way or other, from above."[60]

Like Proudhon, Bakunin contrasted authority with collective self-government. He argued for "no external legislation and no authority" and rejected "all legislation, all authority,

[59] "Letter to Albert Richard", *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 62 (Summer 2014).

[60] *Bakunin on Anarchism*, 408, 142.

> to operate social tools and organise production [...] all workers should group themselves into resistance societies by trade in order to secure the present and prepare for the future."[55]

This position was held in the libertarian sections of the *International Workers' Association*, which had been founded in 1864 by British trade unionists and French mutualists. The idea of unions becoming the economic framework of socialism in *chambres de travail* (workers councils) was first raised by mutualist delegates from the Belgium section at its Brussels conference in 1868 before becoming policy at the Basle Congress.[56]

Bakunin: Building and Applying

When Bakunin joined the International in 1868 he took up and championed these syndicalist ideas, arguing that it had to "expand and organise itself [...] so that when the Revolution [...] breaks out, there will be [...] a serious international organisation of workers' associations [...] capable of replacing this departing world of States."[57] Anarchists would only achieve their goal "by the development and organisation" of the "social (and, by consequence, anti-political) power of the working masses."[115] The "organisation of the trade sections and their representation in the Chambers of Labour [...] bear in themselves the living seeds of new society which is to replace the old world. They are creating not only the ideas, but also the facts of the future itself."[58] Thus libertarian socialism was based on

[55] Eugène Varlin, "Workers Societies," *La Marseillaise*, 11 March 1870, from "Precursors of Syndicalism I," *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 75 (Winter 2019).

[56] Graham, 92, 109–111, 118–120.

[57] *The Basic Bakunin* (Buffalo, NY: Promethus Books, 1994), Robert M. Cutler (ed.), 110.

[58] *Bakunin on Anarchism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980), Sam Dolgoff (ed.), 255.

> "organisation, that is to say, association for a specific purpose and with the structure and means required to attain it, is a necessary aspect of social life. A man in isolation cannot even live the life of a beast [...] Having therefore to join with other humans [...] he must submit to the will of others (be enslaved) or subject others to his will (be in authority) or live with others in fraternal agreement in the interests of the greatest good of all (be an associate). Nobody can escape from this necessity."
>
> – Errico Malatesta[1]

[1] *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas* (London: Freedom Press, 1993), Vernon Richards (ed.), 84–5.

Introduction

The notion that anarchism is inherently against organisation is one much asserted.

George Woodcock, the ex-anarchist turned anarchism's self-appointed historian, proclaimed that "it seems evident that logically pure anarchism goes against its own nature when it attempts to create elaborate international or even national organisations, which need a measure of rigidity and centralisation to survive." A syndicalist union, however, needs "relatively stable organisations and succeeds in creating them precisely because it moves in a world that is only partly governed by anarchist ideals". He reflected the opinion of a large band of more hostile commentators on anarchism who inflict a fundamental irrationality on anarchists. If "pure" anarchism is against any form of organisation beyond its "natural unit" of the "loose and flexible affinity group" then few sensible people would embrace it for neither a rail network nor a hospital could be reliably run by such a unit.[1]

However, if we accept that anarchists are no different from other social activists and so fundamentally rational and realistic people as Davide Turcato persuasively (and correctly!) argues[2] then we need to admit that anarchist theoreticians and activists would not be advocating an ideal that could not possibly work. Unsurprisingly, then, we discover that anarchists – in general – spent some time thinking about organisation and

[1] George Woodock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (England: Penguin Books, 1986), 226–7.

[2] David Turcato, *Making Sense of Anarchism: Errico Malatesta's Experiments with Revolution, 1889–1900* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press, 2015).

find Eugène Varlin as well as "advocat[ing] equal rights for women in opposition" to Proudhon also arguing that unions and strikes were "necessary to abolish capitalism."[54] As well as mitigating capitalist exploitation and oppression in the here and now, unions had a wider role in "organis[ing] the production and distribution of products" in the future:

> "Unless you want to reduce everything to a centralising and authoritarian state, which would appoint the directors of mills, factories, distribution outlets, whose directors would in turn appoint deputy directors, supervisors, foremen, etc. and thus arrive at a top-down hierarchical organisation of labour, in which the worker would be nothing but an unconscious cog, without freedom or initiative; unless we do, we are forced to admit that the workers themselves must have the free disposal of their instruments of labour [...] Workers societies, in whatever form they exist at present, already have this immense advantage of accustoming men to social life, and so preparing them for a wider social organisation. They accustom them not only to reach an agreement and understanding, but also to take care of their affairs, to organise, to discuss, to think about their material and moral interests, and always from the collective point of view [...] trade societies (resistance, solidarity, union) deserve our encouragement and sympathy, for they are the natural elements of the social construction of the future; it is they who can easily become producer associations; it is they who will be able

[54] Robert Graham, *We do not Fear Anarchy, we invoke it: The First International and the Origins of the Anarchist Movement* (Oakland/Edinburgh: AK Press, 2015), 77, 128.

Eleven years after Déjacque issued his challenge to Proudhon, André Léo, a feminist mutualist and future Communard, also pointed out the obvious contradiction to his French followers and others on the left in her work *La Femme et les mœurs*:

> "These so-called lovers of liberty, if they are unable to take part in the direction of the state, at least they will be able to have a little monarchy for their personal use, each in his own home. When divine right was shattered, it was so that each male (Proudhonian-type) could have a piece of it. Order in the family without hierarchy seems impossible to them – well then, what about in the state?"[53]

Both Déjacque and Léo argued that Proudhon's Rousseau-derived critique of wage-labour and the state (including Rousseau's democracy) was equally applicable to *family* relations. Anarchists, to be consistent, cannot be blind to social ("private") hierarchies while denouncing economic and political ones. Given that the rationale for all these forms of subjection were justified in liberal theory in the same manner – voluntary or contractual – there was no logical reason to defend patriarchy any more than any other *archy*. Unsurprisingly, almost all subsequent anarchists (including Bakunin and Kropotkin) recognised the need for consistency and so followed the likes of Déjacque and Léo in applying Proudhon's principles against his own contradictory application just as Proudhon had done to Rousseau.

They also sought to apply their ideas within another area Proudhon opposed, namely in the union movement. Thus we

Libertaire in France. (Nettlau, 145, 162). Soon after libertarian was used as an alternative for anarchist internationally, see my "160 Years of Libertarian," *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 71–72 (Fall 2017).

[53] quoted by Carolyn J. Eichner, *Surmounting the Barricades: Women in the Paris Commune* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2004), 40.

how they could apply their ideas to the world around them. This is understandable as anarchists aim to change society for the better – whether by reform or revolution – and as such sought practical solutions to the social problems they saw around them. Theory needs to be reflected in practice and a theory which – by "its own nature" – precludes practical alternatives to the social ills it is protesting against would be a waste of time. No anarchist considers their ideas in such a light.

Anarchism rather than ignoring the need for organisation has always addressed it. This is because rather than being a peripheral concept, organisation is fundamentally a core aspect of any ideology as it is "the point where concepts lose their abstraction" and "are interwoven with the concrete practices sanctioned or condemned by an ideology."[3] What organisational forms an ideology advocates says far more about its *actual* core values than the words it uses.

This can be seen from anarchism considered as both a theory and a movement. It was born in the context of an intellectual inheritance of liberalism and democracy and a social context of the rise of industrial capitalism and opposition to it in the shape of the workers' movement and socialism. We will show how it built upon the critique of liberalism pioneered by Jean-Jacque Rousseau and applied it against both wage-labour (capitalism) and democracy itself. In the process it developed clear organisational principles to ensure social life could continue – indeed, flourish – without *archy*.[4]

[3] Michael Freeden, *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 62.

[4] For a similar analysis see Robert Graham's "The Role of Contract in anarchist theory" in *For Anarchism: History, Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1989), David Goodway (ed.). For a useful exploration of the same issues from a non-anarchist perspective which draws similar conclusions see David P. Ellerman , *Property and Contract in Economics: The Case for Economic Democracy*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

The Ideological and Social Context

While there has been a tendency, started by Paul Eltzbacher and popularised by Woodcock to view anarchist theorists as being isolated thinkers, in reality all the major thinkers have been very much part of their society and its popular movements, seeking to gain influence for the ideas they have produced to solve its problems.[1]

This applies to the key thinkers associated with the birth and rise of anarchism as both a named theory and as a movement in the mid- to late-nineteenth century: Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Michael Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin.

All three, like other lesser known anarchist thinkers and activists, were embedded in the world they were seeking to transform. They were aware of the intellectual and social context in which they lived and critically engaged with both. This can be seen most obviously with Proudhon's writings and its well referenced polemics against the defenders of property, liberal economists and state socialist colleagues within the French democratic and labour movements but it should also be clear that Bakunin and Kropotkin, being Russian aristocrats, were well-versed with the intellectual currents of their times even if their writings were usually for the readers of anarchist journals.

The main immediate ideological influences on anarchism were liberalism (as personified by John Locke) and democracy

[1] Iain McKay, "Sages and Movements: An Incomplete Peter Kropotkin Bibliography", *Anarchist Studies* 22:1.

ation of self-governing associations, Proudhon refused to apply his ideas within the family: there he advocated (and rigorously defended) patriarchy.

Yet, as Carole Pateman reminds us, until "the late nineteenth century the legal and civil position of a wife resembled that of a slave". A slave "had no independent legal existence apart from his master, and husband and wife became 'one person,' the person of the husband." Indeed, the law "was based on the assumption that a wife was (like) property" and only the marriage contract "includes the explicit commitment to obey."[50] Other anarchists saw the obvious contradiction in Proudhon's position.

Joseph Déjacque in 1857 extended Proudhon's ideas to communist-anarchist conclusions as well as applying them to the family and in the process coined the word libertarian. It was a case of "plac[ing] the question of the emancipation of woman in line with the question of the emancipation of the proletarian" so that both enter "the anarchic-community" in which "all despotism [is] annihilated, all social inequalities levelled." Proudhon did "cry out against the high barons of capital" but "wish[ed] to rebuild the high barony of the male upon the female vassal" and so was "a *liberal* and not a LIBERTARIAN." The need was to create a "true anarchy, of absolute freedom, [in which] there would undoubtedly be as much diversity between beings as there would be people in society, diversity of age, sex, aptitudes: equality is not uniformity."[51] The following year Déjacque used this new synonym for anarchist as the title for his paper *La Libertaire, Journal du Mouvement Social*.[52]

[50] Pateman, *Sexual*, 119, 122, 181.

[51] Joseph Déjacque, "On the Male and Female Human-Being", *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 71–72 (Fall 2017).

[52] Max Nettlau, *A Short History of Anarchism* (London: Freedom Press, 1995), 75–6. Use of libertarian became more commonplace in the 1880s and 1895 saw leading anarchists Sébastien Faure and Louise Michel publish *La*

> whether that collective thought and collective action should become the exclusive attribute of an elite of functionaries, appointed for that purpose by the people and with respect to whom the people are then no longer COLLEAGUES, but obedient, passive subjects or instruments."[46]

Proudhon, then, had an opposition to one centralised Association or association for its own sake (what Proudhon termed "the principle of Association") but he was in favour of workplace associations to replace wage-labour as well as an "*agricultural–industrial federation*" in which associations would "not to absorb one another and merge, but to mutually guarantee the conditions of prosperity that are common to them".[47] Nor was he opposed to large-scale industry for these associations were advocated precisely to ensure its benefits for workers rather than a few capitalists.[48] Similarly, the free access to workplaces and land to abolish wage-labour required Proudhon to advocate their social ownership precisely to ensure that those who used them controlled them. Thus possession (or use-rights) were postulated within the context of collective or undivided ownership by all.[49]

Déjacque, Léo and Varlin: Being consistently libertarian

It was in reaction to a specific aspect of Proudhon's ideas that the term libertarian (*libertaire*) was first used in the modern sense. While denouncing both the state and the capitalist workplace as authoritarian and seeking to replace both with a federal

[46] Proudhon, *Regarding*, 29.

[47] Proudhon, *Property*, 711–3.

[48] Vincent, 156.

[49] Iain McKay, "Proudhon, Property & Possession", *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 66 (Winter 2016).

(as personified by Rousseau). The social context was the failure of the French Revolution and the rise of industrial capitalism as well as the oppositional movements each produced: radical republicanism and the labour and socialist movements, respectively.

Locke: Justifying Subordinate Relations

Liberalism is usually associated with John Locke who is often presented as the foundational thinker for modern Western freedoms and democracy. Yet we cannot understand Locke if he has "modern liberal-democratic assumptions read into his political thought."[2] His political theory is not primarily concerned with defending liberty but rather *property* and the power that comes with it.[3] Thus he takes wage-labour as existing in his "state of nature" and as a self-evident natural order:

> "*Master* and *Servant* are names as old as History [...] a freeman makes himself a servant to another, by selling him, for a certain time, the service he undertakes to do, in exchange for wages he is to receive [...] it gives the master but a temporary power over him, and no greater than what is contained in the *Contract* between 'em."[4]

This produces a situation where "a *Master of a Family*" rules over others with "all these subordinate relations of *Wife*, *Children*, *Servants*, and *Slaves*" and with "a very distinct and differently limited *Power*". He was at pains to differentiate the power

[2] C. B Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 194.

[3] For a wider analysis of liberalism along the lines explored here see Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History* (London/New York: Verso, 2011).

[4] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Peter Laslett (ed.), Second Treatise, section 85 (322).

of "a *Master* over his Servant, a *Husband* over his Wife, and a *Lord* over his Slave" from political power. Thus power from wealth was considered as not an issue beyond ensuring that it did not take the form of a political power, namely "a *Right* of making Laws with Penalties of Death, and consequently all less Penalties". However as the State existed "for the Regulating and Preserving of Property, and of employing the force of the Community, in the Execution of such Laws"[5], the property owner could expect the full backing of the state in ensuring his authority was obeyed.

Locke, then, argues that alleged free and equal individuals create organisations in which the few rule over the many. That is, within the liberal organisation "subordinate relations" – hierarchy – is the outcome yet the awkward question remains: "it is hard to see why a free and equal individual should have sufficient good reason to subordinate herself to another."[6]

Locke rose to this challenge with the liberal use of the word consent and a "just-so" story rooted in what appear reasonable assumptions. The latter are of note for Locke is keen to base his defence of the bourgeois order on both labour and common property. Thus land is given to everyone in common by God while labour "is the unquestionable property of the labourer". He uses examples of people who have "appropriated" the *produce* of the commons ("the Acorns he pickt up under an Oak, or the Apples he gathered from the Trees in the Wood") to the appropriating the commons themselves. To the objection that appropriating the commons ends the freedom of others to take its produce, he suggests "no man but he can have a right to what [his labour] that is once joined to, at least where there is enough, and as good, left in common for others."[7]

[5] Second Treatise, sections 86, 2, 3 (323, 268).

[6] Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), 40.

[7] Second Treatise, sections 27, 28, 27 (288).

and the same proposition" for "what, in politics, goes under the name of *Authority* is analogous to and synonymous with what is termed, in political economy, *Property*; that these two notions overlap one with the other and are identical". The "principle of AUTHORITY [was] articulated through property and through the State." and so "an attack upon one is an attack upon the other."[43] Association had to replace both.

