3

FREEDOM

Nathan Jun

Whereas earlier forms of political thought emphasized "the idea of a natural order discernible by reason to which human beings ought to conform," modern political thought "begins, ends, and is animated throughout by the idea of freedom" (Franco 1999, 2) – a fact that is aptly demonstrated by the sheer number and variety of political ideologies that acknowledge it as a core concept. Notwithstanding this "near unanimity on … the centrality of freedom in understanding political life" (ibid.), political ideologies disagree sharply over the meaning of the concept as well as "its measurement, distribution, and institutional requirements" (Kukathas 2012, 685). At particular issue are the following questions:

First, what is the ontological status of freedom? In other words, what kind of thing is the concept of freedom a conception *of*?
Second, who or what is free? In other words, to whom or what does the concept of freedom apply?
And third, is freedom valuable as an end in itself or merely as a means to achieving other valuable ends?

Liberalism – the ideology most commonly associated with the concept – typically defines freedom as a state, condition, or capacity (of some kind or another) that is morally valuable (in some sense or other) and which applies solely or chiefly to individual persons rather than collective entities. Beyond these general points of agreement, liberals have ascribed a wide range of more or less plausible meanings to freedom, and "different streams within liberalism express preference for some … of those meanings" over others (Freeden 2015, 59). As Michael Freeden (2015) notes:

> Broadly speaking, the meaning of liberty [within liberal ideologies] will stretch between securing an area of harmless activity, or even passive existence, unimpeded by physical or state initiated intrusion … and enabling the exercise of human potential through actively removing any hindrances that could seriously dehumanize human beings.
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> *(59)*

This observation highlights the extent to which liberalism and other broad ideological traditions can and do express themselves as distinct orientations that differ over the meaning and scope of core concepts – in which case political disagreement is just as often *intra-ideological* as it is *inter-ideological.*

The tendency of conventional discussions of ideology to underemphasize or altogether overlook this fact is vividly illustrated in the case of anarchism. From its origins in the nineteenth century to the present, anarchism has been routinely identified with the rejection of the state – so much so, in fact, that the term "anarchist" is often treated as a synonym for "anti-statist."[1] This identification follows from a more general but no less ubiquitous habit of characterizing anarchists as "extreme libertarians" (Ritter 1980, 9) who value "unlimited and absolute freedom" (Zenker 1897, 9), make a "holy dogma of the abstract freedom or autonomy of the individual" (Belfort Bax 1891, 145), and demand "the right of every person to do as he or she pleases always and under all circumstances" (Morris 1996, 88) – all of which suggests that their most fundamental and distinctive political value is a hyperbolized form of negative liberty that is otherwise "virtually the same as that of many of the classical liberals" (Vincent 2009, 125).[2]

It is certainly true that anarchists hold freedom in especially high esteem and that this makes it "more plausible than any other value as their overriding aim" (Ritter 1980, 9). William Godwin (1798, 331), for example, identified freedom as "the most valuable of all human possessions." Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, a self-described "partisan … of all liberties" (Proudhon 2011, 702), referred to it as his "banner and rule" (Proudhon 1875, 375). And Mikhail Bakunin, who called himself a "fanatic lover of liberty" (Bakunin 1972, 261), defined it as "the absolute source and condition of all good that is truly worthy of that name" (Bakunin 1953, 155). That said, it is a grave mistake to portray anarchists as "single-minded devotees of freedom" who seek liberty "above all else" (Ritter 1980, 9, 39), and this for at least two reasons. First, doing so neglects their commitment to other values and, by extension, fails to provide a clear distinction between anarchism and other ideologies that value freedom, including liberalism. Second, and more importantly, it ignores the considerable extent to which anarchists have disagreed amongst themselves regarding "what freedom *is* … what relationships exist *between* freedom and other concepts … [and] how *central* freedom is in [anarchism's] arrangement of concepts and values" (Gordon 2008, 20).

