

Introduction

We are told that the word Anarchy needs constant explanation; that whenever used in its literal sense it must be defined. Is there any other word of which this is not true? The introduction of new ideas into a man's mind is not accompanied by the use of a specially coined word, but by the adaptation of old words to broader uses.

Lucy Parsons, "Anarchism"

This book aims to provide a philosophical defense of egalitarian anarchism, more popularly known as *social anarchism*. It is certainly not the first book to attempt to defend this position; numerous egalitarian anarchists across time and place have already produced something of a canon of works expounding and arguing for the ideology.¹ However, this book stands apart from these prior efforts in that it employs the tools of contemporary analytic philosophy to construct its argument. While popular defenses of anarchism generally seek to persuade through the use of rhetoric and informal argumentation, this book aspires to provide something closer to a *proof* of its thesis, with heavy reliance on logic, the precise definition of terms, and concepts developed by academic philosophers.²

This book will also differ from canonical anarchist texts in that it defends a moral position rather than a social arrangement. Typically, anarchist texts present social anarchism as a socialist, stateless political

¹ Some influential examples include Mikhail Bakunin (1953), Alexander Berkman (2003), Murray Bookchin (2004), Noam Chomsky (2013), Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin (2021), Luigi Fabbri (1922), Emma Goldman (1911), Daniel Guérin (1970), Peter Kropotkin (1995), Nestor Makhno (1996), Errico Malatesta (1994), Louise Michel (1896), Ito Noe (2005), Lucy Parsons (2004), Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1876) (though Proudhon is claimed by many anarchist traditions), Elisée Reclus (1899), Rudolf Rocker (2004), and Charlotte Wilson (2005).

² The downside to this approach is that it will make the book less accessible to those who do not have prior philosophical training. However, the hope is that non-philosophers with an interest in anarchism will still be able to follow the broader argument even if some of the details get a bit technical.

system. They then attempt to explain how the system works in practice, appeal to moral principles to justify the system, propose strategies for realizing it, and address various objections that might call into question the viability or general attractiveness of the proposed system. By contrast, this book is strictly concerned with the moral principles that motivate social anarchists to endorse the abolition of the state and capitalism. Thus, when the book talks of “social anarchism” or “egalitarian anarchism,” it is using these terms to refer to a specific set of moral principles (to be introduced in the subsequent chapter) as opposed to a way of structuring political institutions, society, and the economy.

In addition to the so-called canonical anarchist texts, there have been a few anarchist philosophers who have employed the tools of analytic political philosophy to either explicate or defend anarchism *qua* moral philosophy. However, this book stands apart from these prior efforts in that it *defends* an *egalitarian* anarchist position. Typically, when philosophers write about anarchism, they are primarily concerned with explicating the anarchist position rather than defending it.³ While some do attempt to provide a sustained defense of anarchism, they generally argue for a more minimal version of the position that merely maintains that people are not obligated to obey the laws of the state.⁴ Or, alternatively, they defend a more expansive *market* anarchist or *anarcho-capitalist* position that assigns each person the power to unilaterally acquire a robust set of property rights over an unlimited quantity of natural resources.⁵ This posited power opens the door to a significant degree of licensed inequality, as some individuals might acquire much more property than others. Those with less would then have moral duties to respect the property rights of those with more even though doing so leaves them comparatively worse off.

Notably, this property-friendly anarchist position is not one that most self-identified anarchists would endorse. Rather, the bulk of the anarchist movement is composed of self-identified *anarcho-communists* or *social anarchists* who favor equality and reject capitalism, markets, and the private property rights on which these institutions rest. Indeed, as will be discussed subsequently, a popular opinion among these anarchists is that anarcho-capitalism – and, to a lesser extent, market anarchism – are not even genuine forms of anarchism, as they lack the egalitarian and

³ See, for example, Alan Ritter (1980), David Miller (1984), and Paul McLaughlin (2016).

⁴ Robert Paul Wolff's (1970) influential book on anarchism takes this approach. For a more recent defense, see Crispin Sartwell (2008).

⁵ See Michael Huemer (2013) and Gary Chartier (2013).

anti-capitalist commitments that are essential to anarchism. While the book will not take a stand on this question, its purpose is to propose and defend a moral position that will be much more amenable to these egalitarian anarchists.

The outline of the book is as follows. The remainder of this introduction discusses the general aims of the book and situates the book within the broader ideological landscape by explaining the relationship between its argument, the anarchist movement, and some of the defended position's philosophical rivals. Specifically, Section I.1 begins by considering the question of what it means for a moral position to be an *anarchist* position and whether the position defended by the book can be reasonably characterized as "social anarchism." Section I.2 then discusses the central aims of the book in a bit more detail, the primary two being (1) showing that social anarchism is coherent (in a sense to be described subsequently) and (2) showing that the position is independently plausible. Finally, Section I.3 argues that social anarchism will be attractive (in at least some respect) to partisans of a number of rival philosophical positions. In this way, the section aims to show that the theoretical costs of accepting the position are not as high for these partisans as it might first appear.