Before leaving Proudhon to see how his ideas were later developed, it must be noted that many commentators view him as an opponent to association, large-scale industry and social ownership. To do so is to misunderstand his ideas and the context in which he expressed them. Against those other socialists vying for influence in the French labour movement, Proudhon was keen to stress that these utopian schemes turned the "community" into proprietor and so resulted in the oppression and exploitation of labour just as much as capitalism did.[44] Similarly with Louis Blanc, who came "under attack by Proudhon for eliminating all competition, and for fostering state centralisation of initiative and direction at the expense of local and corporative powers and intermediate associations. But the term association could also refer to the mutualist associations that Proudhon favoured, that is, those initiated and controlled from below."[45] If Blanc advocated *Association*, Proudhon supported *associations*:

> "But there is not one single public function, one single industry in society; and the question is precisely to know if the public thought or action can and should be exerted *ex æquo*, in equal measure and by equal title, by all the citizens individually and independently of one another: that is the democratic or anarchic system – or

[43] *Property*, 503–6.

[44] *Property,* 132.

[45] Vincent, 224–5.

and authority must be equal in every citizen: otherwise, there would be no equality [...] and the sovereignty of the people, vested in a small number of representatives, would be a fiction." Economically, just as citizens could not alienate their liberty to a government, so the revolution meant that workers would not sell their liberty to a boss so "[c]apitalist and landlord exploitation [is] stopped everywhere, wage-labour abolished" by association for "industrial associations" were "worker republics".[40]

Individuals would join self-government groups within a "universal federalism" based on making "the citizens vote by categories of functions, in accordance with the principle of the collective force" for "the federative system is the opposite of administrative and governmental hierarchy or centralisation". Thus the "groups that comprise the confederation" would be "self-governing, self-judging and self-administering in complete sovereignty" and "universal suffrage form [their] basis" and each "enjoys a right of secession". This means that in "a mutualist confederation, the citizen gives up none of his freedom, as Rousseau requires him to do for the governance of his republic!"[41] In summary:

> "no longer do we have the abstraction of people's sovereignty as in the '93 Constitution and the others that followed it, and in Rousseau's *Social Contract*. Instead it becomes an effective sovereignty of the labouring masses which rule and govern [...] the labouring masses are actually, positively and effectively sovereign: how could they not be when the economic organism – labour, capital, property and assets – belongs to them entirely"[42]

Thus the "*abolition of man's exploitation of his fellow-man and abolition of man's government of his fellow-man"* were "one

[40] *Property*, 563, 502, 596, 780.

[41] *Property*, 677, 698, 716, 763, 762.

[42] *Property*, 760–1.

Yet this limitation is quickly overcome[8] by the increased productivity of the appropriated land which meant "there was still enough, and as good left; and more than the yet unprovided could use. " The "tacit Agreement" to use money "introduced (by Consent) larger Possessions" which in turn meant "it is plain, that Men have agreed to a disproportionate and unequal Possession of the Earth, they having, by a tacit and voluntary consent, found out, a way how a man may fairly possess more land than he himself can use the product of, by receiving in exchange for the overplus, Gold and Silver, which may be hoarded up without injury to any one"[9] Significantly, this inequality of property exists in the state of nature and *precedes* the creation of the state. Equally significantly, Locke justifies appropriation of the world not in terms of increased liberty for all but rather by the trickle-down effect of increased wealth produced by that appropriation.

With all the land appropriated and inequality in wealth the norm, any free agreement between the rich and proletariat would favour the former and create authoritarian social relationships which Locke took as both natural and unproblematic for liberty:

> "since the Authority of the Rich Proprietor, and the Subjection of the Needy Beggar, began not from the Possession of the Lord, but the Consent of the poor Man, who preferr'd being his Subject to starving. And the Man he thus submits to, can pretend to no more Power over him, than he has consented to, upon Compact."[10]

This is part of Locke's argument against absolute Monarchy and its ideological justifications, namely that the sovereignty

[8] Macpherson, 203–20; Carole Pateman, *The Problem of Political Obligation: A Critique of Liberal Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), 66–7.

[9] Second Treatise, sections 33, 36, 50 (291, 293, 302).

[10] First Treatise, section 43 (170–1).

of a Monarchy – the King's power of life and death – rested on ownership of the land ("*Private Dominion*"). Thus while the property owner had *authority* over his wage-worker and tenant as specified in a contract, ownership "could give him no *Sovereignty*" understood as being "an Absolute, Arbitrary, Unlimited, and Unlimitable power over the Lives, Liberties, and Estates of his Children and Subjects".[11]

Once the worker has consented to being under the authority of the wealthy then his labour and its product is no longer his own property: "Thus the Grass my Horse has bit; the Turfs my Servant has cut; and the Ore I have digg'd in any place, where I have a right to them in common with others, become my *Property*." The workers' labour is now his employer's and "hath fixed my property" in both the product and common resources worked upon.[12] Thus Locke's defence of property as resting on labour becomes the means to derive the worker of the full product of that labour. This is unsurprising for "the more emphatically labour is asserted to be a property, the more it is to be understood to be alienable. For property in the bourgeois sense is not only a right to enjoy or use; it is a right to dispose of, to exchange, to alienate."[13]

Thus liberalism rationalises organisations based on "authority" and "subjection", which turns one into the "subject" of another thanks to property which, lest we forget, "*the Preservation*" of was the "great and *chief end*" for men "uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under Government". Therefore, "*Subjects* or *Foreigners*, attempting by force on the Properties of any People, may be *resisted* with force"[14]

Government is based on an alienation of the natural liberty of the property owners into "the Legislature" who could not "*think themselves in a Civil Society*" until the government "was

[11] First Treatise, sections 43, 9 (171, 148).
[12] Second Treatise, section 28 (289).
[13] Macpherson, 214–5.
[14] Second Treatise, sections 124, 231 (418, 550–1).

capital against the wage-workers, of whatever language and nationality they all are."[36] Thus monarchies and republics were class states, run by and for dominant minorities regardless of whether elections take place. This was the function of centralism, hence the need for federalism:

> "In short, whoever says freedom says federation, or says nothing;
>
> "Whoever says republic, says federation, or says nothing;
>
> "Whoever says socialism, says federation, or yet again says nothing."[37]

If, in 1847 he suggested the goal of "industrial centralisation, administrative, without hierarchy,"[38] by the early 1850s he had embraced the more precise and clearer term federalism as better expressing his vision. In 1863 he stressed "the idea of an industrial federation serving as a complement to and ratification of the political federation" and that his "economic ideas, elaborated for twenty-five years, can be summarised" as "*Agricultural-Industrial Federation*" and his "political views are reduced to a similar formula: *Political Federation* or *Decentralisation*."[39]

Anarchy, then, was an economic as well as political participatory democracy – a self-governing society – for "any one-sided conditions" in which "one part of the citizens should find themselves, by the contract, subordinated and exploited by the others, it would no longer be a contract; it would be a fraud". Politically, "the object of the Revolution" is "to put paid to all authority and do away with the entire machinery of government" by "the organisation of universal suffrage" for "freedom

[36] *Du principe fédératif* (Antony: Tops-Trinquier, 2013), 125, 163.
[37] *Du principe fédératif*, 122.
[38] Besancon municipal library, MS 2881 f. 30v.
[39] *Property*, 712, 714.

society" and must be replaced with one in which "all positions are elective, and the by-laws subject to the approval of the members."[32]

This meant that there "will no longer be nationality, no longer fatherland, in the political sense of the words: they will mean only places of birth. Whatever a man's race or colour, he is really a native of the universe; he has citizen's rights everywhere."[33] So freedom and democracy did not end at the workplace door for the political and economic regimes were linked. As well as meaning association within the political and economic spheres in a free society, this also showed why the centralised political structure did not come about by accident. It was required to ensure bourgeois rule:

> "And who benefits from this regime of unity? The people? No, the upper classes [...] Unity [...] is quite simply a form of bourgeois exploitation under the protection of bayonets. Yes, political unity, in the great States, is bourgeois: the positions which it creates, the intrigues which it causes, the influences which it cherishes, all that is bourgeois and goes to the bourgeois."[34]

The centralised, hierarchical, state is "the cornerstone of bourgeois despotism and exploitation"[35] for how else can a minority class rule? So it was no coincidence that "nothing resembles a monarchy more than a unitarian republic" and "[l]et us not forget that the constitutional, bourgeois and unitary monarchy, tends, with regard to international politics, to guarantee from State to State the exploiting classes against the exploited classes, consequently to form the coalition of

[32] *Property*, 583–6.
[33] *Property*, 597.
[34] *La fédération et l'unité en Italie* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1862), 27–8
[35] *La fédération*, 33.

placed in collective Bodies of Men, call them Senate, Parliament, or what you please"[15] and so Locke's "liberal state, or the political sphere, stands over and above, and external to, the world of everyday life."[16] This collective body of landlords would rule supreme over the individuals who make it up "for it would be a direct Contradiction, for any one, to enter into society with others for the securing and regulating of property [...] to suppose his Land, whose Property is to be regulated by the Laws of the Society, should be exempt from the Jurisdiction of that Government, to which he himself, the Proprietor of the Land, is a Subject" After this, a man "is at liberty to go and incorporate himself into any other Commonwealth".[17]

Once the land is appropriated and wealth accumulated in a few hands, then this few combine to form a political state because the previous government – a monarchy – no longer acts as an impartial umpire and takes a self-interested part in the numerous conflicts between property owners. This turns "the state of nature" into "the state of war" as the King starts to exercise absolute power over the property owners and their property. This produces the need to overthrow the monarchy and create a political power which "turns out to be the majority of the representatives, and the latter are chosen by the propertied."[18]

This meant that while the "labouring class is a necessary part of the nation its members are not in fact full members of the body politic and have no claim to be so". Locke considered "all men as members [of civil society] for the purposes of being ruled and only the men of estate as members for the purpose of ruling" (or "more accurately, the right to control any government"). Workers, the actual majority, "were in but of civil society" and so Locke "would have no difficulty, therefore, in

[15] Second Treatise, section 94 (329–30).
[16] Pateman, *Problem*, 71.
[17] Second Treatise, sections 120, 121 (348, 349).
[18] Pateman, *Problem*, 67, 72.

thinking of the state as a joint-stock company of owners whose majority of decision binds not only themselves but also their employees."[19]

In short, Locke "was not a democrat at all."[20] Needless to say, many liberal writers have objected to these kinds of arguments and conclusions and given these conflicting interpretations of Locke and his democratic credentials (or lack of them), some may consider it impossible to determine the facts of the matter. Here, however, Locke himself provides an answer with his *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* that postulates rule by wealthy landlords as well as the introduction of serfdom. Significantly, its preamble is very clear on who is forming this state and why:

> "that we may avoid erecting a numerous democracy, we, the lords and proprietors of the province aforesaid, have agreed to this following form of government"[21]

Ignoring his "just-so" story of land appropriation, Locke simply allocated the land to "eight proprietors" who each received "one-fifth of the whole" in perpetually while "the hereditary nobility" received another fifth. The parliament would be made up "of the proprietors or their deputies" and "one freeholder out of every precinct." The freeholder members of parliament had to have more than "five hundred acres of freehold within the precinct for which he is chosen" while the electorate would be made up of those who have more than "fifty acres of freehold within the said precinct."[22]

Compare this to a Commonwealth described in the Second Treatise which had a "single hereditary Person having

[19] Macpherson, 221–2, 248–9, 227, 251.

[20] Macpherson, 196.

[21] John Locke, *Political Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Mark Goldie (ed.), 161–2.

[22] Locke, *Political*, 162, 174–5.

> citizen in the sphere of his industry, each municipal, district or provincial council within its own territory, is the only natural and legitimate representative of the Sovereign, and that therefore each locality should act directly and by itself in administering the interests which it includes, and should exercise full sovereignty in relation to them. The People is nothing but the organic union of wills that are individually free, that can and should voluntarily work together, but abdicate never [...] it becomes necessary for the workers to form themselves into democratic societies, with equal conditions for all members, on pain of a relapse into feudalism [...] they will themselves be the State; that is to say, in all that concerns their industrial speciality, they will be the direct, active representative of the Sovereign."[31]

Democratic principles must be extended to the economy – including the workplace – and this, in turn, would eliminate class differences and so the need for a state. The capitalist workplace involved the worker being "simply the employee of the proprietor-capitalist-entrepreneur" and so "subordinated, exploited" in a "permanent condition" of "obedience and poverty". So "due to the immorality, tyranny and theft suffered" under wage-labour, association was needed. The worker must "become an associate" and "participate in the chances of loss or gain of the establishment, he will have a voice in the council" and so "resumes his dignity as a man and citizen" by becoming "a part of the producing organisation, of which he was before but the slave" just "as, in the town, he forms a part of the sovereign power". A workplace with "subordinates and superiors" and "two industrial castes of masters and wage-workers" is "repugnant to a free and democratic

[31] *Property*, 595–6.

Second, Rousseau's political solution – a centralised, unitarian, indivisible republic – recreates the division between rulers and ruled which it claims to end. Thus, "having laid down as a principle that the people are the only sovereign", Rousseau "quietly abandons and discards this principle" and so "the citizen has nothing left but the power of choosing his rulers by a plurality vote". Echoing Rousseau's own words about England, Proudhon proclaimed that France was "a quasi-democratic Republic" in which citizens "are permitted, every third or fourth year, to elect, first, the Legislative Power, second, the Executive Power. The duration of this participation in the Government for the popular collectivity is brief [...] The President and the Representatives, once elected, are the masters; all the rest obey. They are *subjects*, to be *governed* and to be taxed, without surcease."[29]

Thus the democratic principle is nullified and the people exercise a mythical sovereignty rather than a real one.

Against the idea of representative democracy in a one and indivisible republic, Proudhon advocated a decentralised, federal, participatory democracy. The "idea of contract excludes that of government" for it is in "this agreement that liberty and well being increase" as there would be "[n]o more laws voted by a majority [in a nation], nor even unanimously; each citizen, each commune or corporation [i.e., co-operative], makes its own."[30] There would be a radical decentralisation of decision-making into the hands of the people and their associations:

> "Unless democracy is a fraud, and the sovereignty of the People a joke, it must be admitted that each

[29] *Property*, 566, 573.

[30] *Property*, 562–3, 591. By corporation Proudhon, like many socialists at the time in France, meant organisations of worker-run co-operatives. This federation of co-operatives in a given industry should not be confused with modern corporations (i.e., stock issuing companies) which Proudhon opposed as being basically identical to state-communist associations.

the constant, supream, executive Power", an "Assembly of Hereditary Nobility" and an "Assembly of Representatives chosen, *pro tempore*, by the People".[23] Where "the People" being those who matter, the wealthy, for "Locke's argument says nothing" about what the character of this majority in the two Treatises is because he "took for granted" that the "members of the political community" were "males who own substantial amounts of material property" and so "politically relevant members of society."[24]

Given that Locke, in spite of his apparent denunciations of slavery, was a shareholder in slaving companies, it comes as no surprise that a freeman "shall have absolute power and authority over his negro slaves" while this civil dominion of a master over his slaves was likewise extended to workers or, more correctly, hereditary serfs (called leet-men) who were "under the jurisdiction of the respective lord" and could not leave the land "without licences from his said lord". Rest assured, this serfdom is based on consent for an additional article included in 1670 allowed anyone to voluntarily register himself as a leet-man.[25]

This serfdom is not inconsistent with Locke's *Treatises* on government. There he noted that by commonwealth he wished "to be understood all along to mean not a democracy, or any form of government, but any independent community" while he acknowledged that "men did sell themselves" into slavery, although he favoured the term "drudgery". Slavery, Locke argued, meant a relationship "between *a lawful Conquerour, and a Captive*" where the former has the power of life and death over the latter. Once a "*Compact*" is agreed between them, "an agreement for a limited power on the one side, and obedience on the other" meant "*Slavery* ceases." As long as the master cannot kill or main the slave, then it is "plain" that this was

[23] Second Treatise, section 213 (408).