Although there is no question that freedom is a core concept of anarchism – "one that is both central to, and constitutive of [it]" and, by extension, to "the

particular ideological community to which it gives inspiration and identity" (Ball 1999, 391–392) – this does not mean that freedom is the only or even the most important element "in [anarchists'] model of a good society" (Ritter 1980, 38), nor that anarchism understands freedom in the same way as other ideologies like liberalism. Because anarchism has long been and continues to be a global political movement whose ideas evolve from and are disseminated through a complex array of decentralized transnational networks (Altena and Bantman 2014, 12), the ideas in question are constantly being "reimagined in fresh national contexts … adapted and modified to meet the specific challenges facing activists and thinkers in these countries, and translated – both literally and figuratively – into prevailing cultural scripts" (Adams and Jun 2015, 259).[3] In practice, this has led to the proliferation of diverse conceptions of freedom within and across multiple contexts and, as a result, it is extremely difficult to adumbrate a single conception of freedom that all anarchists share in common.

One of the principal merits of Freeden's morphological approach is that it avoids reducing complex ideologies like anarchism to a "series of simplified generalizations" and "distances itself from [simpler] accounts of ideological distinctiveness and diversity by dismissing identification of … ideologies with one central concept" (Freeden 2013, 117, 125). Instead, Freeden treats ideologies as complex, dynamic, and variable conceptual assemblages that are distinguished by their *morphologies* – that is, the various ways they organize and arrange concepts so as to accord them specific meanings and degrees of significance. Although this approach recognizes that ideologies have core elements that are "indispensable to holding [them] together, and are consequently accorded preponderance in shaping [their] ideational content" (126), it avoids defining them 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" these morphologies contain. Because these are virtually unlimited, ideologies have "the potential for infinite variety and alteration" and so are capable of expressing themselves in a wide and diverse range of manifestations (128, 126). 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 (125).

In this chapter, I draw upon Freeden's morphological approach to examine the various ways freedom has been conceptualized within the anarchist tradition. My principal aims in doing so are two-fold: first, to determine how and to what extent these conceptions serve to differentiate anarchism from liberalism and other ideologies that claim freedom as a core concept; and second, to explore the role they play in the formulation of diverse anarchist tendencies. As I shall argue, prevailing anarchist conceptions of freedom uniformly obviate the "assumed tension between the freedom of the individual and the good of society" as well as "between negative and positive definitions of the concept" (Honeywell 2014, 118). Indeed, the rejection of such dichotomies is a unifying theme in anarchism more generally and a key aspect of its ideological distinctiveness.

The Concept of Freedom

As noted previously, intra- and inter-ideological disagreements over the meaning of freedom often concern its ontological status, scope, and value. This suggests that standard conceptualizations of freedom contain at least three kinds of micro-components – one that specifies what freedom is a concept *of*, a second that specifies to whom or what freedom applies, and a third that specifies how and why freedom is valuable. As Chandran Kukathas (2012, 534) notes, contemporary understandings of the ontological status and scope of freedom have been "most profoundly shaped by the analysis of Isaiah Berlin … [who] … argues that, in the history of ideas, liberty has had two quite different meanings or senses." In Berlin's (1969, 121) classic formulation, negative liberty (or "freedom from") is the absence of external interference, coercion, or constraint – the freedom to "be left to do or be what [one] is able to do or be, without interference by other persons." A person is free in this sense "to the degree that no man or body of men interferes with his activity," which means that negative liberty is "simply the area within which a man can act unobstructed by others" (122). Positive liberty ("freedom to"), in contrast, is the freedom "to be [one's] own master …" such that one's "life and decisions depend on [oneself], not on external forces of whatever kind …" (131). To be free in this sense is to be autonomous or self-determining, i.e., "a thinking, willing, active being, bearing responsibility for one's own ideas and able to explain them by reference to one's own ideas and purposes" (133).

