

# Brill's Companion to Anarchism and Philosophy

*Edited by*

Nathan Jun



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# Anarchism and Philosophy: A Critical Introduction

Nathan Jun

## The Problem of Definitions

What is the relationship between anarchism and philosophy, and in what sense, if any, can anarchism be understood as a “philosophy” in its own right? How we answer these questions depends crucially, of course, on how we define the operative terms, both of which have been ascribed a bewildering range of conflicting meanings. Just as philosophy “has been understood in so many ways that it is practically useless to come up with a definition which embraces all that philosophers have sought to accomplish,”<sup>1</sup> anarchism, too, has long been regarded as “disparate and incoherent” and has frequently been accused of being “too diverse” to qualify as a single, uniform entity.<sup>2</sup> (It is no wonder, as James Joll once remarked, that “anyone who has tried to write about anarchism sometimes comes to a point at which he wonders just what it is he is writing about.”<sup>3</sup>)

In an initial effort to clarify matters somewhat, we might distinguish between two sorts of definitions. Those of the first sort, which we can call “generic,” identify a given *definiendum* as a particular instance of a general kind (as in “Bowser is a dog”). Those of the second sort, which we can call “specific,” indicate how a given *definiendum* differs from other instances of the same kind (as in “Bowser is a brown dog.”) In generic definitions like “Bowser is a dog,” whatever is true of the general kind (“dog”) is true of all its particular instances (including “Bowser”). The same is not true of specific definitions like “Bowser is a brown dog” insofar as they involve a particular predicate (“brown”) that is exclusively applied to a particular instance (“Bowser”) of a general kind (“dog”). As such, the question of how best to define a given term is reducible to two primary concerns, the first of which pertains to the general kind(s) of which the *definiendum* is a particular instance, the second of which pertains to what distinguishes the *definiendum* from all other instances of the same kind(s).

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1 L. Navia, *The Adventure of Philosophy* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1999), 3.

2 D. Morland, “Anti-capitalism and Poststructuralist Anarchism,” in *Changing Anarchism: Anarchist Theory and Practice in a Global Age*, eds. J. Purkis and J. Bowen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 23.

3 J. Joll, “Singing, Dancing and Dynamite: Review Jean Maitron, *Le Mouvement Anarchiste en France*,” *Times Literary Supplement* (September 10, 1976): 1092.

Disputes over the meaning of “anarchism” are sometimes reducible to disputes over specific definitions—as when Jones defines anarchism as a philosophy that rejects all authority as such, whereas Smith defines it more narrowly as a philosophy that regards all states as illegitimate. In this case, Jones and Smith agree on the general kind of which anarchism is a particular instance but disagree about how it differs from all other instances of that kind. This is in marked contrast with disputes over whether anarchism should be considered an ideology,<sup>4</sup> a political philosophy,<sup>5</sup> a social system,<sup>6</sup> a theory of organization,<sup>7</sup>

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- 4 See, e.g., L. Davis, “Anarchism,” in *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*, eds. V. Geoghegan and R. Wilford (London: Routledge, 2014), 213–238; D. Miller, *Anarchism* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1985); R. Sylvan, “Anarchism,” in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, eds. R. Goodin and P. Pettit (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 215, 233; and D. Weir, Introduction to *Anarchy and Culture* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).
- 5 See, e.g., B. Christopher, et al., “The Relevance of Anarchism” in *What Is Anarchism?* ed. D. Rooum (London: Freedom Press, 1993), 70–72; G. Crowder, *Classical Anarchism: The Political Thought of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991); F. Depuis-Déri, “Anarchy in Political Philosophy,” in *New Perspectives on Anarchism*, eds. N. Jun and S. Wahl (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2009), 9–24; P. Eltzbacher, *Anarchism: Exponents of the Anarchist Philosophy* (London: Freedom Press, 1960); M. Egoumenides, *Philosophical Anarchism and Political Obligation* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014); G. Gaus and J. Chapman, “Anarchism and Political Philosophy: An Introduction,” in *NOMOS IXI: Anarchism*, eds. J.R. Pennock and J. Chapman (New York: New York University Press, 1978), xxii–xl; E. Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Dover, 1969), 50, 67; R. Hoffman, ed., *Anarchism as Political Philosophy* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2005); P. Kropotkin, “Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal,” in *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings*, ed. R. Baldwin (New York: Dover, 1970), 114–144; R. Long, “Anarchism,” in *The Routledge Companion to Social and Political Philosophy*, eds. G. Gaus and F. D’Agostino (New York: Routledge, 2013), 217–230; P. McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority: A Philosophical Introduction to Classical Anarchism* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2012); A. Parsons, ed., *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis* (Chicago: Parsons, 1887); H. Read, *The Philosophy of Anarchism* (London: Freedom Press, 1940); A. Ritter, *Anarchism: A Conceptual Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); R. Rucker, *Anarchosyndicalism* (Oakland, Calif.: AK Press, 2004); and C. Sartwell, *Against the State: An Introduction to Anarchist Political Theory* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2008), among countless other examples.
- 6 See, e.g., P. Kropotkin, “Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles,” in *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings*, 46.
- 7 See, e.g., Paul and Percival Goodman, *Communitas: Ways of Livelihood and Means of Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960); E. Reclus, “Anarchy,” in *Anarchy, Geography, Modernity: Selected Writings of Elisée Reclus*, eds. J. Clark and C. Martin (Oakland, Calif.: PM Press, 2014), 120–132; and C. Ward, “Anarchism as a Theory of Social Organisation,” in *Patterns of Anarchy: A Collection of Writings on the Anarchist Tradition*, eds. L. Krimmerman and L. Perry (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), 349–351.

a sensibility,<sup>8</sup> a temperament,<sup>9</sup> an attitude,<sup>10</sup> an ideal,<sup>11</sup> a faith,<sup>12</sup> a culture,<sup>13</sup> a tradition,<sup>14</sup> an orientation,<sup>15</sup> a tendency,<sup>16</sup> a movement,<sup>17</sup> a recurring historical phenomenon,<sup>18</sup> or something else entirely. Such disputes concern the generic definition of anarchism and, as such, are obviously deeper and more profound than those of the former sort. Furthermore, because the definitions of general kinds themselves are often contested, even those who ostensibly share a given generic definition may nonetheless disagree over what this definition entails.

The fact that all of this applies equally to the term “philosophy” adds an additional level of complexity to the questions posed at the outset. In order to ascertain the relationship between anarchism and philosophy (or *A* and *P* as a shorthand), one must first determine the general kinds of which each is a particular instance—that is, one must define them generically. One possibility

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- 8 See, e.g., R. Amster, *Anarchism Today* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2012), xiv.
- 9 See, e.g., J. Joll, *The Anarchists* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 24; T. Perlin, “The Recurrence of Defiance,” in *Contemporary Anarchism*, ed. T. Perlin (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1979), 1.
- 10 See, e.g., D. Apter and J. Joll, eds., *Anarchism Today* (London: Macmillan, 1971), 260; D. Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2002), 4.
- 11 P. Avrich, *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America* (Oakland, Calif.: AK Press, 2005), 158; J. Billington, *Fires in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1980), 415; E. Malatesta, *Life and Ideas*, ed. V. Richards (London: Freedom Press, 1965), 53; and N. Walter, *About Anarchism* (London: Freedom Press, 2002), 29.
- 12 See, e.g., G. Baldelli, *Social Anarchism* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2009), 2; Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*, 4; and Malatesta, *Life and Ideas*, 39.
- 13 See, e.g., J. Cohn, *Underground Passages: Anarchist Resistance Culture, 1848–2011* (Oakland, Calif.: AK Press, 2015); and U. Gordon, *Anarchy Alive! Anti-authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory* (London: Pluto, 2008).
- 14 See, e.g., J. Cohn, *Anarchism and the Crisis of Representation: Hermeneutic, Aesthetics, Politics* (Selingsgrove, Pa.: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 56, 80, 204.
- 15 See, e.g., J. Ferrell, “Against the Law: Anarchist Criminology,” in *Thinking Critically About Criminology*, eds. B. MacLean and D. Milovanovic (Vancouver: Collective Press, 1997), 146.
- 16 See, e.g., D. Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (Oakland, Calif.: AK Press, 2009), 214; and Walter, *About Anarchism*, 27.
- 17 See, e.g., B. Morris, “The Revolutionary Socialism of Peter Kropotkin,” in *Anthropology, Ecology, and Anarchism: A Brian Morris Reader* (Oakland, Calif.: PM Press, 2014), 205; and J. Suissa, *Anarchism and Education: A Philosophical Perspective* (Oakland, Calif.: PM Press, 2010), 8.
- 18 See, e.g., M. Nettlau, *A Short History of Anarchism*, trans. I. Isca and H. Becker (London: Freedom Press, 1995), 1; P. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (Oakland, Calif.: PM Press, 2010), xiii–xiv; Walter, *About Anarchism*, 27–28.

is that *A* and *P* are particular instances of altogether *different* kinds. In this case, any relationship between them is purely contingent insofar as the instantiation of *A* is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the instantiation of *P* (and vice versa).

Another possibility is that *A* and *P* are particular instances of the *same* general kind (call it "*Z*"). In this case, both *A* and *P* are necessarily related to *Z* (since the instantiation of *Z* is a necessary but not sufficient condition for both the instantiation of *A* as well as the instantiation of *P*), *Z* is contingently related to *A* and *P* (since the instantiation of *A* and the instantiation of *P* are sufficient but not necessary conditions for the instantiation of *Z*), and the relationship between *A* and *P* is contingent (since the instantiation of *A* is neither necessary nor sufficient for the instantiation of *P*, and vice versa).