[24] Pateman, *Problem*, 71–2.

[25] *Political Essays*, 180, 166.

"only *Drudgery*" as "it is evident" that "the person sold was not under an Absolute, Arbitrary, Despotical power."[26]

It should also be noted that Locke invented another story to justify *actual* slavery, namely the notion of a "just war." Like the one to justify appropriation of land and rationalise master-servant relations, in this story slavery could be justified when the victors in a war started by those they have defeated offered the prisoners a choice, slavery or death: "*Slaves* who being captives taken in a just War, are by the Right of Nature subjected to the Absolute Dominion and Arbitrary Power of their Masters." This meant that the conqueror "has an Absolute Power over the Lives of those, who by an Unjust War have forfeited them," a power Locke calls "purely Despotical" for "he has an absolute power over the Lives of those, who putting themselves in a State of War, have forfeited them." The slave-owner can murder his slave and this, too, is ultimately based on consent: "For, whenever he finds the hardship of his Slavery out-weigh the value of his Life, 'tis in his Power, be resisting the Will of his Master, to draw on himself the Death he desires."[27]

Just as his just-so story protected his property in land and capital (and the status and power that went with it), so this just-so story protected his substantial investments in the slave trade. That no wealthy man had acquired his property in the manner described was as irrelevant as the slaves he profited from were not aggressors against the slavers (quite the reverse). So even absolute chattel slavery, with the power of life and death, is based on consent – and his investments safe *and* ethical.

All this indicates that Locke's *Constitutions* of Serfdom was not in contradiction with the alleged egalitarian and democratic ideas in the *Treatises* any more than his spurious hair-splitting over "slavery" and "drudgery" is no accident. Rather it exposes the core of his ideology as his works were

[26] Second Treatise, sections 133, 24 (355, 284–5).

[27] Second Treatise, sections 85, 178, 180, 23 (322–3, 387, 388, 284).

body "distinct from the people, apart from and above the people" based on the "alienation of public power for the profit of a few ambitious men" which "no sooner exists than it creates an interest of its own, apart from and often contrary to the interests of the people; because, acting then in that interest, it makes civil servants its own creatures, from which results nepotism, corruption, and little by little to the formation of an official tribe, enemies of labour as well as of liberty". Anarchy, however, "is the living society, the people having consciousness of their ideas, governing themselves as they work, through division of industries and special delegation of jobs, in short by the egalitarian distribution of forces." Universal suffrage "implies the nomination by the people of all the functionaries without exception, their permanent revocability, and consequently the government of the people by the people."[26]

Proudhon turned his polemical skills towards the intellectual father of the French Left, Rousseau, in 1851's *General Idea of the Revolution.* A superficial reading of that work may cause some to consider the idea that Proudhon was working in his tradition as paradoxical. Yet Proudhon favourably quotes Rousseau on "the conditions of the social pact"[27] before starting his polemic which showed how Rousseau failed to achieve the task he set himself due to two key issues.

First, Rousseau "speaks of political rights only; it does not mention economic rights." By ignoring the economic sphere he ends up creating a class state in which the Republic "is nothing but the offensive and defensive alliance of those who possess, against those who do not possess", a "coalition of the barons of property, commerce and industry against the disinherited lower class".[28]

[26] "Regarding Louis Blanc – The Present Utility and Future Possibility of the State", *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 66 (Winter 2016).

[27] *Property*, 565.

[28] *Property*, 566.

top, [is] the reverse of what now exists" and meant that "centralisation [would] be effected from the bottom to the top, from the circumference to the centre, and that all functions be independent and govern themselves independently." He added to anarchist theory by calling this vision a "revolution *from below*" for "*from below* signifies the people" and "the initiative of the masses" while "from above" meant "the actions of government".[24]

Thus anarchist organisation was decentralised, decentred, from the bottom-up, based on collective decision making with delegates elected, mandated and subject to recall. He attacked his colleagues on the left for advocating a democracy in which the sovereign people were ruled by an elected few. Against Louis Blanc – whose economic ideas he has previously attacked in 1846 – he argued that the state "is the external constitution of the social power" and by this "external constitution of its power and sovereignty, the people does not govern itself; now one individual, now several, by a title either elective or hereditary, are charged with governing it, with managing its affairs". Anarchists, however, affirm that "the people, that society, that the mass, can and ought to govern itself by itself" and so "deny government and the State, because we affirm that which the founders of States have never believed in, the personality and autonomy of the masses." Anarchy "maintains itself without masters and servants" and so when we "deny the State and the government" we "affirm in the same breath the autonomy of the people and its majority" for "the only way to organise democratic government is to abolish government."[25]

This was needed because the State is "the constitutional silencing of the people, the legal alienation of its thought and its initiative into the hands of" the few in which "the people no longer have anything to do but keep silent and obey". It is a

[24] *Property*, 439–41, 461, 446–7, 398.

[25] *Property*, 482–5.

written to justify and rationalise rule by the wealthy and provide a veneer of voluntarism for oppressive, authoritarian and exploitative social relationships.

That Locke himself was a wealthy man hangs heavy over his work as it is fundamentally a defence for his social position. He attacked both absolutist monarchy *and* radical democracy. He justifies a class state for he takes a class society – his own – for his starting point and, indeed, eternalises it in "the state of nature". The Lockean (liberal) social contract gives "justification to, and is expressly designed to preserve, the social inequalities of the capitalist market economy"[28] and the authoritarian social relationships within production these create, relations which Locke was well aware of. The master-servant relationship was *precisely* what his theory of property in the person sought to justify for a servant's labour (and liberty) being their property it could be alienated (sold). Yet, for Locke, both the owning class and working class benefited from the social contract. The former saw their property and power protected by a government of their own class from the whims of Monarchs proclaiming their divine right to rule. The latter saw the power of their masters reduced to a limited authority and so could not be killed or maimed on a whim by those who they had consented to obey. After all, "no rational Creature can be supposed to change his condition with an intention to be worse".[29]

In both cases, consent is the means used. This is the hardest worked concept in Locke's ideology and is used to justify a multitude of liberty destroying social relationships: actual slavery, voluntary slavery, wage-labour, patriarchal marriage. Yet any ambiguities in Locke's theoretical work – and any read into the work by later readers whose liberalism has been modified by other influences – are clarified when we look at the organisa-

[28] Pateman, *Problem*, 68.

[29] Second Treatise, section 131 (353).

tion within which he sought to apply it. A class state based on wealthy landlords assembling together in a Parliament to rule themselves and their servants is exposed in his organisation for Carolina.[30]

Rousseau: Liberty cannot exist without Equality

Locke's theory was "no less influential in France than in its native England"[31] and was likewise utilised to combat absolutist Monarchy. However, the person who is most associated with French democracy, Jean-Jacque Rousseau, "denounces the liberal social contract as an illegitimate fraud".[32] If Locke proclaimed "we are *born Free*"[33] then Rousseau replied that we are "everywhere in chains"[34] and sought to explain why liberalism produced and justified this.

Critiquing Liberalism's "just-so" story of state formation, Rousseau noted how "[a]ll ran headlong to their chains, in the hopes of securing their liberty" when, in fact, it "bound new fetters on the poor, and gave new powers to the rich; which

[30] Rudolf Rocker's notion that anarchism is "socialism vitalised by liberalism" and "the synthesis of liberalism and socialism" therefore misreads liberalism. He is right to highlight the authoritarian tendencies of Rousseau but completely ignores those of Locke. While he notes that "deficiencies in [Locke's] political program" were "enhanced by the economic inequalities in society", Rocker fails to mention that Locke sought to protect these as his ideas assumed "victorious capitalism" in the state of nature and that the liberal regime was rule by the wealthy over the rest. (*Nationalism and Culture* [Minnesota: Michael E. Coughlin, 1978], 142, 238).

[31] William H. Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France: The language of labor from the old regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 120.

[32] Pateman, *Problem*, 142.

[33] Second Treatise, section 61 (308).

[34] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses* (London: Everyman, 1996), 181.

cise[ing] executive power, just the way it exercises legislative power through its joint deliberations and votes" while "as a consequence of universal suffrage" there would be the "implementation of the imperative mandate" otherwise "the people, in electing representatives, does not appoint mandatories but rather abjure their sovereignty" which is "assuredly not socialism: it is not even democracy." The Assembly would be controlled by the "organisation of popular societies" as these were "the pivot of democracy, the cornerstone of republican order" and would "rip the nails and teeth off state power and hand over the government's public force to the citizens."[23]

With more experience of the workings of the Assembly – he was elected as a representative in 1848 and remained one until imprisoned for insulting the President in 1849 – Proudhon came to see the limitations of this position. Rather than all questions flowing to a single body, the decentralisation of power also required its decentring. So the question was "to organise universal suffrage in its plenitude" for each "function, industrial or otherwise". Each functional group would elect its own delegates in its own separate bodies (Proudhon uses the examples of the church and the army). In this way "the country governs itself solely by means of its electoral initiative" and "it is no longer governed" for it "is a matter of the organisation of universal suffrage in all its forms, of the very structure of Democracy itself." Instead of centralising all issues into the hands of one assembly, there would be a multitude of assemblies each covering a specific social function. For "a society of free men" is based on the "associating with different groups according to the nature of their industries or their interests and by whom neither collective nor individual sovereignty is ever abdicated or delegated" and so "the Government has ceased to exist as a result of universal suffrage". This "truly democratic regime, with its unity *at the bottom* and its separation *at the*

[23] *Property*, 378–9, 407.

democracy rejects and so it "exists fully only at the moment of elections" and then it "retreats; it withdraws into itself again and begins its anti-democratic work. It becomes AUTHORITY." This meant that for democracy "the People cannot govern themselves" and so "after declaring the principle of the People's sovereignty" it "ends up declaring *the incapacity of the People*!" Instead of a democracy understood in the manner of the Jacobin left, Proudhon suggested in an anarchy "all citizens [...] reign and govern" for they "directly participate in the legislation and the government as they participate in the production and circulation of wealth".[21]

Thus a genuine democracy had to be both participatory and include the economic realm. Unsurprisingly, then, Proudhon considered his key economic reform, the Bank of Exchange, as "an essentially republican institution; it is a paradigmatic example of government of the People by the People" for "association is universal" with workplaces becoming "democratically organised workers' associations" within a "vast federation of companies and societies woven into the common cloth of the democratic and social Republic" for "under universal association, ownership of the land and of the instruments of labour is *social* ownership." The Bank of Exchange was seen as a means of a wider economic transformation, as the means of abolishing wage-labour: "all the workshops are owned by the nation, even though they remain and must always remain free" for "[b]y virtue of its over-arching mandate, the Exchange Bank is the organisation of labour's greatest asset" and so allow "the new form of society to be defined and created among the workers."[22]

Government, in the shape of an executive power with its Presidents and Ministries would be replaced by the National Assembly "through organisation of its committees [...] exer-

[21] *Property*, 260, 261, 267, 273, 277–8, 280.

[22] *Property*, 287–9, 377–8, 296–7.

irretrievably destroyed natural liberty, eternally fixed the law of property and inequality, converted clever usurpation into unalterable right, and, for the advantage of a few ambitious individuals, subjected all mankind to perpetual labour, slavery, and wretchedness."[35] The liberal social contract was based on defending property rather than liberty:

> "The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying *This is mine*, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows, 'Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.'"[36]

In contrast to liberalism, Rousseau recognised that the "greatest good of all" reduces down to "two main subjects, liberty and equality" for the former "cannot exist without" the latter.[37] He rightly argued that contracts between the wealthy few and the many poor will always benefit the former and, for the latter, become little more than the freedom to pick a master:

> "The terms of social compact between these two estates of men may be summed up in a few words: 'You have need of me, because I am rich and you are poor. We will therefore come to an agreement. I will permit you to have the honour of serving

[35] Rousseau, 99.

[36] Rousseau, 84.

[37] Rousseau, 225.

> me, on condition that you bestow on me that little you have left, in return for the pains I shall take to command you.'"[38]

Thus "laws are always useful to those with possessions and harmful to those who have nothing: from which it follows that the social state is advantageous to men only when all posses something and none has too much." The ideal society was one where "no citizen shall be rich enough to buy another and none so poor as to be forced to sell himself."[39] In a passage sadly not included in the final version of the *Social Contract*, Rousseau goes to the core problem with liberalism:

> "That a rich and powerful man, having acquired immense possessions in land, should impose laws on those who want to establish themselves there, and that he should only allow them to do so on condition that they accept his supreme authority and obey all his wishes; that, I can still conceive [...] Would not this tyrannical act contain a double usurpation: that on the ownership of the land and that on the liberty of the inhabitants?"[40]

We cannot really "divest ourselves of our liberty [...] just as we transfer our property from one to another by contracts" for "the property I alienate becomes quite foreign to me, nor can I suffer from abuse of it" but it "concerns me that my liberty should not be abused". This meant that a contract "binding the one to command and the other to obey" would be "an odd kind of contract to enter into" and so "to bind itself to obey a master" would be "illegitimate." It would be the "voluntary establishment of tyranny" and so if "the people promises simply

[38] Rousseau, 162.
[39] Rousseau, 199, 225.
[40] Rousseau, 316.

and "guarding of the people by the people, without any other army than a citizen militia."[18]

The 1848 revolution thrust the issue of political – social – organisation to the fore. This lead Proudhon into a direct and sustained polemic with the Jacobin tradition with its vision of a centralised, unitary and indivisible democracy and so Rousseau. While previously he had proclaimed Rousseau "the apostle of liberty and equality,"[19] Proudhon now appeared not only to attack him but also democracy as such. However, a close reading shows that Proudhon's critique of democracy was that it was not democratic enough and so his negative words should not make us forget Rousseau's influence on him.[20]

The earliest weeks of the revolution saw Proudhon produce a pamphlet entitled *Democracy* which proclaimed that "problem of the People's sovereignty is the fundamental problem of liberty, equality and fraternity, the first principle of social organisation" but concluded that democracy "does not answer any of the questions raised by that idea" and "is the negation of the People's sovereignty". This was because "democracy says that *the People reigns and does not govern*, which is to deny the Revolution", and concludes "the People cannot govern itself and is forced to hand itself over to representatives". His solution to this problem has become a core idea of anarchist organisation for "we can follow" those we elect "step-by-step in their legislative acts and their votes" and "make them transmit our arguments" and when "we are discontented, we will recall and dismiss them." Thus the electoral principle needed "the imperative mandate, and permanent revocability" as its "most immediate and incontestable consequences". This should be "the inevitable program of all democracy" but one which

[18] Besancon municipal library, MS 2881 f. 30v.
[19] *Property*, 179, 147.
[20] Aaron Noland, "Proudhon and Rousseau," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28:1 (Jan-Mar 1967).