Although negative and positive freedom both apply to individuals, the former designates a state or condition that individuals occupy, whereas the latter designates a capacity that they possess. This raises the question of whether negative and positive freedom are "two different interpretations of a single concept" (Berlin 1969, 166) or whether they are altogether separate concepts, as Berlin himself believed. The latter, if true, has important ramifications for the ontological status of freedom, as it would imply that negative and positive freedom do not have any possible referents in common and, by extension, that they pertain to entirely different sorts of things. (Some liberals who take this view recognize *both* as core concepts – albeit with varying degrees of relative significance – while others will only recognize one or the other as a core concept.) The former, in contrast, would suggest that negative and positive freedom are simply two different ways of (micro-)decontesting the same concept – i.e., of defining and arranging that concept's micro-components, determining its position in relation to other concepts within a given liberal morphology, or both.

At first glance, the fact that negative freedom refers to a state or condition and positive freedom refers to a capacity would appear to support the notion that they are altogether separate concepts referring to altogether different kinds of things. Whether it truly does so, however, depends on how we define the term "capacity," and here there are at least two possibilities. The first, which I call an *actionable*

capacity, refers to an actual power or ability to act in a particular way under existing conditions. The second, which I call a *potentiality*, refers to a hypothetical capacity to act in a particular way that is only realizable under certain conditions. For example, to say that Jones has the (actionable) *capacity* to speak Japanese means that she has the actual power or ability to speak Japanese right now, whereas to say that Jones has the *potential* to speak Japanese means that she has the power to speak Japanese only under certain conditions (say, the condition of knowing how to speak Japanese, of having functioning cognitive and linguistic faculties, of having a functioning larynx, and so on). In other words, if the conditions necessary for Jones to speak Japanese do not obtain, then Jones does not have the potential to speak Japanese unless and until they are.

According to this view, *X* has the potential to ϕ if and only if there is a range of possible conditions under which *X* has an actionable capacity to ϕ. If such conditions do not exist, then *X* does not have the potential to ϕ. For example, if Jones has suffered irreparable damage to the parts of her brain that are responsible for language usage or acquisition, then there are no possible conditions under which she will have an actionable capacity to speak Japanese – in which case we would say Jones lacks the potential to do so. On the other hand, if Jones has the power or ability to speak Japanese under actually existing conditions, it follows trivially that these are possible conditions under which Jones has an actionable capacity to speak Japanese – in which case the fact that Jones has an actionable capacity to speak Japanese implies that she has the potential to do so prior to those conditions obtaining.

In many cases, *X* is prevented from ϕ-ing by external impediments that are a direct or indirect consequence of deliberate human intervention (Kukathas 2012, 535). For example, if Smith binds Jones to a chair and gags her, Jones will obviously lack an actionable capacity to speak Japanese because Smith is forcibly inhibiting her ability to do so. This doesn't mean that there are no possible conditions under which Jones has the actionable capacity to speak Japanese – only that Smith is preventing those conditions from obtaining right now. As long as such conditions remain possible, Jones retains the potential to speak Japanese even if she lacks the actionable capacity to do so.

The same is true in cases where lack of actionable capacity is the result of external factors that have nothing to do with human intervention (as when Jones suffers severe head trauma in the midst of an extreme weather event) or, indeed, of factors that are entirely internal to the agent him/herself (as when Jones refrains from speaking Japanese because she has an irrational fear of doing so). *X*'s lack of actionable capacity to ϕ does not imply that *X* lacks the potential to ϕ unless there are no possible conditions under which *X* has the ability to ϕ. If it is possible for Jones to recover from her head injury or overcome her irrational phobia, then Jones retains the potential to speak Japanese because there are possible conditions under which she has an actionable capacity to do so. If no such conditions exist, then Jones lacks both the potential as well as the actionable capacity to speak Japanese.