With this introductory groundwork in place, Chapter 1 begins the main argument of the book by introducing the five moral principles that make up the social anarchist position. Specifically, it defines social anarchism as the conjunction of the following five theses. First, there is the consent theory of legitimacy. This thesis holds that persons are obligated to obey the laws of the state only if they have consented to do so. Given that practically no one has consented in this way, this thesis entails the *philosophical anarchist* conclusion that all existing states are illegitimate, that is, they lack the power to oblige. Second, there is the Lockean proviso. This proposition places a constraint on persons' powers to convert unowned natural resources into private property. A defining commitment of *right-libertarianism*, this proviso holds that persons can acquire property rights over some bit of land or natural resource if and only if they leave "enough and as good" for others. The third anarchist thesis is the self-ownership thesis. This thesis asserts that each person has the same set of ownership rights over her body that she would have over a fully owned thing (including a permission to use her body, a claim against others using it without permission, etc.). Fourth, the anarchist position asserts that persons do not have private property rights over any external natural resources. And, finally, the social anarchist position includes an endorsement of luck egalitarianism as the moral principle regulating the

permissible use of unowned external objects. (This will be called “the anarchist conclusion”.)

Notably, the social anarchist position includes both principles that are standardly associated with libertarianism and egalitarian principles that are widely endorsed by socialist philosophers. This pairing is not without precedent; left-libertarian philosophers have influentially endorsed both varieties of principle and defended their compatibility.⁶ However, it will be argued that social anarchism represents a distinctive synthesis of libertarian and egalitarian moral positions, both because of the particular theses that it posits and because of the stronger logical relation that it claims obtains between them (more on this in Section I.2).

The five anarchist theses having been introduced, Chapter 2 argues that these principles can all be derived from a single meta-principle that limits which moral theories qualify as theoretically acceptable. This posited *moral tyranny constraint* holds that a theory of duties is acceptable only if full compliance with that theory (and the demands of morality more generally) would not allow any person to unilaterally, discretionarily, and foreseeably act in a way that would leave others with less advantage – that is, whatever it is that matters morally vis-à-vis distributive justice – than they would have possessed given some other choice by the agent. The chapter then explicates the various components of the constraint, defends the constraint’s plausibility, and explains how it entails three of the posited anarchist theses (with subsequent chapters arguing that these theses entail the two remaining anarchist theses). Finally, the chapter addresses three potential objections that might be raised against the moral tyranny constraint.

Chapter 3 begins the process of explicating the logical relations that obtain between the various anarchist theses. Taking the Lockean proviso as its starting point, it argues that this thesis entails two further conclusions embraced by social anarchists. First the chapter argues that, contrary to what

⁶ Left-libertarians differ from right-libertarians in that, while both endorse the self-ownership thesis and affirm that people can acquire private property, left-libertarians believe that this acquisition is subject to demanding egalitarian constraints. For example, Peter Vallentyne (1998) both posits that people own themselves – a core libertarian thesis (discussed in detail in Chapter 1) – and that a society can justly tax away the full benefit that a person receives from natural resources without violating said self-ownership. Similarly, Michael Otsuka (2003) argues that one might endorse a particular version of the self-ownership thesis while still insisting that justice obtains if and only if the acquisition of private property is constrained such that each person has an equal opportunity to obtain welfare. Hillel Steiner (2000) defends a position wherein he accepts the libertarian right to self-ownership while simultaneously affirming the egalitarian position that each person is entitled to an equal share of external natural resources. And Philippe Van Parijs (2000) posits that self-ownership can be balanced with an egalitarian maximin principle that structures resource ownership in a way that maximizes the opportunities available to the worst off.

right-libertarians typically maintain, the Lockean proviso implies that no one owns (or could reasonably come to own) any natural resources. This is because any appropriation of such resources would leave others worse off in a way that the proviso does not allow, which, in turn, implies that no such appropriation of natural resources has occurred. By contrast, the chapter argues that the proviso is *necessarily* satisfied when it comes to each agent's own body. Thus, while people do not own any external resources, they can easily come to own themselves via acts of self-appropriation.

Chapter 4 provides an alternative argument for rejecting private property. While Chapter 3 attempts to derive this conclusion from the Lockean proviso, this chapter begins with the consent theory of legitimacy as its starting premise. It then argues that property ownership is a form of legitimate authority. Thus, if one accepts a consent theory of legitimacy, one would also have to maintain that property ownership has consent as its necessary condition. However, given that no one has ever consented to the appropriation of natural resources, it follows that no one owns any such resources. The chapter concludes by considering three objections to this argument. It also discusses what the consent-based argument against private property implies vis-à-vis the self-ownership thesis.

Notably, both Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 begin with a libertarian starting premise. They, thus, put significant dialectical pressure on libertarians to reject their standard conclusion that persons have property rights over land and objects. However, Chapter 5 notes that this result underdetermines which positive position libertarians (or, strictly speaking, any property rights theorist) ought to endorse. One option is to simply concede that people lack any sort of claim rights when it comes to natural resources. The chapter labels this proposal "the *Hobbesian conclusion*" and argues that it must be rejected because it violates the moral tyranny constraint. Given the theoretical unacceptability of this option, the chapter contends that libertarians and property rights theorists should, instead, accept what it calls the *anarchist conclusion*. This thesis holds that persons *do* possess certain claims against others using unowned resources, where these claims correspond to the prescriptions of a luck egalitarian principle of distributive justice. The chapter then argues that libertarians have limited basis for rejecting the anarchist conclusion, as it is compatible with both their favored property-based theories of justice and the arguments that support such theories. Finally, it argues that libertarians' tacit presuppositions also commit them to the egalitarian aspect of the anarchist conclusion.

