3

Anarchy, Culture and Association

INTRODUCTION

In *Strange Multiplicity*, James Tully, one of the preeminent constitutional political theorists of our time, describes Bill Reid's sculpture 'The Spirit of Haida Gwaii' as an 'immensely optimistic vision of cultural diversity'.[1] The sculpture, installed outside the Canadian Embassy in Washington, DC, in 1991, is a canoe crammed with thirteen characters. They are all paddling in the same direction, but, according to the artist, 'squabbling and vying for position'.[2] The key figure, who has 'some vision of what's to come' is 'identifiably Haida': its prominent location and size signify the re-centring of the Haida People from the political and geographical margins. The other figures are 'symbols of another time when the Haidas, all ten thousand of them, knew they were the greatest of all nations'. They include the bear and the wolf, 'spirit creatures from aboriginal myth-time', the beaver, 'the Canadian […] perfectly designed for cutting down trees and damming rivers' and the 'imperial, somewhat pompous' eagle. While the wolf 'vigorously' chews on the eagle's wings, the bear suffers the brunt of the eagle's attack. By placing these figures alongside symbols of the continent's dominant ideologies, Reid invites viewers to consider 'the variety of cosmologies' that once flourished and the alternatives to those that prevail.[3]

For Tully, Reid's sculpture is a beautiful, imaginative recasting of the constitution which recognises and accommodates the people as equals, 'in terms of their own cultural identity', and grounds political association in their sovereignty 'rather than the sovereignty of the existing constitution'.[4] Tully finds

[1] For information on Bill Reid's life and works, see www.billreidgallery.ca/pages/about-bill-reid.
[2] Reed quoted in Martineau 2001, 252.
[3] Martineau 2001, 252–253.
[4] Tully 1995, 26–27.

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in Reid's work an allegory for constitutionalism as an overlapping, interacting and negotiated play between cultural inheritance and global citizenship, what he calls 'constitutional association'. The sense of belonging, he writes, 'comes from being associated with the other cultures'.[5]

The regenerative promise of the sculpture is replicated in what Tully calls the 'third movement' of constitutionalism, namely the transformation wrought by the recognition of the rights of previously marginalised peoples. This transformation, he argues, remodels the anti-imperialist principle of self-government that underpins modern constitutionalism. Historicising the process, he describes the first movement as a counter to feudalism and absolutism and the second as an anticolonial response to European imperialism.[6]

Tully brings the ancient constitution to bear critically on the modern. Modern constitutionalism is the enactment of freedom which releases a people 'from custom' and imposes 'a new form of association by an act of will, reason and agreement'. The ancient constitution recognises that 'the people are already constituted by their assemblage of fundamental laws, institutions and customs'.[7] As Simpson notes, the critique leads Tully to rethink constitutions as 'fields of interaction'. The 'rules and customs that emerge' are 'established', 'contended with' and 'changed', through 'the very practices of everyday interactive rule-following'.[8] Contra Plato, Tully argues that there is no transcendental standard of justice 'beyond the discussion in the canoe'. What matters is the alignment of constitutional practice with the 'spirit' of cultural dissent.[9]

In this chapter, we take advantage of Tully's imaginative recasting of constitutionalism to consider how anarchy operates as a constitutional principle in this vein and how it complicates this image, pushing the boundaries of sensible politics.

To begin, we rethink the predicament. Our seafaring analogy comes from Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Recalling Plato's ship of fools, but placing the navigator in a separate vessel, Tolstoy describes the self-assurance and powerlessness of leaders and the resigned or trusting obedience of the led:

> In moments of untroubled repose, every administrator feels that the entire population working under him is kept going only by his efforts […] It is easy to understand that while ever the ocean of history remains calm, a pilot-administrator in a little bobbing boat holding on to the ship of the people with a tiny boathook, and moving along with it, might easily think *he* is driving the ship that he is clinging to. But the moment a storm comes up, with the sea heaving and the ship tossing about, this kind of delusion immediately becomes impossible. The great ship on its vast course is a free agent, the boathook

[5] Tully 1995, 205.
[6] Tully 1995, 16.
[7] Tully 1995, 60.
[8] Simpson 2008, 521.
[9] Tully 1995, 27.

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can no longer reach the moving vessel, and the pilot who had been in charge, providing all the power, finds himself transformed into a creature that is pathetically useless.[10]

The idea that the course of history can be steered by great men is shared by the captain and those in the mothership. The reality, Tolstoy tells us, is that the leader's powers are contingent, and that social coordination depends on the actions and behaviours of millions of individuals. There is no lead-boat. Yet unless we rid ourselves of the illusion, he argues, we will remain trapped in the fiction of leadership, and however we change the positions we occupy on deck, we will remain trapped.

To explore this anarchy, the chapter breaks into four parts. We begin with the concept and examine the philosophy of science that anarchists championed to describe it (Anarchy and the Philosophy of Science). Our account contests the view, popular in poststructuralist-inflected political theory, that historical anarchism eroded the philosophical force of *anarché* by reducing it to a scientistic dogma, anarch*ism*. Against this, we identify three principles in the anarchist analyses of order: divisibility, relatedness and irreducibility. Each works in tandem with the rest, thus creating an order of permanent flux.

The second part (Anarchy and Order) outlines a theory of association to complement the idea of the social constitution outlined in Chapter 2. We explain multiplicity in association as a fact of social life and show how anarchists diluted the binary choice of state versus individuals as the subjects of law by reasserting the moral dignity of all collectives and groups in their near-infinite variety. In association, we argue, individuals sustain human relationships that are mutually reinforcing – likewise for groups. The point of our discussion of individuality is that individuals are groups too, and that there are varieties of association, not levels.

In the third part, (Constituent Power Revisited) we use anarchy and multiplicity to rethink constituent power. Looking at late nineteenth-century concepts of struggle, we argue that anarchists used it permanently to destabilise ideas of democratic consent and authorisation, thereby opening the near-infinite possibilities of political life.

In the final part, (Constitutionalisation: Culture and Anarchy) we explore this broad social theory as it is articulated in probably the most comprehensive anarchist account of constitutionalisation. Focusing on the work of Rudolf Rocker, a labour organiser and one-time editor of the London Yiddish periodical *Der Arbeter Fraint*, we outline a conception of culture as emergent, not protean or natural, radically more complex than nationhood or ethnicity, and shaped by multiple antecedent power imbalances and structures.[11] Distinguishing cultures of nationalism during the rise of the Third Reich from cultures of anarchy, Rocker investigated what led to the homogenisation of European society and

[10] Tolstoy 1998, 984.
[11] On Rocker, see Vallance 1973; Fishman 2004; Graur 1997.

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statist atrophy. His view was that political groups are dramatically more plural and numerous than the macro-cultures that underpin states, nations and peoples, that the exercise of collective power at the micro-social level is the appropriate focus for constitutional politics and the prerequisite for the empowerment of historically marginalised peoples. Pushing Tully further, Rocker argues for the positive *anarchisation* of the constitution, not just its decolonisation.[12]

The chapter establishes the ontological reality and normative force of anarchy as a constitutional principle. Anarchist constitutional politics uses anarchy to describe the empirical norm of all constitutional projects, 'internally', vis-à-vis their constituent parts, 'externally', in relation to every other constitution, and trans-locally, as a function of the criss-crossing jurisdictional, functional and normative reach of the myriad constitutions that make up contemporary global society.

ANARCHY AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

In his entry for anarchism in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Kropotkin traced the etymological root of anarchy to the Greek 'αν', meaning without and 'αρχία', meaning authority.[13] This construction has become standard in anarchist thought. In adopting it, nineteenth-century anarchists asserted that the roots of anarchy, that is, the absence of *archos*, stretched as far back as these hierarchical traditions and reaffirmed their artificiality: *archos* was at best contingent.

In contemporary political theory, this concept seems Janus-faced. On the one hand, anarchy promises to disrupt conventional concepts of political foundations and unsettle the social or epistemic hierarchies presumed to be natural and therefore legitimate.[14] On the other hand, anarchism, the ideology of self-government, recommends as natural a future ideal. Anarchism's enduring appeal is usually linked to the first, the disruptive promise of anarchy. Missing from this analysis is an extensive discussion of the anarchist literature on the social ontology of a constitutional alternative.

Viewed through the lens of contemporary theory, historical anarchism looks like a political ideology which lacks an adequate philosophical account of anarchy. The dominant post-anarchist thesis is that historical anarchists failed to push their antiauthoritarian politics into their philosophy. Sometimes leaning on post-Marxist criticisms of Marxist economism and classism, post-anarchists

[12] Following Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, we use 'decolonise' here to refer to the rejection of 'essentialist and historicist interpretations of the indigenous question' which 'supplant the indigenous populations as historical subjects and turn their struggles and demands into elements of a cultural reengineering and a state apparatus in order to subjugate them and neutralize their will' (Cusicanqui 2012, 100–101).

[13] Kropotkin 1910a, 914. See also Gordon 2016.

[14] For a discussion, see Rancière 2006; McCullough 2025.

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diagnose a host of problems in 'classical' anarchism. Essentialism, positivism, scientism and what Sayre and Löwy call the Romantic 'longing for a harmonious relationship between man and nature',[15] are persistent themes.[16] Catherine Malabou has recently presented a softer version of the thesis. Recognising Proudhon as the first to embrace positively the concept of anarchy – as well as the first to articulate a coherent ideology of anarch*ism* – Malabou argues that in Proudhon's hands, and those of his followers, anarchism nevertheless remained philosophically immature because anarchists failed fully to articulate the 'ontological dimension' of anarchism.[17]

A second, related claim is that anarchism is inherently a-theoretical.[18] Kathy Ferguson argues that anarchism is not a political theory, and does not contain one, precisely because anarchists are primarily actors, traditionally wary of philosophy, whose ideas emerge 'from below', on the streets, not from abstract and detached contemplation.[19] Reversing the usual assessment, Ferguson finds with the Marxists that 'the practices have much to offer' but 'the theory needs some work'.[20] Poststructuralism, she argues, fills the void.

In the reading of the history of ideas we outline in the rest of this section, we agree with post-anarchists that conceptions of humanism, of naturalism, science and ontology, are indeed central to anarchism, but that these loose commitments drove 'classical' anarchist thought to positions that many so-called post-anarchists share. Nineteenth-century anarchists believed that positive science was able to offer insights into the nature of the indeterminate, fluid, anarchic nature of reality. Yet, contrary to the critics, they promoted a philosophy resistant to the drift towards infallibility and universality or, to borrow Bakunin's formulation, the detachment of generalised abstract 'science' from the study of everyday life or 'art'.[21] In their hands, science was an investigative tool for the articulation of a robust constitutional politics, a way of closing the door on claims to infallibility. Science exposed the dynamics (indeed necessity) of anarchic self-government.