In the strict sense, *X* is negatively unfree if and only if *X* lacks an actionable capacity to ϕ on account of human interference. If positive freedom means an actual ability or power to act autonomously under existing conditions, then one cannot be positively free without also being (at least mostly) free from anything that hinders or obstructs his or her ability to act autonomously – in which case negative freedom is a necessary but not sufficient condition for positive freedom in the sense of having an actionable capacity to act autonomously. This suggests, in turn, that negative freedom is a component of the concept of positive freedom rather than an altogether separate concept. If, on the other hand, positive freedom merely refers to the *potential* to act autonomously, then negative freedom is neither a necessary *nor* a sufficient condition for positive freedom, since it is possible for one to be positively free even if s/he lacks negative freedom, and vice versa. In this case it would make more sense to regard negative freedom and positive freedom as altogether separate concepts.

Questions concerning the scope and ontological status of "freedom" have important axiological ramifications as well. If negative and positive freedom are regarded as components of the same concept, how much and what kind of proportional weight are these components assigned within the internal structure of that concept? Does each have equal intrinsic value, or, as some liberals contend, is negative freedom only valuable insofar as it serves as a means to achieving or realizing positive freedom? And if this is so, *how* valuable is negative freedom in comparison to other conceptual micro-components that are regarded as instrumentally valuable? On the other hand, if negative and positive freedom are regarded as separate concepts, where does each stand in relation to the ideological core of liberalism? If only one of them is a core concept, which one qualifies as such, and why? If both are core concepts, are they equally valuable, or does one have greater proportional weight than the other?

Given the sheer number and variety of possible definitions of freedom, it comes as no surprise that liberalism lacks uniform answers to these questions. The same is true, as it turns out, of every ideology that recognizes freedom as a core concept – a fact which, unfortunately, has seldom been acknowledged in the case of anarchism. As we shall see, this is because the predominant conception of freedom in the anarchist tradition is largely incompatible with Berlin's paradigm.

Freedom as an Anarchist Concept

As was noted in the introduction, there is a longstanding tendency to associate anarchism with an essentially liberal conception of negative freedom predicated on the total rejection of "coercion or compulsion" (Vincent 2009, 125). According to Paul Thomas (1980), for example:

> Many of [anarchism's] doctrinal features point … back … through the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century into the liberal tradition …

> Anarchist convictions and doctrines are with rare exceptions based upon a negative view of liberty – a view according to which freedom is to be understood in the first instance as freedom *from* some obstacle or impediment to its exercise, in this case the state and its auxiliaries. All anarchist convictions can be summed up under the rubric not of the hindering of hindrances to but of the *removal of obstacles* from some vision of the good life. It is this imperative that links anarchism to the liberal tradition ….
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> *(8, emphasis in original)*

Likewise, R.B. Fowler (1972):

> Does our exploration of nineteenth-century anarchist thinking about individualism and coercion direct us to a single, defining pattern? The answer must be that what emerges is a mood permeated by the desire to make every person as free to do as he truly wished, within the constraints of social life and the requirements of nature. This mood suggests that anarchism might be best understood in relation to nineteenth-century laissez-faire liberalism. The enthusiasm of both outlooks for maximum negative liberty and individual development is unmistakable. Perhaps laissez-faire liberal theorists differed only in advocating the preservation of a little "government" because they were a shade less confident of humanity.
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> *(745)*

Accounts of this sort, it must be admitted, are not altogether inaccurate. There is no question that "anarchist sympathy for negative freedom [is] enormous" and that "their writings resonate with their demand for it" (Fowler 1972, 746), as is made clear by the following representative quotations[4]:

> The character of the revolution must at first be negative, destructive. Instead of modifying certain institutions of the past, or adapting them to a new order, it will do away with them altogether. Therefore, the government will be uprooted, along with the Church, the army, the courts, the schools, the banks, and all their subservient institutions …
>
> *(James Guillaume, quoted in Bakunin 1972, 357).*

> Anarchy is anti-government, anti-rulers, anti-dictators, anti-bosses. … Anarchy is the negation of force; the elimination of all authority in social affairs; it is the denial of the right of domination of one man over another …
>
> *(Albert Parsons, quoted in Parsons 1886, 12).*

> Anarchism, contrary to authority, is the name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government …
>
> *(Kropotkin 1968, 284)*

> Anarchism … teaches that the present unjust organization of the production and distribution of wealth must finally be completely destroyed …
>
> *(de Cleyre 2005, 301).*

The same is true of the notion that there is a significant historical and ideological affinity between anarchism and classical liberalism, at least in this respect. Anarchists themselves have frequently argued as much, as when Rudolf Rocker (2004, 11) asserts that anarchism "has in common with Liberalism the idea that the happiness and prosperity of the individual must be the standard of all social matters … [as well as] … the idea of limiting the functions of government to a minimum …."

