

Anarchism

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Contents

I. Introduction	3
II. Origins of Anarchism: The Classical Anarchism of the Long 19 th Century (1789–1914)	3
III. Schools of Anarchist Thought	4
A. Mutualism	4
B. Anarcho-Communism	4
C. Anarcho-Individualism	5
D. Attitudes to Religion and Organization	6
IV. Anarchism as a Social Movement (1870–1939)	6
A. First International	6
B. “Propaganda by the Deed”	7
C. Anarchist Influence on Cultural Movements (1900–1914)	7
D. Anti-Militarism and Anarcho-Syndicalism	8
E. World War I and the Inter-War Years	9
V. Anarchism Since 1945	10

I. Introduction

Anarchism, political concept and social movement that advocates the abolition of any form of State, which is regarded as coercive, and its replacement with voluntary organization. The political doctrine of anarchism has expressed itself through both a variety of schools, whose main differences reflect the anarchists' differing attitudes towards the economy, and the role of organization both in a future stateless, anarchist society and within their movements.

II. Origins of Anarchism: The Classical Anarchism of the Long 19th Century (1789–1914)

Anarchists and students of anarchism have traced an anarchist tendency throughout recorded history, from ancient China to ancient Greece, to the Christian heretical movements of medieval Europe and to the more radical sects of the English Civil War. Anthropologists have reported stateless and non-coercive “primitive” societies. However, anarchism, as a self-conscious ideology, appeared in Europe during the first half of the 19th century, the uneasy sibling of modern socialism and communism. The word “anarchist” had been used as a term of abuse during the French Revolution, but the first self-proclaimed anarchist was the French writer and political theorist Pierre Joseph Proudhon, who had reached adulthood during the Restoration. However, the concept if not the term was already present in the writings of the English thinker and writer William Godwin, especially in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (1793; final ed. 1798).

Anarchism arose out of the ideological ferment of the French Revolution and in reaction to both the European bureaucratic nation state and the advent of large-scale industrial capitalism. Anarchism derives much of its philosophical impulse from the Age of Enlightenment and particularly from the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality Among Mankind* (1755; trans. 1761). According to the anarchists, freedom is achieved through moral self-direction. Unlike Rousseau, however, the anarchists did not believe that one could be “forced to be free”, even through the settled will of the majority in a democratic polity. Whereas Rousseau believed that freedom preceded the formation of government and had to be limited in order to have a functioning society, the anarchists believed that any executive would result in dictatorship and thus crush freedom. Like Rousseau, most schools of anarchists believed in positive rather than negative freedom. For both, freedom was based on political, economic, and social equality, but whereas Rousseau relied on State coercion and the education of the next generation in the ways of classical republican virtue, the anarchists believed that a stateless society would be accomplished through non-coercive persuasive example and libertarian education.

Anarchism was shaped by several generations of thinkers and activists who lived between the first half of the 19th century and the first three decades of the 20th century. Proudhon may have popularized the word “anarchy” but the Russian thinker, disaffected nobleman, and revolutionary Mikhail Bakunin provided a charismatic example of the anarchist revolutionary in action. He forged the social and political movements associated with anarchism on a variety of national, European, and global stages in the 1860s and 1870s. He led the schism of the anarchists from the Marxists in the First International with his critique of the authoritarian tendencies of Karl Marx and Marxism. In his *Statism and Anarchy* (1873) Bakunin predicted, prophetically, that the Marx-

ian “dictatorship of the proletariat” would not result in rule by the working classes but rather in a “Red” dictatorship of ex-revolutionaries and experts who would then reinforce the power of the modern State to a hitherto unheard-of degree. His co-national, the geographer, writer, and revolutionary, another disaffected aristocrat of ancient lineage, Pyotr Kropotkin, provided anarchism with a scientifically inspired philosophy to challenge the scientific claims of Marxism. Kropotkin shared with much of the anarchist tradition the scientism and somewhat naïve optimism of 19th-century European social thought, derived from the writings of the sociologist and writer, Auguste Comte. The Italian revolutionary and journalist, Errico Malatesta (1853–1932), challenged the mechanistic and scientific approaches of both Marx and Kropotkin. He criticized Kropotkin’s deployment in the social sciences and politics of models derived from the physical sciences, and emphasized the role of individual and collective will in the shaping of history. *See also* Philosophy, Western.