[15] Sayre and Löwy 1984.

[16] The critique was stimulated by Todd May's groundbreaking study of poststructuralism (May 1994). May rejected the label 'post-anarchist'. For the critical literature, see Purkis and Bowen 1997; Call 2002. For a guide to the debates, see Rousselle and Evren 2011. For a critical discussion of the claims, see Colson 2001.

[17] According to Malabou: 'Anarchism is evidently also a philosophical archipelago that claims it flees all properly conceptual elucidation and is a refusal of [philosophical] responsibility […] Can anarchism really get out of explaining its ontological dimension?' (Malabou 2023, 214).

[18] In 2004, David Graeber argued: 'Anarchists are distinguished by what they do, and how they organize themselves to go about doing it. And indeed, this has always been what anarchists have spent most of their time thinking and arguing about. They have never been much interested in the kinds of broad strategic or philosophical questions that preoccupy Marxists' (Graeber 2004).

[19] Ferguson 2011, 7–8.

[20] Ferguson 2023, 12.

[21] Bakunin 2000, art. 71002BEF. See also Jun 2016; Jun 2012; Adams and Jun 2015; Kinna and Prichard 2009.

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Anarchy and Nature

Proudhon's life's work can be interpreted as an attempt to defend the reality and ubiquity of anarchy and the impossibility of 'the absolute', using philosophy of science, moral philosophy and history.[22] The question that preoccupied him was how to reconcile the plurality of peoples with the need for social coordination and unity; or how to enable the articulation of justice in the context of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation? His approach to the reality or otherwise of social pluralism, and what to do with it, was a key contribution to wider nineteenth-century discussions of the 'social question'.[23]

Proudhon interpreted anarchy through the looking glass of what he called 'cosmotheology', or the theological foundations of the historical construction of order. This worked in two ways. First, he argued, all that is rationally impenetrable is 'divine', and has been so historically and remains so today. For example, war is 'divine' in these terms, and it remains so until we have given it an empirical, phenomenological footing.[24] Second, cosmotheology highlighted the tendency of enlightenment thought to replicate the eschatology and theodicy of the Church by simply secularising its main claims. Modern political thought, he argued, tended to explain evil in terms of a stimulus for the rational unfurling of the good, and a transcendence of the conditions of the present (theodicy). Kant's Kingdom of Ends and Saint Simon's positivist end times, for example, were secularised eschatology, where science and history finally unified, and the 'government of persons' would be replaced with the 'administration of things'.[25] Saint Simon's acolyte Comte, offered a neo-Platonic cabal of Priest Scientists to rule in the interests of all, and even invited Proudhon to join in this great pantheon of Positivism. Proudhon rejected Comte in terms similar to those he used to rebuff Marx's invitation to join the communist vanguard.[26]

Philosophy, from Socrates through the Reformation and Enlightenment, had, Proudhon argued, evolved 'into a science of causes'.[27] Where previously law and the Decalogue had operated as a bedrock of reason, the critique of religious dogma had led political philosophers and law makers to a fundamental uncertainty of belief and, then, to lament the fact that politics

[22] The nineteenth-century anarchists were, generally, positivists. But 'positivism' had a very different meaning in the nineteenth century from the one it has today. For more, see, for example, Pickering 1993; Scharff 1995.

[23] See, for example, Proudhon [1848], *OC*, vol. III. The roots of this tradition are found in the writings of Turgot, Condorcet and then later Saint-Simon and Comte, leading figures in the French scientific and philosophical establishment.

[24] See Proudhon [1861], *OC*, XIII, Book 1.

[25] For a full discussion, see Bouglé 2024.

[26] Despite practicing 'cerebral hygiene' which prevented him from reading Proudhon's works, Comte sent Proudhon copies of his own works while he was incarcerated in 1851, with an invitation to join him in the Priesthood. For a discussion, see Pickering 1993, vol. III, 85–95.

[27] Proudhon [1843], *OC*, vol. III, 36.

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and the exercise of force are too much like 'art, which is to say something essentially arbitrary'. Philosophy, in existential crisis, then aped the natural sciences by searching for laws of reason, or right, to ground legislation in an objective, non-metaphysical 'idea of authority'.[28] Given that 'divine will' established all things, and that man is part of nature, ascertaining those laws would ensure that the 'will of the sovereign' was also the will of God. Proudhon concluded that the movement from religion to philosophy was minimal. Indeed, he described Rousseau, Plato and a host of others as religious philosophers.

The metaphysical age, which Proudhon associated most clearly with Kant, was the attempt to conjoin both the ideal and the real in a critical philosophy. No matter how improbably, this presupposed the possibility of the convergence of the laws of nature with those of human thought. Ultimately, it reproduced the absolute: a divine and final point of authority: this time in human reason. Rejecting or questioning a natural, transcendent or pure origin of thought inevitably pushes us towards anarchy. In the *Philosophy of Progress* (1853), written while he was incarcerated in Saint Pélagie prison for criticising Louis Napoleon, Proudhon noted the following in passing:

> Every social theory necessarily begins with a theory of reason and a solution of the cosmotheological problem. No philosophy has lacked that requirement. This […] explains why the partisans of political and social hierarchy all begin from a theosophic idea, while the democrats generally incline towards an absolute emancipation of reason and conscience. In order to democratize the human race, insists Charles Lemaire,[29] it is necessary to demonarchize the Universe.[30]

'Demonarchizing the Universe' was the precondition of progress, Proudhon argued.

> Progress […] is the affirmation of universal movement, consequently the negation of every immutable form and formula, of every doctrine of eternity, permanence, impeccability, etc., applied to any being whatever; it is the negation of every permanent order, even that of the universe, and of every subject or object, empirical or transcendental, which does not change.[31]

[28] Proudhon [1843], 43.

[29] A reference to the botanist Charles Antoine Lemire (1800–71).

[30] Proudhon [1853], *OC*, vol. XX, 47, n. Contemporary theoretical physicists now suggest the absence of constants in nature. The laws of physics, they argue, may have evolved from the first moments of the big bang, through cooling, and to the present. Even time itself may have evolved: 'If everything changes sooner or later, so must the regularities of nature, although some of them may change more slowly or more rarely than others. If everything changes sooner or later, so must the modes of change. Indeed (as I have argued), one way to define time is to say that it is the transformation of transformation. That the laws of nature may change is a direct implication of the reality of time. Such change may be discontinuous'. Unger and Smolin 2014, 263.

[31] Proudhon [1853], *OC*, vol. XX, 20. Trans. Wilbur 2023, 10.

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This philosophy of science mirrors Proudhon's Heraclitan philosophy of history: '*Nothing persists*, said the ancient sages, *everything changes, everything flows, everything becomes*; consequently, everything remains and everything is connected; by further consequence, the entire universe is opposition, balance, equilibrium'.[32] He continued that: '*Movement exists*: this is my fundamental axiom'.[33] 'What I maintain is that we cannot preserve the status quo'.[34] 'God […] immutable, infinite, eternal, absolute […], cannot be; but the social being, grouped, organized, perfectible, progressive, whose essence is to become, always, is'.[35]

Proudhon's approach to the philosophy of science left a deep mark on anarchist thought. Bakunin adopted the term 'antitheologism' to distinguish anarchist science from dogmatic belief. Using organised Christianity and idealism as his foil, he defined theologism as the view that perfection lay in the divine, that the divine was knowable through revelation and that order led to salvation, demanding both obedience and sacrifice. Like Proudhon, Bakunin defended science as an instrument of genuine discovery. The mainlines of his thought were set out in *God and the State*, a text published by Élisée Reclus and his fellow anarchist communist Carlo Cafiero in the 1880s. Bakunin's main theme was authority and the potential for theologised science. Although he talked loosely about '*absolute science*' as 'absolute authority', he denied the possibility of its mastery, and accordingly rejected the false claims advanced by 'men of science' to 'absolute, universal, and infallible authority'.[36] Against the faulty idea of the absolute, Bakunin denied the possibility of universality: what was called law or morality yesterday was not recognised as such today; norms in China were not the same as those elsewhere. As a proud 'atheist', Bakunin argued that nothing could possibly encompass 'the infinite totality of worlds and being'. The proposition was unintelligible, unimaginable except as a religious fiction that underpinned sovereignty and the state.

Science, then, was a project, a process, the object of 'all the efforts of the human mind' to grasp 'the system of co-ordination' of 'all the natural laws manifested by the incessant development of the world'. This project would never be complete, because it followed the path of life. Moreover, the knowledge that scientific study imparted was always only ever partial. Adding another twist to the argument, Bakunin clarified the limits of science by distinguishing it from art. The role of science, he argued, was to formulate abstract generalisations about reality. Yet reality itself was art, created by 'acting, living and passing individuals'. Preaching the 'revolt of life' against 'the government

[32] Proudhon [1853], 14. Trans, Proudhon [1853], 6.
[33] Proudhon [1853], 27.
[34] Proudhon [1853], 52.
[35] Proudhon [1853], 54.
[36] Bakunin 2000, art. 71002AEF, ff. 56–58.

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of science', he defended science as art's handmaiden and refused to externalise its authority.[37]

Kropotkin's construction of 'modern science' was explicable in Proudhon and Bakunin's terms and similarly indebted to Auguste Comte. Science, he argued, was an expression of philosophy which, in turn, was 'but a generalization, the result of intellectual movement in all the realms of life'.[38] He aligned anarchism with science to reveal the speciousness of rival doctrines. Adopting Proudhon's tripartite model, he plotted the movement from religion to metaphysics and science, emphasising the overlaps between these evolutionary steps, as much as the transitions. For example, Marxism was described by Marxists as science, but it was metaphysics in Kropotkin's book. Indeed, the bulk of so-called modern knowledge was religion masquerading as science. Rephrasing Chernyshevsky's question, 'what is to be done?' in his influential essay 'Appeal to the Young', he advised junking the existing libraries of repressive orthodoxy and pursuing genuine scientific methods in every field of intellectual endeavour.[39]

Kropotkin's overriding interest was evolutionary biology, notably the work of Herbert Spencer, the liberal champion of Social Darwinism. Spencer's science, Kropotkin argued, was skewed by unscientific, theological assumptions about human nature. While formally removing God from nature, Spencer had erroneously used the 'treacherous method of resemblance' or 'analogies' to justify law and vengeance – religiously-rooted morality – to protect the right of property.[40]

Explaining the shifts of modern science as a continuous revolt against orthodoxy, Kropotkin assessed knowledge claims by the standards of a naturalistic, inductive-deductive method of investigation.[41] This led him to describe anarchism as

> a conception of the Universe based on the mechanical [kinetic] interpretation of phenomena, which comprises the whole of Nature, including the life of human societies and their economic, political and moral problems. Its method is that of natural sciences, and every conclusion it comes to must be verified by this method if it pretends to be scientific. Its tendency is to work out a synthetic philosophy which will take in all facts of Nature, including the life of societies […][42]

[37] Bakunin 2000, sect. 71002BEF God and the State 2 ff. 2–5.