Nevertheless, there are several problems with the position described above. In the first place, anarchism "has never been, nor ever aspired to be, a fixed, comprehensive, self-contained, and internally consistent system of ideas, set of doctrines, or body of theory" (Jun 2012, 49) and so is not "necessarily linked to any [one] philosophical system" (Malatesta 1965, 19). As Freeden (1996, 311) notes, on the contrary, anarchism "straddles more than one ideological family" and has "carved out a niche related to and intersecting with [all of] them." This accounts for the multifarious array of tendencies, orientations, and schools of thought through which anarchism has been expressed. In the second place, the fact that all forms of anarchism emphasize negative freedom scarcely entails that they understand this concept in the same way as classical liberalism, nor that their conception of freedom is principally negative in character.

Of particular relevance to the first point is the well-known distinction between "individualist anarchism" and "social anarchism." Like classical liberals, virtually all of the major theorists associated with the former are committed to three broad claims: first, that "the solitary individual – the agent who is and always has been isolated from others – is nevertheless capable, in principle, of displaying all distinctive human capacities"; second, that "any property that can serve as an ultimate political value … [is] capable of being instantiated by the socially isolated person, by the solitary individual"; and third, "that the ultimate criteria of political judgment … are provided by non-social as distinct from social values" (Pettit 2005, 23, 26, 28). For individualist anarchists, the notion that society is or could be anything more than a mere collection of individuals is a "scientific abstraction" (Yarros 1994, 35). But if there is no society apart from individuals, this means there is no such thing as "social well-being" apart from aggregate individual well-being, the essential condition of which is "individual sovereignty" (Yarros 1994, 34), i.e., the absolute and inviolable right to do as one pleases to the extent compatible with the freedom of others (Armand 1907). Such a right belongs to human beings by nature; it is not "bestowed" upon them by society. As Benjamin Tucker writes, on the contrary, "the individual is the gainer by society exactly in proportion as society is free, and … the condition of a permanent and harmonious society is the greatest amount of individual liberty compatible with equality of liberty …" (quoted in Martin 1970, 25).

The fact that individuals have "inalienable moral jurisdiction" (McElroy 2004, 4) over their own property – including their bodies – implies a negative right to not be subjected to "imposition, constraint, violence, [and] governmental oppression, whether these are a product of all, a group, or of one person" (Armand 1907). Because justice is coextensive with honoring this right, and because the latter is only possible under the "condition of absolute liberty," it follows that any political, social, or economic institution that limits negative freedom is unjust by definition (Martin 1970, 55). This applies not only to the State but also to the various laws, customs, and traditions that govern individual behavior. For many individualist anarchists, it also applies to capitalism and other forms of economic exchange that deny workers the fruits of their labor.

Social anarchism, in contrast, has consistently emphasized "community, mutuality, free cooperation, and … social arrangements of a reciprocal character" (Egoumenides 2014, 2–3) as indispensable components of freedom and "demand [ed] the abolition of all economic monopolies and the common ownership of the soil and all other means of production, the use of which must be available for all without distinction …" (Rocker 2004, 11). To this extent it is better understood as a "confluence" of liberalism and socialism than as an extreme form of liberal individualism (ibid.). Although I do not share the view that social anarchism is "the only anarchism" (Schmidt and van der Walt 2009, 19), the preponderance of historical evidence makes clear that it has long been and continues to be the predominant anarchist tendency and, to this extent, is arguably the most representative of the anarchist tradition as a whole. This suggests, in turn, that we are within our rights to treat its conception of freedom as normative.