Freedom for the proletarian is the ability to work, that is, of being robbed again; or not to work, that is to say to die to hunger! Freedom only benefits strength: by competition, capital crushes labour everywhere and converts industry into a vast coalition of monopolies."[14]

Politically, Proudhon argued that the state was created to "conduct [an] offensive and defensive war against the proletariat" and – again against Locke – wondered "what advantage is it to [the proletarian] that society has left the state of war to enter the regime of police?" This meant that "from the moment that the essential conditions of power – that is, authority, property, hierarchy – are preserved, the suffrage of the people is nothing but the consent of the people to their oppression" and so the task of the proletariat was to create "an agricultural and industrial combination [...] by means of which power, today the ruler of society, shall become its slave" and so "envelop capital and the State and subjugate them."[15] Interestingly, he notes in passing the state "contributes to the general welfare" by "establishing in society an artificial centralisation, the image and prelude of the future solidarity of industries".[16]

Thus by 1847 Proudhon had produced both a critique of capitalism and an alternative rooted in democratic values: "to unfold the system of economic contradictions is to lay the foundations of universal association."[17] The current State could not be captured nor reformed as it was an instrument of capital. This meant labour had to organise itself, and so "we want the organisation of labour by the workers, without capitalists or masters" along with "government of the people by the people, without that supernatural person called the prince or the state"

[14] *Système* II: 519.
[15] *Property*, 223, 222, 223, 225, 226.
[16] *Système* I: 288.
[17] *Property*, 179.

to obey, by that very act dissolves itself and loses what makes it a people; the moment a master exists, there is no longer a Sovereign." In short: "To renounce liberty is to renounce being a man, to surrender the rights of humanity and even its duties."[41]

Political association had to be participatory and so the "people of England regards itself as free; but it is grossly mistaken; it is free only during the election of members of parliament. As soon as they are elected, slavery overtakes it, and it is nothing." The "people, being subject to the laws, ought to be their author" and so the "problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before." Sovereignty, "for the same reason as makes it inalienable, is indivisible; for will either is, or is not, general; it is the will either of the body of the people, or only of a part of it." Any government "is simply and solely a commission, an employment" and "mere officials of the Sovereign".[42]

The proclaimed indivisible nature of sovereignty produced a tendency in Rousseau's ideas that subsequently influenced the Jacobin tradition: the vision of a centralised republic. Local associations were viewed negatively because "when factions arise [...] partial associations are formed at the expense of the great association" and it was "therefore essential, if the general will is to be able to express itself, that there should be no partial society within the State". While Rousseau also suggested that "if there are partial societies, it is best to have as many as possible and to prevent them from being unequal", his preference (and how he was interpreted) was that the citizens should have "no communication one with another" so that "the grand

[41] Rousseau, 105, 269, 104, 200, 186.
[42] Rousseau, 266, 212, 191, 201, 230.

total of the small differences would always give the general will, and the decision would always be good."[43] Thus democracy favoured a centralised, unitarian regime.

The democratic critique of liberalism produced both the idea of popular sovereignty and the importance of equality within society. Rousseau's ideas were never implemented during his lifetime and so, unlike Locke and his *Fundamental Constitutions*, it is the example of his followers during the French Revolution we need to turn. This revolution was a conflict between both the people and the monarchy but also between the rising bourgeoisie and the toiling masses.[44] It expressed itself in both popular and representative organisational forms, both of which could be found in Rousseau. Yet while "the Sections under sans-culotte control" produced "a vision of a city taken over by workshop Rousseaus,"[45] power under the Jacobins was increasingly centralised into fewer and fewer hands – from the electorate into representatives, from representatives into the government, from the government, finally, into the hands of Robespierre. Eventually groups such as the sections of Paris, workers associations or strikes were destroyed as they were considered "states within the state" for the Republic was called "one and *indivisible*" for a reason.[46]

[43] Rousseau, 203–4.

[44] Peter Kropotkin, *The Great French Revolution, 1789–1793* (London: Orbach and Chambers Ltd, 1971); Daniel Guérin, *Class struggle in the First French Republic: bourgeois and bras nus, 1793–1795* (London: Pluto Press, 1977).

[45] Gwyn A. Williams, *Artisans and Sans-Culottes: Popular Movements in France and Britain during the French Revolution* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), 25.

[46] Peter Kropotkin, *Modern Science and Anarchy* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2018), 270.

whom they had "sold their arms and parted with their liberty" and so monopoly "must republicanise itself".[11] A new economy would be organised on a new basis:

> "a commercial society [...] should lay down as a principle the right of any stranger to become a member upon his simple request, and to straightway enjoy the rights and prerogatives of associates and even managers [...] it is evident that all the tendencies of humanity, both in its politics and in its civil laws, are towards universalisation [...] towards a complete transformation of the idea of the company as determined by our statutes [...] articles of association [...] should regulate, no longer the contribution of the associates – since each associate, according to the economic theory, is supposed to possess absolutely nothing upon his entrance into the company – but the conditions of labour and exchange, and which should allow access to all who might present themselves [...] In order that association may be real, he who participates in it must do so [...] as an active factor; he must have a deliberative voice in the council [...] everything regarding him, in short, should be regulated in accordance with equality. But these conditions are precisely those of the organisation of labour"[12]

Rejecting capitalism and state socialism, this would be "a solution based upon equality – in other words, the organisation of labour, which involves the negation of political economy and the end of property."[13] This was because, under capitalism, work may be "free. But what freedom, for heaven's sake!

[11] *Property*, 248, 212, 255.

[12] *Property*, 213–5. See Vincent's excellent discussion (154–6).

[13] *Property*, 202.

ter for "all accumulated capital being social property, no one can be its exclusive proprietor" and land is "a common thing". In short, the means of life become "a collective property" for while "the right to product is exclusive", the "right to means is common." This meant "equality of conditions and universal association" was needed for "[f]ree association, liberty – whose sole function is to maintain equality in the means of production and equivalence in exchanges – is the only possible, the only just, the only true form of society." This meant industrial democracy as "leaders, instructors, superintendents" must be "chosen from the workers by the workers themselves."[8]

Thus use rights replace property rights and so a piece of land or workplace is "a place *possessed*, not a place *appropriated*." Anarchism is "association, which is the annihilation of property" for while "the use" of wealth "may be divided" as "property [it] remains *undivided"* and so "the land [is] common property" and capital is "*common* or *collective*." So "to destroy despotism and the inequality of conditions", master and worker must "become associates".[9]

This position is reflected in his next significant work, 1846's *System of Economic Contradictions*.[10] As before, property "degrades us, by making us servants and tyrants to one another" for the wage-workers' lot was to "work under a master" to

[8] *Property*, 91. 118, 105, 137, 112, 109, 137, 119. Proudhon appears to have first used the term "industrial democracy" in 1852 when he noted "an unavoidable transition to industrial democracy". (*La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'État du 2 décembre* [Antony: Tops-Trinquier, 2013], 156). Later the same decade saw him argue that "an industrial democracy must follow industrial feudalism" for "Workers' Associations are the locus of a new principle and model of production" (*Property*, 610, 616)

[9] *Property*, 93, 148, 153, 150.

[10] This work has been misrepresented by some, particularly by Marx in his *The Poverty of Philosophy*. Most obviously, Proudhon did *not* advocate "labour notes" regardless of Marx's assertions – see my "Proudhon's Constituted Value and the Myth of Labour Notes," *Anarchist Studies* 25: 1 (Summer 2017) and "The Poverty of (Marx's) Philosophy," *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 70 (Summer 2017).

Associationism: Fraternity does not stop at the workplace door

Rousseau presented a critique of inequality but did not fundamentally criticise property. This is to be expected as he lived before the rise of industrial capitalism. The economy was based predominantly on peasant farming and artisan workshops, the authoritarian social relationships within production associated with wage-labour were not widespread nor of prime importance in continental Europe. The solution for the domination of landlords over peasants was clear and, moreover, did not need question property as such – land reform by breaking up large estates and parcelling out the land to those who actually work it. The small-scale of technology meant that most could eventually become artisans working with their own tools in their own workshop.

The French Revolution raised the issue of artisan organisation in the shape of guilds and journeymen societies with one building employer reporting in alarm that the "workers, by an absurd parody of the government, regard their work as their property, the building site as a Republic of which they are jointly citizens, and believe in consequence that it belongs to them to name their own bosses, their inspectors and arbitrarily to share out the work amongst themselves."[47] These perspectives only increased when the industrial revolution transformed France and artisans became wage-workers. Faced with the obvious authoritarianism within the factory, these workers sought a solution appropriate to the changed circumstances they faced.

Unlike peasant farmers, the workplace could not be broken up without destroying machinery and the advantages it produced alongside master-servant relations. This reality

[47] quoted by Roger Magraw, *A History of the French Working Class* (Oxford/Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992) I: 24–25.

produced a new perspective in the new working class and so "Associationism was born during the waves of strikes and organised protests provoked by the Revolution of 1830" when "there appeared a workers' newspaper" which "suggested cooperative associations as the only way to end capitalist exploitation." This paper was produced by printers and entitled *l'Artisan, journal de la class ouvrière* and "laid the basis for trade socialism."[48] It argued as early as October 1830 that by "utilising the principle of association, workers could overcome the tyranny of private property and themselves become associated owners of industrial enterprises."[49]

While many intellectuals – the so-called utopian socialists like Saint-Simon and Fourier and their followers – had raised various schemes for improving society, this was the first example of workers themselves making practical suggestions for their own liberation. Across France, many workers started to combine their existing organisations for mutual support with trade union activity as well as visions of a world without masters. This process intertwined with existing political Republican ideas. The radical neo-Jacobin *Sociéte des Droits de l'Homme* recruited amongst workers which resulted in a "two-way interchange of ideas" with that organisation taking up "the ideology of producer associationism which was becoming central" to artisanal socialism. Louis Blanc was the most public expression of this process and his "distinctive contribution was to fuse the associationist idea with the Jacobin-Republican political tradition"[50] but there were

[48] Bernard H. Moss, *The Origins of the French Labour Movement 1830–1914: The Socialism of Skilled Workers* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1980), 32–3.

[49] Sewell, 202.

[50] Magraw, 55, 72.

> to renounce the nature of man: after that, how could we perform the acts of man?"[6]

This brings him into conflict with Locke and the liberal tradition. Rejecting the notion that master-servant contracts were valid, he dismisses its basis of property in the person in a few telling words: "To tell a poor man that he has property because he has arms and legs, – that the hunger from which he suffers, and his power to sleep in the open air are his property, – is to play with words, and add insult to injury." Property, then, is solely material things – land, workplaces, etc. – and their monopolisation results in authoritarian relationships. To "recognise the right of territorial property is to give up labour, since it is to relinquish the means of labour", which results in the worker having "sold and surrendered his liberty" to the proprietor. This alienation of liberty is the means by which exploitation occurs. Whoever "labours becomes a proprietor" of his product but by that he did "not mean simply (as do our hypocritical economists)" – and Locke – the "proprietor of his allowance, his salary, his wages" but "proprietor of the value which he creates, and by which the master alone profits." Locke is also clearly the target for Proudhon's comment that "the horse [...] and ox [...] produce with us, but are not associated with us; we take their product, but do not share it with them. The animals and workers whom we employ hold the same relation to us." So for "[w]e who belong to the proletarian class: property excommunicates us!"[7]

Freedom and property were incompatible and to secure the former for all we have to seek the "entire abolition" of the lat-

[6] *Property,* 92.

[7] *Property,* 95, 106, 117, 114, 129, 104. It should be noted that Proudhon takes for granted Adam Smith's assertion that the "produce of labour constitutes the natural recompence or wages of labour." (*An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976], Volume 1, 72). Needless to say, he had no time for arguments by any economist on why this was not applicable under capitalism.

of Proudhon and those he influenced, not least Bakunin and Kropotkin.

So analysis, advocacy and activity are interwoven, with the critique of what exists informing what could be and what could be informing our struggles of today. Anarchist organisation, in short, reflects anarchist theory: it is its application.

Proudhon: Laying the Foundations

Like most aspects of anarchism, anarchist organisational theory did not appear ready made in 1840. While a basic principle was postulated then, it took over a decade for all its elements to be raised and incorporated into it. This was for the very good reason that Proudhon had to respond to current events and so expand his ideas to take them into account.

Initially, Proudhon's ideas on organisation were made in the context of economics and his critique of property. While he will forever be linked with "property is theft" this was just one part of his answer to the question *What is Property?*, the other being that "property is despotism." Property "violates equality by the rights of exclusion and increase, and freedom by despotism." Anarchy was "the absence of a master, of a sovereign," while the proprietor was "synonymous" with "sovereign," for he "imposes his will as law, and suffers neither contradiction nor control" and "each proprietor is sovereign lord within the sphere of his property".[62] Echoing Rousseau, Proudhon laid down his position clearly:

> "Liberty is inviolable. I can neither sell nor alienate my liberty; every contract, every condition of a contract, which has in view the alienation or suspension of liberty, is null: the slave, when he plants his foot upon the soil of liberty, at that moment becomes a free man. [...] Liberty is the original condition of man; to renounce liberty is

many others who expressed the associational idea in different forms.[51]

[51] K. Steven Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) 127–140.

Organisation: the application of theory

By 1840 there was not only a wide appreciation for the need of some kind of association to replace capitalism but also extensive workers organisations across France which aimed to do so. It was in this context that a working man, a printer by trade, would transform socialist politics forever by proclaiming himself an anarchist.

Proudhon did not develop his ideas in isolation. Indeed, he did not invent his preferred term for them – mutualism – as the workers organisations in Lyon, where he stayed in 1843, had been using it since the early 1830s. So there is "close similarity between the associational ideal of Proudhon" and "the program of the Lyon Mutualists" and it is "likely that Proudhon was able to articulate his positive program more coherently because of the example of the silk workers of Lyon. The socialist ideal that he championed was already being realised, to a certain extent, by such workers."[1]

This shows the importance of sketching the ideological and social context within which Proudhon was living when he wrote his seminal *What is Property?* in 1840. Indeed, the title of the first work in which a person self-proclaimed themselves an anarchist is significant. While there is a tendency (particularly by Marxists and right-wing "libertarians") to reduce anarchism to just being anti-state, the reality is that from the start anarchism has always been critical of property and capitalism. As Proudhon repeatedly stressed, the critiques

[1] Vincent, 164.

of property and of the state share common features and are interwoven. They cannot be considered in isolation without destroying the very notion of anarchism for the fundamental commonality between organisations anarchists oppose – the state, capitalist firms, marriage, etc. – is that they are authoritarian and "power and authority corrupt those who exercise them as much as those who are compelled to submit to them."[2]

Moreover, these critiques are relevant with regards to what anarchists aim for and what they do now to bring that desired future closer. The logic is simple enough – if you oppose something for specific reasons then you will not seek to reproduce them in your visions of a better world nor in the organisations you create to bring that better world about. So, for example, based on his analysis of how exploitation occurred under capitalism – how wage-labour allowed the employer to appropriate the "collective force" produced by his workforce – Proudhon argued for the necessity of association ("By virtue of the principle of collective force, workers are the equals and associates of their leaders"[3]) and socialisation ("All human labour being the result of collective force, all property becomes, by the same reason, collective and undivided"[4]) Equally, we would expect thinkers who sought to transform their world to have a politics that was *practical*, namely a theory of organisation that could result in their principles being applied – "All theory is practical at the same time. What is said in theory today will be done tomorrow"[5] – and this is what we do find in the works

[2] Michael Bakunin, *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin* (New York: The Free Press, 1953), G.P. Maximov (ed.), 249.

[3] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Système des contradictions économiques ou Philosophie de la misère* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1846) I: 377.

[4] *Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology* (Edinburgh/Chico: AK Press, 2011), Iain McKay (ed.), 137.

[5] Peter Kropotkin, *Le Révolté*, 8 July 1882.