[38] Kropotkin 1968, 250.

[39] Kropotkin 1910b, 11–12. The ethnographer Elie Reclus, his brother and geographer, Elisée, and the Japanologist and sociologist Lev Metchnikov [Metchnikoff] each contributed to this effort. On Reclus, see Fleming 1988; Ferretti 2018. On Mechnikov, see White 1976; Konishi 2007; Siegrist 2022; Pedrosa 2021.

[40] Kropotkin 1912b, 30.

[41] Kropotkin's views dovetailed with Metchnikov's. Confounding distinctions between physical and social sciences, the zoologist and theorist of mutual aid referred to the 'great law of the unity and continuity of life' to call for compatible methods of 'political or historical knowledge' to study it (Metchnikoff 1886, 412).

[42] Kropotkin 1912b, 38.

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His ambition was comparable to Proudhon and Bakunin's. Naturalism, like Proudhon's '*philosophy of the people*',[43] and Bakunin's 'art', focused science on the 'creative, constructive activity of the masses'.[44] Rejecting anthropomorphism, 'the habit of attributing human qualities and intentions to Nature and to physical forces', Kropotkin endorsed Spencer's attempt to construct a synthetic philosophy, 'rising from the simple to the complex', to 'represent a reasoned, unified systematic summary of the whole of our knowledge'.[45] This conception, like Proudhon's and Bakunin's, showed reality to be a constant, shape-shifting movement of forces. Indeed, reinforcing Bakunin's view, he described natural law as 'nothing but a certain relation among phenomena', that takes a 'temporary character of causality'.[46] There was, Kropotkin argued, nothing 'preconceived in what we call harmony in Nature', only the 'chance of collisions and encounters'.[47]

Taking up Bakunin's theme of scientific authority, he remarked: Anarchists 'shrug their shoulders' when 'metaphysicians wish to persuade a naturalist that the intellectual and emotional life of man is unrolled "according to the inherent laws of the Spirit,"' or that 'the aim of Law is to establish Justice, which represented the manifestation of the Supreme Idea'. Anarchists, he added, were equally at a loss when asked: 'What is, then, according to you, the Aim of Life?'.[48] For Kropotkin, these questions were meaningless, for the object of science was life and its philosophy was anarchy. When anarchists are 'addressed in this language', he wrote, 'they pass on without paying attention to it, and continue their study of social conceptions and illusions, past and present, always following the method of the naturalist'.[49]

For Kropotkin, the point of modern science was to find answers to plain questions 'well put' and to 'help evolution in the direction that determines the social, scientific, and artistic activity of the Anarchist'. Like Proudhon, then, he promoted science as an enabler of anarchy or the pluralisation of life, its precondition, and normative 'ought'. The theory of mutual aid was a 'factor of evolution' in both these senses: his study of natural phenomena stripped evolutionary theory of theologism to tip the scales of analysis against Spencer's prevailing Social Darwinist view.

Science was a thread that knitted anarchists together as opponents of authority. Emma Goldman distinguished the 'philosophy of theism' from the 'philosophy of atheism' to describe the anarchist view. The former 'is static and fixed'. She continued, the 'mere attempt' at discovery was 'non-belief',

[43] Kropotkin 1968, 270.
[44] Kropotkin 1912b, 4.
[45] Kropotkin 1912b, 18.
[46] Kropotkin 1897, 6.
[47] Kropotkin 1897, 6.
[48] Kropotkin 1912b, 39.
[49] Kropotkin 1912b.

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the 'denial of wisdom'. The latter expressed 'the expansion and growth of the human mind'.[50] The human mind, she remarked, 'never was, and can never be, bound by fixities'. Echoing Bakunin, she conceptualised the 'restless march towards knowledge' as a march in step with 'life'.[51]

Anarchist science exposed the falsity of the popular idea of anarchy as disordered and pointed to rival concepts of order and science. As Goldman put it (quoting the freethinker Joseph McCabe), the 'universe is not the result of a creative fiat by some divine intelligence, out of nothing, producing a masterpiece chaotic in perfect operation'. Rather, it was the 'product of chaotic forces operating through aeons of time, of clashes and cataclysms, of repulsion and attraction crystalizing through the principle of selection into what the theists call the universe guided into order and beauty'.[52] Order is anarchic, lacking a transcendent telos.

Using Proudhon to benchmark the historical tradition, we discuss concepts of divisibility, relatedness and irreducibility to flesh out this anarchist conception of order.

Anarchy and Divisibility

Following Comte, Proudhon argued that ontology begins not with 'substances' but with 'relations', and not with 'ideas' and absolutes, but with reality: 'I use the word division to designate the first cosmogenic moment, much as Genesis uses the term Separation'. For Proudhon, ontology is 'synthetic'. The 'fact' of a thing is always a composite of other things. The notion of being, and of cause, has been over-simplified and the 'simple' reduced to the 'real'.[53]

If we start, as Proudhon does, with Leibnitz, then all things exist in virtue of their relations with other things – the 'monad' is not a reality, only the relation is real.[54] This is the foundation of what Proudhon called his 'revolutionary ontology'.[55] Order is a balance of relations, a coalescence, a contingent irreducible, emergent (in)stability:

> If the Creator had limited himself to operating on matter by an infinite force of division, the universe would be pulverized, sublimated [*gazéifié*], dispersed like a light cloud through space, deprived of forms; it would only half-exist: it would be, so to speak, between being and nothingness. For creation to be complete, a force of coercion was needed that determined groups, assemblages, organisms, systems, according to varied laws and innumerable modes […] without centrifugal force, the planetary masses

[50] Goldman 1979c, 199.
[51] Goldman 1979c.
[52] Goldman 1979c.
[53] Proudhon [1843], *OC*, vol. III, 88–89.
[54] Proudhon [1853], *OC*, vol. XX, 34.
[55] Proudhon [1858], *OC*, vol. XXII, v.ii, 121.

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would fall into their suns; without the centripetal force, they would escape by the tangent of their orbits, and would be scattered in space.[56]

Force is a fundamental property of all relations, and contingent, complex and reciprocal relations of force and equilibrium, can, Proudhon argued, be identified in nature as in human social relations.

Proudhon's ideas seeped into late nineteenth-century thought. In an essay on science and revolution written for a Russian audience in 1870, Bakunin used the concept of division to reject the state as the 'fundamental and absolute' principle of union. Examining themes explored in *God and the State*, he categorised himself as a partisan of everyday action: a non-doctrinaire revolutionary who recognised that entities were composed of individual parts. This idea of division, he added, applied to all relationships. Everything in the organic or inorganic world that lives, 'or simply exists mechanically, physically or chemically' behaved in the same way.[57]

In a series of articles written for the periodical *The Nineteenth Century* Kropotkin pursued similar themes, discussing topics including cell biology, quantum physics and cosmic gases. Arguing that the advanced ideas of the age in all fields confirmed the anarchist conception of anarchy, he congratulated modern psychologists and biologists for demonstrating that humans are composites of 'faculties', of 'germs', of 'organs'. Modern science, he continued, had shown individuals to be 'a cosmos of organs', each organ to be 'a cosmos of cells', and each cell to be 'a cosmos of infinitely small ones'.[58]

Élisée Reclus, Kropotkin's friend and, like his brother Élie, a former Communard, found similar analogies in evolution. The first 'life-forms', he argued, 'present rudimentary, uniform, and scarcely differentiated features'. Development was a process of differentiation or division.[59] Looking at 'humanity in its entirety', he argued that 'social groupings' usually formed 'small, distinct colonies'. The earliest were 'microcosmic' becoming 'more and more extended and increasingly complex over time'.[60] Like Kropotkin, Reclus argued that all social phenomena could be seen as composites. Engrained habits of thought, the tendency towards abstraction and the articulation of 'sublime ideas' that 'merge with natural laws that govern the world' explained why they were still typically theorised as singularities and wholes. The concept of the state was a prime example. Demythologising it, Reclus rejected idealist constructions of the state as 'pure essence' and the blunt Stirnerite critique of idealism as 'philosophical abstraction'. The state, he argued, was a 'collection of individuals placed in a specific milieu and subjected to its influence'.[61]

[56] Proudhon [1853], *OC*, vol. III, 271.
[57] Bakunin 2000, art. 70010ET, f.5.
[58] Kropotkin 1897, 5. See also Sandberg 2023.
[59] Reclus 2013, 212.
[60] Reclus 2013, 217.
[61] Reclus 2013, 122.

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A society, similarly, was 'a collection of individuals who come together and deliberate in pursuit of the common good'.[62]

Anarchy and Relatedness

In anarchism, divisibility did not spell atomisation. Rather, it bolstered a concept of relatedness. In an essay on meteorites and comets for *The Nineteenth Century*, Kropotkin remarked that the astronomers and physicists who studied the 'tiny mines of the celestial space', had improved our 'general comprehension of the life of the universe [...and] the unity of nature'.[63] This conception of the whole runs through nineteenth-century literature. We consider four iterations: relatedness as harmony, interconnection, complementarity and community.

Harmony was a major motif in Kropotkin's work. Advancing it as a scientific proposition, he argued that the 'whole aspect of the universe' had been transformed by modern scientific conceptions of cosmic interconnection.[64] The political value of this conception was that it helped to dispel myths of anarchism's repressive utopianism. Adopted as the name for one of Robert Owen's utopian communities, 'harmony' was associated in the history of socialist thought with paternalism, the eradication of difference and the achievement of social happiness through the alignment of individual and communal interests.[65] Pushing back against Marx and Engles' critique of Charles Fourier's apparently class-blind, consensual utopianism,[66] and steering socialist history from Marxism to anarchist socialism, Kropotkin argued: 'The idea of force governing the world, of preestablished law, preconceived harmony, disappears to make room for the harmony that Fourier had caught a glimpse of: the one which results from disorderly and incoherent movements of numberless hosts of matter, each of which goes its own way and all of which hold each other in equilibrium'.[67]

Proudhon, Reclus and Rocker all referred to the Riddle of the Sphinx to outline their conceptions of interconnection and complementarity.[68] Rocker outlined his view in *The Six*, a story he devised to raise the morale of fellow

[62] Reclus 2013, 130.
[63] Kropotkin 1899b, 946.
[64] Kropotkin 1897, 5.
[65] Like Kropotkin, Reclus compared the anarchist view to the earlier utopian socialist attempt to build 'model communities' outside 'the normal conditions of life'. Referring to Étienne Cabet's community Icaria, he argued that the abstractions that explained authoritarianism had been eased by practical experimentation and the influx of new people, notably former Communards (Reclus 2013, 128). On the utopian socialists, see Claeys 1982; Mclaren 1996.
[66] Marx and Engles argued that utopian socialism wrongly attempted to 'deaden' class struggle and 'reconcile the class antagonisms' by dreaming up 'experimental' utopias (Marx and Engels n.d., 94–97).
[67] Kropotkin 1897, 3–4. 'Decipher me or I will devour you', from the Riddle of the Sphinx, is the opening epigram on the title page of Proudhon's *War and Peace*. See also Reclus 2013, 130.
[68] Rocker 1938.