Still another possibility is that *A* itself is a particular instance of the general kind *P*. In this case, *A* is necessarily related to *P* insofar as the instantiation of the latter is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the instantiation of the former. This, in turn, raises the question of how *A* is specifically defined—that is, how it is distinguished from all other instances of the general kind *P*. Now, if a generic definition of *P*—for example, "*P* is a particular instance of the general kind *Z*"—is simply stipulated, ascertaining the definition of *A* amounts to determining whether *A* itself is a particular instance of *P*, a particular instance of *Z*, or a particular instance of some altogether different general kind. The problem with the case at hand, however, is that the definition of *P* itself is deeply disputed and not simply stipulated. In order to answer the aforementioned questions, therefore, we must begin by independently considering the various ways "anarchism" and "philosophy" have been defined, as this will presumably reveal several possibilities with regard to how the two are related.

### Definitions of Philosophy

As Alexis Papazoglou notes, "[W]hen philosophers give definitions of philosophy they are not usually offering descriptive definitions ... of a cultural practice that a sociologist or anthropologist might have given" but "normative definitions" that prescribe "what philosophy should be, what it *should* be aiming at, how it *should* be aiming at it, and so on..."<sup>19</sup> The goal of this section, it must be emphasized, is not to make prescriptions of the latter sort but merely to understand in what relevant sense(s) anarchism can be conceived as a

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19 A. Papazoglou, "Philosophy, Its Pitfalls, Some Rescue Plans, and Their Complications," *Metaphilosophy* 43, nos. 1–2 (2012): 4.

philosophy or, at the very least, as relating to philosophy in some way. As such, the definitions we consider will be purely descriptive in nature.

In ordinary language the word “philosophy” generally indicates a particular approach to, or perspective on, something (as in “philosophy of parenting” or “philosophy of management”). Although this constitutes a generic definition in the sense of specifying what kind of thing philosophy is, it is unhelpful for our purposes since it is trivially true that anarchism entails a particular approach or perspective. (As Peter Marshall says, “All anarchists are philosophical in a general sense.”<sup>20</sup>) For us the relevant question is not only *what kind* of approach or perspective anarchism is, but also, and more importantly, what it is a perspective *on* or approach *to*. Answering these questions obviously requires a greater degree of specificity than the trivial definition provides. To this end, there are six general definitions of philosophy that are worth our while to consider.

The first (hereafter “P<sub>1</sub>”) refers to a basic view of reality—that is, to a more or less comprehensive and internally coherent worldview or system of thought (as in “Marxist philosophy” or “Christian philosophy”).

The second (hereafter “P<sub>2</sub>”) refers to a more or less uniform way of understanding some particular dimension of reality (as in particular political philosophies, moral philosophies, metaphysical philosophies, epistemological philosophies, and so on).

The third (hereafter “P<sub>3</sub>”) refers to mode of inquiry or form of intellectual practice that uses rational methods to investigate “the most general or fundamental questions about the nature of reality and human life insofar as those problems are beyond the competence of the special sciences to raise or resolve.”<sup>21</sup>

The fourth (hereafter “P<sub>4</sub>”) refers to a particular tradition of intellectual practice or inquiry (in the sense of P<sub>3</sub>) defined by a more or less uniform subject matter and range of approaches (as in “Western philosophy” or “Eastern philosophy”).

The fifth (hereafter “P<sub>5</sub>”) refers to the philosophical study (in the sense of P<sub>3</sub>) of the theoretical basis of a particular mode of knowledge (as in “philosophy of science” or “philosophy of religion”) or the explicitly philosophical exploration (again, in the sense of P<sub>3</sub>) of issues arising within a particular domain of human experience (as in “political philosophy” or “moral philosophy”).

The sixth (hereafter “P<sub>6</sub>”) refers to a professional academic discipline that provides instruction and conducts scholarly research pertaining to philosophy in one or more of the senses described above.

<sup>20</sup> Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 7.

<sup>21</sup> S. Duncan, *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (Philosophy Insights, 2007), 8.

These definitions highlight a basic distinction in conventional understandings of philosophy. As in the trivial case above,  $P_1$  and  $P_2$  characterize philosophy as a kind of “view” or “perspective,” whereas  $P_3$ ,  $P_4$ ,  $P_5$ , and  $P_6$  characterize it as a kind of intellectual “practice” or “activity.” (In other words,  $P_1$  and  $P_2$  presuppose a different generic definition of philosophy from  $P_3$ ,  $P_4$ ,  $P_5$ , and  $P_6$ .) Although the kind of activity or practice described in  $P_3$  may in some cases generate perspectives or views of the sort described in  $P_1$ , there may be ways of generating such perspectives or views that do not involve “philosophizing” in the sense described in  $P_3$ . The same is true of the kinds of perspectives or views described in  $P_2$  in relation to the modes of study and investigation described in  $P_5$  insofar as a view or perspective of this sort may or not be the product of explicitly philosophical inquiry.

### Definitions of Anarchism

As in the case of “philosophy,” it is not our intention here to prescribe how the term “anarchism” *ought* to be defined but rather to describe “its various uses, and ... the varying intentions with which it was used.”<sup>22</sup> Definitions of anarchism have emerged in a wide and diverse range of historical, political, social, and cultural contexts. Some have been formulated by self-identified anarchists, others by sympathetic writers and fellow travelers, still others by hostile critics. Some date from the mid to late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, others from the mid to late twentieth centuries, still others from the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Some have been articulated explicitly in texts of various kinds, while others are implicit in the political activities of individuals and groups. In seeking to understand such definitions, our chief interest lies in determining what particular actors, “writing at the time [they] did write for the audience [they] intended to address, could in practice have been intending to communicate” by means of them.<sup>23</sup> It remains an open question whether there is some one “determinate idea to which various writers contributed” or whether there is “only a variety of statements made by a variety of different agents with a variety of different intentions.”<sup>24</sup>

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22 Q. Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” in Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Volume 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 85.

23 Ibid., 87–88.

24 Ibid., 85.

Generic definitions of anarchism, including those alluded to above, may be divided into two broad categories.<sup>25</sup> The first, which I call “intellectual” definitions, understand anarchism first and foremost in terms of its theoretical *content*—i.e., a set of distinctive beliefs, judgments, values, principles, ideals, and so on—and/or the intellectual *activities* and *practices* that give rise to this content—i.e., the methods and approaches it employs in critiquing existing political, social, and economic institutions; describing and justifying alternative forms of organization; critically engaging with other perspectives; and so on.<sup>26</sup> The second, which I call “practico-political” definitions, understand anarchism chiefly in terms of particular (non-intellectual) activities, practices, and practical objectives. Whereas definitions of the former sort pertain to how and what anarchists *qua* anarchists think, definitions of the latter sort are principally concerned with how they *act* and what they *do*.

Because intellectual definitions generally regard anarchism as a kind of *ideology*, *philosophy*, or *theory* (or as a group of related ideologies, theories, or philosophies, or as a broad ideological, philosophical, or theoretical tendency, orientation, or tradition), they are often favored by political philosophers and others who analyze political thought “in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions” and “concentrate on argument analysis of largely canonical texts.”<sup>27</sup> Practico-political definitions, in contrast, tend to regard anarchism first and foremost as a social and/or political *movement* (or as a group of interrelated political movements, or as a practical tendency or orientation within or across various political movements). As such, they are often favored by sociologists and others who analyze political movements by studying “institutions, organizations and social practices.”<sup>28</sup>

25 For a similar categorization scheme, see George Woodcock’s *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Cleveland, Oh.: World Publishing Company, 1962).

26 Representative examples of this approach include Crowder, *Classical Anarchism*; McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*; Miller, *Anarchism*; and Ritter, *Anarchism: A Conceptual Analysis*. Cf. Gordon, *Anarchy Alive*, 4.

27 B. Franks, “Vanguards and Paternalism,” in Jun and Wahl, eds., *New Perspectives on Anarchism*, 100.

28 Ibid. In addition to the examples Franks cites, see also R. Day, *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2005); Gordon, *Anarchy Alive!*; D. Williams, “An Anarchist-Sociologist Research Program: Fertile Areas for Theoretical and Practical Research,” in Jun and Wahl, eds., *New Perspectives on Anarchism*, 243–266; D. Williams, “A Society in Revolt or Under Analysis? Investigating the Dialogue Between Nineteenth-Century Anarchists and Sociologists,” in *Without Borders or Limits: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Anarchist Studies*, eds. J. Meléndez-Badillo and N. Jun (Newcastle-on-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2013), 3–36; D. Williams and J. Shantz,

The difference between the two, it should be noted, is largely a matter of emphasis rather than substance. In the first place, no one denies that “anarchism” refers, at least in part, to a revolutionary political movement that emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century and which still exists in various forms in the present. There is some disagreement as to when and how this movement developed;<sup>29</sup> what it sought to achieve;<sup>30</sup> whether it espoused a distinctive ideological or political-theoretical perspective (and, if so, what that perspective was);<sup>31</sup> and how it relates historically and ideologically to various contemporary political movements that have been described, or described themselves, as “anarchist.”<sup>32</sup> That said, the fact that there is, or at least has

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“Defining an Anarchist Sociology: A Long Anticipated Marriage,” *Theory in Action* 4, no. 4 (2011): 9–30; D. Williams and J. Shantz, *Anarchy and Society: Reflections on Anarchist Sociology* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