In short, Chapter 5 suggests that libertarians ought to accept that people have some variety of egalitarian distributive claims vis-à-vis natural

resources (as opposed to property claims). While it does not establish that these claims should correspond to a *luck* egalitarian theory of distributive justice, this conclusion follows from Chapter 2's argument that luck egalitarianism satisfies the moral tyranny constraint in a way that strict egalitarianism does not. However, Chapter 6 points out that the dominant interpretation of luck egalitarianism fails to fully satisfy the moral tyranny constraint. To resolve this problem, it offers an alternative interpretation that both eliminates the possibility of moral tyranny and rescues luck egalitarianism from two other prominent objections that have been raised against the position. In this way, the chapter demonstrates that there is a plausible egalitarian distributive principle that follows from the moral tyranny constraint (by way of various libertarian moral theses). This result completes the book's defense of the social anarchist position, with the first six chapters having collectively shown that there is a coherent and plausible set of libertarian and egalitarian theses that all follow from the moral tyranny constraint.

Social anarchism *qua* political philosophy having been presented and defended, Chapter 7 notes that there is a significant lacuna in the posited social anarchist position. One might expect that any view described as an "anarchist" position will include an endorsement of the *political anarchist* thesis that the mere existence of a state is unjust, with some persons thereby having an obligation to abolish any existing states. However, this contention does not appear among the five social anarchist theses defended by the book. Rather, as noted previously, social anarchism includes only the endorsement of the weaker philosophical anarchist thesis that all existing states lack the power to impose obligations on their purported subjects. Chapter 7 defends this choice by arguing that political anarchism is implausible. Specifically, it contends that political anarchists must provide an analysis of statehood that entails that (a) any group that qualifies as a state is unjust in a way that its non-state counterpart is not and (b) there are existing states. It then argues that there is no plausible analysis of statehood that satisfies both of these *desiderata*. Thus, political anarchism fails by its own lights. Finally, the chapter concludes by considering and rejecting a recent argument that philosophical anarchism collapses into either political anarchism or statism.

I.1 The Boundaries of Anarchism

The book aims to defend a set of moral theses that it calls "social anarchism." However, this label raises the difficult question of what counts

as an anarchist philosophical position. The difficulty emerges from the fact that many different people have claimed the term “anarchism” for their views despite the fact that those views differ in significant ways and, quite often, conflict with one another. For example, as noted previously, most self-identified anarchists – both past and present – are anarcho-communists or social anarchists who call for the abolition of the state, capitalism, and private property. By contrast, a small but vocal group of anarcho-capitalists argue that the state should be abolished but not capitalism. In their view, each person can rightfully acquire and exchange private property, and they call for market-based services to replace much of the activity typically carried out by states (e.g., private security companies would replace the police and military).⁷ Notably, social anarchists often wish to deny the “anarchist” label to anarcho-capitalists, arguing that genuine anarchism is incompatible with an embrace of property, markets, and capitalism.⁸ Obviously, anarcho-capitalists disagree. Thus, a question is raised regarding how one might resolve this dispute – and, more generally, how one is to determine whether *any* given position (e.g., the one defended in this book) is a genuine anarchist position.

As a starting point for answering this general question, it is helpful to consider some of the arguments philosophers have advanced to try to resolve the debate over whether or not anarcho-capitalism is a genuine form of anarchism. A popular strategy for denying anarcho-capitalism the “anarchist” label involves arguing that anarcho-capitalism’s pro-market commitments contradict an essential anarchist thesis. For example, John Clark posits that “the essence of anarchism is . . . not the theoretical opposition to the state, but the practical and theoretical struggle against domination” (1984, 70), where inequality and private property are forms of domination (120). Thus, one might appeal to the conjunction of these premises to conclude that anarcho-capitalism is not a genuine form of anarchism, as it licenses both inequality and property.⁹ By contrast, Roderick Long argues against this conclusion by noting that there are many influential thinkers who are widely recognized as anarchists by social

⁷ For some influential defenses of this position, see David Friedman (1989) and Michael Huemer (2013).

⁸ Some examples include Alan Carter (2013, 259), Peter Sabatini (1994–1995), and Iain McKay et al. (2008). See also Barbara Goodwin (2007, 143).