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inmates during his internment as an enemy alien in the First World War. It pairs Faust with Don Juan, Hamlet with Don Quixote and E. T. A. Hoffman's fictitious monk Medardus with Heinrich von Ofterdingen, the singer immortalised by Novalis. They are ciphers for intellect and passion, knowledge and courage, egoism and love and their disagreements and separate wanderings illustrate the partiality and subjectivity of judgment. Each character in the pair reflects on their partner's failings, but none fully grasps the partiality of their own perspectives. At the end of their journeys, they confront the Riddle. The realisation that their roads have converged sparks a collective 'awakening'. While their enlightenment evokes the discovery of the laws of nature, it does not lead to unity or the formation of an artificial body or a common ego as Hobbes and Rousseau variously describe the sovereign. Rather, it brings them into an appreciative association which preserves individuality and idiosyncrasy. The Sphinx, who delivers the lesson, tells them:

> Six roads led you to the portals of my realm. Each road held a different clue, but all led to the selfsame goal. So long as each one followed his own clue it was denied him to solve my riddle. But now all six have joined in union, and each feels in himself something of all. The parts have joined to form a whole.[69]

The last aspect of relatedness, community, was brilliantly elaborated by Landauer. Sympathetic to the view that 'the individual' was what Stirner called a 'spook', an abstract fiction or 'bloated nothingness' that restricted our imagination, he nevertheless rejected Stirner's conception of the individual, dubbing it theological. Stirner, he argued, had thrown the baby out with the bathwater and, in rejecting the atomised individual, he had created a 'concrete' being or ego in the ideal alone. The reality, as Landauer saw it, was described by 'affinities and communities'.[70]

Coining the phase 'from separation to community', Landauer conceptualised relatedness as a spiritual force rooted in the discovery of heredity or ancestral community. This meant the unearthing of 'the community's desire in the individual', not the investigation of family history.[71] With a nod to psychoanalysis, he admitted that individuals knew as much about this communal inheritance as they did about their 'unconscious desires'.[72] But this inheritance was as real as the unconscious, and the refusal to accept it reduced individuals to 'all matter, all perception, all spook' and made the 'meaning of life and the world' forever 'mysterious'.[73]

Community emerged through self-discovery; a disruptive awakening first 'experienced within the recesses of the human interior'.[74] He argued: 'Once

[69] Rocker 1938, 255.
[70] Landauer 2010c, 101. Like Proudhon, Landauer also argued that collectivities were more than the 'sums of singularities or individuals' (Landauer 2010c, 101).
[71] Landauer 2010c, 105.
[72] Landauer 2010c, 103.
[73] Landauer 2010c, 104.
[74] Lunn 1973, 146, 214.

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individuals have transformed themselves into communities, then they are ready to form wider communities with like-minded individuals. These will be new kinds of communities, established by individuals with the courage and the need to separate from the dullness of superficiality'.[75]

On this account, anarchy was a testing aspiration that disrupted social relations, unsettling the stability of the self as part of the process. In his short essay, 'Anarchic Thoughts on Anarchism', Landauer described the productive chaos it caused in individuals:

> This extraordinary moment will be experienced by all who, in Nietzsche's words, are able to recreate the original chaos in themselves and to become spectators at the drama of their own desires and deepest secrets. Only once we have achieved this can we decide which one of our many personalities should define who we are. This in turn will define our uniqueness and differentiate us from the traditions and legacies of our ancestors. We will understand what the world should be to us, and what we should be to the world. Those whom I call true anarchists no longer deceive themselves; they have been able to remold themselves through the experience of a deep existential crisis; they can act in the way which their most secret nature demands.[76]

The idea that individuals and collectives generate new constellations of forces – multiplicities – that shape the possibilities open to individuals in context, in an endless, complex feedback loop, was not controversial in nineteenth-century anarchism, though Landauer's qualified endorsement of Stirner and fondness for Nietzsche was.[77] Indeed, the normative conception of anarchy emerged from the identification, study and abolition of ossified social relationships that routinely, and usually arbitrarily, shape our lives. For time immemorial, Élisée Reclus noted, men 'haunted by their fear of the unknown' and their 'feeling of powerlessness to discover the real causes of things', had created 'divinities that represented both their formless ideal and the basis for an entire mysterious world of things'.[78] Anarchy was 'a new spirit', yet also 'as old as humanity'.[79]

Anarchy and Irreducibility

Irreducibility was the idea that order in anarchy could not be explained either by the decomposition of entities into their separate parts or by the action of any

[75] Landauer 2010c, 105–106.

[76] Landauer 1901, 88. Stirnerites like André Colomer also accepted interrelatedness as a condition of anarchy. The individual, he argued, 'finds an extension of its own originality in sympathy and cooperation, as well as the increase of its well-being and a condition of its freedom' (Colomer 2024, 134). The individual 'needs others to act like it needs air to breathe' (Colomer 2024, 233).

[77] For a discussion of Kropotkin and Nietzscheanism, see Kinna 2016, ch. 3. We discuss Rocker below.

[78] Reclus 2013, 124.

[79] Reclus 2013, 121.

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single underlying force. Anarchist ontology instead directed analysis towards notions of emergence.

Writing at the end of her life, with experience of Bolshevism, Stalinism and Nazism under her belt, Emma Goldman presented a crisp version of the thesis. The 'individual', she argued, is 'the true reality in life', a 'cosmos in himself' and the 'sole source and motive power of evolution and progress'. Yet in this impassioned defence, she also recognised the 'wonderful results', namely, the 'unique force of man's individuality', that came from 'co-operation with other individuals'.[80] This association, she argued elsewhere, created something beyond the individual.[81] Individuality was an emergent property of social forces, unique, the basis of the individual's sovereignty and due reciprocal respect. It was real, material and tangible but also only ever in a process of becoming.

Proudhon laid the philosophical foundations for Goldman's argument. According to Proudhon's theory of groups, emergence is explicable as a function of grouping as becoming. Indeed, in 'Le Petit Catéchisme Politique', arguably the clearest statement of Proudhon's social ontology anywhere in his works, he defined natural groups as 'social embryos'.[82] To find order, he had argued in *The Philosophy of Progress*, we must build groups: 'Just as in logic the idea of movement or progress translates into that other, the series, so, in ontology, it has as a synonym: the group. Everything that exists is grouped; everything that forms a group is one. Consequently, it is perceptible, and, consequently, it *is*'.[83] But this state of being is not fixed, monadic, or hermetic. 'I regard society, the human group, as a being *sui generis*, constituted by the fluid relations and economic solidarity of all the individuals, of the nation, of the locality or corporation, or of the entire species'.[84] This process is unending. In *Contradictions Politiques* (1870), Proudhon argued:

> Mobility derives from the dynamism of the antinomies on which it rests, we might say its *autokinètos*, its own motor, the generator of its unique movement. The normal life of the collective being comes from the equilibrium in the system it adopts, whether a nation or a state. If the equilibrium is destroyed, the movement is no less, it just continues in a subversive mode: the opposition of the elements become antagonistic; society moves into a revolutionary state.[85]

This account of social order does not presuppose the empirical equality of all groups and individuals – quite the opposite. Balances emerge because of inequality, hierarchy, domination, and the fluid process of division and recombination.

[80] Goldman 1979b, 88–89.
[81] Goldman 1972a, 56–57.
[82] Proudhon [1858], *OC*, vol. XXII, 100.
[83] Proudhon [1953], *OC*, vol. XX, 36.
[84] Proudhon [1953], 39.
[85] Proudhon [1870], *OP*, *De la Capacité*, 103.

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A calibrated society is one in which the balance is tolerable, enforced, implicit, habitual, or all of these things at once. But a balance is never permanent.

Just as society supervenes on the actions and activities of individuals, and social products are the emergent property of their labour, *individuals are groups too*, emergent balances of forces internal and biological, and in their relations with their environment. For Proudhon, and those that followed him, consciousness was understood as emergent from biological, intellectual and social relations in their material context. Unlike Comte, who argued that free will was a chimera dreamt up by the philosophes of the enlightenment, Proudhon argued that agency was free precisely because it was irreducible to any form of structure, biological or social, even if it was fundamentally shaped by them all.

In his posthumously published and unfinished book *Ethics*, a text examining the evolution of moral philosophy through the lens of mutual aid, Kropotkin applied Proudhon's concept of emergence to investigate the source of moral sentiments. His main theme was the relationship between the 'instinct' to cohere and the development of 'will', a term he borrowed from Leibnitz to refer to the capacity to exercise judgments.[86] Proudhon, he argued, had identified right, the 'ability […] to demand from all others that they respect human dignity in their own person', and duty, 'the demand that everybody should recognize this dignity in others', as the basis of this relationship.[87] While he modified Proudhon's theory, he used the analysis to deny explanations that relied on revelation or the calculation of self-interest. Nor was morality explained by passion or 'feeling'. Proudhon's insight, Kropotkin argued, was his contention that morality was a '*product of the development of human societies*'; what he called 'sociality' or '*the sense of righteousness*' was equally an expression of the 'the consciousness of the equal right of all men to mutual regard for personality'.[88] Morality emerged out of, or perhaps supervenes on, individuals' interconnections.

Kropotkin's account of the construction of Gothic cathedrals illustrated the fortuitous contingency and productive 'surplus' that anarchists associated with emergence. While he reduced the grandeur of the cathedrals to the 'grand idea' of 'brotherhoood and unity' that inspired them, his narrative was anarchic: the cathedral had sprung from 'an audacity which could only be won by audacious struggles and victories'. It had no single force. Rather, it expressed 'vigour' because, he said, 'vigour permeated all the life of the city'.[89] Similarly, for Rocker, the Gothic cathedral, 'could only arise out of a society so rich and of such varied structure, in which every part, consciously or unconsciously strove toward a common goal'. It was a 'collective creation in the production

[86] Kropotkin 1968, 176.
[87] Kropotkin 1968, 270.
[88] Kropotkin 1968, 270–271.
[89] Kropotkin 1972, 185.