III. Schools of Anarchist Thought

A. Mutualism

Several different schools of anarchist thought arose in the 19th century. Proudhon was associated with mutualism. Proudhon objected to the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few monopolists but throughout his life he never promoted communism as the basis of an anarchist society. He condemned equally *laissez-faire* and State control. He believed that all value derived from labour and promoted the formation of workers’ associations, which would exchange products valued on the amount of time it took to produce them. Foreshadowing syndicalism, which would become an important factor in the French labour movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Proudhonian mutualism argued that workers’ associations would replace the capitalist economy, enabling the political State to wither away. However, mutualism (renamed collectivism by anarchists such as Bakunin) never advocated complete equality. Personal and small-scale property was protected and the lazy worker would receive less than the productive one. Anarcho-collectivism carried on the Proudhonian tradition, particularly in Spain and elsewhere in southern Europe, until the doctrine of anarcho-communism replaced it in the 1890s.

B. Anarcho-Communism

A noted formulation of anarcho-communism can be found in Kropotkin’s work. The anarcho-communists believed that the bases of freedom were sympathy, affection, cooperation, and mutual aid. In an anarchist society the basic needs of all human beings were assured without the need for any sort of competition and rivalry. Unlike mutualism or anarcho-collectivism, anarcho-communism did not invoke the virtue of the work ethic, but argued that each individual was entitled to receive from the common store what was required for his or her needs. In fact the anarcho-communists believed that it was impossible to determine the time value of labour because the common institutions upon which the individual worker relied were the product of generations. Thus even mutualism and anarcho-collectivism were considered flawed and less satisfactory versions of anarchism.

In *Mutual Aid* (1897) Kropotkin disagreed with the Social Darwinists. Flourishing species and human civilizations were not the winners of the “survival of the fittest”, as the Social Darwinists argued; rather cooperation had been the key: mutual aid rather than naked competition was a more successful strategy. In *The Conquest of Bread* (1888) and *Fields, Factories, and Workshops* (1899) Kropotkin mapped out a future society that would be owned by communes of producers reliant on the latest technology in order to generate sufficient amounts of goods. Kropotkin envisaged a society where mental and manual labour would be blended through integral education. He advocated industrial decentralization, the integration of town and country, and the use of new intensive methods of cultivation. In fact, however, the difference between many anarcho-collectivists and anarcho-communists was one of degree not category. Malatesta believed anarcho-communism was nobler but he realized that a temporary phase of collectivism might be necessary and he was far more sanguine about the ability of a modern industrial city to transform itself instantaneously into an anarcho-communist commune on the morrow of the revolution. In any case, many anarchists were agnostic and labelled themselves “anarchists without adjectives”.

C. Anarcho-Individualism

All anarchists emphasized the importance of the individual: the anarcho-collectivists supported individual reward and smallholder or artisanal property, and even the anarcho-communists argued that their voluntary form of communism would deepen the individual’s ethical personality. However, for anarcho-individualists the needs of the individual superseded the collective and the commune. This school of thought is associated with the German, Max Stirner (1806–1856), whose best-known book, *The Ego and its Own* (1845), was rediscovered by individualist anarchists in the late 19th century after decades of obscurity. Stirner was influenced by the Young Hegelians (see G. W. F. Hegel) and received trenchant criticism by fellow members Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The German Ideology* (1846). Stirner did not identify himself as an anarchist or the follower of any ideology. He believed that the individual should reject institutional structures and all set patterns of truth, obligation, or morals. Thus he advocated a union of egoists, of exceptional individuals prepared to question the value of all social and political orthodoxy. In the late 19th century Stirner’s ideas were combined with an appreciation of Friedrich Nietzsche by a small group of anarchist activists and intellectuals. This type of anarchist individualism was attractive to certain writers (Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw, for example), who decried mass civilization, common prejudice, and the “mass mind”, but it also inspired an anarcho-feminist, the Russian-American Emma Goldman, who advocated the social and sexual liberation of women (see Feminism). Later Stirner’s writing had a significant effect on the philosophy of existentialism.