⁹ McKay et al. (2008) appeal to Clark in this way as part of a lengthy and detailed argument against counting anarcho-capitalism as a genuine variety of anarchism. That said, Clark does not direct his quoted comments directly against anarcho-capitalists, and other remarks of his suggest a willingness to count those who oppose the state but endorse property as genuine anarchists (1978, 19, 21).

anarchists despite holding views that social anarchists otherwise consider disqualifying when it comes to anarcho-capitalists (2018, 287–95). Given that there is no principled basis for denying the “anarchist” label to anarcho-capitalists but not these paradigmatic anarchist thinkers, he concludes that social anarchists should accept that anarchism is a big tent that includes anarcho-capitalists.¹⁰

The problem with both of these argumentative strategies is that they rest on premises that a critical interlocutor could easily reject. The former argument presupposes that there is some commitment that is essential to anarchism such that any broader anarchist position must be at least compatible with this commitment or, more strongly, must follow from it. While the essentialist claim may not, itself, be terribly controversial – though anti-essentialists might reject it and contend that the various anarchist positions merely bear a “family resemblance” to one another without sharing any single property – there will inevitably be controversy over which commitment is the essential one. Is a rejection of domination the defining feature of anarchism? Why not think, instead, that anarchism’s essential feature is a respect for property rights (with opposition to the state following from the fact that states necessarily violate such rights)? It is not clear how one might resolve such disagreement. Thus, the essentialist argument for the claim that anarcho-capitalists are not anarchists seems to rest on an indefensible premise.

Long’s argument encounters a similar difficulty. He is right that many social anarchists have been willing to grant the “anarchist” label to thinkers who embrace positions associated with anarcho-capitalism (e.g., Benjamin Tucker and Lysander Spooner). However, suppose that someone insisted that this was a mistake. Such a rejection of Long’s starting premise – namely, that social anarchists are *correct* to judge that these thinkers are anarchists – would render his argument unsound. Of course, critics can dispute the core premise of any argument, but, in this case, there is no obvious way to defend the premise in question without rendering Long’s argument superfluous. Note that any argument for the proposition that the thinkers in question are genuine anarchists would seemingly have to appeal to some general account of which positions qualify as anarchist positions. However, if one had such a general account, then one could

¹⁰ Contra Long’s argument, McKay et al. (2020, section G) argue that there are important differences between anarcho-capitalists and the property-sympathetic thinkers that social anarchists recognize as anarchists. Thus, they would insist that there *is* a principled basis for uniquely denying anarcho-capitalists the “anarchist” label.

forego Long's argument and appeal to that account directly to resolve the debate over whether anarcho-capitalism is a genuine variety of anarchism.

The foregoing discussion reveals that both of the prior arguments suffer from a common vulnerability: They each assume as their starting premise that one can uncontroversially apply the "anarchist" label to specific commitments or thinkers. However, in each case, there is no obvious supporting argument for this assumption that does not beg the question. To defend a particular application of the "anarchist" label, one must seemingly posit a general theory demarcating which ideas and/or thinkers are anarchist in character, where this theory will be just as controversial as the particular judgments that it is supposed to support. To see this, consider how one might resolve a disagreement between someone advancing one of the just-discussed arguments and an interlocutor who (a) denied that the posited commitments (or thinkers) were anarchist in character and (b) rejected any general theory of anarchism that had this implication. Given these positions, there is no obvious rejoinder available, as one seemingly needs a general theory to resolve disputes about particular commitments/thinkers but also established judgments about particular commitments/thinkers to resolve disputes about the general theory. Granted, one might accuse the interlocutor of simply not grasping the relevant conceptual truths; however, this reply is implausible given that it seems to be at least an open question whether a given commitment (or thinker) is, in fact, an anarchist position (or thinker). Thus, both arguments about the proper boundaries of anarchism appear to be ultimately inconclusive.

This result might suggest a more general form of skepticism about the book's claim that it is presenting and defending an *anarchist* political philosophy. On this skeptical view, the apparent intractability of debates over what counts as anarchism reveals that one ought to adopt a *non-factualist* understanding of these debates. Specifically, the non-factualist holds that the best explanation of this intractability is that there is simply no fact of the matter as to whether or not a given thinker/social arrangement/philosophical position is anarchist in character. Thus, the proposition that the book presents an anarchist viewpoint is neither true nor false, which is to say that it is lacking in genuine semantic content.

Alternatively, one might adopt a *quietist* view that takes debates over the boundaries of anarchism to be merely verbal rather than substantive. This variety of skepticism begins with the observation that there are millions of distinct ideological positions, where these positions are individuated based upon the particular propositions they affirm. When two people intractably

disagree about whether one of these positions is a variety of anarchism, their disagreement results from the fact that they mean different things when they use the term “anarchism,” with one person using the term to refer to a particular set of positions while the other uses it to refer to a non-identical set. For this reason, the quietist maintains that the disagreement is apparent rather than genuine, as it can be dissolved through greater verbal precision: the person who says the position is a form of anarchism is really saying that it is a form of anarchism₁ while the person who disagrees is denying that it is a form of anarchism₂. In this way, the quietist can (i) explain why there is disagreement – namely, the disagreeing parties are using the same word to refer to different things – (ii) resolve the disagreement by showing that the two asserted claims are actually compatible, and (iii) still affirm that there is a fact of the matter when it comes to whether a given position is appropriately classified as anarchism₁ (or anarchism₂, or anarchism₃, etc.).