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of which every […] member of society, joyously took part'. The cathedrals were produced by the labour of individuals working collectively. But they were more than the sum of these parts, or even of the surplus that their labour produced. Rocker described the cathedrals as the 'majestic embodiment of that community which lent it a soul'.[90] Medieval historians rightly question his romanticism.[91] But Rocker's analysis, like Kropotkin's, was not intended as an accurate account of the European Middle Ages. He was trying to establish the philosophical point that beauty emerged from the contingencies of anarchy.

ANARCHY AND ORDER

The anarchist theorisation of anarchy fully blurred the conceptual distinction between the international and domestic realm, the notion that the former was orderless and brutal and the latter ordered and free. Anarchy had been defined to excite visions of chaos and incite fear. But the anarchists rejected distinctions between the known and unknown worlds where dragons lurked. Their scepticism encouraged the critical analysis of the seemingly natural forces that explained the statist construction of the global order. To set this out, we look first at the anarchist conception of association and then at the related concepts of force and struggle.

Association, Force and Division

History, ethnography and science convinced nineteenth-century anarchists that association was a fact of life. As Kropotkin argued in *Mutual Aid*, human and non-human species associated to rear progeny, for reasons of security and to enjoy material well-being. The complication was to grasp the social, political and ethical relationships it nurtured and the forces active within it.[92]

Proudhon's short answer to the question 'what is association?' was 'binding union'.[93] His longer analysis involved an account of coordination. Coordination was what all groups do, using different expressions and configurations of force. Association was equally open to the revolutionary proposition that society needed to be 'straightened' out, just 'as a young tree' is made 'to take a different direction', and a 'carriage is turned in a different direction after it has been pulled out of a rut',[94] as it was to the idea of 'social liquidation'. But this latter proposition referred to the liquidation of government by the social, not the liquidation of the social.[95]

[90] Rocker 1978, 489.
[91] Forrest 2020; Gowers 2024.
[92] Kropotkin 1972, 31–33.
[93] Proudhon [1851], *OC*, vol. X, 98–101. Trans, Robinson 1989, 85.
[94] Proudhon [1851]. Trans, Robinson 1989, 76.
[95] Proudhon [1851]. Trans, Robinson 1989, 170.

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The idea that prevailed after the French Revolution, Proudhon argued, was the governmental idea popularised by the 'scoundrel' Rousseau,[96] namely, that 'the people' as a collective had 'no unitary existence'. Mistakenly, Rousseau had designated the people 'an abstract personality, a moral individuality, incapable by itself of thinking, acting or moving'.[97] Proudhon's task was not only to show that association supported division, but also that social progression depended on tapping the non-governmental tendencies that had gained momentum in the years leading up to the Revolution.

Proudhon put in place the philosophical building blocks of the argument when he argued that history was shaped by individual and collective free will in opposition to necessity. He labelled his approach 'ideo-realism'. The thought underpinning it was that all objects and phenomena exert force. Proudhon defined force in terms of two conceptions of powers: *puissance*, derived from the innate properties of the thing, and *pouvoir*, a fundamentally social activity ubiquitous in all social realms, though more complex in human societies.[98] Inertia was an example of *puissance* – inactive resistance is an exercise of force. *Pouvoir*, however, described simple acts, like the putting one's shoulder to a boulder, and more complex functions, like thought and co-operation, or building communities and constitutions. Thought and collective action are both struggles against necessity.

To illustrate, Proudhon opened *War and Peace*, his monumental analysis of war, with an account of its 'moral phenomenology', that is, war's ideals, its rituals, symbols and instruments. These are often obscured by a focus on the materiality of war, but both are operative forces, and the character of the movement is emergent from the mix of the two.[99] Just as the action of heaving a boulder involves the actor, and forces of gravity and friction, to create movement, the collective use of force in war, both moral and material, has revolutionised association, for better or worse.[100]

'Ideo-realism' represented an attempt to link ideas and material reality in ways which privileged neither and presupposed their interrelation.[101] It explained how 'collective force', an ontological, mechanical, industrial phenomenon, as well as a rational, artistic and moral force (what Proudhon called 'collective reason'), gave rise to association and 'social power', or *pouvoir*, and how, in any complex society, association tended towards

[96] Proudhon [1851]. Trans, Robinson 1989, 118.

[97] Proudhon [1851]. Trans, Robinson 1989, 119. For a fuller discussion, see Noland 1967.

[98] In *What is Property?* (1840), Proudhon refused to make a categorical distinction between humans and other animals on this score, arguing that whatever differences there are between animal and human sociability and reason, they are of 'degree', not of 'kind'. Proudhon [1841], *OC*, vol. I, 176. Trans, Kelly and Smith, Proudhon 1994, 170.

[99] Proudhon [1861], *OC*, vol. XIII, Book 1. See also Prichard 2013a, 103–106, 114–124; Castleton 2017b. We discuss Proudhon's conception of war in more detail in Chapter 4.

[100] Proudhon [1861], *OC*, vol. XIV, Book III.

[101] For extensive discussion of the historical and intellectual chassis of Proudhon's thinking in this area, see Castleton 2017a; 2023.

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division and recombination. The more sophisticated the activity, function, or set of relations, the more carefully coordinated that division of forces must be.

Association, Proudhon argued, was driven by changes in production and the emergence of the complex division of labour. In society's infancy, he contended, the coordination of the group was confused with the activities of the leader, or the 'Godhead' as Rocker termed it.[102] Over time, as 'science develops, as labour is divided, as industry takes off', the 'number of capacities becomes proportionately greater; and this entirely empirical progress is manifested by the establishment of aristocracies'.[103] These protean associations are nevertheless fated to division, dissolution and change.

Central to this process is the development of the complex division of labour in society. Leaning on the ideas of Adam Smith and Jean Baptiste Say, Proudhon used his 'revolutionary social ontology' to develop this argument.[104] He begins with the workshop. Here, individual initiative is constitutive of collective endeavour, and vice versa. This collective reciprocity is the basis of his philosophy of mutualism, both as an explanation of social power and as a principle of ethics.

Proudhon does not look to scale this account of social coordination. The coordination required to sustain advanced civilisations, with complex divisions of labour, is possibly beyond us.[105] But science, or 'social science' as he called it, is a key tool in helping us chart that path, and the constitutions of society must be deliberate. In *The General Idea of the Revolution*, Proudhon argued that the social constitution was taking shape 'slowly and silently' in the 'shadow of political institutions' and 'out of sight of the statemen and priests'. The new order was a denial of the 'old politics' and 'old religion' and expressed 'vitality and autonomy'.[106] The new system, he continued, 'based upon the spontaneous practice of industry' was a 'system of *Human Right*', opposed to 'arbitrary command, and was 'complete in itself'.[107]

[102] Rocker argued that the 'Godhead' was present in all manifestations of the will to power, and no constitution was immune from its force. This included the Hammurabi code, the laws of Manu, the Zend-Avesta, the shamanism of Genghis Khan and the deification of rulership in China, Japan and Tibet (Rocker 1978, Chapter 2). In this respect, he followed Proudhon, who argued that the patriarch is the original authority figure, and the Decalogue, one of the most 'solemn moments in the evolution of the principle of authority' and the word 'of the sovereign'. The unity of the two in Moses is predicated on a false conflation of the family, patriarch and the state. See Proudhon's definition of justice in Proudhon [1858], *OC*, XXI, Chapter 7.

[103] Proudhon [1843], *OC*, vol. III, 197.

[104] Proudhon [1843], *OC*, vol. III, 269–270.

[105] Humans are distinguished from other animals by the capacity to institutionalise collective reason through the coordination of collective force, and to use collective reason to justify and explain, to rationalise and to justify this institutionalisation. Proudhon called this 'the third degree of sociability' Proudhon, *OC*, vol. I, 181. Trans, Kelly and Smith, Proudhon 1994, 180.

[106] Proudhon [1851], *OC*, vol. X, 257. Trans, Robinson, Proudhon 1989, 243.

[107] Proudhon 1989, 244.

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Shortly before his execution in 1911, the Zen Buddhist monk Uchiyama Gudō[108] outlined a remarkably similar concept of pluralisation. Like Proudhon, he believed that the 'evolution of politics, law, religion, and ethics', highlighted the movement 'from heteronomy toward autonomy'.[109] Inversely relating statehood or nationhood to the maturation of consciousness, he contended:

> when a nation is in its infancy, people are subjugated to other people: those of great strength, vast knowledge, and immense wealth [...] At first, we the people are taught that our existence depends upon the sovereign, and we accept this idea blindly, but eventually we acquire consciousness that the government is an organism working for us, the people. People then become able to advocate democracy.[110]

However, perhaps leaning closer to Kropotkin's conception of the integrative force of association, Gudō described the 'final goal of the human race' as 'independence and mutual aid'.[111]

Force and Integration

Kropotkin developed Proudhon's 'social science' into the science of 'mutual aid'. Rejecting Bakunin's claim that Proudhon was an idealist, a 'metaphysician' who used an abstract concept of right as a theoretical point of departure,[112] Kropotkin adapted his own version of 'ideo-realism' to reexamine the ideational and material forces of association.

Proudhon, he argued, had attached 'great importance' to 'idealization' and to 'the ideals that in certain periods acquire the ascendancy over the petty daily cares'.[113] Adopting this framing in his history, *The Great French Revolution*, Kropotkin opened with an account of 'the idea' that had 'inspired the middle classes in 1789': the 'system of centralized authority [...] passive obedience of citizens to the law; that worship of law, of Parliament, of judges and their assistants'.[114] Later, thinking about social transformation, he invoked the philosopher Albert Fouillée: '*ideas* are *forces* [...] they are ethical forces'.[115] The weakness of Proudhon's philosophy, he argued, was that it lacked robust scientific articulation. He found the remedy in evolutionary theory, the philosophy

[108] Gudō was one of twenty-six activists to stand trial in 1910. The High Treason case was notorious because the trial centred on the defendants' intent to kill the Emperor. There was no attempt and scant evidence of conspiracy. John Crump describes the twelve executed as 'certainly innocent of the charges' (see Crump 1993, 30).
[109] Gudō 1911, 57.
[110] Gudō 1911, 53–54.
[111] Gudō 1911, 57.
[112] Bakunin 2000, art. 73004ET, f. 223.
[113] Kropotkin 1968, 272.
[114] Kropotkin 1927, vol. 1, 5.
[115] Kropotkin 1968, 21.