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ture, in every branch of labour and science."[71] This implied socialisation of property so that the "land belongs to only those who cultivate it with their own hands; to the agricultural communes. The capital and all the tools of production belong to the workers; to the workers' associations." By being "converted into collective property of the whole of society" it would be "utilised only by the workers, i.e., by their agricultural and industrial associations."[72] He extended this into a vision of social revolution in the traditional rather than reformist sense that Proudhon had used:

> "the revolution must set out from the first radically and totally to destroy the State and all State institutions [...] confiscation of all productive capital and means of production on behalf of workers' associations, who are to put them to collective use [...] the federative Alliance of all working men's associations [...] will constitute the Commune. [...] The Commune will be organised by the standing federation of the Barricades and by the creation of a Revolutionary Communal Council composed of one or two delegates from each barricade, one to each street or district, vested with plenary but accountable and removable mandates [...] all provinces, communes and associations [...] first *reorganising* on revolutionary lines and then sending their representatives to an agreed meeting-place, these too vested with similar mandates to constitute the federation of insurgent associations, communes and provinces in the name of the same principles and to organise a revolutionary force capable of defeating reaction. [...] There can no longer be any successful political or national revolution unless the

[71] *Basic*, 153
[72] Bakunin, *Anarchism*, 247, 427

> political revolution is transformed into social revolution, and unless national revolution, precisely because of its radically socialist, anti-State character, becomes universal revolution [...] created by the people, and supreme control must always belong to the people organised into a free federation of agricultural and industrial associations [...] organised from the bottom upwards by means of revolutionary delegation"[73]

A free society would be based on federations of community and workplace assemblies, initially locally in the Commune and then ever wider in regions, nationally and, ultimately, internationally – all based on decision making from the bottom-up with all delegates elected, mandated and recallable. This would ensure that society would be "reconstituted on the basis of liberty, henceforward to be the sole determinant of its organisation, both political and economic. *Order in society must be the outcome of the greatest possible development of all local, collective and individual liberties*" to ensure that the "political and economic organisation of society must therefore not flow downwards, from high to low, and outwards, from centre to circumference, as it does today on the principle of unity and enforced centralisation, *but upwards* and *inwards*, on the principle of free association and free federation."[74]

It is useful to note that, in stark contrast to those who (like Marx and Lenin) assert that Bakunin, like all anarchists, thought an ideal socialist society would spring-up overnight, Bakunin himself explicitly stated that he did "not say" that the peasants and workers, "freely organised from the bottom up, will miraculously create an ideal organisation, conforming in all respects to our dreams. But [...] that what they construct will be living and vibrant, a thousand times better and more

[73] *Selected*, 170–2.

[74] *Selected*, 65.

just than any existing organisation," be "open to revolutionary propaganda" and so "will develop and perfect itself through free experimentation" with the "development of each commune" taking as "its point of departure the actual condition of its civilisation."[75]

Bakunin, then, urged a socialism from below by means of a "popular revolution" which would "create its own organisation from the bottom upwards and from the circumference inwards, in accordance with the principle of liberty, and not from the top downwards and from the centre outwards, as in the way of all authority."[76]

Kropotkin: Expanding and Consolidating

As with Bakunin, Kropotkin aimed for a society "*wherein nobody should be compelled to sell his labour* (and consequently, to a certain degree, his personality) to those who intend to exploit him" and sought "to create among the working classes the union structures that might some day replace the bosses and take into their own hands the production and management of every industry."[77] He dismissed the "Economists [who] represented as a state of freedom the forced contract agreed by the worker under the threat of hunger with the boss"[78] for capitalism produced hierarchical relationships:

> "In today's society, where no one is allowed to use the field, the factory, the instruments of labour, unless he acknowledges himself the inferior, the subject of some Sir – servitude, submission, lack of

[75] Bakunin, *Anarchism*, 207.

[76] *Selected*, 170.

[77] *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology* (Edinburgh/Oakland/Baltimore: AK Press, 2014), Iain McKay (ed.), 203, 385

[78] *Modern*, 223.

> freedom, the practice of the whip are *imposed* by the very form of society."[79]

Returning repeatedly to the French Revolution, Kropotkin noted that while it had "proclaimed the sovereignty of the people" it "by an inconsistency" also "proclaimed, not a permanent sovereignty, but an intermittent one, to be exercised at certain intervals only, for the nomination of deputies supposed to represent the people". It was "absurd to take a certain number of men from out the mass, and to entrust them with the management of all public affairs". The state "is the power of the bureaucracy"[80] for the "pyramidal ladder that makes the essence of the State" means "the existence of a power placed above society" but also the "*concentration of many functions in the life of societies in the hands of a few*" and this resulted in "thousands of functionaries" ("most of them corruptible") to "read, classify, evaluate" on numerous issues, great and small.[81] Worse, if "an all-powerful centralised Government" – as in state socialism – tries to manage production as well its other tasks then it "develops such a formidable bureaucracy" which proves "absolutely incapable of doing that through its functionaries, no matter how countless they may be".[82]

The State, then, was "developed during the history of human societies" to "subjugate the masses to minorities" and dismissed the arguments of the politicians who "described as a state of freedom the present situation in which the citizen becomes a serf and a taxpayer of the State." Referencing Proudhon's debate with Louis Blanc, he argued that the state "is necessarily hierarchical, authoritarian – or it ceases to be the State."[83] This meant that both the Liberal and Democratic

[79] *Modern*, 226.
[80] *Direct*, 120–1, 464
[81] *Modern*, 275, 234, 269.
[82] *Direct*, 490.
[83] *Modern*, 273, 223, 227.

scious part in collective work, and cease being passive instruments in the hands of leaders."[7]

[62] *Property*, 132–5.

[115] *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), Arthur Lehning (ed.), 197–8.

[209] Rothbard, 54.

[224] Bakunin, *The Basic Bakunin*, 102–3.

[7] Malatesta, *Life and Ideas*, 86.

(run from the top-down) and those which are libertarian (run from the bottom-up). Genuine liberty necessitates groups that are free to join and are libertarian internally as voluntary *archy* is not compatible with *an-archy*. Anarchist organisational principles are core ones because they intersect with other core concepts – not least (the critiques of) property and state – as *they express them*:

> "All depends on the fundamental ideas by which we wish to association. *It is not [...] association which brings about slavery; it is the ideas of individual freedom which we bring into the association which determine its more or less libertarian character.* [...] The cohabitation of two individuals in the same house can lead to the enslavement of one to the will of the other as it can bring freedom for both. [...] Likewise for any association, however large or small it may be. Likewise for any social institution."[6]

Anarchism values individual liberty but sees it a product of social interaction and so embraces the necessity of equality (self-management) within groups to ensure it remains meaningful. This, in turn, means embracing a critique of property to ensure that those who join a workplace are associates rather than master and servants. Finally, if self-management is applicable within the workplace then it is also applicable for all social and private associations. The anarchist critique of hierarchy – whether the state, capital, patriarchy, racism or homophobia – is rooted in an awareness that "far from creating authority, organisation is the only cure for it and the only means whereby each of us will get used to taking an active and con-

[6] Kropotkin, *Modern*, 226.

States were class regimes, and as regards the latter "the Jacobin club was *the bulwark of the bourgeoisie coming to power against the egalitarian tendencies of the people*. [...] the ideal of the *Jacobin State* [...] had been designed from the viewpoint of the bourgeois, in direct opposition to the egalitarian and communist tendencies of the people which had arisen during the Revolution."[84] A State was needed because of the class interests of the few who owned and ruled society:

> "To attack the central power, to strip it of its prerogatives, to decentralise, to dissolve authority, would have been to abandon to the people the control of its affairs, to run the risk of a truly popular revolution. That is why the bourgeoisie sought to reinforce the central government even more, to invest it with powers of which the king himself would never have dreamt, to concentrate everything in its hands, to subordinate to it the whole of France from one end to another – and then to make sure of it all through the National Assembly."[85]

The "people does not govern itself" and so Kropotkin's aim was "economic equality" in which "free and equal citizens, not about to abdicate their rights to the care of the few, will seek some new form of organisation that allows them to manage their affairs for themselves". He pointed to the sections of the French Revolution as popular institutions "not separated from the people" and "remained of the people, and this is what made the revolutionary power of these organisations." Rather than nominating representatives and disbanding, the sections "remained and organised themselves, on their own initiative, as permanent organs of the municipal administration" and

[84] *Modern*, 364–6.

[85] *Words of a Rebel* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1992), 143.

"were practising what was described later on as Direct Self-Government". These were "the principles of anarchism" and they "had their origin, not in theoretic speculations, but in the *deeds* of the Great French Revolution" for the Commune "was not to be a governed State, but a people governing itself directly — when possible — without intermediaries, without masters."[86]

A similar organisation would exist on the economic field, based on the "expropriation pure and simple of the present holders of the large landed estates, of the instruments of labour, and of capital of every kind, and by the seizure of all such capital by the cultivators, the workers' organisations, and the agricultural and municipal communes. The task of expropriation must be carried out by the workers themselves in the towns and the countryside." The workers "ought to be the real managers of industries" and "the importance of th[e] labour movement for the coming revolution" is that these "agglomerations of wealth producers" will "reorganise production on new social bases. They will [...] organise the life of the nation and the use which it will make of the hitherto accumulated riches and means of production. They – the labourers, grouped together – not the politicians."[87]

These social and economic self-managed assemblies would then federate with others, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally:

> "Our needs are in fact so various, and they emerge with such rapidity, that soon a single federation will not be sufficient to satisfy them all. The Commune will then feel the need to contract other alliances, to enter into other federations. Belonging to one group for the acquisition of food supplies, it will have to join a second group to obtain

[86] *Direct*, 225, 228, 419–25.

[87] *Direct*, 500, 680, 344.

time – social relations of subordination."[2] Democracy recognised the problem but its solution failed – it created a new class state, albeit with a different basis and rationalisation.

Like democratic theory, anarchism saw its task as seeking a form of organisation within which freedom was protected and so critiqued both democracy and property. In contrast to the stereotype of anarchism as an impractical dream without an understanding of the complexities of the modern world, anarchists have spent considerable time discussing how to best organise to meet social needs in a world marked by large-scale industry and ever wider personal and social interactions while ensuring individual and social freedom. This was achieved by extending democracy's critique liberalism to democracy itself and extending it to the economic and social realms.

This was why Proudhon quoted Rousseau approvingly on the nature of the social contract while denouncing how far in reality he was from it and showing what was needed to achieve it. So if, in an "embryonic" form, "universal suffrage provides" us "with the complete system of future society" anarchists recognise that "[i]f it is reduced to the people nominating a few hundred deputies" (i.e., a government) then "social sovereignty becomes a mere fiction and the Revolution is strangled at birth."[3] Anarchist opposition to Rousseau is driven not by a rejection of democracy but rather a desire to see a *genuine* one created.[4] Woodcock was wrong both logically and historically to proclaim that "the ideal of anarchism, far from being democracy carried to its logical end, is much nearer to aristocracy universalised and purified."[5]

Anarchism recognises that there are many types of organisation – there are those which are forced upon you and those which you freely join as well as those which are authoritarian

[2] Pateman, *Sexual*, 40, 146, 39, 148.

[3] Proudhon, *Property*, 29.

[4] Read, 130–2.

[5] Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 31.

Conclusion

Organisation is a fundamental aspect of any theory simply because it is how its core principles are applied. If an ideology places organisation to the periphery then it suggests that its adherents are not particularly bothered by their stated core principles for it implies an indifference to whether they are achieved in practice.

This can be seen from propertarianism and its return to classical liberalism in protest to the attempts by many liberal thinkers to grasp the obvious contradictions between their stated aspiration to liberty and the various authoritarian social relationships that can happily coexist with consent. Yet this transformation of mainstream liberalism due to the influence of democratic, socialist and labourist ideas and movements should not blind us to the authoritarian social relationships which liberalism was created to justify and defend.

Anarchism is part of the reaction to liberalism and its production of both "industrial servitude" and "obedient *subjects* to a central authority."[1] Liberalism "is primarily about a way of creating social relations constituted by subordination, not about exchange." Indeed, "contract doctrine has proclaimed that subjection to a master – a boss, a husband – is freedom" and is a "theoretical strategy that justifies subjection by presenting it as freedom" and has "turned a subversive proposition" that we are born free and equal "into a defence of civil subjection" for "the employment contract (like the marriage contract) is not an exchange; both contracts create social relations that endure over

[1] Kropotkin, *Anarchism*, 137.

> other goods, such as metals, and then a third and a fourth group for textiles and works of art [...] the federations of Communes, if they were to follow their free development, would very soon start to mingle and intersect, and in this way form a network [...] the Commune [...] no longer means a territorial agglomeration; it is rather a generic name, a synonym for the grouping of equals which knows neither frontiers nor walls. The social Commune will soon cease to be a clearly defined entity. Each group in the Commune will necessarily be drawn towards similar groups in other communes; they will come together and the links that federate them will be as solid as those that attach them to their fellow citizens, and in this way there will emerge a Commune of interests whose members are scattered in a thousand towns and villages."[88]

This diversity of groupings, federations, links and contracts means that a free society would by decentralised and decentred, with questions no longer channelled into one body. This would allow genuine delegation to develop:

> "The question of true delegation versus representation can be better understood if one imagines a hundred or two hundred men, who meet each day in their work and share common concerns, who know each other thoroughly, who have discussed every aspect of the question that concerns them and have reached a decision. They then choose someone and send him to reach an agreement with other delegates of the same kind on this particular issue. On such an occasion the choice is made with full knowledge of the question, and everyone

[88] *Words*, 87–9.

> knows what is expected of his delegate. The delegate is not authorised to do more than explain to other delegates the considerations that have led his colleagues to their conclusion. Not being able to impose anything, he will seek an understanding and will return with a simple proposition which his mandatories can accept or refuse."[89]

Groups raised "questions and discussed them first themselves" and "sent *delegates* – not rulers" – to congresses who "returned with no *laws* in their pockets, but with *proposals of agreements.*"[90] This "free agreement, by exchange of letters and proposals, by congresses at which delegates met to discuss certain special subjects [...] is a new principle that differs completely from all governmental principle, monarchical or republican, absolute or parliamentarian."[91]

This would produce "an interwoven network, composed of an infinite variety of groups and federations of all sizes and degrees, local, regional, national and international – temporary or more or less permanent – for all possible purposes."[92] The Commune "will know that it cannot admit any higher authority; above it there can only be the interests of the Federation, freely accepted by itself as well as the other communes [...] the Commune will be absolutely free to adopt all the institutions it wishes and to make all the reforms and revolutions it finds necessary [...] The Commune will know that it must break the State and replace it by the Federation."[93] Anarchism now had its full social organisation on all three levels – economic, social and personal:

[89] *Words*, 133.

[90] Kropotkin, *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings* (New York: Dover Press, 2002), Roger N. Baldwin (ed.), 68.

[91] Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 117–21.

[92] Kropotkin, *Anarchism*, 284. Also see *Direct*, 229.

[93] *Words*, 83.

fuels the spark of liberty which always remains even in the most tyrannical system. This is why "[d]irect action against the authority in the [work]shop, direct action against the authority of the law, of direct action against the invasive, meddlesome authority of our moral code, is the logical, consistent method of Anarchism."[12] If, as Bakunin rightly argued, trade unions created the living seeds of (libertarian) socialism within capitalism, then the class struggle ensures they blossom.

In this way we create the means by which anarchy becomes a possibility for, as Proudhon argued during the 1848 Revolution, if "a body representative of the proletariat be formed [...] in opposition to the bourgeoisie's representation" then "a new society [is] founded in the heart of the old society."[13] The structure of the new society is not only formed within the shell of the old, as the famous words from the *Industrial Workers of the World*'s preamble puts it, we are transformed as we fight it. In short: "Only freedom or the struggle for freedom can be the school for freedom."[14]

[12] Goldman, 74, 76–7.