While the quietist does assign a truth value to the proposition that the book is advancing an anarchist position, her view strips this claim of any philosophical significance. Once her demand for verbal precision has been met, the truth of such a proposition becomes simply a matter of definition: if anarchism₁ is defined as including some position *p*, then it is an analytic truth that *p* is a form of anarchism₁. Thus, the book’s assertion that it is defending an anarchist position would either be false or trivial depending on one’s stipulated definition of “anarchism.” If “anarchism” is defined such that the book’s posited position is (part of) its extension, then the book’s assertion is true; if “anarchism” is not defined in this way, then the claim is false. Either way, the result is uninteresting, and the assertion does not seem worth making – at least on the quietist view.

So, what, then, should one think of the book’s claim that it is presenting and defending an anarchist philosophical position? Against both of the just-discussed skeptical positions, the book’s contention is that this claim has both semantic content and philosophical significance. Specifically, the claim has nontrivial semantic content because it is an assertion about the relationship between philosophical ideas and a particular social movement. The task of the remainder of this section is to briefly describe this relation and this movement, beginning with the latter.

As a matter of social fact, there are many people across time and space who have called themselves anarchists. While there is likely no single belief that these people share, there is a constellation of beliefs that they will endorse at much higher rates than will people outside of this group. These beliefs include the contention that the state should be eliminated, that

police and prisons should be abolished, that (almost) all wars are unjust, that capitalism and/or markets are morally bad forms of economic organization, that private property rights are unacceptable constraints on freedom, that resources should be distributed from each according to her ability to each according to her need, that production should be managed by trade unions and/or democratically, that centralized state planning of the economy is an unacceptable alternative, that gender norms are objectionable constraints on autonomy, that significant social changes need to be made to eliminate racist and sexist practices that prop up White supremacy and patriarchy, that borders should be open or eliminated entirely, that children have a robust set of rights and should not be subject to expansive parental authority or compulsory education, that consuming animal products is exploitative and immoral, and that humans should significantly limit their activities to preserve and restore natural ecosystems, among others. This group of people also will tend to endorse the views espoused by a particular set of thinkers (e.g., those who produced the so-called canonical texts listed in Footnote 1), champion certain causes (the efforts of the CNT/FAI and the Zapatistas, Bundism, the Rojavan revolution, etc.), and affiliate with certain institutions (antifascist groups, the Industrial Workers of the World, etc.). Call the set of self-identified anarchists who exhibit these tendencies *the anarchist movement*.

So, what is the posited relation between the anarchist movement and the egalitarian philosophical position that the book calls “social anarchism?” Obviously, it will not be the case that every member of the anarchist movement endorses social anarchism. As noted previously, self-identified anarchists regularly disagree about most questions, including the truth of each of the claims listed in the previous paragraph. Indeed, it was for this reason that the movement is specified via reference to self-identification rather than any shared set of beliefs held by its members. Given that there is limited *actual* endorsement of social anarchism by self-identified anarchists, the suggestion here is that a substantial number of anarchists *would* endorse the social anarchist position if given adequate philosophical context (e.g. they were presented with a full slate of rival views and the best arguments for and against those views). In other words, if debate and reflection would lead self-identified anarchists to ultimately converge on the social anarchist position, then the position has a claim to the “anarchist” label. Call this proposal the *social movement approach*.

As an analogy, consider a small planet that forms in a field of smaller matter scattered across space. Over time, the gravity of the planet will pull surrounding material either onto its surface or into its orbit, with the

greatest pull being exerted on the most spatially proximate material (holding mass constant for these purposes). One might similarly think of self-identified anarchists as being located at different points in n -dimensional ideological space, where n is equal to the total number of normative philosophical propositions that a person can hold and where an anarchist's location along a particular dimension is determined by whether or not she affirms the particular normative proposition associated with that dimension. Similarly, the social anarchist position sits in this space in virtue of the propositions it affirms.¹¹ Finally, to claim that social anarchism is a genuinely anarchist view is to assert that it will exert an analogous sort of gravitational pull on the self-identified anarchists surrounding it, steadily pulling a large number of them into its orbit (with greatest effect on those anarchists who sit at the most proximate points in ideological space).

There are a few advantages to this proposal. First, one can endorse the social movement approach while also conceding to the quietist that there are other rival concepts that could equally be called "anarchism." While essentialists must insist that there is a pre-theoretical concept of anarchism whose necessary and sufficient conditions of application can be grasped through intuition, the social movement approach can grant that its proposed account of what qualifies as an anarchist view is merely stipulated. However, this concession does not entail that it is trivial to declare that social anarchism is an anarchist position. Rather, this claim expresses a significant and contestable thesis about the relationship between the posited philosophical position and the anarchist social movement.

