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For the present purpose, anarchism is defined as the political and social ideology which argues that human groups can and should exist without instituted authority, and especially as the historical anarchist movement of the past two hundred years; and religion is defined as the belief in the existence and significance of supernatural being(s), and especially as the prevailing Judaeo-Christian system of the past two thousand years. My subject is the question: Is there a necessary connection between the two and, if so, what is it? The possible answers are as follows: there may be no connection, if beliefs about human society and the nature of the universe are quite independent; there may be a connection, if such beliefs are interdependent; and, if there is a connection, it may be either positive, if anarchism and religion reinforce each other, or negative, if anarchism and religion contradict each other.

The general assumption is that there is a negative connection logical, because divine and human authority reflect each other; and psychological, because the rejection of human and divine authority, of political and religious orthodoxy, reflect each other. Thus the French *Encyclopdie Anarchiste* (1932) included an article on Atheism by Gustave Brocher: ‘An anar-

chist, who wants no all-powerful master on earth, no authoritarian government, must necessarily reject the idea of an omnipotent power to whom everything must be subjected; if he is consistent, he must declare himself an atheist.' And the centenary issue of the British anarchist paper *Freedom* (October 1986) contained an article by Barbara Smoker (president of the National Secular Society) entitled 'Anarchism implies Atheism'. As a matter of historical fact the negative connection has indeed been the norm anarchists are generally non-religious and are frequently anti-religious, and the standard anarchist slogan is the phrase coined by the (non-anarchist) socialist Auguste Blanqui in 1880: 'Ni dieu ni matre!' (Neither God nor master!). But the full answer is not so simple.

Thus it is reasonable to argue that there is no necessary connection. Beliefs about the nature of the universe, of life on this planet, of this species, of purpose and values and morality, and so on, may be independent of beliefs about the desirability and possibility of liberty in human society. It is quite possible to believe at the same time that there is a spiritual authority and that there should not be a political authority. But it is also reasonable to argue that there is a necessary connection, whether positive or negative.

The argument for a positive connection is that religion has libertarian effects, even if established Churches seldom do. Religion may check politics, the Church may balance the State, divine sanction may protect oppressed people. In Classical Greece, Antigone (in the Oedipus myth) appeals to divine law in her individual rebellion against the human law of the ruler Creon.[1] Socrates (the greatest figure in Greek thought) appealed to the divine demon within him to inspire his individual judgement. Zeno (the founder of the Stoic school of phi-

[1] In Sophocles' play *Antigone* (c. 440BC), Creon actually says in response to her rebellion, 'There is no greater evil than anarchy' one of the earliest uses of the word in the pejorative double sense.

losophy) appealed to a higher authority than the State. Within Judaism, the Prophets of the Old Testament challenged Kings and proclaimed what is known as the 'Social Gospel'. One of the most eloquent texts in the Bible is Hannah's song when she conceives Samuel, which is echoed by Mary's song when she conceives Jesus the Magnificat:

> *My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour... He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats; and hath exalted the humble and meek. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.*

Within Christianity, Jesus came for the poor and weak, and the early Christians resisted the Roman State. When Christianity became the established ideology in its turn, religious heretics challenged both Church and State. Medieval heresies helped to destroy the old system the Albigensians and the Waldensians, the Brotherhood of the Free Spirit and the Taborites in Bohemia, the Anabaptists in Germany and Switzerland.

This pattern may be seen in Britain. John Ball, the ideologist of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, was a priest who proclaimed in a sermon to the rebels: *'Things shall not go right until there is neither master nor slave.'* Later religious dissent led to political dissent, and the extreme Puritans in the English Revolution of 1649–1659 were the pioneers of the native tradition of anarchism. Gerrard Winstanley, the ideologist of the Diggers or True Levellers, who came nearer to anarchism than anyone before the French Revolution, moved within a few years from quoting the Bible to invoking 'the great Creator Reason'. The tradition was continued by the Ranters and Seekers, the Quakers and Shakers, and later the Universalists and Unitarians, and may be seen in the modern peace movement.