- 29 See, e.g., M. Schmidt and L. van der Walt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland, Calif.: AK Press, 2009), which argues that anarchism developed out of the First International Workingmen’s Association in the 1860s. Most other writers cite earlier dates. For a representative example, see P. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*.
- 30 See, e.g., E. Goldman, “Anarchism: What It Really Stands For,” in *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 47–67; Kropotkin, “Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal,” 123–124; P. Latouche, *Anarchy! An Authentic Exposition of the Methods of Anarchists and the Aims of Anarchism* (London: Everett and Company, 1908); D. Novak, “Anarchism in the History of Political Thought,” in Hoffman, *Anarchism as Political Philosophy*, 20–33, esp. 28–29; Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 4; Ritter, *Anarchism: A Conceptual Analysis*, chapter 2; and E. Steinle, *The True Aim of Anarchism* (E.H. Fulton, 1896).
- 31 See, e.g., Amster, *Anarchism Today*, 88; L. Susan Brown, *The Politics of Individualism: Liberalism, Liberal Feminism, and Anarchism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1993), 2; B. Franks, “Anarchism and Analytic Philosophy,” in Kinna, ed., *The Bloomsbury Companion to Anarchism*, 62; R. Leach, *Political Ideology in Britain* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), xi; McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 53; C. Milstein, *Anarchism and Its Aspirations* (Oakland, Calif.: AK Press, 2010), 17–28; S. Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011); S. Sheehan, *Anarchism* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 78–79; Ritter, *Anarchism a Conceptual Analysis*, introduction; Sartwell, *Against the State*, 13; and E.V. Zenker, *Anarchism: A Criticism and History of the Anarchist Theory* (London: Putnam’s, 1897), chapter 1.
- 32 See, e.g., R. Kinna, “Introduction,” in Kinna, ed., *The Bloomsbury Companion to Anarchism*, 16–22. See also D. Apter, “The Old Anarchism and the New—Some Comments,” in Apter and Joll, eds., *Anarchism Today*, 1–13; K. Ferguson, “Toward a New Anarchism,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* 7, no. 1 (1973): 39–57; Gordon, *Anarchy Alive!*, 21–27; D. Graeber, “New Anarchism,” in *A Movement of Movements: Is Another World Really Possible?* ed. T. Mertes (London: Verso, 2004), 202–215; S. Hirsch and L. van der Walt, “Final Reflections: The Vicissitudes of Anarchist and Syndicalist Trajectories, 1940–Present,” in *Anarchism and*

been, such a thing as an anarchist political movement (or a group of anarchist political movements, or an anarchist tendency or orientation within or across various political movements) is scarcely in dispute.

So, too, few would claim that there is or could be an anarchist political movement that is not founded in some way on a particular perspective or range of perspectives—more specifically, on a particular set of underlying beliefs, ideas, values, principles, and/or commitments.<sup>33</sup> Robert Graham warns against the tendency to define anarchism solely in terms of “a historically-embodied movement or movements,” as this approach conflates “anarchism as a body of ideas with anarchism as a movement.”<sup>34</sup> Even if anarchism is chiefly regarded as a political movement that is distinguished from other movements on the basis of its practices or practical tendencies, one may still ask what ends anarchists hope to achieve through these practices, why they choose these particular practices and ends over others, and so on. One obvious answer to these sorts of questions is, again, that what anarchists *do* is at least a partial function of what anarchists *believe*—in other words, that anarchist *practice* is related in non-trivial ways to anarchist *thought*. (Since we are mainly concerned with the relationship between anarchism and philosophy, and since all six definitions enumerated in the previous section define philosophy in terms of intellectual content or activity, we will not consider practico-practical definitions of anarchism in any significant detail here—although we will briefly revisit the relationship of anarchist thought and anarchist political activity in the conclusion.)

All of this being said, even those who define anarchism in intellectual terms disagree amongst themselves as to how anarchist thought as such should be characterized. This disagreement bespeaks a more basic tension concerning the role that reason and intellectual analysis plays (or ought to play) in anarchist politics. Though anarchists of all stripes have generally agreed that “anarchism owes little to the writings of the ‘intellectual,’”<sup>35</sup> many have considered it important to defend anarchism against the sorts of charges and accusations

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*Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870–1940*, eds. S. Hirsch and L. van der Walt (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 398–400; R. Kinna, *Anarchism: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), 22–23; B. Morris, “Reflections on the New Anarchism,” in *Anthropology, Ecology, and Anarchism*, 133–148; T. Perlin, “The Recurrence of Defiance,” in *Contemporary Anarchism*; and G. Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists* (Kingston, On.: Quarry Press, 1992), 40–58.

33 Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 36.

34 R. Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy—We Invoke It: The First International and the Origins of the Anarchist Movement* (Oakland, Calif.: AK Press, 2015), 2.

35 S. Christie and A. Meltzer, *The Floodgates of Anarchy* (Oakland, Calif.: PM Press, 2000), 9.

enumerated in the preface by attempting to demonstrate that it is “coherent” (i.e., that its substantive claims are mutually consistent) and “rational” (i.e., that its substantive claims may be justified on purely rational grounds). However, some have gone a step further by portraying anarchism as an explicitly “scientific”<sup>36</sup> worldview “anchor[ed] firmly and irretrievably in Enlightenment rationalism.”<sup>37</sup> This is particularly true of Kropotkin and other “classical” anarchists for whom anarchism employs the methods “of the exact natural sciences” to construct “a mechanical explanation of all phenomena ... including ... the life of human societies and their economic, political, and moral problems”<sup>38</sup> or “to construct a synthetic philosophy comprehending in one generalization all ... of Nature.”<sup>39</sup> In associating anarchism with notions of “self-regulating natural mechanisms, relations and processes that are rational and that, if left alone, allow a more harmonious social order to emerge,”<sup>40</sup> Kropotkin and his ilk were not content to demonstrate that it is intellectually credible (insofar as it is supported by or, at the very least, compatible with reason); rather, they were explicitly intent upon characterizing anarchism as a rationalist ideology that places foremost emphasis on reason and scientific analysis in the formulation and justification of its beliefs, ideas, principles, and commitments.

Others have claimed that anarchism rejects “rationalist discourses of Enlightenment humanism” including “essentialist notions of the rational human subject and ... positivistic faith in science and objective historical laws.”<sup>41</sup> For those who defend “non-rationalist” perspectives of this sort, anarchism is neither solely nor even chiefly a matter of rational deliberation, theoretical analysis, or “intellectual awareness”<sup>42</sup> more generally, but of non-rational sensibilities,

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36 Schmidt and van der Walt, *Black Flame*, 69.

37 G. Ciccariello-Maher, “An Anarchism That is Not Anarchism: Notes Toward a Critique of Anarchist Imperialism,” in *How Not to be Governed: Readings and Interpretations from a Critical Anarchist Left*, eds. J. Casa Klausen and J. Martel (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2011), 20.

38 P. Kropotkin, *Modern Science and Anarchism* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1908), 53, 135–136; cf. Malatesta, *Life and Ideas*, 25, 41.

39 Ibid.

40 Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 37.

41 Ibid., 6. Representative postanarchist texts include L. Call, *Postmodern Anarchism* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2002); R. Day, *Gramsci is Dead*; T. May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* (University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); and S. Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2001). See also D. Rousselle and S. Evren, eds., *Postanarchism: A Reader* (London: Pluto Press, 2011).

42 Feral Faun, *Feral Revolution* (n.d.), <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/feral-faun-essays>.

convictions, aspirations, and ideals. According to this view, anarchist beliefs, ideas, principles, and commitments reflect underlying “psychological and temperamental attitudes”<sup>43</sup> or “mood[s],”<sup>44</sup> which means that anarchist political movements are not so much applications of a “doctrine”<sup>45</sup> or “a body of theory”<sup>46</sup> as they are expressions of “an attitude, or perhaps one might even say a faith: the rejection of certain types of social relations, the confidence that certain others would be much better ones on which to build a livable society, the belief that such a society could actually exist.”<sup>47</sup> In this way, anarchism is closer to being “a species of Romanticism”<sup>48</sup> than a “wayward child of the Enlightenment”<sup>49</sup> or the “odd man out”<sup>50</sup> in a broader set of Enlightenment ideologies.

We must avoid the temptation to overstate the difference between rationalist and non-rationalist interpretations. An emphasis on ideas, or on the role that intellectual analysis plays in the formulation and justification of these ideas, does not necessarily entail a commitment to a particular theoretical perspective, let alone a de-emphasis on practices or on the role that psychological or emotional factors play in motivating and inspiring these practices. Nor does calling attention to the limitations of intellectual analysis necessarily entail a blanket opposition to science, philosophy, and related discourses. As Graeber remarks:

Anarchism is ... a project, which sets out to begin creating the institutions of a new society “within the shell of the old,” to expose, subvert, and undermine structures of domination but always, while doing so, proceeding in a democratic fashion, a manner which itself demonstrates those structures are unnecessary. Clearly any such project has need of the tools of intellectual analysis and understanding.<sup>51</sup>

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43 Apter and Joll, eds., *Anarchism Today*, 260.

44 Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 663. Representative texts include H. Bey, *T.A.Z. The Temporary Autonomous Zone* (New York: Autonomedia, 2003); B. Black, *Anarchy After Leftism* (Columbia, Mo: C.A.L. Press, 1997); CrimethInc. Ex-Workers Collective, *Days of War, Nights of Love* (Atlanta: CrimethInc. Free Press, 2001); Nadia C., “Your Politics Are Boring As Fuck” (n.d.), <http://www.crimethinc.com/texts/selected/asfuck.php>.