Another branch of individualism was found in the United States and was far less radical. The American Benjamin Tucker (1854–1939) believed that maximum individual liberty would be assured where the free market was not hindered or controlled by the State and monopolies. The affairs of society would be governed by myriad voluntary societies and cooperatives, by, as he aptly put it, “un-terrified” Jeffersonian democrats, who believed in the least government possible. Since World War II this tradition has been reborn and modified in the United States as anarcho-capitalism or libertarianism.

D. Attitudes to Religion and Organization

All these schools of anarchism shared common traits: they were for the devolution of power from the State to the smaller units of voluntary organizations and thus had great sympathy for federalism, of which Proudhon wrote extensively. They believed that the individual was the guardian of freedom, even if they disagreed regarding the form of voluntary organization with which this would be most appropriately achieved. Finally, they were anti-clerical and openly atheist, even if some, like Proudhon, expressed their beliefs with a strong religious and ethical sensibility. The idea of justice underwrites Proudhon's political philosophy. However, other notable figures close to the anarchist tradition were openly religious. Leo Tolstoy, perhaps the greatest Russian novelist, was a Christian anarchist pacifist, who believed that mankind would outgrow the need for a State as individuals became more spiritual. He greatly influenced the Indian political figure Mohandas Gandhi, whose practice of non-resistance to violence was employed against the British colonial authorities during the struggle for Indian independence. Gandhi combined Tolstoy's ideas with Hindu traditions into the non-violence of *Satyagraha*. And like Tolstoy, he envisaged a future good society resting upon a union of self-governing and self-sufficient peasant villages.

Besides the various schools of anarchism, the anarchists were also divided by different attitudes towards organization. The majority of Italian anarchists advocated an anarchist party or national organization, but an important counter-current advocated small intimate affinity groups, which also found favour with some Spanish and Latin American anarchists. Anarchist philosophy did not always align with the type of organization endorsed. Thus, for example, the anarcho-communist Luigi Galleani (1861–1931), a journalist and activist in both Italy and in the United States, was an anti-organizationalist. Italian individualist anarchists might be found in the formal organizations influenced by Malatesta's type of anarchism.

IV. Anarchism as a Social Movement (1870–1939)

A. First International

Although Proudhon pronounced on anarchism in the middle of the 19th century, anarchism did not become a separate and distinguishable movement until the foundation of the First International in 1864. It was through the First International that Bakunin and others promoted a movement of socialists, which was clearly differentiated from the followers of Karl Marx or more moderate trade unionists. At first allies against moderate reformists within the First International, Marx and Bakunin quickly fell out. In France, and particularly in Spain, Italy, and the Jura region of Switzerland, the anarchist Internationalists were more successful in gathering recruits than their Marxist competitors. The anarchist Internationalists identified with the insurgents of the Commune of Paris and radical republicans and federalists in Spain and Italy. After the demise of the First International in 1876, the repression of the Internationalists in Spain, Italy, and France, and the growing attraction of municipal and reformist parliamentary socialism, the anarchist internationalist current became a minority current within European and global socialism, albeit with the exception of Spain. Nevertheless, their influence could still be found in the culture of the left. In the late 19th century the anarchists were important participants in the campaign for the eight-hour working day. In 1886 in Chicago four anarchists were hanged after a May Day

demonstration in its favour led to a riot in which police were killed. The celebration of May Day—central to the rites and rituals of Marxist and reformist socialism—was originally an anarchist event.

B. “Propaganda by the Deed”

Nevertheless, the “direct action” of the anarchists alienated popular sympathies. In the 1870s and 1880s the anarchists promoted “propaganda by the deed”. At first this meant agitating for mass popular rising through smaller acts of guerrilla warfare. And in the 1870s the disorder of republican Spain and newly unified Italy, as well as the insurgency of the Commune of Paris, seemed the perfect ground to carry out a tradition that had its roots in social and popular uprisings of 1830 or 1848. But these attempts were crushed. Propaganda by the deed now became the assassination of king, president, or empress. The assassination of the Russian tsar, Alexander II, by a “populist” in 1881 touched off a round of attempted assassinations (including the German kaiser and the Italian king) by anarchists. The assassinations of heads of state reached a crescendo at the end of the 19th century. Successful attempts on the lives of President Sadi Carnot of France in 1894, Prime Minister Canovas of Spain in 1897, Habsburg Empress Elizabeth of Austria in 1898, King Humbert I of Italy in 1900, and President William McKinley of the United States in 1901 followed each other in rapid succession. Bombings of public places, such as cafés in Paris and the opera house in Barcelona, also occurred. Some anarchists theorized and practised criminal activities as political acts. The image of the bearded anarchist, bomb in hand, found its way not only into the popular press but also appeared in the novels of Henry James and Joseph Conrad. By the turn of the century, many anarchists denounced acts of mass terrorism and criminality, although they were decidedly less forthright about the assassination of heads of state. The anarchist movement suffered mass arrests and exile in continental Europe. The establishment of modern socialist parties, associated with the Second International in 1889, which combined the revolutionary rhetoric of Marxism with a practical parliamentary road to reform, received increasing support in the working classes of Europe before 1914. The anarchists were expelled from the Second International at its London Congress in 1896 because they opposed electoral socialism.