The argument for a negative connection is that religion supports politics, the Church supports the State, opponents of political authority also oppose religious authority. In Classical Greece and Rome, the religious sceptics Protagoras, Diogenes, Epicurus, Lucretius, Sextus Empiricus were the real liberators (and the same is true in Ancient India and China). Within Judaism, God is the archetypical figure of (male) authority, the Jewish State was a theocracy ruled by priests, and the few good Prophets (and the good Rabbis who followed them) should be seen as dissenters. In Christianity, Paul told his followers that 'the powers that be are ordained of God', Church and State stand together as the 'two swords' of the Gospel of Luke, and the good Christians have been rebels against ecclesiastical as much as secular power the heretics and sceptics, esprits forts and libertins, the freethinkers and philosophes, Jean Meslier and Denis Diderot (who both wanted to see 'the last king strangled in the guts of the last priest') and Voltaire (whose motto was 'Ecrasez l'infeme!'), Thomas Paine (the pioneer of freethought and also of free society, the opponent of Priestcraft as well as Kingcraft) and Richard Carlile (who led the shift towards both atheism and anarchism), and so on to the historical freethought movement.

Within the historical anarchist movement, these two attitudes exist together. Revolutionary anarchism, like revolutionary socialism, has quasi-religious features expressed in irrationalism, utopianism, millennialism, fanaticism, fundamentalism, sectarianism, and so on. But anarchism, like socialism and liberalism, also has anti-religious features all of them modern political ideologies tending to assume the rejection of all orthodox belief and authority and is the supreme example of dissent, disbelief, and disobedience. All progressive thought, culminating in humanism, depends on the assumption that every single human being has the right to think for himself or herself; and all progressive politics, culminating in anarchism, depends on the assumption that every single human being has the right to

much as what it is in most people that needs obedience and the State the will to believe and the will to obey. And the last anarchist hope about both religion and politics is that, just as the Church once seemed necessary to human existence but is now withering away, so the State still seems necessary to human existence but will also wither away, until both institutions finally disappear. We may yet end with Neither God nor master!

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towards religion by pushing Christians towards his idiosyncratic version of anarchism as much as he pushed anarchists towards his idiosyncratic version of Christianity. He influenced the Western peace movement (including such figures as Bart de Ligt and Aldous Huxley, Danilo Dolci and Ronald Sampson), and also movements in the Third World (especially India, including such figures as M. K. Gandhi and J. P. Narayan). A similar development in the United States is the Catholic Worker movement (including such figures as Dorothy Day and Ammon Hennacy).

So the conclusion is that there is indeed a strong correlation between anarchism and atheism, but that it is not complete, and it is not necessary. Most anarchists are non-religious or anti-religious and most take their atheism for granted but some anarchists are religious. There are therefore several valid libertarian views of religion. Perhaps the most persuasive and productive one was that expressed by Karl Marx (before he became a 'Marxist') in the famous passage from his essay *Towards the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1844):

> Religious distress is at the same time an expression of real distress and a protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, the soul of a soulless situation. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about their condition is the demand to give up a condition which needs illusions. The criticism of religion is therefore in embryo the criticism of the vale of tears whose halo is religion.

The true anarchist attitude to religion is surely to attack not faith or the Church so much as what it is in so many people that needs faith and the Church, just as the truly anarchist attitude to politics is surely to attack not obedience or the State so

act for himself or herself. (A point worth mentioning is the connection of anarchism, as of liberalism and socialism, with the alternative religion of Freemasonry, to which several leading anarchists have belonged Proudhon, Bakunin, Louise Michel, Ferrer, Volin, and so on.) There is no doubt that the prevailing strain within the anarchist tradition is opposition to religion. William Godwin, the author of the *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), the first systematic text of libertarian politics, was a Calvinist minister who began by rejecting Christianity, and passed through deism to atheism and then what was later called agnosticism. Max Stirner, the author of *The Individual and His Property* (1845), the most extreme text of libertarian politics, began as a left-Hegelian, post-Feuerbachian atheist, rejecting the 'spooks' of religion as well as of politics including the spook of 'humanity'. Proudhon, the first person to call himself an anarchist, who was well known for saying, 'Property is theft', also said, 'God is evil' and 'God is the eternal X'. Bakunin, the main founder of the anarchist movement, attacked the Church as much as the State, and wrote an essay which his followers later published as *God and the State* (1882), in which he inverted Voltaire's famous saying and proclaimed: 'If God really existed, he would have to be abolished.' Kropotkin, the best-known anarchist writer, was a child of the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution, and assumed that religion would be replaced by science and that the Church as well as the State would be abolished; he was particularly concerned with the development of a secular system of ethics which replaced supernatural theology with natural biology. Errico Malatesta and Carlo Cafiero, the main founders of the Italian anarchist movement, both came from freethinking families (and Cafiero was involved with the National Secular Society when he visited London during the 1870s). Eliseé and Elie Reclus, the best-loved French anarchists, were the sons of a Calvinist minister, and began by rejecting religion before they moved on to anarchism. Sebastien Faure, the most active

