“The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before.”

Rousseau’s *Social Contract* explores many avenues to find this form of association and arrives at conclusions about governing our affairs which understood that government could and would abuse its authority unless it had limited powers. He de-legitimizes the idea of democracy by stating “Where there a people of gods, their government would be democratic. So perfect a government is not for men.” He also states that if for any reason the “…State is dissolved [it] falls into despotism or anarchy.” In just over a century philosophical anarchists would be looking to his *Social Contract* as a way to develop society.

Anarchy has been defined by some as an absence of power hence lack of political structure, chaos. This exclusion of anarchy from models of government is based on a partisan and partial definition of the government.

It must be questioned because at present the way in which our affairs are being governed is leaving people without the necessities of life and that is because of the laws; not created by the body politic but rather enforced upon the body politic. This paper is going to explore the ideas of partisan and partial definitions of government and the socio/philosophical idea of anarchism.

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2 Ibid., Book 3, Chapter 4, 411.
3 Ibid., Book 3 Chapter 1, 407.
“Publicae Perturbatio” or public confusion, disturbance, emotion is one definition another is “Leges Nullae” or not at all authority, or “Licentia” described as freedom, lawlessness by Latin definitions. Other definitions are Anarchy the, “absence of government, disorder, confusion.” Anarchy is defined as “a state of lawlessness or political disorder due to the absence of government, a utopian society made up of individuals who have no government and who enjoy complete freedom.”

Anarchism does have definitions that are seen from a different perspective such as,

“When Anarchists recognize full well that power is a definite and necessary characteristic of all social situations. But they draw a careful distinction between social and political power. So long as there are people there will naturally exist subtle forces of social control which makes life possible. Anarchists deny, however, that this control must contain an element of coercion which transforms social force into political power.”

As diverse as these definitions appear, perhaps there is another perspective to view this idea from. The idea of government as entrenched into the collective consciousness acts as a requirement of social interaction but this partisan definition of government can be denounced as such. For example,

“Equally essential is...the combination of the natural ruler and ruled, for the purpose of preservation. For the element that can use its intelligence to look ahead is by nature ruler and by nature master, while that which has the bodily strength to do the actual work is by nature a

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slave, one of those who are ruled. Thus there is a common interest uniting master and slave.”

Aristotle’s observations based upon his interpretation of empiricism led him to believe that nature demonstrated, through example, the role of the people inside of the polis. His ideas, progressive for his time, actually went further to support Plato’s idea which can be viewed as the search for universalism. His notions were that a static understanding of government and social progress was a natural phenomenon. As an illustration he uses his observation that, “Again, as between male and female the former is by nature superior and ruler, the latter inferior and subject. And this must hold good of mankind in general.” Therefore his conclusion leads to the understanding that “bodily strength” must serve intelligence and that females are incapable of intelligence so they are by nature lesser and must be ruled. His realization that this “must hold good of mankind in general” presents the idea of universalism.

This creates a paradox that will lead to millennia of political and social stagnation. He does not see a time in the future where rulers are not required or that women will be seen as equals instead of as inferior. He has entrenched the idea of partisan government into the body politic.

Resistance to the idea of government had already been displayed before Aristotle’s Politics was written. The notion that the government held the monopoly of

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power and control over its own citizens becomes evident in Plato’s *Republic*.

Thrasymachus states,

“...every government lays down laws for its own advantage, a democracy democratic a tyranny tyrannical laws...In laying down these laws they have made it plain that what is to their advantage is just. They punish him who departs from this as a law-breaker...the established is master, and so sound reasoning gives the conclusion that the same thing is always just, namely, what is advantageous to the stronger.”

The notion of government, even democratic, as a static ideal was seen to be the highest form of government imagined. Yet Thucydides, the Athenian General and writer, commented on the decline of Periclean democracy due to corruption and avarice at a time of war. The Athenians were putting in place policies that promoted the formation of an oligarchy, “...for these policies, so long as they were successful, merely brought honour or profit to individual citizens, but when they failed proved detrimental to the state in the conduct of the war.” This would lead Pericles into having to manipulate the Athenians,

“...Whenever he saw them unwarrantably confident and arrogant, his words would cow them into fear; and, on the other hand, when he saw them unreasonably afraid, he would restore them to confidence again. And so Athens, though in name a democracy, gradually became in fact a government ruled by its foremost citizen.”

