IS ANARCHISM AN ALTERNATIVE TO MARXISM?

INTRODUCTION

The apparent limitations of the application of Marxism in the USSR and other similar societies would seem to suggest that the most convincing alternative is represented by Anarchism. This is an approach that promises that it is possible to organise society without the role of a repressive state, or the importance of a form of power or rule by an elite. Instead it is based on the principles of equality, solidarity and co-operation. What is also being suggested is that the role of a vanguard party is being replaced by the genuinely emancipatory activity of the people, and in this context democracy would be authentic and truly participatory in terms of the significance of self-governing communes. But is it possible to realise a society in which the role of the state and political parties is effectively replaced by the spontaneous role of the people? Furthermore, can anarchism effectively promote the possibility of the development of a new non-coercive authority that would replace the functions of the state and a capitalist economy? Are the ambitions of anarchism unrealistic and credible? In other words should we support the rival claims of socialism despite its apparent failure in historical terms and the inability to emancipate society in terms of the perspectives of Marxism?

In order to establish the basis to study this question it is necessary to outline what we consider to be the approach of Marxism and its various limitations. Marx outlined an analysis of capitalism which implied that the exploitation of the relations of production would generate class struggle in order to transform society and so create the conditions for communism. But what was not systematically outlined was the actual role of a revolutionary party in relation to this development. To what extent was a party vital in order to promote the ability of the working class in order to bring about change? Furthermore, Marx did not outline what he meant by the communist society that was to replace capitalism apart from the sparsest description of it various attributes. This meant the question was not addressed as to how the domination of capitalism was to be overcome, and nor was the role of the state in the transition to communism addressed. Possibly most importantly Marx did not elaborate on the relationship between party and class in this process of transition to communism. Also Marx did not allow for the possibility that capitalism itself could change to the extent that reform would become the apparently most viable strategy for the improvement of the working class. In contrast to these issues Anarchism was concerned with outlining the details and principles of their future society. What they seemed vaguer about was how this society could be realised. What Anarchists did do was outline the principles they advocated and how they would be expressed in the future society. However, what was omitted in this elaboration of their aims and objectives was the issue of what could become the expression of authority within their future society which could adequately replace the role of the state in order to reconcile the different interests of individuals and provide social cohesion. The problem anarchists had to tackle was how to resolve the relationship between adherence to individual autonomy and the more general interests of society. Consequently the dilemmas that these issues generated meant that Anarchism seemed to be a good idea that could not be realised in practice. However, Marxism seemed to have a more serious problem: it had been tried and seemed to have failed. Thus despite the apparent impracticalities and tensions within Anarchism it could be said to be an attractive doctrine that had not been discredited by it actual application. Furthermore, Anarchism has identified the apparent problems within Marxism in relation to its adherence to the role of a state within a future society, and justification of the importance of the vanguard party. Hence Anarchism could claim that it is the only effective emancipatory alternative to Marxism. Indeed various Anarchists could claim that they were able to predict that Marxism would fail because of its ultimate elitist pretensions and dogmatic adherence to the problematical conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Consequently, Marxism when applied in practice could only result in the rule of an elite party over society. However, this criticism could only be valid if anarchism could outline a more effective possibility for human emancipation. The major problem that anarchists have is that whilst they are able to outline in immaculate form a description of the application of their principles, such a standpoint is not connected to how these aims could be realised in terms of the challenges created by the complexity of empirical reality. For example, let us assume that an anarchist society has been established in country A, this would immediately be challenged by the rival and opposing capitalist powers. Hence the anarchist society would be confronted with the task of having to defend itself in terms of the development of armed forces. How could this objective be successfully accomplished without the establishment of a state that would be able to organise the defence of the country against possible aggression? Furthermore, the isolation of the anarchist country would mean that it was not able to organise the economy except in terms of the principles of the allocation and distribution of scarce resources. Thus how could this task be successfully accomplished without the role of a state that that was able to successfully organise economic tasks? The point is that we can only envisage the success of a society in terms of anarchist principles in conditions of perfect harmony, of the assumption that the majority of humanity had become anarchist. But given the uneven character of international politics this type of assumption cannot be reasonably made. Instead we must accept that it is likely that anarchism would be developed in a situation of opposition from what is still global capitalism. Such a situation would be bound to distort the ability to realise anarchist principles.