45 Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 663.

46 Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*, 4.

47 Ibid.

48 Weir, *Anarchy and Culture* 12, 14.

49 J. Shantz, *A Creative Passion: Anarchism and Culture* (Newcastle-on-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 24.

50 Weir, *Anarchy and Culture*, 12.

51 Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*, 7.

At the same time, he continues, anarchist intellectuals must “reject self-consciously any trace of vanguardism” and avoid taking on the role of “an elite that can arrive at the correct strategic analyses and then lead the masses to follow.”<sup>52</sup>

Although neither perspective categorically denies that rational deliberation and reflection are important to anarchist thought, and although both emphasize the centrality of practice, non-rationalist perspectives understand anarchism in terms of sensibilities, convictions, aspirations, or ideals that emerge organically from concrete, lived experience rather than considered rational deliberation or judgment. It is only *after* such sensibilities, convictions, aspirations, or ideals come into being at the level of practice that they are subjected to intellectual analysis, and even then the analysis in question is largely concerned with strategy or tactics (as Graeber puts it, a “discourse about revolutionary practice”<sup>53</sup>) rather than “high theory.” In other words, it is not anarchist thought itself that is the product of intellectual analysis, but rather the strategic and tactical discourses that are formulated in response to that thought. This explains, in turn, why non-rationalist accounts have generally been uninterested in arguing for anarchism or providing rational justification for it more generally.

For rationalists like Kropotkin, there is no reason in principle why the ideas that emerge organically from the concrete, lived experience of political struggle should be regarded as “non-rational” in nature. Such ideas are “rational” just in case they are justified by sufficient reasons (and so can be explicated and justified in terms of those reasons), and this is true regardless of *how* those ideas come about.<sup>54</sup> Although some who defend non-rationalist perspectives may agree that anarchist ideas are “rational” in this sense, they do not necessarily consider this to be an important consideration. After all, perspectives of this sort are not just claiming that anarchist ideas emerge from non-rational sources, but that it is a matter of indifference whether anarchist ideas qualify as rational in the first place.

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52 Ibid., 11.

53 Ibid., 6.

54 It may be that ideas that are formulated on the basis of rational deliberation are more likely to be rational than ideas that are formulated on the basis of feelings, intuitions, or instincts. But this is mostly irrelevant as far as the present discussion is concerned. Whether X is a rational thing to believe or not depends solely on whether there are good reasons to believe that X is true. The fact that I happen to believe X on the basis of a feeling rather than a consideration of the reasons for believing X may indicate that my belief-forming process is non-rational, but it doesn't necessarily mean that X itself is an irrational thing to believe.

In short, while intellectual definitions of anarchism uniformly emphasize anarchist *thought*, this does not entail a uniform understanding of the *mechanisms* by which this thought is generated. The same is generally true with regard to characterizing the general kind of which anarchism is a particular instance. Although some definitions use terms like “ideology,” “theory,” and “philosophy” interchangeably, many more hold them as distinct. We must therefore differentiate those that describe anarchism as a “philosophy” from those that describe it as a “theory,” an “ideology,” or something else entirely. We must also draw a distinction between those that understand anarchism as a *single* ideology, theory, or philosophy and those that see it as a broad philosophical, ideological, or theoretical tendency, orientation, or tradition comprised of otherwise diverse elements.

### Anarchism as Political Ideology

In most cases, “ideology” is defined as a “consistent set of ideas [or] central assumptions”<sup>55</sup> (or as a “sheaf of overlapping [ideas or assumptions] assembled around a core characterization”<sup>56</sup>) that pertain to the particular dimension of human reality known as “politics” or “the political.” Although the meaning of the term “political” is itself disputed, it is generally understood to refer to the social dimension of human existence or, more specifically, to the various ways that human beings constitute (or are capable of constituting) themselves as social creatures. According to Ponton and Gill, for example, politics may be defined as “the way in which we understand and order our social affairs, especially in relation to the allocation of scarce resources, the principles underlying this, and the means by which some people or groups acquire and maintain greater control over the situation than others.”<sup>57</sup>

Whereas “political” activity or practice refers to actual or hypothetical constitutions of the social domain itself, “political” discourse and thought refer to various ways of speaking and thinking about this domain as well as the fundamental issues to which it gives rise—e.g., “the exercise of power ... the public allocation of things that are valued ... the resolution of conflict ... the competition among groups and individuals pursuing their interests ... [and] the determination of who gets what, when, and how.”<sup>58</sup> Understood in this way, political

55 Miller, *Anarchism*, 3.

56 Sylvan, “Anarchism,” 233.

57 G. Ponton and P. Gill, *Introduction to Politics* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982), 5–6.

58 J. Danziger, *Understanding the Political World* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1991), 5.

thought is a broad category that “refers to thinking about politics at any level of conceptualization and articulation.”<sup>59</sup> As such, it encompasses “the political speculations of a whole community, over a certain period” including its “leaders, statesmen, commentators, writers, poets, publicists, social reformers, litterateurs, and the like” as expressed in “policies, programs, plans, activities, organizations, constitutions, etc.”<sup>60</sup>

Although anarchism is often defined as an “ideology” in the generic sense described above, there is considerable disagreement regarding the particular “ideas” or “assumptions” that distinguish it from other ideologies. As David Miller writes:

Of course an ideology is never a fully coherent doctrine; every ideology is open-ended, capable of being developed in different directions, and therefore of generating contradictory propositions. But generally speaking we can at least find a coherent core, a consistent set of ideas which is shared by all those who embrace the ideology in question ... It is by no means clear that we can find such a set of core assumptions in the case of anarchism. We must [therefore] face the possibility that anarchism is not really *an* ideology, but rather the point of intersection of several ideologies.<sup>61</sup>

Here Miller seems to be suggesting that the “ideas” and “assumptions” that constitute ideologies are first-order claims, assertions, or propositions. As Paul McLaughlin notes, many scholars have taken it for granted that such “ideas” and “assumptions,” if they exist, are to be found in the writings of individuals who have been identified, or identified themselves, as “anarchists.” Although McLaughlin seems to agree with Miller in defining ideologies as “collections of particular beliefs articulated in particular texts and expressed in particular activities,” he nonetheless rejects the notion that ideologies can be reduced to “collections of individuals.”<sup>62</sup> When anarchism is approached in this way, he writes:

[I]t is not the least bit surprising that scholars [who employ it] conclude that it is an inconsistent, contradictory, or incoherent ideology. Individuals

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59 M. Freeden, “Ideology, Political Theory and Political Philosophy,” in *Handbook of Political Theory*, eds. G. Gaus and C. Kukathas (London: SAGE, 2004), 6.

60 J.C. Johari, *Contemporary Political Theory* (New Delhi: Stirling Publishers, 2006), 17–18.

61 Miller, *Anarchism*, 3.

62 McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 15.

themselves change and also change their minds. We can hardly expect them to be consistent—say “consistently anarchist”—throughout a lifetime and a body of work ... [E]vading [the] basic challenge of ideological inquiry by simply identifying an ideology with a collection of individuals—and, once again, with every aspect of their lives and thought—is indolent and uninformative.<sup>63</sup>

As McLaughlin himself admits, however, “anarchism has been defined in numerous ways”<sup>64</sup> (for example, as “the rejection of rule, of government, of the state, of authority, or of domination,” as “a theory of voluntary association, of decentralization, or federalism, of freedom...”<sup>65</sup> and so on), and “locating or specifying the [ideas and assumptions] that characterize [it] is a challenge” even when we focus on the extent to which [they] “have gained expression in ... activities” rather than the writings of individuals.<sup>66</sup>

A much more useful approach is provided by Michael Freeden, who defines ideologies in general as complex “clusters” or “composites” of decontested political *concepts* “with a variety of internal combinations”<sup>67</sup> (we will refer to this as Freeden’s “weak” definition of ideology). For Freeden—unlike for Miller and McLaughlin—ideologies are not constituted by particular claims, assertions, or propositions but by particular political *concepts* “characterized by a morphology,”<sup>68</sup> i.e., an inner structure that organizes and arranges those concepts in particular ways and, in so doing, removes them “from contest by attempting to assign them a clear meaning.”<sup>69</sup> The structure of an ideology is determined by the particular ways it decontests the concepts it contains; the decontested meanings assigned to these concepts are determined in turn by how they are organized and arranged within the ideology, as well as the historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts within which the ideology itself is situated.<sup>70</sup>

Ideologies assign fixed meanings and degrees of relative significance to concepts by means of two basic operations. The first involves identifying, defining,

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63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., 25.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid., 20.