The second advantage of using the anarchist label in this way is that it allows for the possibility of revisionary anarchist theories – that is, theories that are anarchist in character despite the fact that they are not endorsed by most self-identified anarchists. On the essentialist view, revisionary accounts of an ideology are rendered paradoxical, as they apply the concept of that ideology to targets that, *by the accounts' own admission*, do not meet the necessary conditions for the application of that concept. Or, to put this point another way, given that revisionary accounts deny some core tenet of the ideology in question, why claim that they are revising that ideology

¹¹ More precisely, it would be a cluster of points, as the egalitarian anarchist position in this context should be understood not merely as a set of propositions, but, rather, a *set of such sets* S , where a set of views V belongs to S if and only if V includes each of the five theses presented in Chapter 1 and no propositions incompatible with the conjunction of these theses. Each member of S would then occupy a point in ideological space. However, it is easier to present the analogy if egalitarian anarchism is taken to occupy a single point rather than many, so this bit of complexity is ignored in the main text.

rather than rejecting it in favor of a rival view? The social movement approach helps to answer this question and thereby make sense of revisionary theories: When someone claims to be positing a heterodox version of some ideological position, she is claiming that proponents of the existing orthodox version would, upon adequate reflection, ultimately endorse her proposed heterodox view.¹²

I.2 The Aims of the Book

The book's position is called "social *anarchism*" because it aspires to present a philosophical position that stands in the posited relation to the anarchist movement. It is certainly not the case that most self-identified anarchists *actually* endorse the position. This is partly due to the fact that the position is stated in terms of concepts and principles that are peculiar to academic philosophy and not widely discussed by actual participants in the anarchist movement. Additionally, the position has some revisionary implications that many anarchists would refuse to endorse (these will be discussed in Chapter 7). So why think that self-identified anarchists would ultimately accept the proposed view? The convenient answer is that anarchists, like all persons interested in identifying the correct moral theory, will be attracted to the position in proportion to its general theoretical virtues. Thus, the aim of the book is to establish that social anarchism possesses these theoretical virtues, thereby simultaneously defending the position *qua* political philosophy and the position's claim to the anarchist label.

That said, the book's argument for social anarchism will appeal to a number of principles that will be particularly attractive to self-identified anarchists. Thus, anarchists will be more likely to endorse the social anarchist position after adequate philosophical reflection relative to non-anarchists. As will be discussed shortly, one aim of the book is to show that social anarchism is coherent in the sense that its five theses are connected via relations of logical entailment. Given that self-identified anarchists

¹² For example, G. A. Cohen suggests that a core socialist commitment is eliminating all unchosen disadvantage such that any social differences reflect only "difference of taste or choice" (2008, 18). He recognizes that this is a revisionary view, as it declares unjust certain economic regimes that are widely endorsed by socialists. However, in response to this observation, he states that "I acknowledge that socialists have advocated such regimes, and I have no wish, or need, to deny that those regimes can be called *socialist* . . . What I do need to insist is that such systems contradict the fundamental principles animating socialists, when those principles are fully thought through" (23). In this way, he seemingly endorses the social movement approach to justify his revisionary account of socialism *qua* political philosophy.

often endorse the theses that function as antecedents in these entailment relations, they will also be disposed to accept the consequent theses as well (after philosophical reflection). Thus, they will be particularly disposed to endorse the social anarchist position.

When it comes to establishing the theoretical virtues of social anarchism, the book will attempt to demonstrate that the position is both coherent and independently plausible. As a rough statement of the former virtue, a *coherent* position is one where the adoption of any additional principles beyond one's starting principle is motivated by that starting principle.¹³ The virtue of coherence is particularly important for establishing the plausibility of positions that are composed of unusual combinations of normative theses, for example, social anarchism with its simultaneous endorsement of libertarian and egalitarian moral principles. To see the worry here, suppose that one embraces some libertarian principle *L*. Given this starting commitment, should one build a political philosophy that endorses not only *L* as its starting premise but also some egalitarian principle *S* (assuming that *L* and *S* are compatible)? There are two reasons one might have doubts about the wisdom of such a project, each of which can be understood as a kind of coherence worry.

First, the worry about the position's coherence can be understood as a worry about *arbitrariness*. Note that there are numerous alternative principles and combinations of principles that might be adopted as a supplement to *L*. Why, then, affirm a political philosophy that endorses the conjunction of *L* and *S* rather than one that affirms *L* and some other principle *T* – or, alternatively, *L* and *S* and *T*? Even supposing that *L* is compatible with both *S* and *T* (i.e., there is no contradiction between *L* and either of these two latter theses), the fact that these principles *can* be jointly held does not establish that they *should* be so held. By contrast, a coherent political position is one where a stronger logical relation than mere compatibility obtains between *L* and *S*, where this relation justifies the particular set of principles chosen.

Note that it is not adequate to simply provide freestanding justifications of *L* and *S*, that is, independent reasons why each respective moral principle is attractive. This is because a given principle might be compatible with many other independently plausible principles that are, themselves, incompatible. For example, it might be the case that *L* is compatible with *S* and is similarly compatible with *T*, and there is something attractive

¹³ This is how Barbara Fried defines the notion when criticizing left-libertarian positions for lacking coherence (2004; 87fn50, 89).

about both *S* and *T*; however, it also turns out that *S* and *T* contradict one another. Thus, to embrace *L* & *S* requires that one reject *L* & *T*, even though all three principles are equally plausible. Given this possibility, one might worry that a theoretical position composed of independently attractive principles bound together only by the very weak compatibility relation is theoretically objectionable due to it being unacceptably arbitrary. At the very least, one might ask of the person who endorses *L* and *S* whether she is confident that she has found the optimal combination of moral principles, or whether there might be superior combinations of compatible principles available to her.

