

ANARCHISM

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Summary

Anarchy and anarchism are often misleadingly equated with chaos and lawlessness. The falsification of such “commonplace” anarchy is dispelled by connecting the reader directly with the debate on anarchism in a form that is both comprehensive and simple to understand. *Theories and Ideologies of Anarchism* includes the significant writers of the anarchists’ school and their contributions to political theory and political science. At the turn of the twentieth century, anarchism (as both theory and ideology) evolved into a relatively intractable set of ideas with a range of conceptual variations resulting in a complex of unlikely practical applications. Nevertheless, the idea of anarchism in political science continues to find its greatest value in terms of theoretical models that are especially useful in political science pedagogy. How is it possible for the individual to exist peacefully with other individuals without the overarching presence of the state? Would such an existence preclude the enjoyment of individual rights and lead to the forfeiture of economic and political liberty? To what extent would the individual be able to fulfill the human potential of political action within a milieu of pluralistic and competing interests? This article provides some answers to these questions that are organized around five main sections (1) an introduction and reference to the roots of anarchism; (2) the epistemological bases of anarchism; (3) anarchical individualism; (4) anarchical communalism; and (5) conclusion. There are many ways to interpret anarchism and this article presents the major contributions made in the Academy. However, the final interpretation of anarchism’s theoretical successes and practical failures—if there can ever be a final edition—is more likely than not to lead to a better understanding of politics, the state, and human nature.

1. Introduction

An eighteenth century French anarcho-syndicalist, camouflaged in a Left Bank socialist overcoat, would not be able to recognize anarchism and its various forms it represents

today. Anarchism is often associated with the work of Thomas Paine (1737–1809), Emiliano Zapata (1879–1919), Emma Goldman (1869–1940), and ranging from the pragmatic hedonism of the Free Spirits of the eighteenth century to the Mujeres Zapatistas and the *Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (FZLN), of the twentieth century. For many, anarchism is a kind of left of left-wing socialism, for others it is the diametrical opposite, moving towards hybrid called anarcho-capitalism. Anarchism, what ever its color, remains primarily an ideology that promotes people living together without coercion (Barclay, 1990).

This article examines the use of theoretical models of political behavior with specific reference to the normative theories and intellectual vocabulary associated with anarchism: anarchical individualism, the anarchical community (Bakunin), anarchy, and their conceptual relationships. The paper explores also the various theoretical, methodological, and political implications of the meanings and interpretations that surround the concept of anarchy.

The roots of anarchism draw from utopian intellectual resources that have evolved through the history of modern liberal political thought. Theoretical anarchism, an intellectual ideology, is primarily concerned about the relationships between individuals with other individuals within a set of predetermined political boundaries that contain social, religious/spiritual, cultural, and economic sub-texts and sub-systems (after Weber). In theoretical terms, anarchism is often touted as purveying truths that involve movements toward goals that serve to uphold the betterment of individual life as part of human civilization. More specifically, intellectual anarchism refers to a set of theories that constitute (evolutionary) practices that work towards a general harmony of individual co-existence within communities. This nexus occurs without the presence of coercive state structures that violate individual and group rights. Intellectual anarchists are united in their stand against states of coercion that insidiously promote oppression through “façade” judicial systems that are justified by legal-rational jargon. Anarchism, therefore, is about individual sets of rights seeking dominance within a political arena that is free from oppression. Oppression refers to the illegal violation of internationally recognized human rights for the individual that includes all forms of from physical and psychological torture, and violence to the human body, the human mind, and the human spirit. Ironically, most intellectual anarchists (are more likely than not to) allow for some practical degree of the use of minimal force by a form of minimalist protective structure (at best) or dominant protective structure (at worst) for the betterment of the general anarchical public good. In other words, this approach to anarchism leads to a paradoxical situation where the existence of lesser (anarchical) freedom creates greater (anarchical) liberty. This position demonstrates how intellectual anarchism may exist in political reality (anarchism as political ideology) through the devolution (rather than evolution) of some power and some sovereignty to a marginal or dominant protective agency (after Nozick). This situation affords an examination of intellectual or theoretical anarchism within a spectrum of approaches involving different degrees and latitudes of coercion.

A brief revision of two main kinds of general methodology used in the social sciences will help a nuance engagement of the topic: if we understand the “how” of anarchism, it

will contribute to our understanding of the “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” and “why.”

How do human beings know more about humanity if not by observation and dialectical questioning? If all individuals behaved in the same manner then there would be no problem for social scientists to predict the outcome of human behavior. But because human behavior is innately different between and among individual persons, and because each individual tends to be predisposed towards acting either rationally and irrationally on any topic, theme or activity (either as individuals alone in their own environment or in a group of other persons) the individual is likely to continue to present new and unique challenges to social scientists trying to make sense of their behavior. A “first” method that social scientists employ involves the use of theoretical models of political behavior to observe before theorizing (inductive method) that range from a large variety of idiosyncratic and ideological influences in the centuries that have led to this millennium and those that will lead into future millennia. A second method may be contextualized in terms of working towards a universalistic model or general theory of knowledge, common in the natural sciences. This method, known as the deductive method, begins with hypotheses about human interaction or human nature, and then examines if the “evidence” from what has come to be known as empirically observable behavior substantiates the hypotheses. Both social scientific methods—inductive and deductive—may be argued as being the prime movers or the two most powerful motivators of post-1950s social science, and covers an immense field of intellectual possibilities.

The challenges for academic political theorists include the need to convince their readers or audience about the validity of the formers’ methodological and theoretical claims. Similarly, political scientists dealing with the concept of anarchy must often endeavor to account for and reconcile the theoretical space that exists between the assumptions that support or criticize the choices offered by anarchists and statist. To what extent then do the conditions for choice under a risky political future provide for the creation of a slate of what Nozick called in 1974 a set of “morally permissible and non-permissible actions.” Philosophical anarchism is about the theories that underpin and explain empirical Anarchic events that have happened in the past and, or may happen in the future.

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Author's note: The work on anarchism and anarchy in terms of intellectual research, and as a political ideology, is overwhelming. Not all the excellent work and research on anarchism could be included.

Biographical Sketch

Antonio L Rappa teaches contemporary political theory at the National University of Singapore's Department of Political Science. He was recently Visiting Assistant Professor at the Johns Hopkins University's Department of Political Science. He was a Visiting Scholar at the Institute for Governmental Studies, University of California at Berkeley; and a Visiting Scholar at the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, California. His research concerns *Politics and Modernity*. He is currently working on a special issue on "Modernity and the Politics of Public Space" for *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*.