Under these types of conditions the idea of government, by one person or the minority, was proving itself to be anarchic by definition. There was an absence of order and it was the majority of people that were suffering from the consequences of this disorder. The notion to solidly establish the idea of partisanship as a form of

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12 Ibid.
government was actually only a partial definition of government because as Aristotle pointed out the ruler must be able to think ahead, which implies not being a reactionary power but instead one with foresight. With different forms of government being discussed in ancient times it suggests that the idea of government evolves always seeking to find a better form for ‘the purpose of preservation,’ as Aristotle stated.

It is the preservation of the body politic that is relevant not the perpetuation of the political machine itself. If a form government is unable or unwilling to provide the necessities of life for the entire population, the purpose of preservation has been lost. This failure on the part of the government leads to domination of the people in order to assimilate them to an ideal that is unjust due to legislated inequality. When the natural resources of a state become the private holdings of a single person or corporation due to government policy the government is displaying its monopoly of power over the people; not for the people.

“Forms of government...and the only chance for a satisfactory constitution...to maintain itself for any length of time is constantly to repress any tendencies to depart from the original conceptions of its creator.” 13

History itself would unfold demonstrating that the idea of a power structure (church or state) whether installed by the belief that a god assigned the power, or through the distinction of a specific blood line was subjugating the majority through

acts of violence, coercion and laws that were created to maintain the power structure not to benefit the people. (The observations of Thrasymachus seem pertinent here.)

It is the American Revolution that will be one of the first recorded acts perpetrated by anarchists that were successful and raise a question about the authority of a state created by anarchists. The definition of anarchist is; 1) one who rebels against any authority, established order, or ruling power 2) one who believes in, advocates or promotes anarchism or anarchy esp. One who uses violent means to overthrow the established order.\(^\text{14}\) It was acts of violence, or rather war, that was led by anarchists (according to definition) that overthrew the British government for the reason of the British exploitation of the thirteen colonies in America. This was followed by the continuation of violence against the Indigenous peoples or established order of the continental USA.

The state in its present manifestation is a miniature empire built upon violence, coercion and imposed ideas. In this way it is a practiced form of the pre-dominant definition of anarchy. Therefore to delegitimate anarchy as violence and chaos is to delegitimate the state. To support of the state is to support the idea of violent anarchy.

By the middle of the 19\(^{th}\) century movements which eventually accepted the name ‘an-archists’ were being promoted. In Europe writers such as Peter Kropotkin and Mikhail Bakunin were writing to protest the repression of the working class by beneficiaries of the State system of governance. Bakunin would write,

“...At the present time a serious, strong state can have but one sound foundation - military and bureaucratic centralization. Between a

monarchy and the most democratic republic there is only one essential difference: in the former, the world of officialdom oppresses and robs the people for the greater profit of the privileged and propertied classes, as well as to line its own pockets in the name of the monarch; in the latter, it oppresses and robs the people in exactly the same way, for the benefit of the same classes and the same pockets but in the name of the peoples will...”

By the end of the 19th century there was a strong desire for social change growing around the world and some of the great intellectuals of the time were joining the movements for social change. Some sought out socialism or communism and others were looking towards anarchism as a philosophical movement for change.

“...No less important is the factor for rebellious awakening in modern literature – Turgenniev, Dastoyevsky, Tolstoy, Andreiev, Gorki, Whitman, Emerson and scores of others embodying the spirit of ferment and longing for social change...”