Second (and relatedly), one might take the worry about coherence to be a worry about how the posited position would hold up in the context of a debate with those who endorse various rival positions. Specifically, consider the ideologue who endorses *L* as a core principle but rejects *S*. Given her rejection of *S*, a demonstration that *L* and *S* are compatible will do nothing to push her away from her position, as she can admit such compatibility while denying that there is any need for her to append *S* to her already-accepted principle. Of course, one might appeal to various intuitive considerations that favor the adoption of *S*, but a steadfast ideologue could simply deny that she feels the force of the presented intuition pumps.

This worry about the coherence of a conjunctive position that endorses both *L* and *S*, then, can be understood as a worry that *L* and *S* fail to adequately hang together in a way that gives the position a dialectical advantage over a position that endorses *L* but not *S*. In other words, were the conjunctive position coherent, then there would be a logical relation between *L* and *S* such that those who merely embraced *L* would be rationally compelled to accept the conjunctive position. Specifically, it would have to be the case that either *L* – when coupled with some conjunction of uncontroversial premises *U* – entails *S*, or that the most plausible grounds of *L* (i.e., the most plausible premise that, together with *U*, entails *L*) also entails *S* when conjoined with *U*. This book will argue that there are such direct relations of logical entailment that connect the libertarian and egalitarian theses that make up the social anarchist position. In this way, the book aims to establish that social anarchism is coherent in the sense described earlier, with the position thereby capturing the associated dialectical and theoretical advantages.

In addition to demonstrating that the various anarchist theses are logically connected, the book will also argue that they are independently plausible. It will do this in two ways. First, as noted in the opening section,

it will argue that the anarchist theses follow from an independent meta-principle that constrains which moral theories are acceptable (the moral tyranny constraint). Insofar as this meta-principle is plausible, it will represent a novel reason for accepting the anarchist position that it entails. Second, the book will show that, once the anarchist theses are suitably adjusted to conform to the moral tyranny constraint, they avoid many of the serious objections that plague their unadjusted counterparts. By negating these reasons for rejecting the anarchist position – in addition to having provided the aforementioned positive reason for accepting it – the book aims to show that the all-things-considered balance of reasons favors accepting social anarchism.

In this way, the book aims to increase the metaphorical gravity of the anarchist position. By revealing the logical connections that render the position coherent, the book will help to pull in anarchists who endorse some of the social anarchist theses but not others. Additionally, by enhancing the independent plausibility of the position, the hope is to attract those whose views place them well outside of the part of ideological space primarily occupied by self-identified anarchists. In particular, the book aims to put dialectical pressure on right-libertarians, who share many of the social anarchist's philosophical intuitions and methodological commitments but reach very different conclusions when it comes to distributive justice. The book will try to show that right-libertarians are mistaken in their conclusions and should, thus, enter the social anarchist orbit.

I.3 Something for Everyone

If the argument of the book succeeds, the resulting conclusion will be of some practical use to those across the political spectrum. For anarchists, the uses of the book are more apparent, but still worth discussing. First, the philosophical position it defends (and the argument for that position) can serve as an intellectual foundation for justifying various anarchist political practices. G. A. Cohen (1994) provides a helpful discussion of this relation between theory and practice when laying out the moral principles he takes to be constitutive of socialism. It is worth quoting him at length on this point:

An essential ingredient in the Right's breakthrough was an intellectual self-confidence that was grounded in fundamental theoretical work by academics

such as Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, and Robert Nozick. In one instructive sense, those authors did not propose new ideas. Instead, they explored, developed, and forthrightly reaffirmed the Right's traditional principles. Those principles are not so traditional to the British *political* Right as they are to the American, but they are traditional nevertheless, in the important sense that they possess a historical depth which is associated with the conceptual and moral depth at which they are located. . . . The point of theory is not to generate a comprehensive social design which the politician then seeks to implement. Things don't work that way, because implementing a design requires whole cloth, and nothing in contemporary politics is made out of whole cloth. Politics is an endless struggle, and theory serves as a weapon in that struggle, because it provides a characterization of its direction, and of its controlling purpose The theories [of Friedman, Hayek, and Nozick] are . . . uncompromisingly fundamental: they were not devised with one eye on electoral possibility. And, just for that reason, their serviceability in electoral and other political contest is very great. *Politicians and activists can press not-so-crazy right-wing proposals with conviction because they have the strength of conviction that depends upon depth of conviction, and depth comes from theory that is too fundamental to be practicable in a direct sense* The large fundamental values help to power (or block) the little changes by nourishing the justificatory rhetoric which is needed to push (or resist) change. (1994, 4–5, emphasis in the original)

In other words, while it is unlikely that anarchists will ever fully realize their envisioned utopia, there are things that can be done to nudge society in that direction. However, such political action often requires both self-sacrifice and the courage to challenge accepted norms and social expectations. Given the costs of acting on political conviction, one might reasonably want some degree of assurance that one's political views are well-grounded and not the product of mistaken reasoning, unquestioned dogma, and beguiling platitudes. This book aims to provide anarchists with such an assurance, thereby giving them the intellectual self-confidence to go forth and realize a more just world.