C. Anarchist Influence on Cultural Movements (1900–1914)

Nevertheless, between 1900 and 1914 the anarchists found a new lease of life in cultural movements and anarcho- and/or revolutionary syndicalism. Anarchism influenced the emergence of modernism, with James Joyce, Oscar Wilde, and Franz Kafka, for example, Post-Impressionist painters in Paris, Futurists in Milan, and later the movement of Dada in Zurich during World War I, all fascinated by its implications. Anarchism was an important cultural current in the bohemian quarters of New York, Munich, Paris, and elsewhere. Anarchists took the lead in a new form of libertarian education, which was child-centred and anti-clerical, but also against indoctrination by the secular State. The execution of Francisco Ferrer Guardia (1849–1909), the founder of the anarchist Modern School movement, witnessed mass protests against the Spanish government by anarchists, liberals, and educationalists. In France the libertarian cultural anarchists supplied popular and educational networks of the broader socialist movement with literature and teachers. This was also the case in Italy where much of the popular literature, songs, and

poetry of the broader socialist movement was heavily influenced by anarchists such as Pietro Gori (1865–1911), sociologist, lawyer, vagabond, and poet.

D. Anti-Militarism and Anarcho-Syndicalism

The anarchists also flourished in the growing anti-militarist movements of Europe and elsewhere, as imperialist rivalry and Great Power competition increased international tensions before 1914. Anarcho- and revolutionary syndicalism was to be their most congenial home. In France anarchists such as Fernand Pelloutier (1867–1901) and Emile Pouget (1860–1931) were central to the formation of the *Bourses du Travail* (Chambers of Labour) and the confederation of trade unions, *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT), which became France's largest union. In Italy anarchists thrived in the Italian Chambers of Labour and in the syndicalist confederation, the *Unione Sindacale Italiano* (USI), Italy's second largest trade union confederation before 1914, and in 1910 the Spanish anarchists founded the *Confederación Nacional de Trabajo* (CNT). In Argentina and Brazil anarchists took an important role in the founding of modern labour movements. In Japan, China, and Korea anarchists and former anarchists were noticeable in the labour movement and also helped found socialist and, later, communist parties. Elsewhere, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) served as a convenient political home for anarchists in the United States, Canada, and Australia.

Anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary syndicalism were inviting to anarchists because they postulated the replacement of the State and the capitalist system with a society run by *syndicats* (trade unions), achieved through a general strike. Both movements were formally anti-parliamentary and both used means of direct action (strikes, boycotts, and sabotage) to achieve their more immediate industrial goals. However, the anarchists and the syndicalists were not always in accord. Many anarchists argued that a peaceful general strike would need to be complemented by an armed insurrection against the State's security forces, immune to calls for a general strike. Indeed, like many socialists and later communists, they felt that all trade unions had to be reformist in order to win concessions in the present for their membership. Anarchists were also uneasy about the divisions created between the unionized population and the rest, which would produce a new hierarchy in the syndicalist future. Geographically based units founded on anarcho-communist principles were necessary to complement the syndicalist unions. Anarchists disagreed about what their own position should be towards the syndicalist unions. Some anarchists became leading figures in non-anarchist syndicalist organizations. Others stayed in socialist trade unions because they feared that workers' movements would be divided and weakened. On the other hand, many syndicalists were suspicious of anarchists because, like the socialists, they attempted to import an alien political ideology into the working-class movement. In Spain the anarchists eventually sought to steer the CNT towards a full anarchist programme through their own party of anarchism, the *Federación Anarquista Ibérica* (FAI).