The social anarchist conception of freedom rests on three fundamental claims. First, "true liberty" for social anarchists is not a "*negative* thing" that involves "being free *from* something" but rather "the freedom *to* something … the liberty to be, to do; in short the liberty of actual and active opportunity" (Goldman 1998, 98). Positive freedom in this sense corresponds to an individual's capacity to "grow to [his or her] full stature … [to] learn to think and move, to give the very best of [himself or herself] … [to] realize the true force of the social bonds that tie men [sic] together, and which are the true foundations of a normal social life" (Goldman 1910, 67). In this way, it serves as the primary vehicle through which "all the latent powers of individual …" are expressed and the principal means of satisfying her "desire to create and act freely" (Goldman 1910, 61).

Second, because the actualization of "the material, intellectual, and moral powers that are latent in each person" (Bakunin 1972, 261) and "the all-around development and full enjoyment of all physical, intellectual, and moral faculties" (Bakunin 1992, 46) is not possible "outside of human society or without its cooperation …" (46), individual freedom is a "collective product" (46), born of "collective and social labor" (Bakunin 1972, 236). For social anarchists, the fact that human beings "share the same fundamental human qualities … share the same basic fate … [and] … have the same inalienable claim on freedom and

happiness" (Fromm 2001, 228) implies that human nature itself – which is "immanent and inherent, forming the very basis of our material, intellectual and moral being" (Bakunin 1972, 262) – is inexorably social. This suggests, in turn, that "the isolated individual cannot possibly become conscious of his [sic] freedom" and, by extension, that "the freedom of other men [sic], far from negating or limiting [individual] freedom, is, on the contrary, its necessary premise and confirmation" (237). A similar point is made by Errico Malatesta, who argues that solidarity "is the only environment in which Man [sic] can express his personality and achieve his optimum development and enjoy the greatest possible wellbeing" (Malatesta 1974, 29), as well as by Emma Goldman, who contends that individual freedom is "strengthened by cooperation with other individualities" and that "only mutual aid and voluntary cooperation can create the basis for a free individual … life" (Goldman 1998, 118).

Third, the fact that "the freedom of each" finds its "necessary *raison d'etre* in … the freedom of others" (Malatesta 1974, 29) implies that "equality is an absolutely necessary condition for freedom" (Bakunin 1992, 48). Equality in this context refers not to the "forced equality of the convict camp" (Berkman 2003, 164) but to the equal opportunity of "each human being to bring to full development the powers, capacities, and talents with which nature has endowed him [sic]" (Guérin 1998, 57). As Alexander Berkman (2003) writes:

> True anarchist equality implies freedom, not quantity. It does not mean that every one must eat, drink, or wear the same things, do the same work, or live in the same manner. Far from it: the very reverse in fact … Individual needs and tastes differ, as appetites differ. It is equal opportunity to satisfy them that constitutes true equality. Far from leveling, such equality opens the door for the greatest possible variety of activity and development. For human character is diverse … Free opportunity of expressing and acting out your individuality means development of natural dissimilarities and variations.
>
> *(164)*

For social anarchists, "equality [is not] secondary to liberty, as usually happens under the liberal reading … [and] the demand for it goes beyond the formal equality of rights" (Egoumenides 2014, 90). The converse is also true: because equality of the sort described above is not possible in the absence of freedom, it follows that freedom itself is a necessary condition for equality and, by extension, that the two are "mutually dependent values" (Ritter 1980, 3).

In the last section, we noted that the meaning of freedom is a partial function of the meanings and degrees of relative significance assigned to at least three micro-components – one that specifies what freedom is a concept *of*, a second that specifies to whom or what freedom applies, and a third that specifies how and why freedom is valuable. In the social anarchist conception, the first of these micro-components identifies freedom as a *state* or *condition* marked by the

achievement of maximal human development or flourishing, which means that freedom is a *teleological* as well as *eudaimonistic* concept; the third identifies maximal human development or flourishing as an end in itself, which means that freedom is a concept of *intrinsic value*; and the second identifies freedom as fundamentally social in character, which means that freedom is a *non-monistic* or *non-individualist* concept.