67 M. Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 88.

68 Ibid., 77.

69 M. Freeden, *Liberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 59.

70 Ibid., 54, 76–77.

and organizing their “micro-components”—i.e., the particular referents that specify what they are concepts *of*.<sup>71</sup> Every concept has several possible micro-components, each of which, in turn, has many possible meanings and degrees of relative significance within the overall concept. This allows for “diverse conceptions of any concept”<sup>72</sup> and an “infinite variety” of “conceptual permutations” within “the ideational boundaries ... that anchor [them] and secure [their] components.”<sup>73</sup> The second, in contrast involves arranging concepts within a hierarchy of “core,” “adjacent,” and “peripheral” elements as well as determining their relative significance among other concepts of the same type.<sup>74</sup>

The core concepts of a particular ideology are distinguished by their “long-term durability” and are “present in all known cases of the ideology in question.”<sup>75</sup> As such, “they are indispensable to holding the ideology together, and are consequently accorded preponderance in shaping that ideology’s ideational content.”<sup>76</sup> Adjacent concepts, in contrast, “are second-ranking in the pervasiveness and breadth of meanings they impart to the ideology in which they are located. They do not appear in all its instances, but are crucial to finessing the core and anchoring it ... into a more determinate and decontested semantic field.”<sup>77</sup> Lastly there are peripheral concepts, which are “more marginal and generally more ephemeral concepts that change at a faster pace diachronically and culturally.”<sup>78</sup> Each of these categories, moreover, has an internal hierarchy that accords different degrees of “proportional weight”<sup>79</sup> to the concepts they comprise.

Both operations can be applied in a variety of different ways. In some cases these differences are a function of the identification, definition, and organization of micro-components within the concepts themselves. In others, they are a function of the presence or absence of other concepts; of the relative position of concepts within the morphology; or of the different levels of proportional weight accorded to concepts that occupy the same relative position in the morphology. Although Freeden’s approach recognizes that ideologies

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71 M. Freeden, “The Morphological Analysis of Ideology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*, eds. M. Freeden, L. Tower Sargent, and M. Stears (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 124–125.

72 *Ibid.*, 124.

73 *Ibid.*, 126, 128, 125.

74 *Ibid.*, 125.

75 *Ibid.*, 125–126.

76 *Ibid.*, 126.

77 *Ibid.*, 125.

78 *Ibid.*

79 *Ibid.*

have core elements that are “indispensable to holding [them] together, and are consequently accorded preponderance in shaping [their] ideational content,”<sup>80</sup> it avoids defining ideologies strictly in terms of these (or any other) concepts. Its goal as such is not only to identify the core concepts of ideological morphologies but also, and more importantly, to investigate the various “conceptual permutations” they contain. Because these are virtually unlimited, ideologies have “the potential for infinite variety and alteration” and, for this reason, are capable of expressing themselves in a wide and diverse range of manifestations.<sup>81</sup> This is true even of core concepts, the meanings of which can vary enormously from one particular “manifestation” of a given ideology to the next.<sup>82</sup> Ideologies that recognize the same core concepts can be and often are quite different from one another; even a single ideological tradition can include a variety of distinct tendencies.

As such, the question of whether anarchism is characterized by a set of core propositions is largely irrelevant to its identification as an ideology. What matters, on the contrary, is that it involves a stable “cluster” of concepts as well as a particular *morphology*—that is, a particular way of organizing and arranging concepts so as to accord them specific meanings and degrees of significance. Although there is no question that anarchist ideas are “fluid and constantly evolving” and that their “central content ... changes from one generation to another ... against the background of the movements and culture in and by which they are expressed,”<sup>83</sup> different tendencies within anarchism nonetheless “have largely similar morphologies,”<sup>84</sup> meaning that they tend to affirm the same basic set of core concepts even though “[these] are expressed in different ways, depending on context.”<sup>85</sup> Were this not the case, it would be difficult to account for the ubiquitous tendency to regard anarchism as a distinctive political perspective, let alone the fact that conventional treatments of anarchism consistently highlight particular concepts (e.g., freedom, anti-statism, anti-capitalism, prefiguration, etc.) rather than others. This suggests that anarchism qualifies as an ideology at least according to Freeden’s “weak” definition.

According to (what we will call) Freeden’s “strong” definition, ideologies are not simply conceptual assemblages but “clusters of ideas, beliefs, opinions, values, and attitudes usually held by identifiable groups that provide directives,

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80 Ibid., 126.

81 Ibid., 128, 126.

82 Ibid., 125.

83 Gordon, *Anarchy Alive*, 4.

84 Franks, “Anarchism and Analytic Philosophy,” 63.

85 Ibid.

even plans, of action for public policy-making in an endeavour to uphold, justify, change or criticize the social and political arrangements of a state or other political community.”<sup>86</sup> Unlike the “weak” definition, the “strong” definition encompasses ideas *as well as* the concrete forms of political activity they animate, and this (along with additional characteristics to be discussed below) serves to distinguish ideologies from less explicitly practice-oriented forms of political thought such as political philosophy or political theory. As we have already noted, anarchism may be understood as a “*movement* composed of dense networks of individuals, affinity groups and collectives which communicate and coordinate intensively, sometimes across the globe, and generate innumerable direct actions and sustained projects.”<sup>87</sup> It may also be understood as an “intricate *political culture*”—that is, “a family of shared orientations for doing and talking about politics, and to living everyday life”—that animates these networks and infuses them with content.”<sup>88</sup> Insofar as the “major features” of this culture (e.g., “a shared repertoire of political action based on direct action, building grassroots alternatives, community outreach and confrontation; shared forms of organizing ...; broader cultural expression in areas as diverse as art, music, dress and diet ...; [and] shared political language that emphasises resistance to capitalism, the state, patriarchy and more generally to hierarchy and domination”<sup>89</sup>) follow straightforwardly from the conceptual morphology described above, it is clear that anarchism qualifies as an ideology in this stronger sense as well.

All of this being said, it remains an open question whether anarchism is *only* a political ideology. Although it is certainly possible that ideology constitutes an altogether distinct category of political thought, it may just as well be a general kind of which political theories or political philosophies are particular instances—in which case anarchism might qualify as a political theory, a political philosophy, or some other species of political thought *as well as* an ideology. Indeed, even if political theory or political philosophy are entirely distinct from ideology, it is possible that anarchism is related to them in non-trivial ways. We will consider each of these possibilities below.

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86 Freeden, “Ideology, Political Theory and Political Philosophy,” 6.

87 Ibid., 3.

88 Gordon, *Anarchy Alive*, 4.

89 Ibid., 3–4.

### Anarchism as Political Theory

The term “political theory” is typically used in two senses. The first refers to a form of political thought that explores fundamental political questions, problems, and issues. As Terence Ball writes:

So long as people live together in communities, fundamental questions—“theoretical” ones, if you like—will inevitably arise. No community can long exist without addressing and answering, at least provisionally, questions of [this] sort. [These include] questions about justice and fairness in the distribution of duties and resources.... about offices and authority ... about grounds and justification ... about punishment ... about the limits and extent of obligation ... [in short] questions ... that any civilized community, or at any rate its most reflective members, must address and attempt to answer.<sup>90</sup>

Whereas other forms of political thought are concerned with questions that emerge in specific political contexts (e.g., about public policy), political theory deals with questions that are taken to be universally applicable in any and all “civilized communities.” For this reason, it tends to be more speculative and abstract than the former.

As Anthony Quinton notes, the distinction between this first sense of political theory and similarly abstract or speculative modes of political thought like political philosophy “is fine, to the point, indeed, of being barely discernible.”<sup>91</sup> Insofar as the former is identified as a subfield of political science, it “is more closely allied with empirical methodologies and less inclined toward the normative claims of humanities scholars (although political theorists are more normative and ‘philosophical’ than other scholars in the social sciences).”<sup>92</sup> In practice, this is generally taken to mean that political theory is both explanatory and predictive *as well as* normative in character—in other words, that it is concerned with describing or explaining fundamental political phenomena as well as prescribing what ought to be the case ideally. This implies that political philosophy is coextensive with normative political theory, whereas

90 T. Ball, “Whither Political Theory?” in *Political Science: Looking to the Future*, vol. 1, ed. W. Crotty (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 60.

91 A. Quinton, “Political Philosophy,” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Philosophy*, ed. A. Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 275.

92 A. Fiala, Introduction to *The Bloomsbury Companion to Political Philosophy*, ed. A. Fiala (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 12.

political theory more broadly encompasses non-normative questions and non-philosophical methods. Such a distinction is largely tendentious, however, since canonical works of political philosophy frequently involve descriptive or explanatory analyses rooted in the use of empirical methodologies. For our purposes, it is just as well to regard political theory in this first sense as equivalent to political philosophy (about which more below).

The second sense refers to a “subdiscipline of political science” which studies significant “texts, arguments, and discourses” in the history of political theorizing.<sup>93</sup> Understood in this way, political theory involves a “historical narrative [or] a sequenced story that examine[s] the ways in which a number of outstanding individuals such as Aristotle, Hobbes or Rousseau applied their wisdom” to particular political issues, problems, and questions.<sup>94</sup> Its foremost objective, in other words, is to interpret and/or critically evaluate the political thought of particular thinkers and writers in terms of the particular issues with which they are concerned; the particular methods they employ in investigating these issues (whether “philosophical, historical, economic, psychological, sociological, theological, or anthropological”<sup>95</sup>); and the particular conclusions at which they arrive. Although students of this sort of political theory do not deny the existence of significant commonalities among otherwise distinct political perspectives—indeed, the notion of political-theoretical “schools,” “movements,” “tendencies,” and the like is articulated precisely on the basis of such commonalities—they are keen to emphasize the distinctiveness of individual thinkers and, by extension, the various ways in which their political ideas differ.

The same critique that McLaughlin leveled against the “individualistic approach” to ideology would seem to apply here as well. Although conventional accounts of anarchism tend to characterize it as “the brainchild of certain nineteenth-century thinkers—Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, etc.” these “‘founding figures’ did not think of themselves as having invented anything particularly new.”<sup>96</sup> Like other anarchists, on the contrary, they tended to understand anarchism as a product of the combined efforts of countless “anonymous individuals who played active roles in the workers’ movement of the nineteenth century” as well as the “common people [who practiced] anarchism without being aware of it or with no previous knowledge of the

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93 Freeden, “Ideology, Political Theory and Political Philosophy,” 3.