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of the age, and identified Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) as its seminal statement.[116]

Reworking Darwin's theory of evolution to challenge Spencer's Social Darwinism,[117] Kropotkin substituted mutual aid for the idea of justice, as the 'pivot' of association.[118] His general theory, applicable to human and non-human species, related co-operation to social division and showed how forces tending towards homogenisation confronted those tending towards heterogeneity. He took diversity as a starting point. This was 'the distinctive feature' of the physical environment. The 'territory occupied by each nation', he argued, was 'a most varied texture of soils and climates, of hills and valleys, of slopes and races'. Accordingly, each 'nation' practiced a 'variety of occupations' and was 'a compound aggregate of tastes and inclinations, of wants and resources, of capacities and inventive powers'.[119]

Kropotkin related the extension and refinement of mutual aid to the breakup of these established associations and the creation of new forms of co-operation between their separate parts. As a 'natural growth', the process of separation and reintegration made 'absolute uniformity' impossible.[120] To illustrate, he plotted the double movement in the emergence of the family in the clan, the multiplication of households in village communities and the emergence of civic, mercantile, labour and cultural unions in European city-states.[121] Mutual aid was practiced in all these settings. But the ethical refinement of mutual aid

[116] Proudhon was unable to read *Origin of Species* for himself, but unfavourable reviews of Darwin's magnum opus, published in the French press, confirmed his view that 'nothing is fixed in the universe', and that everything evolves. Nature, he argued, was a process of continual evolution, a 'panorama of creations in the process of being produced, which move pell-mell, penetrate each other with reciprocal influence, and present to the eye and series of more or less regular pictures' Proudhon was also convinced by Darwin's confirmation of the reality of the variability of species, which he interpreted as a proof that species that are currently 'fixed, are not fixed in perpetuity'. Cited in Castleton 2017a, 236.

[117] Claiming that Spencer had distorted Darwin's thesis, and that Darwin had also wrongly placed too much weight on individual competition to explain natural selection, he argued that co-operation was also a determinant of biological fitness, and that intra-species co-operation was by far the best protection for individuals confronting predators in changing environments. On Kropotkin's engagement with Spencer, see Adams 2016, 51.

[118] Chanial 2017.

[119] Kropotkin 1912a, 12.

[120] Kropotkin 1972, 119. Élisée Reclus argued similarly that social division promoted social integration without homogenising social relationships. Progressive reason made demands 'on behalf of society'. Regressive reason invoked 'the right of the strongest' to defend 'injustice and violence' (Reclus 2013, 148).

[121] Kropotkin 1972, 111. Kropotkin's labelling of his two formative social formations, 'savage' and 'barbarian', grates. But his point was to spotlight the savagery and barbarity of European elites who had raised violence into an art form and eradicated traditional societies through colonisation (Kropotkin 1968a, 316). For a discussion of his challenge to the racist, essentialist and Eurocentric assumptions that fuelled the modernist eschatology of European nation statism, see Ferretti 2017, 125.

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and its extension from blood relatives to guests and strangers depended on the cultures nurtured through association and their adaptability to changing environmental conditions. Evoking Proudhon's analysis of social force, Kropotkin referred to the European cities to make the point:

> The medieval cities were not organized upon some preconceived plan in obedience to the will of an outside legislator. Each of them was a natural growth in the full sense of the world – an always varying result of the struggle between various forces which adjusted and re-adjusted themselves in conformity with their relative energies, the changes of their conflicts, and the support they found in their surroundings.[122]

However, parting company with Proudhon, who preferred the Roman concepts trust or usufruct, Kropotkin discovered that cultures of co-operation were fostered by common ownership or communism. His description of the village community asserted the link between the material and ideational forces:

> A whole series of institutions, partly inherited from the clan period, have developed from that basis of common ownership of land [...] The village community was not only a union for guaranteeing to each one his fair share in the common land, but also a union for common culture, for mutual support in all possible forms, for protection from violence, and for a further development of knowledge, national bonds and moral conceptions.[123]

Kropotkin's analysis was bolstered by an analysis of European social regression in the high Middle Ages, when the effervescence of the 'current of the people' had been flattened by the countervailing minoritarian forces that sought to bottle it. The social forces helpful to co-operation had survived: neither 'the crushing powers of the centralized State nor the teachings of mutual hatred and pitiless struggle', he argued, had been able to 'weed out the feeling of human solidarity' nurtured 'by our preceding evolution'.[124] But inequalities, exploited by self-aggrandising elites, had incentivised the better-off to press their economic advantages over their fellow citizens.[125] Notions of right supplanted ideas of common good and competition displaced co-operation as the norm of association. Arbitrary social divisions, stifling 'organic' separation, and atomisation thereafter inhibited the practice of mutual aid. Looking at late Victorian London, Kropotkin remarked:

> Under the present social system, all bonds of union among the inhabitants of the same street or neighbourhood have been dissolved. In the richer parts of the large towns, people live without knowing who are their next-door neighbours. But in the crowded lanes people know each other perfectly and are continually brought into mutual contact [...]

[122] Kropotkin 1972, 167.
[123] Kropotkin 1902, 121.
[124] Kropotkin 1972, 245.
[125] Kropotkin 1968, 301.

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affinities grow up, and within their circle, mutual aid is practised to an extent to which the richer classes have no idea.[126]

In this history of association, the division of labour heralded the destruction of the commons and the emergence of a new repressive orthodoxy. Kropotkin called it political economy and, aligning Proudhon with Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Marx,[127] characterised it as a perfect illustration of the kind of abstract thinking that anarchist science was designed to correct: a fanciful proposition cooked up by intellectuals bedazzled by the productive power of industrialisation and neglectful of its imperialist logics and exploitative functions.

Far from serving anarchy, the division of labour served *laissez-faire* liberalism by steering global trade towards production for profit. The plan, Kropotkin argued, was to turn 'a few nations of West Europe' into the 'manufacturers of the world' and use the rest to supply 'food they cannot grow themselves' and the 'raw materials they need for their manufactures'.[128] This division meant national specialisation for the sake of elite domination or, as Kropotkin argued, the transformation of production, locally, regionally and globally, to suit the trading preferences of the industrialised states. It was a recipe for the development of monocultures and aggressive resource extraction; the refusal of states to comply with the theory was entirely predictable, as was the resulting competition between states for markets and economic resources.[129]

Kropotkin presented his weighty critique in *Fields, Factories and Workshops*. The book recommended the integration of industry and agriculture to boost local production, reduce supply lines and transform global exchange by resetting association on need, or the right to well-being. With the Paris Commune firmly in mind, Kropotkin argued that mutual aid was integral to the prefigurative call to assert the 'right to possess the wealth of the community', the 'right to live in comfort' and the 'right to decide […] what this comfort shall be, what must be produced to ensure it, and what discarded as no longer of value'.[130] But the 'rights' he had in mind were not just material. Pointing to a dense web of networks already mushrooming across the globe, Kropotkin reimagined association as a vehicle for borderless organising and the complex integration of local, regional and transnational groups. Taking Proudhon's idea, he thus substituted 'free agreement' for Proudhon's neo-Roman 'contract' to steer the voluntarism of association away from the assertion of right and towards the satisfaction of spiritual, intellectual, recreational, cultural and scientific needs.[131]

[126] Kropotkin 1972, 239.
[127] Kropotkin 1912b, 78.
[128] Kropotkin 1912a, 25.
[129] In the same spirit, Bakunin had earlier called for the introduction of 'integral education' to undo the damage inflicted by bourgeois systems designed to equip workers to fulfil predetermined social functions, typically manual labour (Bakunin 2000, art. 69034EF).
[130] Kropotkin 1906, 30.
[131] Kropotkin 1906, ch. XI.

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CONSTITUENT POWER REVISITED

The theory of groups and association we have reconstructed here foreground the anarchist rejection of the founding moment through which 'the people' collectively authorised power in its name. As we argue in the next section (Constitutionalisation: Culture and Anarchy), it also points to the pluralisation of struggle to preserve the autonomy of multiple groups and the sovereignty of individuals within them. If the notion of individual sovereignty was as much a fiction as the idea of the sovereign people, it complicated the concepts of consent and democratic authorisation central to constitutionalism and affirmed the principle of self-government, 'without gods or masters'.

The theory of association helps explain why the concept of constituent power is not readily found in nineteenth-century anarchist literature. As Adam Lindsay argues of Hannah Arendt, anarchists rejected 'the theoretical lens of the absolute through which the need for a constituent power manifested' and preferred a 'modality of action' that detached constitutional novelty from the constraint of 'constituted power'.[132] The discussion of revolution, which steered struggle from finality and furnished an overtly utopian critique of Marxism, provides an illustration.[133]

Anarchist assessments of revolutionary actions, especially national liberation struggles, were often wildly variant, but the underlying logic of their analysis was analogous. Bakunin adopted Proudhon's language to theorise struggle, albeit without directly referring to him. In 1870, addressing a Russian audience, he described struggle as the means of altering the patterns of life through organisation, a reordering of social relations achieved through the exercise of collective force.[134] Playing against stereotype, he distanced himself from the 'doctrinaires', or armchair revolutionaries who took their ideas from books, and self-styled tribunes of the people who painted themselves atop the barricades.[135] In contrast, he presented himself a 'partisan of everyday action'. His aim, he explained, was to assist in the coordination of collective force and dismantle the existing configurations of political, civic and social power. Since this configuration had also emerged from the 'conjunction and reciprocal action of the various forces' active in a society, of conflict, struggle and 'mutual annihilation',[136] it followed that its disassembly relied on the assertion of popular collective force.

[132] Lindsay 2017, 1036.

[133] Anarchist approaches to nationhood and nationality, which rejected essentialist conceptions, provide another. Rocker's analysis, discussed in the fourth section (Constitutionalisation: Anarchy and Culture), exemplifies this. For a discussion of the complex interplay between anarchism and nationalism, see Gutiérrez and Kinna 2023.

[134] In the 1870s, Bakunin identified the IWMA as his model. When Marx proposed organisational changes, Bakunin concluded that the prospects for anarchy were at stake (Bakunin 2000, art. 70010ET, f. 2).

[135] Bakunin 2000.

[136] Bakunin 2000, art. 70010ET, f. 5.