It has frequently been argued that the anarchists attracted bohemian artists, cobblers, peasants, and unemployed students. In fact, as the previous discussion implies, the anarchists were a vibrant minority in certain national settings among artisans, factory workers, and agricultural labourers. Peasants were also attracted to anarchism during the Russian Civil War in the armed movement of the Ukrainian anarchist Nestor Makhno (1889–1934), and during the Mexican Revolution.

E. World War I and the Inter-War Years

After 1914 anarchism declined, with the exception of Spain where it reached its apogee during the Spanish Civil War. Anarchists and syndicalists were divided over whether to support their respective countries' entry into World War I. The Russian Revolution at first seemed to be the fulfilment of the anarchist and syndicalist dream. The system of soviets was interpreted as a Russian form of syndicalism, and Lenin, in *The State and Revolution* (1917), was read in an anarchist key. Indeed, some of Lenin's comrades accused him of being "Bakuninist". But most anarchists were disabused of these notions rather quickly. The Cheka (*see* KGB) rounded up the anarchists, their organizations were smashed, and the last open demonstration of anarchist protest occurred at Kropotkin's funeral in 1921. Although in the immediate post-war era there were brief and impressive revivals of the anarchist movement in Germany and Italy, during the inter-war period the anarchists and syndicalists were squeezed on the left by communists. The anarchists and the syndicalists were crushed after the establishment of fascist, National Socialist (Nazi), and authoritarian dictatorships in Europe and Latin America. In the United States the IWW was severely weakened by government persecution and changes in the US economy. The execution in the United States in 1927 of two Italian immigrant anarchists, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti (*see* Sacco-Vanzetti Case), had been preceded by a mass campaign but the movement itself had already been considerably weakened.

By the 1930s, Spain alone had a vibrant anarchist movement. The anarchist movement had gone through several transformations since the 1860s. Radical federalist republicans joined the First International in the 1860s and 1870s. After the International was crushed, the movement veered towards terrorism in the 1890s, but it found a new popular base in the CNT, which had a membership of 1 million by 1920. Over four decades the anarchists had succeeded in finding strongholds in Andalusia, where landless labourers and artisans dreamed and occasionally attempted to establish their own decentralized independent communes. Anarchism was not only attractive to the poor of Andalusia. The anarchists succeeded in recruiting modern intellectuals to their cause and more importantly from the early 1900s they built a popular base in the suburbs of Barcelona, the most industrialized and modern city in Spain. Suppressed by both the gunmen of the industrialists of Barcelona and dictatorship until 1930, the CNT re-emerged and took a prominent role in the Second Spanish Republic of the 1930s. From 1927, anarchists in exile created the FAI, which never exceeded 30,000 members, as a separate anarchist organization to keep the CNT within the anarchist camp.

The anarchists survived as a major force in Spain because of the unique partnership of the CNT and the FAI, even if major tensions did lead to a temporary departure of moderate syndicalists from the CNT for several years. But anarchism and syndicalism also prospered because of the weakness of the Communists and the failure of the Socialists to make inroads into the anarchist strongholds. Furthermore, in Barcelona and Catalonia, the CNT-FAI developed a helpful alliance of convenience and mutual respect with a new generation of Catalan nationalists, who were also hostile to the Spanish State.

In 1936 the army mounted a coup d'état after the electoral victory of the left-wing Popular Front government: many anarchists had even voted to get their comrades amnestied from imprisonment. However, the coup failed and Spain descended into civil war. Anarchist militias controlled Barcelona for several months, industries were run by the CNT, and in Aragón and León, anarchists attempted to create money-less agrarian communes. However, the Spanish Re-

public required financial and military assistance from abroad to counter the aid and military intervention the insurgents received from fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Prominent militants of the FAI were forced to become “government anarchists”, to join the Cabinet of the Spanish Republic, and asked their followers to concentrate on winning the war rather than making a social revolution. This led to tensions and confusion within the anarchist movement between 1937 and the end of the Republic in 1939. With the Western powers refusing to intervene on the Republican side, the Soviet Union stepped into the breach with arms and the Soviet-dominated International Brigades of foreign volunteers. Tensions between the pro-Communist and anarchist factions grew to such a degree that a short-lived civil war broke out during May 1937 in Barcelona pitting the Republican- and Communist Party-influenced security forces against the local anarchists and the left-communist POUM (*Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista*, or “Workers’ Party of Marxist Unification”). With the defeat of the Republic, thousands of anarchists fled into exile. When the dictator Francisco Franco died in 1975, and the regime was replaced by democracy, anarchists and syndicalists reappeared, but they never regained predominance in their former strongholds.