94 Ibid.

95 Johari, *Contemporary Political Theory*, 20.

96 Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*, 3.

word *anarchism*.<sup>97</sup> Even the rationalist Kropotkin insisted that anarchism was “born *among the people*.”<sup>98</sup> This suggests that anarchist ideas evolved from the real-world political struggles of “activists” rather than the deliberations of a small group of intellectuals or theoreticians—in which case anarchism does not qualify as a “political theory” in the second sense described above. This is not to say that individual figures like Proudhon and Bakunin were not political theorists or that their work cannot be studied as political theory, but only that anarchism itself is not reducible to the political theory of any one individual.

### Anarchism as Philosophy (Political and Otherwise)

As we noted at the outset, many notable anarchists (as well as commentators on anarchism) have described anarchism as a “philosophy.” To cite just a few examples:

[Anarchism] is the philosophy of the sovereignty of the individual.<sup>99</sup>

Anarchism—The philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by man-made law; the theory that all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary.<sup>100</sup>

Anarchism is the only philosophy which brings to man the consciousness of himself.<sup>101</sup>

The liberation of man from economic exploitation and from intellectual and political oppression ... finds its finest expression in the philosophy of anarchism...<sup>102</sup>

Anarchism is that political philosophy which advocates the maximization of individual responsibility and the reduction of concentrated power.<sup>103</sup>

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97 Z. Vodovnik, *A Living Spirit of Revolt: The Infrapolitics of Anarchism* (Oakland, Calif.: PM Press, 2013), 7.

98 Kropotkin, *Anarchism*, 146.

99 Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 67.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid., 50.

102 Rocker, *Anarchosyndicalism*, 37.

103 A. Comfort, Preface to H. Barclay, *People Without Government: An Anthropology of Anarchy* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1990), 7.

Anarchism is a philosophy based on the premise that men need freedom in order to solve urgent social problems, and begin to realize their potentialities for happiness and creativity.<sup>104</sup>

Anarchism is a philosophy of freedom. It is a body of revolutionary ideas which reconciles, as no other revolutionary concept does, the necessity for individual freedom with the demands of society. It is a commune-ist philosophy which starts from the individual and works upwards, instead of starting from the State and working downwards.<sup>105</sup>

Anarchism is a philosophy in its own right. Although as a social movement it has developed a wide variety of strands from extreme individualism to communism, all anarchists share certain common concerns.<sup>106</sup>

Anarchism is a political philosophy in the authentic sense: it poses the fundamental ethical question of political legitimacy. It is not content with disinterested description of the political order but seeks, from the standpoint of “justice,” to assess the legitimacy of this order and its alternatives.<sup>107</sup>

Anarchism is a political philosophy concerning any form of non-authoritarian political organization dealing with local and daily life.<sup>108</sup>

Anarchism is a political philosophy ... favoring social order based on voluntary association and rejecting the legitimacy of the state.<sup>109</sup>

These examples make clear that those who describe anarchism as a “philosophy” typically mean “political philosophy.” Generally speaking, this refers either to a more or less uniform way of understanding the particular dimension of reality known as “politics” or “the political” (as in P<sub>2</sub>), or else to an intellectual practice or mode of inquiry that philosophically explores this dimension of reality (as in P<sub>5</sub>)—that is, by means of “rational methods” such as *argumentation* (the justification of propositions by means of deductive and/or inductive reasoning) and *analysis* (the critical evaluation of propositions by means of the same). Before considering the extent to which anarchism qualifies as a political philosophy in either or both of these senses, let us briefly examine its relation to the other definitions of philosophy outlined previously.

104 D. Wieck, “Essentials of Anarchism,” in Hoffman, ed., *Anarchism as Political Philosophy*, 97.

105 Christopher, et al., “The Relevance of Anarchism,” 70.

106 Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 36.

107 McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 104.

108 Depuis-Déri, “Anarchy in Political Philosophy,” 19.

109 Long, “Anarchism,” 217.

The notion that anarchism qualifies as an instance of  $P_1$  is dubious. Anarchists past and present have refused to characterize anarchism as a fixed, comprehensive, and self-contained system of thought<sup>110</sup>; on the contrary, they have insisted that it “recognizes only the relative significance of ideas, institutions, and social forms.”<sup>111</sup> and have explicitly denied that it is “necessarily linked to any [one] philosophical system,”<sup>112</sup> as when Emma Goldman argues that anarchism “leaves posterity free to develop its own particular systems, in harmony with its needs.<sup>113</sup> Identifying anarchism with  $P_3$  is problematic for two related but distinct reasons. In the first place, anarchism has never understood itself as an attempt to answer “the most general or fundamental questions about the nature of reality and human life”<sup>114</sup>; it is not “a metaphysics, cosmology, ecology, or spirituality ... an ontology, philosophy of history, ethics, economics, or positive political program.”<sup>115</sup> In the second place, anarchism as such is not committed to any particular mode of inquiry or form of intellectual practice, rational or otherwise; as Goldman says, it does not seek to “impose an iron-clad program or method.”<sup>116</sup>

As we have already seen, the role that such modes of inquiry play in anarchist thought is a matter of dispute. Feral Faun writes, for example, that anarchism emerges not from rational analysis but from “the energy of insurgent desire,”<sup>117</sup> seeking after “the revitalization of desire as a creative impulse” and “the refusal to let utility and effectiveness dominate over enjoyment, playfulness, experimentation and poetic living.”<sup>118</sup> Giovanni Baldelli makes a similar point:

Anarchism is not a philosophy ... Anarchism must rely on fundamental principles that are the result of an act of choice and are operative as an act of faith, regardless of whether they may be fitted into one philosophical system or another and whether they may have received rational and even scientific support.<sup>119</sup>

110 Rucker, *Anarchosyndicalism*, 31.

111 Ibid.

112 Malatesta, *Life and Ideas*, 19.

113 Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 49.

114 Duncan, *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, 8.

115 McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 9.

116 Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 49.

117 Feral Faun, “Radical Theory: A Wrecking Ball for Ivory Towers,” *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* 38 (Fall 1993): 53.

118 W. Landstreicher, “Desire Armed: Anarchy and the Creative Impulse” (n.d.), <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/wolfi-landstreicher-desire-armed>.

119 Baldelli, *Social Anarchism*, 2.

So, too, Alfredo Bonanno: “Anarchism is not a political theory. It is a way of conceiving life, and life ... is not something definitive.”<sup>120</sup> For defenders of these sorts of perspectives, “there is no difference between what we do and what we think, but there is a continual reversal of theory into action and action into theory.”<sup>121</sup> As Graeber puts it, “Anarchists like to distinguish themselves by what they do, and how they organize themselves to go about doing it ... [They] have never been much interested in broad philosophical or strategic questions.”<sup>122</sup> None of this is to say, again, that anarchism explicitly *disclaims* rational inquiry or analysis—only that anarchist thought as such is not uniformly committed to any particular method, rational or otherwise.

It will be recalled that P<sub>4</sub> refers to a particular tradition of intellectual practice or inquiry (in the sense of P<sub>3</sub>) defined by a more or less uniform subject matter and range of approaches (as in “Western philosophy” or “Eastern philosophy”). Although anarchism does not qualify as an instance of P<sub>4</sub> in the strict sense, it is certainly possible to situate anarchist thought in relation to various philosophical traditions of this sort—indeed, this is precisely what many of the chapters in this volume aim to do.<sup>123</sup> Even if Schmidt and van der Walt are right to argue that anarchism is “a product of the capitalist world and the working class it created”<sup>124</sup>—or, more controversially, that it has no existence prior to Bakunin and the First International<sup>125</sup>—no one can deny that anarchists have critically engaged with other thinkers, perspectives, and traditions and that anarchism itself has been influenced by a wide range of political, intellectual, and cultural movements (e.g., the Renaissance and the Reformation,<sup>126</sup>

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120 A. Bonanno, *The Anarchist Tension*, trans. J. Weir (London: Elephant Editions, 1996), 4.

121 *Ibid.*

122 *Ibid.*, 5.

123 See, for example, Christoyannopoulos’ and Apps’ contribution to this volume, which provides a comprehensive overview of anarchism’s relationship with various religious traditions. Although none of the contributors deal explicitly with the relationship of anarchism to classical Greek and Roman thought, other scholars have pursued such lines of inquiry. See, for example, Donald Dudley, *A History of Cynicism* (London: Methuen, 1974), esp. 211–212; and D. Keyt, “Aristotle and the Ancient Roots of Anarchism,” *Topoi* 15 (1996): 129–142.

124 Schmidt and van der Walt, *Black Flame*, 96.

125 *Ibid.*, 34.

126 P. Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid* (Oakland, Calif.: AK Press, 2009), 138ff; P. Kropotkin, *Two Essays: Anarchism and Anarchist Communism, Its Basis and Principles* (London: Freedom Press, 1993), 11, 20; M. Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, trans. M. Shatz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 40.

the Enlightenment,<sup>127</sup> the French Revolution,<sup>128</sup> Left Hegelianism,<sup>129</sup> Comtean positivism,<sup>130</sup> and Darwinism,<sup>131</sup> *inter alia.*) While none of this establishes that anarchist thought *belongs* to a particular philosophical tradition, it at least provides evidence of a longstanding discursive relationship between anarchism and philosophy.