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Landauer offered a similar perspective on the disintegrative and integrative power of collective revolutionary action but lovingly described it as utopian. Anarchy, he argued, 'was no lifeless system of ready-made thoughts'. It was '*life*', the 'life that awaits us after we have freed ourselves from the yoke'.[137] Struggle constituted the people through their collective actions, building trust and solidarity. Yet, as he argued in a later essay, the 'courageous, wild, and fanatic […] caring and loving' spirit that filled everyone during heightened moments of revolution, was fleeting.[138] Once social relationships had been reset, groups and individuals struggled to find new accommodations. With the dissipation of spirit, all anyone wanted was '*panem et circenses*, "bread and circuses"'.[139]

Landauer's embrace of utopianism was a sustained and blistering attack on the materialist conception of history, Marx's political economy and its sociological implications: the view that history was the history of class struggle and that industrial capitalism provided the foundation for socialism. His hostile assessment painted Marx's 'spiritless' vision of proletarian unity as a bogus 'science' of 'desolate, ugly, uniform, restrictive, and repressive centralism'. No surprise, he added, that it was strong in Prussia and Russia, states 'dominated by the sergeant, the minor official and bureaucrat'.[140] Against Marx, he argued that freedom was 'not about the nationalization of the achievements of the past' or the 'struggle between classes'. It was driven by 'free, strong, and sovereign individuals breaking free from mass culture and uniting in new forms'.[141]

The critique of a constituent power, here understood as a class in and for itself, and the Bolshevik priority of political power over a general social transformation, was one of Emma Goldman's central concerns. In the aftermath of the 1917 Bolshevik coup, she produced a neat version of Landauer's analysis of Marx's conception of socialist revolution: 'The dominant, almost general, idea of revolution […] is that revolution is a violent change of social conditions through which one social class […] becomes dominant over another class […] It is the conception of a purely political change, and as such it involves only political scene shifting and institutional rearrangements'.[142] Goldman did not quibble with the idea that struggle involved violence. Her pressing concern was to expose the fallaciousness of the Marxist idea of socialist revolution and clarify the anarchist position. Struggle, she argued, was directed towards the transformation of 'underlying ideas and values', not the transfer of government power. Turning to Nietzsche, she called the idea of revolution '*a fundamental transvaluation of values* […] not only of social but of human

[137] Landauer 2010a, 74.
[138] Landauer 2010b, 154.
[139] Landauer 2010a, 154.
[140] Landauer 1978, 66.
[141] Landauer 1901, 87.
[142] Goldman 2017, 253. See also Rocker 1938, 24.

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values'.[143] Using the same idea to analyse women's emancipation, she accused feminists who demanded the extension of rights of promoting a shallow idea. Emancipation, she argued, 'should make it possible for woman to be human in the truest sense'.[144] The tragedy of women's emancipation was its politicisation. Feminists aspired to give women the tools to permit competition with men on men's terms. This impoverished idea, she argued, encouraged the demonisation of men, not new forms of association.

The 'modality of action' that framed all three accounts of political subjectivity, or constituent power, was anarchy. Writing two years before the Paris Commune Bakunin argued:

> We do not fear anarchy, we invoke it. For we are convinced that anarchy, meaning the unrestricted manifestation of the liberated life of the people, must spring from liberty, equality, the new social order, and the force of the revolution itself against the reaction. There is no doubt that this new life – the popular revolution – will in good time organize itself, but it will create its revolutionary organization from the bottom up, from the circumference to the centre, in accordance with the principle of liberty, and not from the top down or from the centre to the circumference in the manner of all authority.[145]

Unlike Marx, Bakunin and the antiauthoritarians who supported him in 1871, argued that socialism could not be achieved solely by socialising the means of production and democratising the constitution.[146] Unlike republicans who, as Lindsay argues of Arendt, promoted a reflexive 'activity of founding' to resist the absolutism of constituted power, anarchists complicated the notion of founding by theorising struggle as a permanent process of negotiation between plural social groups and associations. This was politics without state sovereignty, but not without force.

As the twentieth century progressed, anarchists increasingly concluded that statism was entrenched. In 1901, Reclus disclosed his own fears when he wrote: 'we may even feel swept away by the winds of reaction'.[147] Anarchist historical sociology explained how and why statism had come to predominate. In Rocker's work, it produced an account of constitutionalisation that called the robustness of constitutional democracy into question and set the prospects for decolonisation to nought.

[143] Goldman 2017, 253–254.
[144] Goldman 1979e, 134.
[145] Bakunin 2000, art. 68016DEF, f. 4. Trans. Dolgoff in Bakunin 1980, 152.
[146] As Andreas Kalyvas notes, in 1843, Marx argued that democracy 'solved the riddle of all constitutions' by making the constitution 'implicitly in essence' and 'existing in reality' the free creation of the 'actual human being' the 'actual people' (Kalyvas Page 13 n.d.). For a discussion of the statement, see Rubel 1983. Doveton notes that democracy became 'much less significant' in Marx and Engels' political lexicon after 1848. However, he argues that they worked with 'an implicit concept of democracy' and that this underpinned their political thought (Doveton 1994, 558).
[147] Reclus 2013, 234.

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CONSTITUTIONALISATION: CULTURE AND ANARCHY

In 1863, lamenting the centralisation of nation states, the elision of over twenty historic nations in France and the removal of the historic independence of the Italian cities and regions, Proudhon predicted that the twentieth century would either open 'the era of federations' or society will 'resume another thousand years of purgatory'.[148] Twenty years later, Kropotkin echoed the sentiment but referred to Alexander Herzen's warning: 'you didn't want socialism, you'll have war'.[149] By the early twentieth century, Landauer, Kropotkin and others had all concluded that statism and nationalism were entrenched. Violence had become the *raison d'état* of the state and unity its death cult. By the mid twentieth century, after the two World Wars, genocide, and the Cold War it was all too easy to see that anarchy was the road *not* travelled.

In *Nationalism and Culture*, an expansive intellectual, social and economic history, Rocker argued that the era of federations had failed to materialise and that a new hellish politics had taken root.[150] Fleeing Berlin after Hitler's seizure of power, he concluded that the collapse of the Weimar Republic was symptomatic of a deeper European malaise. He called the prevailing cultural force 'nationalism' and labelled its antithesis 'culture'.[151]

In this final section, we outline Rocker's account of constitutionalisation to show how the decolonisation of constitutionalism and the celebration of cultural diversity is the *sine qua non* of the constitution of anarchy.

Nationalism and Culture

Rocker's magnum opus, *Nationalism and Culture* was a comprehensive, historicised re-statement of Proudhon's federalist thesis which Bakunin revived in 1871, when the IWMA split into anarchist and Marxist factions. Situating Bolshevism, Nazism and Fascism at the end of a long history of European statism, Rocker described these forms of totalitarianism as expressions of nationalism and linked their predominance to the suppression of the federalist alternative. Like Kropotkin and Landauer, he argued that the destruction of the Paris Commune marked the constitutional turning point. Following Bakunin, he characterised it as the universalisation of a repressive, regulative ideal.

Confusingly, this account of constitutionalisation used 'culture' in a general sense to describe 'the conscious resistance of man against the course of nature' and, in a narrow sense, the free expression of community, and of individuals

[148] Proudhon [1863], *OC*, vol. VIII, 78–79.
[149] Kropotkin 1885, 78.
[150] The first edition was published in 1937. We refer to the second edition, published in 1947, which includes a discussion of post-war reconstruction of Europe. Rocker 1978.
[151] Bernardini 2022, 459.

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in those communities.[152] In the first sense, it referred to the collective coordination and administration of public life, from community, to city, to state and was even consistent with 'slavery and despotism'. In the second, it distinguished arrangements that promoted 'the caste interests of the privileged minority' from those that defended 'the interests of the community'.[153] The usage anticipated the complexity Buber found in the relationship between the social and the political principle.

Rocker's history analysed the drift of European culture towards nationalism.[154] Enthused by an emancipating mission and armed with bogus race theory, Rocker argued that Europeans had played a key role in spreading nationalism across the globe and traced the spread through Christian theologism from the Crusades to the Renaissance and the Reformation, and from the Catholic reconquest of Spain to the colonisation of the Americas. He conceptualised this by showing how the 'will to freedom' had been overcome by the 'will to power'. The terminology, adapted from Nietzsche and common to much German philosophy at this time,[155] described the movement in history, theory and practice from the social towards the political principle.

Reworking Kropotkin's historical sociology, Rocker argued that the will to power had fuelled the drive towards statism in Europe from the high Middle Ages; the domination of man by man was complete by the turn of the twentieth century.[156] Like Kropotkin, he argued that economic inequality had undercut mutual aid in the medieval city states, and that the dismemberment of the medieval social system between the twelfth and fifteenth had been driven by the development of 'mercantilism and economic monopoly'.[157] The shift from absolutism had given rise to an 'abstract concept of freedom' or 'ego-cult' that promoted the 'the oppression of the weak by the strong' in the name of self-advancement and creative expression.[158] Its great success was to have inaugurated the age of the 'Master Man', modelled by Cesare Borgia, championed by Machiavelli and embodied by a litany of absolutists as 'handy with poison and dagger' as the 'rosary and sceptre'.[159] These individuals, eager to proclaim their genius and project their power at every turn, had diluted the 'spirit of responsibility', that 'ethical feeling arising from human association' and essential to solidarity and 'real community'.[160]

[152] Rocker 1978, 342; 343.
[153] Rocker 1978, 86.
[154] Rocker 1978, 47–52.
[155] See also the use of the will to power in the realism of Hans Morgenthau: Morgenthau 1946, 1993.
[156] Rocker 1978, 344–345.
[157] Rocker 1978, 117.
[158] Rocker 1978, 96.
[159] Rocker 1947, 97.
[160] Rocker 1947, 96.

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The culture of nationalism that had taken shape was structured by domination and a hierarchy of peoples. Linguistic, religious, historic, mythical and racialised ethnic norms designated insiders and outsiders, citizens and immigrants, natives and foreigners, and settler-pioneers from the indigenous. The crude nationalist opposition between primitive 'nature' peoples and purportedly civilised, 'culture' peoples showed how oppressively these boundaries had been drawn in European states.[161]

Like Landauer, Rocker used Étienne la Boétie's concept of voluntary servitude to describe the 'deep rooted dependency' that a monolithic, statist culture signified.[162] The compensation for slavishness, he argued, was the promise of meting out punishments to those ranked lower in the hierarchy. But symbolising it, he followed Kropotkin in describing the new forms of association manifestations of 'inhuman, cruel and egoistic'[163] Roman legalism, and the now stunted culture as expressions of Hellenic autonomy.[164] Identifying Hegel as a key figure in the Roman revival and a champion of the Prussian state, Rocker also reinforced the bridge between patriotic German statism and Marxist state socialism. His analysis was more nuanced than Bakunin's characterisation of Teutonic socialism (and free of its anti-Semitic slurs).[165] But the thrust of the argument was the same: Rocker rejected Hegel's 'harsh insistence on the unity of the individual with the state',[166] and opposed state socialism because it demanded proletarian unity.[167]

Following these different currents of thought, Rocker contended that Europe's cultural inheritance was the loss of plurality, the entrenchment of a totalising ideology of dependence and the consolidation of all legitimate *pouvoir* in the constitution and the monopolisation of violence. Organisation had been transformed into *techne*, 'the art of ruling men'.[168] Education had become the 'drill of the national state', leaving the 'sources of creative urge […] quenched' by junk food prepared by 'the all-devouring machine'.[169] As the 'intellectual precipitate of this endless struggle',[170] nationalism had ordered social relationships to advantage elites over masses, creating conflicts that required the perpetual increase of repressive force. What was now called the

[161] Rocker 1947, 343.
[162] Rocker 1947, 134. Cf. Newman 2022.
[163] Rocker 1978, 397.
[164] Rocker 1978, 382.
[165] See, for example, Bakunin's letter to *Le Réveil*, October 1869 (Bakunin 2000, art. 69043_EF). Bakunin rejected the charge that he was anti-Semitic. Yet, after noting that all nations have unique histories, he argued that 'the modern Jew' was generally out of step with 'frankish' socialism: mercantile, bourgeois and exploitative. His remarks about Marx's Jewish heritage in *Statism and Anarchy* reflected this view. Bakunin 2000, art. 73004_ET, f. 221.
[166] Rocker 1978, 398.
[167] Rocker 1978, 235.
[168] Rocker 1978, 409.
[169] Rocker 1947.
[170] Rocker 1978, 86.