One of the first people in the United States to use the term philosophical anarchism was Benjamin R. Tucker. By 1882 he began publishing a journal entitled “Liberty” which promoted the idea of philosophical anarchism. Philosophical anarchism is non-aggressive; it is built upon the idea of civil disobedience and exposure to new ideas of socio-political discourse. For Tucker, “The Social Contract of Rousseau was to become a fact, because free men would throw overboard all religious and moral sanctions and reorganize life on the basis of mutual advantage.” For Tucker the idea of philosophical anarchism meant that,

“Resistance to government was to be passive – taking such forms as refusal to pay taxes, evasion of jury service and military duty.

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Resistance to plutocracy was likewise to be purely passive. There were to be individual and collective strikes against landlordism and rent for example. There was to be organized competition with the commercial and other banks on the part of mutual, co-operative banks as well as co-operation in industry and trade on a voluntary basis in opposition to the profit system."18

The anarchist movement would suffer a loss of support in America after an act of terrorism killed eight policemen in Chicago. The Haymarket Square bombing in 1886 would label all anarchists (even philosophical anarchists) as terrorists and begin a campaign of propaganda and some suggest, the use of provocateurs to further discredit the movement altogether.

Brought about by the ongoing labour problems in Chicago and the resultant loss of jobs for thousands after a general strike was held for higher wages and shorter hours in the working day, one group of anarchists was preparing for more direct actions. They felt that even if the ‘capitalists’ had given in it would still be unacceptable because it would effectively be a tacit consent to continued slavery.

In the end four anarchists would be hung for the crime and four others imprisoned but there was a general consensus that the trial had not proven that any of these men had thrown the bomb. Although the people were not sympathetic with the anarchists act of terrorism they were convinced that there was not enough evidence to prove the case. One of the imprisoned would die in prison and by 1893 the other three were pardoned. The overall condemnation of anarchism was on the rise due to

the events in Haymarket Square that day. Even the Socialists began separating themselves from the movement. ¹⁹

“The advocacy and practice of individual terrorism by some anarchists... estranged them from the socialists, but terrorism was not condoned by the anarchist movement as a whole, and as a phenomenon arising out of extreme individualism and oppressive social and political conditions it has not been confined to anarchists alone.” ²⁰

Anarchism as a socio-philosophical movement would slowly fade from the ideas of social reorganization, although socialism and communism would continue to attempt to bring about social change through political movements. In countries such as Canada where they attempted to bring about change for the plight of the working class there would be State violence and coercion to overthrow any meaningful change, although some change did occur.

The Two Great Wars of the early and mid 20th century would effectively bring a close to any further achievements for these political parties. Capitalists and government had to redefine their ideology to consider a way to quell any future unrest. Improvements in the standard of living and the development of the welfare state would eventually leave capitalists and the State unchallenged until the closing years of the 20th century.

In representative democracies around the world there is a problem unfolding that has immense consequences. What is actually happening is that our representatives have taken the role of being ‘elected thinkers’ for the people not

representatives of the people. With their focus on economies and global economies they have created situations where their actions, while supporting capitalism, are destroying the environment and exploiting cheap labour in third world countries. This is allowing corporations to get away from paying the higher wages required to keep a national economy stable and a workforce in place. Corporations are making huge profits in unnecessary wars which appear to be for natural resources. Iraq and oil being an example of this situation.

At the present time with the global economy in crisis we are seeing that the working class and poor are giving welfare to corporations, some being the same corporations that own the natural resources of a country but do nothing to help the people unless there is a profit in it. Cumulatively this is leaving people without the necessities of life due to laws imposed on the body politic not created by the body politic. In countries around the world the protests are getting bigger and more aggressive. This is creating,

“The resurgence of anarchism in the international anti-capitalist movement...so called post-anarchism: anarchism that reworks the “classical” theory that animated the nineteenth century anarchist movement through the lens of post-structuralism...”

Michel Foucault, a philosopher often referred to as a post-structuralist stated,

“...if governmentalization is indeed this movement through which individuals are subjugated...through the mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth...I will say that critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth...critique will be the art of voluntary insubordination...Critique would essentially insure

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the desubjugation of the subject in the context of what we could call, in a word, the politics of truth.”

Thrasymachus seemed to know what he was talking about.

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22 Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2007), 47.
Bibliography