speaker and writer in the French movement for half a century, was intended for the Church and began by rejecting Catholicism and passing through anti-clericalism and socialism on the way to anarchism. Andre Lorulot, a leading French individualist before the First World War, was then a leading freethinker for half a century. Johann Most, the best-known German anarchist for a quarter of a century, who wrote ferocious pamphlets on the need for violence to destroy existing society, also wrote a ferocious pamphlet on the need to destroy supernatural religion called *The God Plague* (1883). Multatuli (Eduard Douwes Dekker), the great Dutch writer, was a leading atheist as well as anarchist. Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, the best-known Dutch anarchist, was a Calvinist minister who began by rejecting religion before passing through socialism on the way to anarchism. Anton Constandse was a leading Dutch anarchist and freethinker. Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, the best-known Jewish American anarchists, began by rejecting Judaism and passing through populism on the way to anarchism. Rudolf Rocker, the German leader of the Jewish anarchists in Britain, was another child of the Enlightenment and spoke and wrote on secular as much as political subjects. In Spain, the largest anarchist movement in the world, which has often been described as a quasi-religious phenomenon, was in fact profoundly naturalistic and secularist and anti-Christian as well as anti-clerical. Francisco Ferrer, the well-known Spanish anarchist who was judicially murdered in 1909, was best known for founding the Modern School which tried to give secular education in a Catholic country. The leaders of the anarchist movements in Latin America almost all began by rebelling against the Church before rebelling against the State. The founders of the anarchist movements in India and China all had to begin by discarding the traditional religions of their communities. In the United States, Voltairine de Cleyre was (as her name suggests) the child of freethinkers, and wrote and spoke on secular as much as political topics. The two best-known American

anarchists today (both of Jewish origin) are Murray Bookchin, who calls himself an ecological humanist, and Noam Chomsky, who calls himself a scientific rationalist. Two leading figures of a younger generation, Fred Woodworth and Chaz Bufe, are militant atheists as well as anarchists. And so on.

This pattern prevails in Britain. Not only William Godwin but nearly all libertarians have been opposed to orthodox religion as well as orthodox politics William Morris, Oscar Wilde, Charlotte Wilson, Joseph Lane, Henry Seymour (who was active in the National Secular Society before he helped to found the British anarchist movement), James Tochatti (who was active in the British Secular Union before he turned to socialism and anarchism), Alfred Marsh (the son of the son-in-law of G. J. Holyoake, who founded the secularist movement), Guy Aldred (who rapidly moved from evangelical Christianity through secularism and socialism to anarcho-syndicalism), A. S. Neill (whose educational work was opposed to religious and ethical orthodoxy as much as to political and social orthodoxy), and so on. And of course Shelley is the poet laureate of atheists and anarchists alike.

There have been few serious studies of anarchist psychology, but those that do exist agree that the first step on the way to anarchism is frequently the rejection of religion. Nevertheless, there are plenty of exceptions to this rule. In Britain, for example, Edward Carpenter was a mystic, Herbert Read saw anarchism as a religious philosophy, Alex Comfort moved from scientific to quasi-religious humanism, Colin MacInnes saw anarchism as a kind of religion; in the United States, Paul Goodman rejected Judaism but retained some kind of religion, and New Age nonsense has infected anarchists as well as so many other radicals. But the great exception is the phenomenon of Christian anarchism and religious anarcho-pacifism. Above all, Leo Tolstoy, who rejected all orthodoxies of both religion and politics, exerted a powerful double pressure towards anarchism "although he always repudiated the anarchist movement and