[13] Proudhon, *Property*, 321.

[14] Malatesta, *Life and Ideas*, 59.

isation of the future order,"[9] a position echoed by others who "recognise[d] in the Trades Unions the embryonic group of the future 'free society.' Every Trades Union is […] an autonomous commune in the process of incubation" which as well as fighting capitalism "will yet take its place by superseding it under the system of universal free co-operation."[10]

These unions – the people in their workplaces assembled and federated – would be the means to first challenge Capital and then destroy it.

Likewise with community organisations, with Kropotkin pointing to the "sections" of the French Revolution as the means by which "Revolution began by creating the Commune […] and through this institution it gained […] immense power." The "masses, accustoming themselves to act without receiving orders from the national representatives" and "[b]y acting in this way – and the libertarians would no doubt do the same today – the districts of Paris laid the foundations of a new, free, social organisation."[11]

These sections – the people in their communities assembled and federated – would be the means to first challenge the State and then destroy it.

In this way workplaces and communities would govern themselves, federating with others to manage their common interests. Thus, "Anarchism is not […] a theory of the future to be realised by divine inspiration. It is a living force in the affairs of our life, constantly creating new conditions." It "stands for the spirit of revolt" and this – the class struggle, the struggle against political, economic and social hierarchy – is based on and encourages "defiance and resistance" and these "necessitates integrity, self-reliance, and courage." It breaks the mental chains hierarchy forges within us all and

[9] Kropotkin, *Direct*, 476.

[10] Albert Parsons, "The International," *The Alarm*, 4 April 1885, from "Precursors of Syndicalism II," *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 76 (Summer 2019).

[11] Kropotkin, *Direct Struggle*, 419, 421, 423.

> "The idea of independent Communes for the territorial organisation, and of federations of Trade Unions for the organisation of men in accordance with their different functions, gave a *concrete* conception of society regenerated by a social revolution. There remained only to add to these two modes of organisation a third […] the thousands upon thousands of free combines and societies growing up everywhere for the satisfaction of all possible and imaginable needs, economic, sanitary, and educational; for mutual protection, for the propaganda of ideas, for art, for amusement, and so on."[94]

Socialism "will therefore have to find its own form of political relations" as it "*cannot* utilise the old political forms". In "one way or another it will have to become *more popular*, closer to the assembly [*forum*], than representative government. It must be less dependent on *representation*, and become more *self-government*, more *government of each by themselves*."[95] This was needed because the State was no neutral structure:

> "Developed in the course of history to establish and maintain the monopoly of land ownership in favour of one class – which, for that reason, became the ruling class par excellence – what means can the State provide to abolish this monopoly that the working class could not find in its own strength and groups? Then perfected during the course of the nineteenth century to ensure the monopoly of industrial property, trade, and banking to new enriched classes, to which the State was supplying 'arms' cheaply by stripping

[94] *Direct*, 188; Also see *Direct*, 105, 598–9.

[95] *Modern*, 187.

> the land from the village communes and crushing the cultivators by tax – what advantages could the State provide for abolishing these same privileges? Could its governmental machine, developed for the creation and upholding of these privileges, now be used to abolish them? Would not the new function require new organs? And these new organs would they not have to be created by the workers themselves, in *their* unions, *their* federations, completely outside the State?"[96]

In short, the revolution would see "the commune, independent of the State, abolishing in itself the representative system" while the "workers' organisations" seize "the instruments of labour" and land. So instead of a society "based on the subjugation of the people to rulers, be they usurpatory, hereditary or elected, anarchists work for the realisation of a society based on the mutual agreement" for they "deny every form of hierarchical organisation".[97] Thus the aim was to produce a society where people were genuinely free rather than simply free to pick their masters:

> "We finally realise now that without communism man will never be able to reach that full development of individuality which is, perhaps, the most powerful desire of every thinking being."[98]

Anarchy, though, was not for the future. Anarchists "work so that the masses of workers of the soil and of [the] factory endeavour *to form organisations*" based "not in pyramidal hierarchy, not in the orders of the central committee" but rather "in the free group, federative, from the simple to the

[96] *Modern*, 164.

[97] *Direct*, 504, 500, 131, 475

[98] *Modern*, 227.

It is easy to see how union and strike assemblies and committees can become the structures by which workers run their workplaces. Indeed, how else could it occur? Thus "the weapon of the future will be the general strike" and "it must be the strike which will *stay in* the factory, not *go out,"* which "will guard the machines and allow no scab to touch them," which "will organise, not to inflict deprivation on itself, but on the enemy," which "will take over industry and operate it for the workers, not for franchise holder, stockholders, and officeholders".[6] So the need, as Kropotkin summarised, is to "constitute a formidable workers' force that might impose its will on the managers of industry and extract from them, first, improved working conditions – better pay, reductions in working hours, healthier factories, less dangerous machinery, and so on – but also, – ultimately, wrest the very organisation of industry from their hands. […] unions [are] more than merely a tool for bettering wages. They must, of necessity, become *bodies that would, one day, take the entire organisation of each branch of industry into their hands.*"[7] In this he was repeating the ideas raised in the first International and championed by the likes of Bakunin and Varlin.

Thus strikes "trains the participants for a common management of affairs and for distribution of responsibilities, distinguishes the people most talented and devoted to a common cause, and finally, forces the others to get to know these people and strengthens their influence."[8] Trade unions were "*natural organs for the direct struggle with capital and for the organ-*

[6] Voltairine de Cleyre, "A Study of the General Strike in Philadelphia", *Anarchy! An Anthology of Emma Goldman's Mother Earth* (Washington D.C.: Counterpoint, 2001), Peter Glassgold (ed.), 311.

[7] Kropotkin, *Direct Struggle*, 384–5.

[8] Kropotkin, "Must We Occupy Ourselves with an Examination of the Ideal of a Future System?," *Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970), Martin A. Miller (ed.), 113.

In short, as Bakunin stressed, there is "but a single path, that of *emancipation through practical action*" which "has only one meaning. It means workers' solidarity in their struggle against the bosses. It means *trades-unions, organisation, and the federation of resistance funds.*"[224] The struggle against hierarchy is the means to achieve anarchy, for by challenging hierarchy we both create the structures which will replace it and get used to managing our own affairs without masters. As George Barrett put it:

> "The Anarchist's argument is that government fulfils no useful purpose. Most of what it does is mischievous, and the rest could be done better without its interference. It is the headquarters of the profit-makers, the rent-takers, and of all those who take from but who do not give to society. When this class is abolished by the people so organising themselves that they will run the factories and use the land for the benefit of their free communities, i.e., for their own benefit, then the Government must also be swept away, since its purpose will be gone. The only thing then that will be put in the place of government will be the free organisations of the workers. When Tyranny is abolished Liberty remains, just as when disease is eradicated health remains."[4]

So, "[t]o make a revolution it is not, however, enough that there should be [...] risings [...] It is necessary that after the risings there should be left something new in the institutions, which would permit new forms of life to be elaborated and established."[5] Struggle is the means by which the new social organism is created.

[4] "Objections to Anarchism," *Our Masters are Helpless: The Essays of George Barrett* (London: Freedom Press: 2019), Iain McKay (ed.), 71.

[5] Kropotkin, *Great French Revolution*, 180.

complex."[99] The struggle against exploitation and oppression was the means by which anarchism was created, for "to make revolution, the mass of workers must organise themselves, and resistance and the strike are excellent means by which workers can organise." What was needed was "to build resistance associations" and "fight against the exploiters, to unify the workers' organisations of each town and trade and to put them in contact with those of other towns, to federate across France, to federate across borders, internationally".[100]

Let Bakunin, Kropotkin – myths aside – saw that a social revolution "is not the work of one day. It means a whole period, mostly lasting for several years, during which the country is in a state of effervescence; when thousands of formerly indifferent spectators take a lively part in public affairs". For "this immense problem – the reorganisation of production, redistribution of wealth and exchange, according to the new principles – cannot be solved by parliamentary commissions nor by any kind of government. It must be a natural growth resulting from the combined efforts of all interested in it" and "must grow naturally, proceeding from the simplest up to complex federations, and it cannot be something schemed by a few men and ordered from above."[101]

[99] *Modern*, 367.

[100] *Direct*, 309.

[101] *Direct*, 535.

Anarchist Organisation: Principles and Practice

Our discussion of the origins of anarchist organisation has shown its influences – ideological and practical – and its characteristics. Anarchists since the first self-proclaimed anarchist text, *What is Property?*, had already answered Engels' question of "how do these people propose to operate a factory, run a railway, or steer a ship without one will that decides in the last resort, without unified direction"?[1] Anarchism was born precisely to answer it and did so with a single word: *association*.[2]

Anarchists have always recognised that freedom is a product of interaction between people and it is *how* we associate which determines whether we are free or not. While anarchism's perspective is social, Engels' is fundamentally liberal as it sees isolation as true freedom ("each gives up some of his autonomy"[3]) and so confuses agreement with authority, co-operation with coercion.

The *real* question is simple: is an association based on the self-government of its members or do a few decide for all? So to qualify as libertarian an organisation must be based on cer-

[1] *Marx-Engels Collected Works* 44: 307.

[2] Interestingly, Errico Malatesta speculated in 1924 that "associationist" could be used as an alternative to communist by anarchists as that term was falling into "disrepute as a result of Russian 'communist' despotism." (*The Anarchist Revolution* [London: Freedom Press, 1995], Vernon Richards [ed.], 20).

[3] Engels, 307.

"Poverty brutalises man, and to abolish poverty men must have a social conscience and determination. Slavery teaches men to be slaves, and to free oneself from slavery there is a need for men who aspire to liberty [...] Governments accustom people to submit to the Law and to believe that Law is essential to society; and to abolish government men must be convinced of the uselessness and the harmfulness of government.

"How does one escape from this vicious circle?

"Fortunately existing society has not been created by the inspired will of a dominating class, which has succeeded in reducing all its subjects to passive and unconscious instruments of its interests. It is the result of a thousand internecine struggles of a thousand human and natural factors [...] From this the possibility of progress [...] We must take advantage of all the means, all the possibilities and the opportunities that the present environment allows us to act on our fellow men and to develop their consciences and their demands [...] to claim and to impose those major social transformations which are possible and which effectively serve to open the way to further advances later [...] We must seek to get all the people, or different sections of the people, to make demands, and impose itself and take for itself all the improvements and freedoms it desires as and when it reaches the state of wanting them, and the power to demand them [...] we must push the people to want always more and to increase its pressures, until it has achieved complete emancipation."[3]

[3] Malatesta, *Life and Ideas*, 188–9.

Resistance is Fertile: From Here to There

Regardless of propertarian claims, it is as not a simple fact of nature that the propertyless must serve those with property – it is a product of specific, human created, social institutions which produce specific hierarchical social relationships and these can and must be ended to achieve freedom for all rather than a few. The struggle to end them is the link between the present and the future, from here to there.

Thus anarchist organisation is not something for the future, it must be applied now. It is only by applying libertarian ideas today, in our daily lives and struggles, that we become capable of being free. Anarchists "are convinced that one learns through struggle, and that once one begins to enjoy a little freedom one ends by wanting it all"[1] and so "by degrees, the revolutionary education of the people" is "accomplished by the revolution itself."[2] Struggle against social hierarchies, whether public or private, political or economic, is the means to transform both individuals and society:

> "Between man and his social environment there is a reciprocal action. Men make society what it is and society makes men what they are, and the result is therefore a kind of vicious circle. To transform society men must be changed, and to transform men, society must be changed.

[1] Malatesta, *Life and Ideas*, 195.

[2] Kropotkin, *Great French Revolution*, 241.

tain core principles[4] that ensure that liberty is not reduced to simply picking masters:

- Voluntary
- Democratic
- Egalitarian
- Federalist
- Functional

Taking each in turn, we can sketch the principles of anarchist organisation which "has sought to change relationships between people, and that will one day transform them, both those that are established between people living under a single roof and those that may be established in international associations."[5]

An organisation that is not ***voluntary*** would hardly be free. So free association requires that individuals decide for themselves which groups to join. Yet it is more than that for "to promise to obey is to deny or to limit, to a greater or lesser degree, individuals' freedom and equality and their ability to exercise these capacities [of independent judgement and rational deliberation]. To promise to obey is to state, that in certain areas, the person making the promise is no longer free to exercise her capacities and decide upon her own actions, and is no longer equal, but subordinate."[6] Being free to join a group that is internally hierarchical is simply picking masters and this means that groups have to be ***democratic*** so that those subject to decisions make them. Thus anarchist organisation is rooted

[4] Colin Ward produces similar criteria in "Anarchism as a Theory of Organisation", *Autonomy, Solidarity, Possibility: The Colin Ward Reader* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press: 2011).

[5] Kropotkin, *Direct*, 199.

[6] Pateman, *Problem*, 19.

in "the possibility of calling the general assembly whenever it was wanted by the members of the section and of discussing everything in the general assembly".[7]

This means freedom does not end at the workplace door or with a marriage ceremony. As Proudhon noted, under capitalism workers may ostensibly sell just their labour but in reality they sell their liberty as well for the reasons Pateman summarises:

> "Capacities or labour power cannot be used without the worker using his will, his understanding and experience, to put them into effect. The use of labour power requires the presence of its 'owner' [...] the worker labours as demanded. The employment contract must, therefore, create a relationship of command and obedience between employer and worker [...] In short, the contract in which the worker allegedly sells his labour power is a contract in which, since he cannot be separated from his capacities, he sells command over the use of his body and himself. To obtain the right to use another is to be a (civil) master. To sell command over the use of oneself for a specified period [...] is to be an unfree labourer. The characteristics of this condition are captured in the term *wage slave*."[8]

Wage-labour is not consistent with anarchism for, least we forget, "a corporation, factory or business is the economic equivalent of fascism: decisions and control are strictly top-down."[9] This means that "staying *free* is, for the working

[7] Kropotkin, *Direct*, 426.

[8] Pateman, *Sexual*, 150–1.

[9] Noam Chomsky, *Letters from Lexington: Reflections on Propaganda* (Monroe/Edinburgh: Common Courage Press/AK Press, 1993), 127.

pense of other liberal values" because they do *not* "expand the liberty theme" at all but rather aim to restrict it – for the many. This can be seen by the awkward fact that while neo-liberalism may have "a built in reluctance to contemplate state regulation as a possible cure to social evils"[18] but this does *not* apply when it comes to, say, organised labour when State power is regularly invoked.[19]

This means that propertarianism is *not* "a strange hybrid" which is "also carved out of conservativism" with the aim of "the sanctioning of existing economic inequalities"[20] for classical liberalism's goal was precisely to sanction the economic inequalities of the developing capitalist economy and to firmly secure (conserve!) the market-driven master-servant relationships which were replacing more traditional ones. That other self-described liberals, are horrified by it is down to the evolution of liberalism and its embrace of ideas from other traditions, namely democracy and socialism.

[18] Freeden, 61, 64, 95.

[19] This applied to propertarianism as well, for many of its leading lights embraced fascism as a temporary bulwark against the labour movement and socialism (see my "Propertarianism and Fascism," *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 75 [Winter 2019]).

[20] Freeden, 95.

to believe his story and ignore history – not to mention the evidence of unfreedom before our eyes.