As was noted in the preface, even a cursory examination of the scholarly literature of the past fifty years reveals that academic philosophers have had precious little interest in, or regard for, anarchism under any description, while the few who have bothered to discuss it have almost invariably belittled or misrepresented it.<sup>132</sup> One notable exception to this general rule is “postanarchism”—also known as “poststructuralist anarchism” or “postmodern anarchism”—a recent current in anarchist political theory associated most prominently with Todd May, Lewis Call, and Saul Newman. At the highest level of generality, postanarchism urges “the adoption into anarchism of poststructural theory to enrich and enliven existing practices.”<sup>133</sup> Although it is extremely critical of certain aspects of classical anarchist thought—and although it has been subject to its fair share of criticism in turn—postanarchism nonetheless sees itself as “self-consciously engaged with and responding to” the broader anarchist tradition.<sup>134</sup>

The same is not true of other philosophical currents that have been described, or have described themselves, as “anarchist”—most notably the “philosophical anarchism ... associated with the work of Robert Paul Wolff and others from the 1970s to the present.”<sup>135</sup> In this context, the term “anarchism” refers to “principled skepticism toward the legitimacy and authority of states”; as such, it functions as little more than “an abstract descriptor

127 McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 105–109.

128 P. Kropotkin, *The Great French Revolution* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1989), 1, 15.

129 McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 111–116.

130 See Alex Prichard’s and Pabo Abufom Silva’s contribution to this volume.

131 See Brian Morris’ contribution to this volume.

132 For a list of representative exceptions, see N. Jun, “On Philosophical Anarchism,” *Radical Philosophy Review* 19, no. 3 (2016): note 5.

133 B. Franks, “Postanarchisms: A Critical Assessment,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 12, no. 2 (2007): 127.

134 N. Jun and M. Adams, “Political Theory and History: The Case of Anarchism,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 20, no. 3 (2015): 247. The literature on postanarchism is extensive. For an excellent overview of postanarchism and its critics, see Franks, “Postanarchisms: A Critical Assessment.”

135 P. McLaughlin, “In Defense of Philosophical Anarchism,” in *Anarchism and Moral Philosophy*, eds. B. Franks and M. Wilson (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 15.

used by academic philosophers to position themselves within philosophical debates.<sup>136</sup> Beyond this, philosophical anarchism has proven altogether oblivious to and uninterested in the broader anarchist tradition and has consistently failed to engage with the social, political, and cultural history of the anarchist movement.<sup>137</sup>

It is an open question whether and to what extent postanarchism has impacted actually-existing anarchist political movements. What is beyond dispute is that postanarchist thought is largely (though by no means exclusively) a creature of academic philosophy—that is to say, of  $P_6$ —and this fact alone renders it suspicious in the eyes of those contemporary anarchists who regard institutional academia as “hierarchical and elitist” and “separate from the everyday conditions of the working class(es).”<sup>138</sup> This suspicion is of a piece with the broader anarchist tradition, which has long been skeptical of and even hostile toward institutionalized scientific and theoretical discourses and the “bourgeois intellectuals” who employ them.<sup>139</sup> Bakunin, who is particularly representative on this score, vigorously rejects the precedence of “abstract theory” over “social practice”<sup>140</sup> and rails against those who defend “the predominance of science over life”—the “abstract thinkers” who, by “lifting [themselves] in thought above [themselves],” achieve nothing but “the representation of perfect abstraction”<sup>141</sup> The worst of these are professional academics, whom Bakunin describes as “modern priests of licensed political and social quackery.” Inclined “by their very nature ... to all sorts of intellectual and moral corruption,”<sup>142</sup> academics “poison the university youth” and produce “doctrinaire[s] full of conceit and contempt for the rabble, whom [they are] ready to exploit in the name of [their] intellectual and moral superiority.”<sup>143</sup> Just as the Roman Catholic Church “once sanctioned the violence perpetrated by the nobility upon the people,” so does academia, “this church of bourgeois

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136 Jun, “On Philosophical Anarchism,” 553–554.

137 The literature on philosophical anarchism is also extensive. For representative criticisms, see Jun, “On Philosophical Anarchism,” and Franks, “Anarchism and Analytic Philosophy.” For a somewhat more sympathetic treatment see McLaughlin, “In Defense of Philosophical Anarchism,” as well as McLaughlin’s contribution to this volume.

138 Franks, “Anarchism and Analytic Philosophy,” 50.

139 D. Goodway, “Literature and Anarchism,” in Kinna, ed., *The Bloomsbury Companion to Anarchism*, 197.

140 Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, 136.

141 Ibid.

142 Ibid., 134.

143 Ibid., 74.

science, explain and condone the exploitation of the same people by bourgeois capital.”<sup>144</sup>

Malatesta—to cite another classic example—also denies the “infallibility of Science,” rejects any and all attempts “to give ‘a scientific basis’ to anarchism,” argues that deterministic and mechanistic conceptions of the universe are incompatible with notions of “will, freedom, [and] responsibility,”<sup>145</sup> and claims that philosophy is often little more than “a play on words and an illusionist’s trick.”<sup>146</sup> He contends that “most of the so-called intellectuals are, by reason of their education, their family background, [and] their class prejudices tied to the Establishment”<sup>147</sup> and that their “natural tendency” is “to keep apart from the people and form themselves into coteries; to give themselves airs and end up believing themselves protectors and saviors whom the masses should worship.”<sup>148</sup> For Malatesta, anarchism is not a matter of intellectual hair-splitting but of action: “what is important is not what we achieve, but how we achieve it.”<sup>149</sup> This clearly echoes Bakunin’s pronouncement that “... the time of grand theoretical discourse, written or spoken, is past ... [and] ... it is no longer time for ideas but deeds and acts.”<sup>150</sup>

If I am right in suggesting that anarchist thought lacks any significant relationship to P<sub>6</sub>, this leaves only one option—viz., that anarchism is a *political* philosophy (or a group of related political philosophies, or a broad political-philosophical tendency or orientation). As noted previously, “political philosophy” can refer either to a more or less uniform way of understanding “politics” (as in P<sub>2</sub>), or else to an intellectual practice or mode of inquiry that philosophically explores politics” (as in P<sub>5</sub>)—that is, by means of “rational methods” such as *argumentation* and *analysis*. Although there is no reason in principle why all instances of the former must be products of the latter, conventional accounts tend to take for granted that “political philosophies” (in the sense of P<sub>2</sub>) differ from political ideologies, political theories, and other forms of political thought insofar as they are formulated by means of “political

144 M. Bakunin, *The Basic Bakunin*, ed. R. Cutler (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus, 1992), 124.

145 Malatesta, *Life and Ideas*, 39, 44.

146 *Ibid.*, 42.

147 *Ibid.*, 138.

148 *Ibid.*, 140.

149 *Ibid.*, 70.

150 Quoted in M. Leier, *Bakunin: The Creative Passion* (Boston: Seven Stories Press, 2009), 242.

philosophizing” (in the sense of P<sub>5</sub>).<sup>151</sup> It behooves us, accordingly, to examine P<sub>5</sub> in closer detail.

Political philosophy in the Western intellectual tradition has been characterized by two distinct but related ends that it has pursued by means of the “philosophical” practices and modes of inquiry described in P<sub>3</sub>.<sup>152</sup> The first end, which may be termed “constructive,” involves the formulation of rigorous definitions of fundamental political concepts; the systematic organization of these concepts into clearly-defined “perspectives” or “positions” (i.e., “political philosophies” in the sense of P<sub>2</sub>); and the defense of these “perspectives” or “positions” vis-à-vis the provision of arguments. The second end, which may be termed “critical,” involves evaluating already-existing definitions of fundamental political concepts as well as the various “political philosophies” they constitute. In its constructive dimension, therefore, Western political philosophy has been principally concerned with assigning particular meanings to “political concepts” (i.e., concepts in terms of which the basic subject matter of the political is described and evaluated); marshaling these concepts in the formulation of descriptive or normative propositions; and organizing these propositions into a more or less coherent theoretical framework within which political questions may be scrutinized and answered. In its critical dimension, by contrast, political philosophy has sought to critically evaluate and compare political philosophies in terms of one or more of their basic elements.

As Michael Freeden notes, “formal” political philosophy of this sort—as well as the “political philosophies” that issue from it—displays “strong similarities” with political ideology, particularly as concerns its “normative and recommendatory features ...”<sup>153</sup> For example, both seek to decontest political concepts, formulate distinctive political “ideas, beliefs, opinions, values, and attitudes,” and—in many cases, at least—to “provide directives, even plans, of action for public policy-making in an endeavour to uphold, justify, change or criticize the social and political arrangements of a state or other political community ...”<sup>154</sup> At the same time, there are also important differences between them. In the first place, whereas political philosophy has tended to be a restricted discourse that is “accessible only to specialists and thus bereft of wider public impact,”<sup>155</sup> political ideologies typically emerge out of, or

151 J.H. Hallowell, *Main Currents in Modern Political Thought* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1950), 9; Johari, *Contemporary Political Theory*, 20.

152 Cf. Freeden, “Ideology, Political Theory and Political Philosophy,” 3–6.

153 Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, 1.

154 Freeden, “Ideology, Political Theory and Political Philosophy,” 6.

155 *Ibid.*, 11–12.

coextensively with, popular political, social, and cultural movements. In the second place, whereas political philosophy has generally been a solitary enterprise carried out by “exceptionally talented, or expertly trained, individuals,” political ideologies tend to develop out of the combined efforts of countless “activists”—many of them anonymous. In the third place, whereas political philosophy self-consciously avoids emotionally-charged rhetoric in favor of dispassionate logical analysis and argumentation (the “rational methods” described previously), political ideologies are chiefly interested in persuading the public and, for this reason, have tended to follow the exact opposite strategy.