V. Anarchism Since 1945

In the second half of the 20th century, anarchism was no longer a movement of artisans, workers, and peasants but it still attracted intellectuals, artists, and the educated middle classes. The era of the welfare state and mass consumerism undermined the traditional settings for anarchism. There was a general realization that anarchism or libertarianism was very much a minority movement, a counter-project of demonstrative acts, of “happenings”, and utopian communities (although communes had in fact been pioneered in the 19th century, not the 1960s). In any case, anarchism no longer had an end project such as the classical anarchists may have dreamed of. In the 1940s and 1950s the Cobra group, the Beat Generation, and the Situationists were influenced by the anarchist tradition. The criticism of mass society and atomic-bomb culture took much from the iconoclastic individualism of anarchism. Anti-militarism and non-violent resistance derived from Tolstoy, Henry Thoreau, and Gustav Landauer (1870–1919). Critiques of power and methods of social control influenced by anarchist thought are found in many of the most important intellectual works of the late 20th century. In the novels of William Burroughs power not heroin is the ultimate addiction. The sociology of Michel Foucault was influenced by anarchism and more directly the anarcho-feminist science fiction of Ursula Le Guin. Anarchist writers, such as Murray Bookchin (1921-), rediscovered and championed the cause of ecology in the 1960s. Paul Goodman (1911–1972) and Colin Ward (1924-) criticized the welfare/warfare state and the social blight of urban renewal. These anarchist writers brought a libertarian sensibility to discussions about public education, urban planning, the welfare state, or the creative play of children. The aim was to return to the democratic polis, to contest the “Moloch”, the centralized nuclear state.

The explosion of protest that shook the Western (and Eastern) world in the late 1960s and early 1970s contained an anarchist or libertarian component. Today’s anti-globalization and peace movements are merely fresh reiterations. Anarchist black flags were seen again in the Parisian May Days of 1968, and at the University of California, Berkeley, throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. However, the anarchist impulse was confused with and overshadowed by an attraction

to newer and older varieties of Marxism. The politics of left-wing terrorism (reminiscent of the 1890s) scarred the 1970s and 1980s.

Green politics (*see* Environmentalism) in the 1980s, with its direct democracy, echoed anarchist practices, and the evolution of the Greens to traditionally organized parties would have brought a wry smile to a classical anarchist from the 1890s. But in the 1990s and 2000s, with the failure and collapse of communism and the decline of social democracy, single-cause protest movements using direct action and having rotating or no apparent leadership, networking through cyberspace, have rediscovered the anarchist project without declaring themselves anarchists.

Political parties and the role of parliaments are sharply criticized, lowered in importance, or just ignored. All politics, even the global, are perceived as local: devolution, local, and federal solutions are celebrated. Direct democracy, rotation of leadership, and the informality of organization are cardinal virtues: the affinity group has been rediscovered. There is a distrust of science, technology, and all types of technocratic planning, which of course does sharply differentiate the current waves of protest from much of the value-free productivism of classical anarcho-syndicalism, which praised economic growth. Today, economic growth is queried and critically examined by these movements. There is a mixing of religious and spiritual legacies from the East, which may have been pioneered by the anarchist intelligentsia of the bohemian quarters in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but does go against the grain of the Enlightenment secularism of classical anarchism. There is a much greater sensibility about the politics of everyday life, the body, sexuality, and gender, albeit Emma Goldman and others in classical anarchism were pioneers. The demarcation between the sphere of the human and the sphere of other creatures in our natural world is declared porous: certain animals have “rights”. The concept of a final revolutionary drama, in which the world will be overturned, is replaced by an anarchist or libertarian reformism. In the postmodern world, the grand projects of socialism and social engineering have been undermined. Plural, temporary, fluctuating movements are at the cutting edge of political change. In this regard the legacy of classical anarchism plays its part but this theoretical inheritance has been renewed. It is alive and vital today.

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