The farcical self-contradictions that Rothbard repeatedly gets himself into shows why "every society declines the moment it falls into the hands of the ideologists"[15]. At its worse, ideology allows its believers to not only ignore – even justify – social injustice but also to contradict their stated aspirations and abuse logic. While it may be argued that it is only by using ideology as a concept that we can expose this kind of contradiction, the fundamental problem is that it is *ideology* which blinds Rothbard and Nozick to the obvious, namely that the state and private property produce identical social relationships and "if you have unbridled capitalism, you will have all kinds of authority: you will have *extreme* authority."[16]

The contradictions of propertarianism also shows that historical understanding and context is important. It does *not* afford "a typical example of a gravitational shift within conventional ideologies that obscures an ideology's foundational principles by reorganising the core units." As Locke shows, this is *not* the case and rather than "crowding out or demoting other liberal core concepts,"[17] propertarianism sees itself as clearing it of that which has no place in it.

While it may be true that "private property migrated within liberal ideology from a core position to a more marginal one" this is due to the rise of subsequent theories which critiqued it (most notably democracy). This means that propertarianism is a reaction to liberal-democratic ideology and the erosion of property rights and power it implies. It is simply not the case that propertarians "overemphasize individual liberty at the ex-

[15] Proudhon, *Système* I: 75.

[16] Noam Chomsky, *Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky* (New York: The New Press, 2002), Peter R. Mitchell and John Schoeffel (eds.), 200.

[17] Freeden, 95.

man who *has to sell* his labour, an impossibility" and so a free economy existed only when "associations of men and women who would work on the land, in the factories, in the mines, and so on, became themselves the managers of production."[10]

In short, "neither a commercial, nor an industrial, nor an agricultural association can be conceived of in the absence of equality".[11] The anarchist critique of property rests on its core principles of liberty and equality and is reflected in its organisational principles. Yet while democratic, anarchist organisations have to be ***egalitarian*** as well for simply electing a few who govern the rest reintroduces hierarchies, albeit elected ones, and least we forget government is the "delegation of power, that is, the abdication of the initiative and sovereignty of every one into the hands of the few" and should not be confused with administration, which "signifies delegation of work."[12] This means "organising society, not from above downwards, but on a basis of equality, without authority, from the simple to the complex".[13] If an organisation is *not* centralised and top-down then it is *not* a state. So anarchism's anti-state position, like its anti-property one, is a *socialist* critique driven by its egalitarian core principle:

> "we are the most logical and most complete socialists, since we demand for every person not just his entire measure of the wealth of society but also his portion of social power, which is to say, the real ability to make his influence felt, along with that of everybody else, in the administration of public affairs."[14]

[10] Kropotkin, *Direct*, 160, 187.

[11] Proudhon, *Property*, 129.

[12] Malatesta, *The Method of Freedom: An Errico Malatesta Reader* (Edinburgh/Oakland, AK Press, 2014), Davide Turcato (ed.), 136.

[13] Kropotkin, *Direct*, 201.

[14] Malatesta and Hamon, *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism* (Oakland/Edinburgh: AK Press, 2005), Daniel Guérin (ed.) , 370.

Anarchists have tended to call this self-management rather than democratic precisely because democracy has, in practice, meant electing a government rather than a group of people governing themselves. This does not preclude the need to "allocate a given task to others" in the shape of committees but it is a case of group members "not abdicating their own sovereignty" by "turning some into directors and chiefs".[15] These would be agents of the group rather than their masters for these committees would be "always under the direct control of the population" and express the "decisions taken at popular assemblies"[16] – subject to election, mandating and recall, like all delegates. How much an individual participates within an association is up to each person but the option to take part is always there.

Just as individuals associate within groups, so groups will need to co-ordinate their activities ("collective beings are as much realities as individual ones are"[17]) by the same kind of horizontal links that exist within an association. This ***federalist*** structure is made up of delegates "elected by each section or federation", "duty-bound to enact the wishes of their mandatories" and "liable to be recalled at any point."[18] Decisions, then, are co-ordinated by means of elected, mandated and recallable delegates rather than representatives. This would, by definition, be a decentralised organisation for power remains at the base in the individuals who associate together into groups rather than at the top in the hands of a few representatives and the bureaucracies needed to support them:

> "True progress lies in the direction of decentralisation, both *territorial* and *functional*, in the development of the spirit of local and personal initiative,

[15] Malatesta, *Method*, 214.
[16] Malatesta, *Life*, 175, 129.
[17] Proudhon, *Property*, 655.
[18] Malatesta, *Method,* 63.

and, with Rousseau, opposed the liberal attempt to decontest the notion by pointing to its practice. That Nozick can ask whether "a free system would allow [the individual] to sell himself into slavery" and answer "I believe that it would"[13] shows the correctness of anarchism in this.

The apparent paradox of why an ideology self-proclaimed as "libertarian" is not particularly interested in liberty and justifies numerous obviously authoritarian social relations (up to and including voluntary slavery and dictatorship) is not a paradox at all. Contract in the liberal sense "always generates political right in the form of relations of domination and subordination" and so rather than "undermining subordination, contract theorists justified modern civil subjection."[14] Once it is realised that its core principle is property rather than liberty then it is logical to rename it something more accurate: *propertarianism*.

This may seem counter-intuitive or contradictory but it is not: it is the aim of the whole ideological tradition. Locke was not seeking to undermine traditional hierarchies (beyond absolute monarchy) but rather to reinforce them. He did so by a "just-so" story whose desired conclusions – his favoured socio-economic system, the one he benefited from – are reached by what appear reasonable steps. And here we have the crux of the matter for in Locke's "just-so" story the state *does* rightfully own its property for it is a joint-stock corporation formed by landlords (servants are *in* civil society but not *of* civil society and have no say, just as employees are part of a company but its owners run it). Rothbard refuses to take this final step but gives no reason to reject this final chapter of the same fictional story. For we must never forget that this is what this ideology is based upon – a "just-so" story. Locke, Nozick and Rothbard seek to defend the inequalities of capitalism by convincing us

[13] Nozick, 371.
[14] Pateman, *Sexual*, 8, 40.

The context in which people make their decisions is important. Anarchists have long argued that, as a class, workers have little choice but to "consent" to capitalist hierarchy as the alternative is either dire poverty or starvation. "Libertarianism" dismisses this by denying that there is such a thing as economic power.[11] It is easy to refute such claims by turning to Rothbard's arguments about the abolition of slavery and serfdom in the 19th century:

> "The *bodies* of the oppressed were freed, but the property which they had worked and eminently deserved to own, remained in the hands of their former oppressors. With economic power thus remaining in their hands, the former lords soon found themselves virtual masters once more of what were now free tenants or farm labourers. The serfs and slaves had tasted freedom, but had been cruelly derived of its fruits."[12]

So if "market forces" ("voluntary exchanges") result in the few owning most of the property then this is unproblematic and raises no questions about the (lack of) liberty of the working class but if people are placed *in exactly the same situation* as a result of coercion then it is a case of "economic power" and "masters".

Such is the danger of ideology that it allows someone to write a book that actually refutes its own arguments.

It also shows the importance of organisation to a political theory. Anarchism by placing liberty as a priority principle took it seriously and organised the concepts it had inherited from previous ideologies in such a manner that it also took organisation seriously. It recognised the obvious contradiction in defining (or, more correctly, limiting) liberty to just consent

[11] Rothbard, 221–2.

[12] Rothbard, 74.

> and of free federation from the simple to the compound, in lieu of the present hierarchy from the centre to the periphery [...] through the organisation in every township or commune of the local groups of producers and consumers, as also the regional, and eventually the international, federations of these groups."[19]

It would also be decentred, with decisions made by those affected rather than every decision being channelled into the hands of a single organisation, whether locally or nationally, which decides upon everything – regardless of its (lack of) competency to discuss and decide upon the issue. Federalism, then, is based on both decentralising and decentring decision making back into the hands of all affected by the decisions made.

Groups and federations exist for clear reasons and self-manage the activities they exist to achieve and so the permanence or otherwise of specific groups or agreements is very much dependent on the ***functional*** needs of the situation or the participants and so cannot be formalised by a hard or fast rule. Some agreements will be fleeting (to provide specific goods or services) and other more-or-less permanent (to provide healthcare or run a railway network). The key is that the federation lasts as long as is required, that association is produced by objective needs and does not exist for its own sake. This does *not* preclude general gatherings at specific times or in response to specific events or needs, just that there will be a multitude of groups and federations alongside these.

This brings us to another issue, namely size. While some suggest that anarchism inherently supports small-scale groups or industry this is not the case. It recognises that size is driven by the objective needs of a functional task. A workplace is as big as its output requires ("oceanic steamers cannot be built in vil-

[19] Kropotkin, *Direct*, 165.

lage factories"[20]) while a commune can be a village, a town or a city. While large organisations would – as is the case now – be sub-divided internally into functional groups, this does not change the fact that anarchists have *always* incorporated the fact of, and need for, large-scale organisation and industry. Indeed, federalism is advocated precisely to co-ordinate, plan and provide services judged by those who need them to be better done together.

What level a specific industry or service should be co-ordinated at will vary depending on what it is so no hard and fast rule can be formulated but the basic principle is that groups "unite with each other in a mutual and equal way, for one or more specific tasks, whose responsibility specially and exclusively falls to the delegates of the federation" Thus it is a case of "the initiative of communes and departments as to works that operate within their jurisdiction" plus "the initiative of the workers companies as to carrying the works out" for the "direct, sovereign initiative of localities, in arranging for public works that belong to them, is a consequence of the democratic principle and the free contract".[21] In contrast to Marxists who have traditionally fetishised large-scale industry, planning and organisation at the expense of common-sense, anarchists advocate *appropriate* levels of all these within a federal structure which is the only form flexible enough to take into account all the differing objective requirements and needs of a complex world.

In short, self-governing individuals join self-governing groups that, in turn, join self-governing federations. Individuals are free in-so-far as the associations they join are participatory and without hierarchy:

[20] Kropotkin, *Direct*, 665. As Proudhon put it: "Large industry and high culture come to us by big monopoly and big property: it is necessary in the future to make them rise from the [workers] association." (quoted by Vincent, 156).

[21] Proudhon, *Property*, 969, 594–5.

thetical example of a country whose King, threatened by a rising "libertarian" movement, responses by "employ[ing] a cunning stratagem," namely he "proclaims his government to be dissolved, but just before doing so he arbitrarily parcels out the entire land area of his kingdom to the 'ownership' of himself and his relatives." Rather than taxes, his subjects now pay rent and he can "regulate the lives of all the people who presume to live on" his property as he sees fit. Rothbard then admits people would be "living under a regime no less despotic than the one they had been battling for so long. Perhaps, indeed, *more* despotic, for now the king and his relatives can claim for themselves the libertarians' very principle of the absolute right of private property, an absoluteness which they might not have dared to claim before."[209]

While Rothbard rejects this "cunning stratagem" he failed to note how this argument undermines his own claims that capitalism is the only system which is based upon and fosters liberty. *As he himself argues*, not only does the property owner have the same monopoly of power over a given area as the state, it is *more* despotic as it is based on the "absolute right of private property". Indeed, he states that the theory that the state owns its territory "makes the State, as well as the King in the Middle Ages, a feudal overlord, who at least theoretically *owned* all the land in his domain"[10] without noticing that this makes the capitalist or landlord a feudal overlord within "libertarianism."

The one remaining defence of "libertarianism" is that these absolutist social relationships are fine because they are voluntary in nature: no one forces someone to work for a specific employer and everyone has the possibility of becoming an employer or landlord. That some may become a proprietor is true but that does not address the issue – are people to be free or not. It is a strange ideology that proclaims itself liberty-loving yet embraces factory feudalism and office oligarchy.

[10] Rothbard, 171.

never been acquired in the form Rothbard (repeating Locke) suggested but has been bound-up with state and private coercion – assuming his theory was robust, which it is not. He attempts to eliminate the clear difficulties he faces by liberal (pun intended) use of "adding mythical and imaginary happenings to make up for the 'reality gaps'"[7] combined with the hope that he found people "simple enough to believe him" (to requote Rousseau).

Ignoring Rothbard's "immaculate conception of property" as being as unrelated to reality as Locke's social contract theory of the state, the question arises why current and future generations should be dispossessed from liberty because property is monopolised by the few. While he denounced social contract theories of the state as invalid because "no past generation can bind later generations"[8] he fails to see he is doing *exactly that* with his support of private property: current and future generations of humanity must be – to use Proudhon's word – excommunicated from liberty by proprietor hierarchy.

One of the many reasons why the state has intervened in society – and why liberalism has evolved away from its classical form – is because people recognised both the contradiction between proclaiming liberty in the abstract while denying it in practice and the obvious injustices that the private hierarchies associated with property can produce.[9] Ironically, Rothbard himself shows that this is the case when he utilised a hypo-

[7] Freeden, 106.

[8] Rothbard, 145.

[9] This tendency should not blind us to the reality that the State has always interfered far more in the interests of the wealthy. That intervention occasionally occurs with a wider remit is due to popular pressure and because "government cannot want society to break up, for it would mean that it and the dominant class would be deprived of sources of exploitation; nor can it leave society to maintain itself without official intervention, for then people would soon realise that government serves only to defend property owners [...] and they would hasten to rid themselves of both." (Malatesta, *Anarchy*, 25)

> "The essential principle of anarchism is that mankind has reached a stage of development at which it is possible to abolish the old relationship of master-man (capitalist-proletarian) and substitute a relationship of egalitarian co-operation. This principle is based, not only on ethical ground, but also on economic grounds."[22]

This self-managed society was termed by Proudhon a "Labour Democracy"[23] to clearly differentiate it from existing – bourgeois – forms of democracy.

[22] Herbert Read, *Anarchy and Order: essays in politics* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1954), 92.

[23] *Property*, 724.

Minorities and Majorities

Rather than constantly governed by the few – whether that few is the elected of the majority matters little – individuals within an association will participate in decisions and will sometimes be in the majority, sometimes not, in numerous groups and federations. The "necessity of division and association of labour" means "I take and I give – such is human life. Each is an authoritative leader and in turn is led by others. Accordingly there is no fixed and constant authority, but continual exchange of mutual, temporary, and, above all, voluntary authority and subordination."[1] No one's permanent position would be one of subjection as under statism and capitalism.

Anarchists do not think that there will be unanimity within each group for "*variety, conflict even, is life"* while *"uniformity is death."*[2] In disagreements, the minority has a choice – agree with the majority, decide to leave the association or practice civil disobedience to convince the majority of the errors of their way. Which option is best depends on the nature of the decision and the group. Similarly, the majority has the right to expel a minority (free association means the freedom *not* to associate) which is acting in anti-social ways or not keeping their word and so threatening a joint activity:

> "Let us take a group of volunteers, combining for some particular enterprise. Having its success at heart, they all work with a will, save one of the associates, who is frequently absent from his post.

[1] Bakunin, *Political*, 353–4.

[2] Kropotkin, *Anarchism*, 143.

people the vote"[4], for "libertarianism" the opposite is the case – individual choice is the means by which people are subjected to authoritarian (indeed, dictatorial) social relationships in the name of "liberty". Yet the glaring contradictions – "libertarians" advocating dictatorship, a definition of the state (evil) identical to property (good) – are all too clear and already denounced by anarchists in the critique of liberalism they extended from Rousseau into property itself. Rothbard, ironically, shows the validity of the anarchist position while haplessly trying to defend his own:

> "*If* the State may be said to properly *own* its territory, then it is proper for it to make rules for everyone who presumes to live in that area. It can legitimately seize or control private property because there *is* no private property in its area, because it really owns the entire land surface. *So long* as the State permits its subjects to leave its territory, then, it can be said to act as does any other owner who sets down rules for people living on his property."[5]

The question now becomes one not of liberty within an association but whether those who hold power ("sets down rules") do so legitimately or not and this relates to property rights. Rothbard argues that the state does not "justly" own its territory and asserts that his "homesteading theory" of the creation of private property "suffices to demolish any such pretensions by the State apparatus" and so the problem with the state is that it "claims and exercises a compulsory monopoly of defence and ultimate decision-making over an area larger than an individual's justly-acquired property."[6] Yet private property has

[4] Freeden, 55.