While the first micro-component is clearly the most significant with regard to the overall meaning of freedom, its meaning depends on its relationship to the other two. If freedom is a *non-individualist* concept, for example, this implies that individuals are free only to the extent that the societies to which they belong are free, and, by extension, that societies are free only to the extent that they realize, or are capable of realizing, the end of maximal human development or flourishing. Similarly, the notion that freedom is a concept of *intrinsic value* implies that freedom itself is distinct from the various background conditions necessary for its realization, which conditions themselves are merely instrumentally valuable. Although some of these conditions are roughly analogous to "negative" and "positive" freedom in Berlin's sense of these terms, freedom itself cannot be reduced to either of them and, as such, is neither wholly negative nor wholly positive.

Unlike individualist anarchists and classical liberals, social anarchists do not regard the removal of external coercion or constraint as an intrinsically valuable or desirable end. In the absence of egalitarian social conditions, negative freedom of this sort is little more than untrammeled license to do as one pleases, even if this means exploiting, oppressing or commanding others (Malatesta 1965, 53) or seeking "well-being, prosperity, and good fortune to the disadvantage of everyone else, despite them and on their backs" (Bakunin 1992, 57). As such, it does nothing on its own to promote the maximal development of individuals and, in many cases, actually serves to hinder it. This suggests that negative freedom is only valuable to the extent that it serves as a necessary condition for positive freedom – i.e., autonomy or self-determination.

For social anarchists, the fact that human beings have "a consciousness of self, of being different from others" instills a "craving for liberty and self-expression …" (Goldman 1998, 439) that is only satisfied when they are "left to act for themselves, to feel responsibility for their own actions in the good or bad that comes from them" (Malatesta 1981, 26). In this sense, the positive capacity for autonomy – no less than the desire to act autonomously – is an essential characteristic of humanness, the actualization of which is only possible in the absence of externally imposed restrictions that "inhibit or prevent people from participating in determining their actions or the conditions of their actions" (Young 1990, 15). Such restrictions destroy human beings' instinctive "spirit of revolt" and replace it with a spirit of servility and submission, thereby transforming them into "will-less automatons without independence or individuality" (Berkman 2003, 65). To this extent, their eradication is absolutely crucial for the development of autonomous "self-thinking individuals" (Berkman 2003,

65) who are "educated to freedom and the management of their own interests" (Malatesta 1981, 26).

Although negative freedom is a necessary condition for positive freedom in this sense, it is not sufficient. Because the capacity for actionable autonomy requires access to "education, scientific instruction … material prosperity" (Bakunin, quoted in Clark 2013, 178) and other means of developing "private judgment and independence" (Honeywell 2014, 119), it follows trivially that those who lack such access are not positively free. In some cases, this is the result of external interference, coercion, or restraint – as, for example, when members of marginalized groups are prevented by law from attending school or entering certain occupations – but it is just as often a consequence of unequal social or economic conditions. For example, although the United States guarantees formal equality of opportunity to all its citizens regardless of race, gender, socio-economic status, this doesn't mean that poor people of color have the same opportunities as wealthy whites in practice. Even in the absence of laws that deliberately discriminate against them, the mere fact that the former are socially and/or economically unequal severely limits the range of opportunities available to them and, by extension, their capacity for actionable autonomy.