Additionally, the proposed position will help egalitarian anarchists to more clearly differentiate their position from rival socialist positions. Typically, the distinction between socialism and anarchism is stated in terms of tactics: While socialists and anarchists endorse a shared end – namely, a stateless, classless, socialist society – socialists want to use the state as a tool to realize that end while anarchists take the abolition of the state to be the first step to achieving that end. However, this characterization suggests that there is no serious philosophical disagreement between

socialists and anarchists, as both groups endorse egalitarianism and reject private property. By contrast, the book suggests that even when anarchists and socialists arrive at the same moral conclusions, they reach them via very different starting premises (with anarchists beginning with premises typically endorsed by libertarians). Thus, it provides anarchists with an alternative way of articulating what is distinctive about their viewpoint.

While the book emphasizes this difference between anarchists and socialists, the latter should still find the proposed argument valuable, as it will serve as a useful tool to deploy against anti-egalitarian right-libertarians. The right-libertarian philosophical position has become one of the primary philosophical bases for criticizing egalitarian redistribution, with right-libertarians arguing that such redistribution is unjust because it violates persons' property rights. By contrast, the social anarchist position denies the existence of such property rights and insists that justice requires an egalitarian distribution of advantage. Importantly, as subsequent chapters will discuss, it argues for this conclusion by appealing strictly to premises that right-libertarians would accept. In this way, it seeks to defeat anti-egalitarian libertarianism on its own terms, thereby making the position of interest to egalitarians of all varieties. Even if such egalitarians ultimately reject the libertarian premises in question, they can treat the book as a *reductio ad absurdum* argument against right-libertarianism: It demonstrates that the right-libertarian position is composed of incompatible propositions, and, thus, right-libertarians must abandon least some of their standard commitments (with their anti-egalitarian commitments being the most promising candidates to reject).

The argument of the book will also be useful to left-libertarians, as it provides them with a solution to their coherence problem. As briefly noted earlier, left-libertarians argue that certain core libertarian commitments are compatible with the claim that justice requires an egalitarian distribution of resources. However, left-libertarianism has also come under fire from various critics who argue that the position lacks coherence. Most notably, Barbara Fried (2004, 89) argues that, although left-libertarians may have demonstrated the *compatibility* of libertarian and egalitarian principles, their embrace of the latter is not adequately *motivated by* the former (87fn50, 89).¹⁴

¹⁴ Mathias Risse (2004) has raised a related worry about the coherence of left-libertarianism, while conceding that left-libertarians succeed in demonstrating the compatibility of various libertarian and egalitarian principles.

In a joint response to Fried's objection, Peter Vallentyne, Hillel Steiner, and Michael Otsuka largely concede the charge, admitting that "left-libertarians do not all hold that the egalitarian ownership of natural resources follows from their non-egalitarian libertarian commitments," and, instead, invoke "egalitarian ownership of natural resources as an independent principle" (2005, 208). However, they argue that this concession is of little consequence, for, if "coherence requires that the justification for each of one's principles appeal to the same set of considerations . . . then there is little reason to require coherence so understood" (2005, 209).

The problem with this reply is that it does not adequately appreciate the theoretical value of coherence. As discussed in the previous section, a philosophical position that lacks coherence is at risk of seeming unacceptably arbitrary. Additionally, it loses much of its dialectical force against those who hold rival views. For these reasons, one should, all else being equal, favor a theory that is coherent over one that is not. Thus, if this book succeeds in demonstrating not only the truth of the left-libertarian thesis – namely, that core libertarian principles are compatible with an egalitarian approach to distributive justice – but also that there is a coherent version of left-libertarianism (namely, social anarchism), left-libertarians would be able to sidestep Fried's criticism by adopting the social anarchist position.

Finally, although the book puts significant dialectical pressure on right-libertarians (as was just noted), they, too, might find its argument useful in at least one respect. Given that social anarchism entails a rejection of private property claims – and, thus, right-libertarian conclusions about distributive justice more generally – one might conclude that social anarchism has nothing helpful to offer right-libertarians. However, two things can be said in response to this conclusion. First, note that the anarchist position includes core libertarian moral principles such as the self-ownership thesis, with the book presenting novel arguments in defense of these principles. Thus, even if right-libertarians reject the book's egalitarian conclusions, they will still find these arguments useful. Second, if the libertarian principles in question are taken to be incompatible with egalitarianism, many philosophers and ideologues will be tempted to reject them simply in virtue of this incompatibility. By contrast, if it can be shown that these libertarian principles are not only compatible with but actually *entail* egalitarian conclusions, then this reflexive hostility might dissipate. In this way, the book could help right-libertarians get a second hearing for some of their favored principles.

Of course, these conciliatory remarks merely aim to show that social anarchism is useful, where usefulness does not imply plausibility. In other words, if anarchism *were* a correct normative theory, some practical advantages would follow from that result. However, it still needs to be shown that the theory is, in fact, correct. This will be the task of the next seven chapters: to demonstrate that social anarchism is a plausible and attractive normative position.