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constitution, Rocker noted, was the protection of caste interest: the rule of law, the centralisation of the state, the repressive control of society and the concentration of economic and political power.

This struggle against what we might call the entropy of politics was epitomised by Jacobin, fascist, and 'Bolshevist' ideologies.[171] Liberalism opposed fascism as it did Bolshevism, but Rocker's charge was that liberal constitutionalism could only preserve itself by aping totalitarianism. The attempt to legislate against the extremes in Germany had backfired disastrously, dramatically revealing the fragility of constitutionalism in the process. As he put it: 'Bourgeois democracy has grown senile and has lost all sympathy for the rights it once used to defend'. This 'blunting of its morals', he continued, had clipped its wings, forcing democrats 'to borrow the methods of the enemy that is threatening to devour it'.[172]

Rocker made three interrelated points. First, constitutionalism was an expression of the will to power and nationalism and could only ever act as a soft brake on arbitrary power. Constitutionalism attacked dynastic absolutism while leaving in place the systems of domination from which it issued: private property. Examining the 'deficiencies' of Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, he pinpointed the weakness of 'liberalism itself and all later constitutional schemes' in the 'economic inequalities' created by the right to property. These inequalities 'could not be removed by the separation of powers'.[173]

Second, constitutionalism conflated self-government and national independence, corrupting the civic virtues that constitutionalists sought to engender in the state. History, he argued, had vindicated Proudhon's view that the replication of the French model would result in the curtailment of liberty. Ignoring Proudhon's warnings, Mazzini, Garibaldi and the masses they had inspired had inadvertently planted the 'germ of a new form of human slavery'.[174] Neither their impassioned love for the people nor the sincerity of their republican aspirations could insulate republicanism from fascist remodelling, the centralisation and production of so-called high culture via the doctrine of nationalism. The slide from cultural to political nationalism was not inevitable. As Rocker remarked, Proudhon had warned of the dangers of national unification to try 'to persuade his contemporaries to fight it'.[175] But the trajectory was always discernible, and 'the people' had followed it, willingly or otherwise.

Third, remodelling the constitution to recognise previously marginalised or despised groups may soften those repressive norms and address some of the most egregious discriminations. But it would not dismantle them.

[171] Rocker 1978, 530–532.
[172] Rocker 1978, 535.
[173] Rocker 1978, 142.
[174] Rocker 1978, 243.
[175] Rocker 1947, 232.

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The development of a single political culture, the expression of the collective freedom and the will to power, becomes more and more bland: culture experiences a general 'degradation'.[176] The deeper the state penetrates into the society, the more people become 'mindless automatons' of the will to power.[177] He added: 'The delusive belief in a dictatorship which is today spreading over Europe like a pestilence is only the ripe fruit of an unthinking belief in the state, which has for decades been implanted in men'.[178]

Rocker's proposals for the reconstitution of post-war Europe did not, then, invoke the ancient against the modern constitution, but were instead inspired by Proudhon, 'the most eminent of all the moderns who have inscribed the principles of federalism on their banners'.[179] Borrowing Proudhon's language, he proposed a 'law of association' to empower 'countless alliances arising from free agreement' against 'types of organization and centralizing tendences arising with the development of the modern state'.[180] This, he argued, would avoid arbitrary legal regulation and allow fluid social, political, intellectual and economic forces to find their own level. The only hope, Rocker argued, was a 'federated Europe with a unified economy' and then a 'world federation' which respected the freedoms of all colonised peoples too.[181]

Culture and the Constitution: Towards Anarchy

In the epilogue to the second edition of *Nationalism and Culture*, Rocker reflected on his pre-war predictions, and the likely trajectory of world politics as countries climbed out of the rubble. He juxtaposed two options: the imperialist state capitalism of 'the Kremlin dictatorship', and the liberal nationalist capitalism. Both were underpinned by the principle of state sovereignty, now embedded in the United Nations. Considering how to rescue constitutional values from constitutionalism, he discounted strategies for cultural inclusion and looked instead towards new forms of 'co-operative collaboration' and federalist internationalism; forms of association that would enable the marginalised to outline their own terms of association. This was not 'a plea for particularism, or the small state', but for 'a higher social culture founded on the freedom of man and his free union with his fellow men'.[182] To unshackle culture is to realise anarchy: 'Culture as such is never national, because it always extends beyond the political frame of

[176] Rocker 1947, 426.
[177] Rocker 1947, 529.
[178] ibid.
[179] Rocker 1978, 231.
[180] Rocker 1978, 91.
[181] Rocker 1978, 533.
[182] Rocker 1947, 433.

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the state structure and is confined by no national frontier'.[183] Rocker found the normative framework in Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*. For Montesquieu, he argued, laws were 'adjustments of things to one another and to man'. Law's force derived from 'man's belief in its usefulness' not in 'external compulsory power'.[184] Incorporated into the architecture of nationalism, Montesquieu's concept had morphed into a 'blind faith in law'. Rousseau's *Social Contract* had signalled its demise. Citizens no longer obeyed the law because they considered it useful but because resistance was regarded as 'political blasphemy'.[185] Anarchy was Montesquieu's real home.

Rocker's comprehensive account of the history of state formation and the contradictions of a culture of constitutionalism was a little verbose, but his conception of culture as orders emergent from individuals in communal self-expression, sprang from a conception of anarchy that was widely shared.

CONCLUSION

We opened the chapter with Tully's imaginative recasting of constitutionalism. For Tully, the experience of cultural difference is '*internal* to a culture'. His 'third movement' of constitutionalism thus 'accommodates cultural diversity' while providing a 'social basis for critical reflection on and dissent from one's own cultural institutions and traditions of interpretation'.[186] Our account suggests that the problem of difference is more complex than usually accepted, even if the focus is solely on culture. Cultures are infinitely plural, and anarchist praxis is aimed at pluralising group formation against 'nationalism' or any other homogenising cultural force. Anarchists combine individuality and association and theorise interconnection while avoiding the legal and political entanglements of a constituent power that would engulf them. We have argued that in anarchy, individuals enjoy the benefits of association while remaining sovereign: their relationships are mutually reinforcing.

Those that presume to derive a final point of authority from the unified sovereign are destined to struggle constantly to impose their will on recalcitrant populations. It is impossible to square sovereign authority with the free expression of cultural difference, without erasing the creative forces that give society its dynamism.

The cosmology and social ontology of anarchism suggest that the problem of reconciling difference with the existing or prevailing ideology of constitutionalism is not really a reconciliation at all. Constitutionalism has evolved across all cultures towards a European ideal.[187] Such is the weight of history,

[183] Rocker 1947, 422.
[184] Rocker 1947, 160.
[185] Rocker 1947, 164.
[186] Tully 1995, 207.
[187] Tully 1995, 13, 97.

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notably the dominance of mass cultures, that the accommodation of difference is only ever on terms deleterious to marginalised groups. The anarchists argue that any attempt at assimilation is an act of domination, for as long as the presupposition is in favour of a sovereign power or a single people, or final point of constitutional authority, and for as long as the conscious insurrection of the peoples is latent and suppressed.

From the anarchist point of view, the near-infinite diversity of communities and cultures that shape our world is the constitutive anarchy of world politics, not simply the inter-state relations the so-called realists point to. In other words, the problem of anarchy is not transcended by the establishment of the state. It is not even simply deflected to the international domain. Rather, anarchy is the constitutive context for politics as such. In *Confessions of a Revolutionary* (1848), Proudhon put it like this: the ideal 'society is organised, living, progressive; it thinks, speaks, acts like a man, precisely because it is no longer represented by a man, because it no longer recognises personal authority, because in it, as in any organised and living being, as in Pascal's infinity, the centre is everywhere, the circumference nowhere'.[188]

The anti-imperial and post-colonial impulse of Tully's drive to multiplicity is therefore severely constrained by the arbitrary parameters of the nation state, its arbitrary centralisation, the reduction of difference to ethnicity and a prioritisation of ethnic cultures over all others. For the anarchist, cultural recognition is infinitely more pluralist. All political groups are each *res publica*, or 'public things', as Proudhon put it; they are contingent instantiations of order in anarchy. In *The Solution to the Social Problem* (1848), Proudhon stated:

> The Republic is a positive anarchy. It is neither liberty subject to order, as in the constitutional monarchy, nor liberty imprisoned IN order, as the provisional government understands it, but liberty delivered from all its obstacles, superstition, prejudice, sophistry, speculation and authority; it is a reciprocal, not limited, liberty; it is the liberty that is the MOTHER, not the daughter, of order.[189]

Rather than seek an escape from these realities, the anarchists ask us to experiment and embrace the possibilities that anarchy promises. Proudhon argued that '[t]he highest perfection of society is found in the union of order with anarchy'.[190] For the anarchist, the respect for pluralism, difference and diversity necessitates an anarchist constitution, that is, one that respects and enables the spontaneous emergence and division of groups, and protects the dignity and development of the individual and their groups. This social ontology, which

[188] Proudhon [1848], *OC*, vol. IX, 192.
[189] Proudhon [1848], *OC*, vol. VI, 87.
[190] Proudhon [1840], *OC*, vol. I, 224. On page 216, he states, 'as man seeks justice in equality, so society seeks order in anarchy'. In the appended footnote, he points out that the formal definition of anarchy as the 'absence of master or sovereign' is often confused with the colloquial definition as the 'absence of principles or rules; from which derives the synonym with *disorder*' (Proudhon [1840], 216).

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sits within a conception of nature or a cosmology, also distinctly anarchic, resembles the 'the anarchical society' theorised in International Relations.[191] Anarchy is both the 'is' and the 'ought' of politics, and insofar as freedom is desired, it is our only logical *grundnorm*. There is no necessary shape to any constitution. This can only be determined by the collective conscience and power of those who establish it and those the founders struggle against. This antinomic, endless re-calibration of society is our lot. The question, then, is what sort of constitution could possibly withstand this amount of change? The answer, the anarchists believed, was federalism. And it is to this that we now turn.

[191] See, for example, Bull 1977.

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