While all of this might seem to imply that individual autonomy is itself an intrinsically valuable end, we have already seen that this is not the case for social anarchists. On the contrary, just as negative freedom is a necessary but insufficient condition for individual autonomy, individual autonomy is a necessary but insufficient condition for individual development. Because individual autonomy is nothing more than a capacity (whether actionable or merely potential) for self-determined action, and because this capacity is solely a function of the conditions under which actions are performed rather than the particular end or set of ends toward which they are directed, the mere fact that actions are autonomous scarcely guarantees that they are maximally conducive to the growth or development of the individuals performing them, nor even increases the likelihood of their doing so. For example: although political, social, and economic elites enjoy a virtually unlimited capacity for self-determined activity, this is largely because they monopolize the means of developing such a capacity in the first place. Because "self-determination" of this sort comes at the expense of others' autonomy, however, it is profoundly at odds with "the full development and the full enjoyment by each person of all human faculties and capacities," as this "can only be provided to each through collective labor … of the whole society" (Bakunin, quoted in Clark 2013, 178).

The fact that the social anarchist conception of freedom includes a negative dimension ("concern with coercive impositions on the individual") *as well as a* positive dimension ("concern with the development of the 'critical, original, imaginative, independent, non-conforming' character") (Honeywell 2014, 119) – both of which depend on robust conditions of solidarity and equality – serves to distinguish it from the "individualistic, egoistic liberty extolled by … the schools

of bourgeois liberalism" (Bakunin 1972, 261) no less than from the individualist anarchist conceptions described above. For this reason, it is exceedingly difficult "to construct a collective family profile" that would justify lumping social anarchism and individualist anarchism together "under one roof" (Freeden 1996, 311).

The matter is further complicated by the fact that social anarchism itself encompasses an array of divergent tendencies. Although all such tendencies agree that freedom is coextensive with maximal human development, they nonetheless have different understandings of what the latter entails. This, in turn, has led to disagreements over the precise form of political, social, and economic organization that freedom requires as well as the revolutionary strategies necessary to bring about a genuinely free society. That said, these disagreements have invariably had less to do with the definition of freedom itself than the meanings and degrees of relative significance assigned to various conceptual micro-components. Though they have played an important role in fostering political diversity and intellectual fluidity, they are nonetheless in keeping with the consistent patterns of conceptual decontestation that have defined social anarchism from its origins to the present day.

Conclusion

When anarchism is defined solely in terms of what it opposes, the underlying motivations for that opposition tend to be obscured. For social anarchists, any concept of freedom that lacks an explicitly teleological dimension is an abstraction devoid of concrete moral significance. The problem with institutions like the State accordingly, is not that they are antithetical to freedom so much as to the substantive moral end toward which freedom is directed – that is, human growth, development, and improvement. Far from demonstrating that anarchism is "amorphous and full of paradoxes and contradictions" (Miller 1985, 2), the inability of standard accounts to accommodate this understanding of freedom is a consequence of their own shortcomings, not least their tendency to define freedom as a generic condition of agency decoupled from particular ends.

Although institutions like the State actively obstruct – if not altogether sabotage – our individual and collective efforts to maximize happiness and well-being, this doesn't mean that abolishing such institutions will automatically usher in a heaven on earth. On the contrary, just as the absence of disease is insufficient by itself to guarantee health, freedom requires much more than the absence of oppressive institutions; it requires the *presence* of new forms of political, social, and economic organization, new ways of thinking, feeling, acting, living, being, and so forth. In striving to achieve this presence, anarchism's foremost aspiration is not (or not just) the destruction of the actual but the creation of the possible. To this extent, it is the very opposite of a purely negative politics.

Notes

1 This is largely owing to the influence of Paul Eltzbacher (1960).
2 This is more or less how contemporary politics textbooks tend to portray anarchism as well. See, for example, Kenneth Janda, Jeffrey Berry, and Jerry Goldman (2013, 22), and Andrew Heywood (2012, 143).
3 For more on the history of anarchism as a transnational movement, see Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt (2010); Andrew Hoyt (2013); Travis Tomchuk (2015); Davide Turcato (2007); and Kenyon Zimmer (2015).
4 For additional examples, see Goldman (1910, 68); Berkman (2003, 145); Hippolyte Havel (1932, 5); David Weick (1979, 139); and Stuart Christie (2004, 162).

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