[5] Rothbard, 170.

[6] Rothbard, 171, 173.

> anarchists, either of the communist or syndicalist variety. But now we had taken it over"[1]

Given this quite brazen – and ideology contradicting! – act of theft, it is understandable that anarchists are somewhat less than sympathetic to "libertarianism". This is confirmed by the self-contradictory and liberty-denying conclusions that its advocates reach. Ignoring what drove the creation of anarchism, "libertarianism" seeks to return to the authoritarianism of classical liberalism and, inevitably, to the contradictions Rousseau had exposed. Thus we find Rothbard proclaiming that the state "arrogates to itself a monopoly of force, of ultimate decision-making power, over a given territorial area" before, buried in the chapter's end notes, quietly admitting that "[o]bviously, in a free society, Smith has the ultimate decision-making power over his own just property, Jones over his, etc."[2] Needless to say, Rothbard does not mention the obvious issue – they like the State have "ultimate decision-making power" over those who use that property as well. Unlike Robert Nozick who was more open:

> "if one starts a private town, on land whose acquisition did not and does not violate the Lockean proviso [of non-aggression], persons who chose to move there or later remain there would have no *right* to a say in how the town was run, unless it was granted to them by the decision procedures for the town which the owner had established."[3]

While some would argue that it "would be logically inconsistent for an ideology to defend individual choice and to deny

[1] *The Betrayal of the American Right* (Auburn, Alabama: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 207), 83.

[2] *The Ethics of Liberty* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1982), 170, 173.

[3] Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1974), 270.

> Must they on his account dissolve the group, elect a president to impose fines, or maybe distribute markers for work done, as is customary in the Academy? It is evident that neither the one nor the other will be done, but that some day the comrade who imperils their enterprise will be told: 'Friend, we should like to work with you; but as you are often absent from your post, and you do your work negligently, we must part. Go and find other comrades who will put up with your indifference!' […] A certain standard of public morals is maintained in the same way."[3]

None of this assumes that the majority has the *right* to rule the minority just that, in general, members who join a group do so understanding the decision making process within the association and can leave if they no longer agree with specific decisions of the majority.[4] Thus we have majority decision making but not majority government for the minority can leave and join or form other associations. While anarchists "have the special mission of being vigilant custodians of freedom, against all aspirants to power and against the possible tyranny of the majority,"[5] the case for anarchy – self-management – is not that the majority is always right but that no minority (even an elected one) can be trusted not to prefer its own advantage if given power:

> "the present capitalist, authoritarian system is absolutely inappropriate to a society of men so improvident, so rapacious, so egotistic, and so slavish as they are now. Therefore, when we hear men saying that the Anarchists imagine

[3] Kropotkin, *Conquest*, 137–8.

[4] Malatesta, *Method*, 488–9.

[5] Malatesta, *Life and Ideas*, 161.

men much better than they really are, we merely wonder how intelligent people can repeat that nonsense. Do we not say continually that the only means of rendering men less rapacious and egotistic, less ambitious and less slavish at the same time, is to eliminate those conditions which favour the growth of egotism and rapacity, of slavishness and ambition? The only difference between us and those who make the above objection is this: We do not, like them, exaggerate the inferior instincts of the masses, and do not complacently shut our eyes to the same bad instincts in the upper classes. We maintain that *both* rulers and ruled are spoiled by authority; *both* exploiters and exploited are spoiled by exploitation; while our opponents seem to admit that there is a kind of salt of the earth – the rulers, the employers, the leaders — who, happily enough, prevent those bad men – the ruled, the exploited, the led – from becoming still worse than they are.

"There is the difference, and a very important one. *We* admit the imperfections of human nature, but we make no exception for the rulers. *They* make it, although sometimes unconsciously, and because we make no such exception, they say that we are dreamers, 'unpractical men.'"[6]

The aim of anarchism is to eliminate *permanent* relations of subordination, in other words hierarchy. This is achieved by collective decision making (self-management) and socialisation (abolition of private property). It does not postulate the notion of everyone *always* seeing their ideas implemented within every freely joined association they are part of. This would be

[6] Kropotkin, *Direct*, 609.

Libertarians against "Libertarianism" (or the dangers of ideology)

Many anarchists are sympathetic to the saying – popularised if not invented by the Situationists – that the difference between theory and ideology is that the former is when you have ideas and the latter is when ideas have you. As such, anarchists tend to suggest that anarchism is not an ideology but rather a theory. The dangers of ideology can best be seen by comparing libertarian theory with the ideology that is called "libertarianism" by its proponents.

We need to clarify an obvious objection: how can anarchists – who have been calling themselves libertarian since 1857 – be against "libertarianism"? Simply because the advocates of "libertarianism" did not let their ideological support for absolute property rights stop them knowingly stealing the name from those who invented and used it. As Murray Rothbard, one of the founders of "Libertarianism", recalled:

> "One gratifying aspect of our rise to some prominence [in 1950s America] is that, for the first time in my memory, we, 'our side,' had captured a crucial word from the enemy [...] 'Libertarians' [...] had long been simply a polite word for left-wing [*sic*!] anarchists, that is for anti-private property

near impossible, unless the person is the dictator of the group and so violates the freedom of the others.

The key is that *internally* the associations are as free as they were to join and so no one alienates or denies their liberty in order to become part of them. Thus the newcomer to an anarchist workplace has the same rights as existing members while the capitalist firm can only be joined if the potential worker agrees to obey the property-owner: the servant-master relationships inherent in the latter are abolished in the former. It also shows how other, more obviously, core principles are expressed – thus liberty is protected by means of equality which is achieved by the abolition of property.

This raises the issue of minorities and majorities. Anarchists are well aware that majorities can be unimaginative and oppressive, that social progress is a product of energetic minorities – sometimes even individuals – who push the accepted norms, challenge the status quo, and so on. Emma Goldman put it well in her article "Minorities and Majorities":

> "Not because I do not feel with the oppressed, the disinherited of the earth; not because I do not know the shame, the horror, the indignity of the lives the people lead, do I repudiate the majority as a creative force for good. Oh, no, no! But because I know so well that as a compact mass it has never stood for justice or equality. It has suppressed the human voice, subdued the human spirit, chained the human body. As a mass its aim has always been to make life uniform, grey, and monotonous as the desert. As a mass it will always be the annihilator of individuality, of free initiative, of originality."[7]

[7] Emma Goldman, *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader* (London: Wildwood House, 1979), Alix Kates Shulman (ed.), 85.

structures and the role of vigilant individuals and active minorities in challenging social crystallisation.[17]

This discussion of majorities and minorities points to a paradox of individualism. In order to always see your ideas implemented you either have to abolish *all* groups (including the family) or be a dictator (or owner, the terms being synonymous). The first option is impossible while the second is hardly libertarian. Most individualists, however, opt for the second option but obscure what is little more than voluntary dictatorship under – like Locke – much talk of "consent" and "property in the person". It is to these we now turn in order to show the contradictions of this position as well as the dangers of ideology.

[17] This is a theme of Ursula Le Guin's classical Science Fiction novel *The Dispossessed* (1974), which addresses the issue well and shows the importance of individual and minority "self-assertion" against "crystallised" social structures even in an Anarchy, see my "Ursula Le Guin and Utopia," *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 73 (Spring 2018).

This was why she, like most other anarchists, supported syndicalism and other mass movements based on direct action, to encourage what Kropotkin called the "spirit of revolt" and break the mental chains which secure those of economic and political inequality.[8] However, the issue remains – would a self-managed socialist society ensure freedom for all, for minorities along with majorities? Would social pressure be oppressive, would the associations become bureaucratic due to administrative routine?

This is no idle point and many sympathetic to anarchism, including George Orwell and Ursula le Guin, made this point.[9] Yet anarchist thinkers have long recognised the issue. Kropotkin, for example, noted in the conclusion of *Mutual Aid* the importance of minority action to shatter social forms which have become set in their ways:

> "It will probably be remarked that mutual aid, even though it may represent one of the factors of evolution, covers nevertheless one aspect only of human relations; that by the side of this current, powerful though it may be, there is, and always has been, the other current – the self-assertion of the individual, not only in its efforts to attain personal or caste superiority, economical, political, and spiritual, but also in its much more important although less evident function of breaking through the bonds, always prone to become crystallised, which the tribe, the village community, the city, and the State impose upon the individual. In other words, there

[8] Goldman, 75–6, 87–100.

[9] Orwell in the essay "Politics *vs.* Literature – An examination of *Gulliver's Travels*" (1946) and le Guin in her classic Science-Fiction novel *The Dispossessed* (1974).

> boycotting such a person and refusing to help him with their labour or to willingly supply him with any articles in their possession. They have it in their power to exert pressure upon him [...] to use force against him. They have these powers individually as well as collectively. Being either past rebels who have been inspired with the spirit of liberty, or else habituated to enjoy freedom from their infancy, they are hardly likely to rest passive in view of what they feel to be a wrong. [...] And at the worst, it can hardly be supposed that the abuse would grow to be a general system like that which exists at present, without having already provoked a severe struggle."[16]

Anarchist organisational theory, in short, has always built into libertarian systems safeguards against irremovable imperfections – safeguards such as federalism, election, mandates, recall, socialisation. In this way, both minorities and majorities have freedom and so social progress is ensured based upon the natural give and take of group life. Anarchism, then, does not deny the potential dangers of majority decision-making and the possible bureaucratic degeneration of even the best organisation but it seeks to minimise them by means of bottom-up

[16] Kropotkin, *Direct*, .614. This obviously applies to those who seek to exclude others from socially used resources. So regarding those who spuriously invoke "freedom" to justify hierarchies (for example, discrimination against people of certain skin colours or sexuality from restaurants), this would not be tolerated in a free society. While bigots, like all possessors, would be able to control who they invite to their homes (as it is personally used), socially used resources (such as a restaurant) would be available to all and any individual or group acting in such a manner would face the solidarity and direct action of the wider society. With no State to call upon to enforce such claims, freedom for all rather than a few would soon prevail.

can minorities. An anarchist society would seek to defend itself against those seeking power, whether economic, political or social – a point worth stressing as some seem to believe, as Malatesta so elegantly put it, "that anarchists, in the name of their principles, would wish to see that strange freedom respected which violates and destroys the freedom and life of others. They seem almost to believe that after having brought down government and private property we would allow both to be quietly built up again, because of respect for the *freedom* of those who might feel the need to be rulers and property owners. A truly curious way of interpreting our ideas."[15] In other words:

> "Our Revolution [...] is [...] a fact consisting of the aggregate of individual victories over the resistance of every individual who has stood in the way of Liberty. Under these circumstances it is obvious that any visible reprisal [of authority] could and would be met by a resumption of the same revolutionary action on the part of the individuals or groups affected, and the maintenance of a state of Anarchy in this manner would be far easier than the gaining of a state of Anarchy by the same methods and in the face of hitherto unshaken organised opposition. [...] the gradual and temporarily imperceptible regeneration of the old evils [...] must eventually become perceptible to those affected by them, who cannot fail to become aware that in such or such a quarter they are excluded from the liberty they enjoy elsewhere, that such or such a person is drawing from society all that he can, and monopolising from others as much as possible. They have it in their power to apply a prompt check by

[15] *Anarchy* (London: Freedom Press, 2001), 42–3.

> is the self-assertion of the individual taken as a progressive element."[10]

The importance of revolutionary minorities, then, does not end with the creation of anarchy.[11] Thus the majority will be subject to the influence of minorities within associations and the federal structure of anarchy ensures experimentation due to the diversity it inherently allows:

> "The principle of political centralism is openly opposed to all laws of social progress and of natural evolution. It lies in the nature of things that every cultural advance is first achieved within a small group and only gradually finds adoption by society as a whole. Therefore, political decentralisation is the best guaranty for the unrestricted possibilities of new experiments. For such an environment each community is given the opportunity to carry through the things which it is capable of accomplishing itself without imposing them on others. Practical experimentation is the parent of every development in society. So long as each district is capable of effecting the changes within its own sphere which its citizens deem necessary, the example of each becomes a fructifying influence on the other parts of the community since they will have the chance to weigh the advantages accruing from them without being forced to adopt them if they are not convinced of their usefulness. The result is that progressive communities serve the oth-

[10] Kropotkin, *Direct*, 368. Also see *Direct*, 613–6.

[11] See Kropotkin's discussion of "Revolutionary Minorities" in *Words of a Rebel*.

ers as models, a result justified by the natural evolution of things."[12]

Diversity, disagreement, is reflected in anarchist organisational theory for anarchists are well aware of the importance of individual and minority freedom within the wider context of social self-management. The idea that full, unanimous agreement ("consensus") is needed is not part of the anarchist tradition.[13] While anarchists recognise that consensus may be suitable for some groups – most obviously, the family and circles of friends – it would not be so for most others, particularly those associated with waging the class struggle or the post-revolutionary organising of industry on a large-scale. Yet, the danger which consensus seeks to eliminate (while exaggerating it) – that minorities are subject to the oppressive will of the majority – is minimised within anarchist organisations. Participation within a multitude of associations means that no one will be a minority all the time whether in a specific group or in life as a whole.

In addition, with the means of life socialised, individuals and groups have the real freedom to leave groupings and form new ones for they have the resources available. Thus, if you are permanently in a minority then you can leave an association far more easily than under capitalism – you do not have to pay

[12] Rudolf Rocker, *Pioneers of American Freedom: Origin of Liberal and Radical Thought in America* (Los Angeles: Rocker Publications Committee, 1949), 16–7.

[13] Neither Proudhon nor Bakunin mentioned consensus (in the sense of unanimous decisions), while Malatesta explicitly and repeated defended majority decision making. Kropotkin mentioned it a few times, usually in relation to the peasant villages of his native Russia and once in relation to the Medieval Commune but also noted that the minority "ended up accepting with good grace, even if only on trial, the view that gained support of the greater number." (*Words*, 139) It only became associated with anarchism during the 1960s and the influence of radical pacifists (often coming from Quaker and other radical religious traditions) within the peace and other movements.

for or gain the permission of others to utilise unused resources to do so. As Kropotkin argued:

> "in a communist society which recognises the right of everyone, on an egalitarian basis, to all the instruments of labour and to all the means of existence that society possesses, the only men on their knees in front of others are those who are by their nature voluntary serfs. Each being equal to everyone else as far as the right to well-being is concerned, he does not have to kneel before the will and arrogance of others and so secures equality in all personal relationships with his co-members. […] communism […] guarantees the most freedom for the individual – provided that the guiding idea of the commune is egalitarian Freedom, the absence of authority, Anarchy."[14]

Thus there is substantial freedom for individuals and minorities to not only live their own lives as they see fit but also to push society forward, to ensure social progress. While under authoritarian systems like capitalism "progress" is usually imposed by minorities for their own advantage (such as higher profits or power) at the expense of the many, with any wider gains purely coincidental, in an anarchist society progress would be achieved by the possibility to experiment and the knowledge that the benefits of change would be shared by all. Few would object to changes which improve their life – particularly if they see pioneers reaping the benefits of applying the new ways.

Any discussion of the dynamic between minorities and majorities must note that this works both ways – groups can expel individuals who systematically undermine decisions reached by the organisation. Just as majorities can be oppressive, so

[14] *Modern*, 226.