All of this would seem to imply that political philosophy (in the sense of both  $P_2$  as well as  $P_5$ ) does not differ from political ideology in terms of *what* it does so much as *how*, *why*, and *in what context* it does it. Indeed, this is at least partly what Freeden has in mind when he concludes that political philosophy—no less than political theory—is “an ideological phenomenon”<sup>156</sup> There are at least three important conclusions that may be drawn from this claim: first, that “political philosophies” (in the sense of  $P_2$ ) are particular instances of ideology rather than altogether distinct forms of political thought; second, that  $P_5$  is but one form of ideological thinking; and third, that formal political philosophy of the sort described above is but one form of  $P_5$ . The last point is especially key, as it decouples the use of rational methods as such from the particular ways they have been used in the history of Western political thought. This challenges the notion that political philosophizing does not or cannot exist outside of the restricted, individualistic milieu of formal political philosophy. It also broadens the scope of political philosophy beyond the narrowly descriptive and normative concerns of the latter and incorporates forms of political thinking that focus on strategic and tactical questions (e.g., questions of how to transform existing political realities to bring them in line with ideal conceptions of justice or the good life)<sup>157</sup> as well as the critical philosophy associated with thinkers in the “Continental” tradition.

In previous sections, we not only established that anarchism qualifies as a political ideology in Freeden’s sense but also that it embodies many of the features that are commonly associated with ideologies—for example, the fact that it was born out of popular movements rather than the speculations of solitary thinkers operating in elite intellectual contexts. We also noted that many anarchists have employed philosophical methods to articulate and justify anarchist ideas (thereby echoing the distinctive means and ends of formal political philosophy) as well as to explore strategic and tactical questions. This

156 Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, 226.

157 May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralism Anarchism*, 4–7.

fact by itself illustrates an obvious but important sense in which anarchism and philosophy are related. At the same time, earlier observations regarding the relationship of anarchist ideas to anarchist practices make it clear that anarchism is not a wholly rationalistic mode of political thought, as this would imply that its practices proceed *from* its ideas, at least some of which are themselves products of rationalistic deliberation or analysis. As we have seen, on the contrary, anarchists have long insisted that their ideas are *products* and not (or not just) *producers* of their practices and practical tendencies.

Note that the latter claim (*viz.*, that anarchist practices proceed from anarchist ideas) does not necessarily negate the former claim (*viz.*, that at least some anarchist ideas are products of rationalistic deliberation or analysis). It is possible, for example, that at least some anarchist ideas were generated through *ex post facto* attempts by anarchist intellectuals to explain or justify preexistent anarchist practices and practical tendencies. Although such attempts proceed *from* anarchist practices and not the other way around, they are nonetheless rationalistic in nature, if only in a minimal sense. This suggests that the intellectual content of anarchist ideology contains *both* rationalistic *as well as* non-rationalist elements—in other words, that anarchist thought is a matter of the heart as well as the mind.

While anarchism does not appear to qualify as an *instance* of P<sub>1</sub>, P<sub>3</sub>, P<sub>4</sub>, or P<sub>6</sub>, it is nonetheless non-trivially related to instances of each. Furthermore, although P<sub>2</sub> and P<sub>5</sub> appear to qualify as particular instances of political ideology, and although some instances of anarchist thought are non-trivially related to P<sub>5</sub>, anarchism as such does not qualify as a particular instance of P<sub>2</sub>. This suggests that anarchism is not *a* political philosophy even though anarchist thinkers have occasionally drawn upon the methods of formal political philosophy. On the contrary, anarchism is an ideology or ideological tradition the intellectual content of which has been shaped in part by the distinctive practices and associated concerns of P<sub>5</sub>.

### Conclusion

Whether it is understood as a kind of “view” or “perspective” (as in P<sub>1</sub> and P<sub>2</sub>) or as an “activity” or “practice” (as in P<sub>3</sub>, P<sub>4</sub>, P<sub>5</sub>, and P<sub>6</sub>), philosophy is thoroughly intellectual in character, concerned first and foremost with *ideas* rather than *actions*. As Freeden notes, even its more explicitly political iterations tend to be “private discourses”<sup>158</sup> that are out of touch “with the real-world arena of

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158 M. Freeden, “Political Ideologies in Substance and Method: Appraising a Transformation,” in *Reassessing Political Ideologies: The Durability of Dissent*, ed. M. Freeden (London: Routledge, 2001), 8.

policy-making”<sup>159</sup> and “removed ... from the practice and language of politics.”<sup>160</sup> While there is no question that formal political philosophy sees itself as a “guide, a corrective, and a justification for enlightened and civilized forms of organized social life and political institutions ... the disciplinary constraints that apply to producing good philosophy have all too often distanced its practitioners from the actual stuff of politics and have contributed to a general sense of the estrangement of philosophy from political life.”<sup>161</sup> Interestingly, the fact that political ideologies tend to place a much heavier emphasis on engaged political activity is one reason among many why they have been considered inferior modes of political thinking<sup>162</sup>—the underlying assumption being that this emphasis is at odds with the intellectual values of “rationality, clarity of argument, logical coherence, and consistency.”<sup>163</sup>

All of this is moot, of course, if political philosophy is itself a species of ideology that “involves selective decontestations of political concepts like any other”<sup>164</sup> and “displays features common to other ideological forms ... such as an appeal to unexamined value assumptions, and the investment of emotional attachment to particular points of view.”<sup>165</sup> In this case, what distinguishes political philosophy from other ideologies is precisely its tendency toward political disengagement, where this, in turn, is either a basic commitment of its practitioners or else a contingent consequence of its methodology and subject matter. Such disengagement, moreover, would appear to make political philosophy a rather bloodless and ineffectual member of the ideological family even if, on some level, it has intellectual merits that other more practice-oriented ideologies lack.

Although anarchism is clearly an ideology in the weak sense of displaying a conceptual morphology, it is also an ideology in the strong sense insofar as it has consistently emphasized practice even in its more explicitly philosophical iterations. This comes as no surprise since, as we have seen, anarchism was born from and shaped by active political engagement and has always scorned abstract theory divorced from action. If anarchist thought appears “less sophisticated” than formal political philosophies, it is precisely for this reason.

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159 M. Freeden, *Liberal Languages: Ideological Imaginations and Twentieth-Century Progressive Thought* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 6.

160 Freeden, “Political Ideologies in Substance and Method,” 8.

161 Freeden, “Ideology, Political Theory and Political Philosophy,” 4.

162 *Ibid.*, 6.

163 M. Humphrey, “Getting ‘Real’ About Political Ideas,” in *Liberalism as Ideology: Essays in Honour of Michael Freeden*, eds. B. Jackson and M. Stears (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 251.

164 Freeden, “Ideology, Political Theory and Political Philosophy,” 10.

165 Humphrey, “Getting ‘Real’ About Political Ideas,” 251.

Understanding the world in various ways is important, but anarchism's foremost imperative has always been to *change* it. More than anything else, perhaps, this explains its general aversion to the abstract content and esoteric methodologies associated with  $P_5$ , to say nothing of the other forms of "philosophy" that we discussed.

At the same time, the fact that anarchism isn't a "philosophy" (or a species of philosophy) in its own right does not mean that it is altogether unrelated to philosophy. As we have seen, on the contrary, there are deep connections between anarchist thought and philosophy under various descriptions. The intellectual content of anarchism has been shaped in significant ways by its engagement with other philosophical currents, and several of its most exemplary thinkers were artful practitioners of  $P_5$  (and, in some cases, of  $P_3$  as well). There is no question that anarchists have *done* and continue to *do* philosophy even if this enterprise has played a comparatively minor role in the historical development of anarchist thought. Understanding these connections is necessary in order to fully comprehend anarchism as a historical phenomenon no less than as a body of thought and practice; this is one reason why anarchist studies would benefit from more explicitly philosophical or intellectual-historical research.

On the other hand, even if we agree that anarchist thought is not a "political philosophy" in the sense of  $P_2$  and is not chiefly a product of  $P_5$ , it remains an open question whether this is an altogether neutral fact. One can certainly argue—as many anarchists have—that rationalistic approaches like  $P_5$  are objectively superior to (or, at the very least, have certain decisive advantages over) non-rationalistic approaches, in which case the failure of anarchist thought to engage more explicitly with the former is a lamentable historical shortcoming that anarchist thinkers should proactively seek to overcome. It has been claimed, for example, that political ideas founded on irrational (or at least non-rational) "faith," "confidence," or "belief" rather than considered rational judgments are arbitrary and foundationless, which implies that there are no clear ways to promote, advance, or advocate for them within the marketplace of ideas (and ideals), and thus no non-arbitrary reasons to organize movements that pursue political goals in their name. If true, this would mean that ideologies that can rationally articulate and justify their ideas would appear to be better off than ideologies that are unwilling or unable to do so, in which case anarchism would benefit by more robustly embracing  $P_5$ .

In short, the question of how philosophy and anarchism are related, no less than the question of how they *ought* to be related, are relevant not only to the study of anarchism as such, but also, and more importantly, to the ongoing development of anarchist thought and practice in the present. What follows is

an initial attempt to make this important fact more explicit and, in so doing, to inspire deeper inquiry going forward.

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