Thus the major problem with Anarchism is that it assumes complete and perfect conditions for the realisation of its aims. It is apparently unable to assume that the economic and political situation may be unfavourable, and that in international terms the balance of forces may be to the disadvantage of the anarchist society. Consequently anarchism seem to be a good idea but its principles are seriously challenged by what could be described as the adverse circumstances in which it could emerge. This means that the most important problem is that anarchism can never be realised empirically in terms of its ideal conditions which assumes a condition of harmony. It would seem that it is an urgent task to establish the basis for the overcoming of the limitations and antagonisms of the empirical situation. Instead of attempting to realise this task, Anarchism is apparently content to outline its principles in an abstract manner and in terms that evade the problem of the inherent tensions that will be involved in its emergence. Thus it seems to be assumed that the majority of society will accept anarchism as being the most rational and reasonable idea by which society should be organised. Anarchism is an extreme form of rationalism in that it upholds the view that its apparently very sensible views about society will achieve unanimous support. This standpoint is connected to the moral approach that its ability to be ultimately realised is because of the ethical superiority of its perspective. Such moral considerations are connected to the implicit view that only a society without a state can be ethically justified.

But possibly the greatest challenge for anarchism concerns its assumption that society can be cohesive, and will not degenerate into being the expression of competing self-interest if there is not any central form of authority such as the state. The unwillingness of anarchists to compromise means that they do not consider the feasibility of the role of a democratic state in order to establish a credible and authentic form of authority within society. Instead their sense of perfectionism means that cannot contemplate any form of compromising of their principles. Hence political pragmatism is rejected by this absolutist stance and instead it is only possible to envisage a society that is the most immaculate expression of the principles of an anarchist standpoint. This perfectionism means that what is not resolved is the political status of those that do not agree with anarchism within their society? Such an issue is not tackled by the anarchists because they can only envisage that their society would have unanimous support. Hence the possibility to vote for an alternative is considered by be an anathema. Such a situation means that true anarchism cannot be a genuine democratic society. There would not be competing political parties with their own distinctive programmes, and elections would be considered to be unnecessary. Instead all aspects of society would be in harmony and it would be sufficient to make sure that the economy was organised efficiently and that people were able to reconcile their interests. How such a society would be satisfactory for people who have been accustomed to the multi-party politics of constitutional democracy is not explained. Instead we have to make the assumption that the realisation of anarchist principles would be sufficient for enabling people to be satisfied in both economic and political terms.

Peter Marshall defines anarchism in the following terms: “All anarchists thus believe that without the artificial restrictions of the state and government, without the coercion of imposed authority, a harmony of interests among human being will emerge. Even the most ardent of individualists are confident that if people follow their own interests in a clear-sighted way they will be able to form unions to minimise conflict. Anarchists, whatever their persuasion, believe in spontaneous order. Given common needs they are confident that human beings can organize themselves and create a social order which will prove far more effective and beneficial than any imposed by authority.”(1) This definition indicates that anarchists have an almost naïve view about how human nature is inherently rational, progressive, and able to organise society without the role of state and any other form of authority. The assumption is that even a situation of the most explicit form of individualism would not degenerate into becoming the justification of crude self-interest. In this context the role of the state, and of laws, is considered to be unnecessary and an expression of arbitrary rule. The idea that a state, and its legislation, is needed to guide the activity of human beings is dismissed as being the justification of the rule of an elite. Primarily the view that people can co-operate together without any form of authority is a very optimistic standpoint. The point is that authority need not be repressive and intolerant if it is based on the expression of the democratic consent of the people. In this context it is possible to establish the political procedures that would enable a government to be formed that would be in the genuine interests of the people. However the anarchists seem to consider that any form of political regulation of society would be inherently repressive and so should be rejected. This means that they contrast the apparent virtues of spontaneous order to the alternative of an authoritarian forms of authority. But what does spontaneous order mean in practice? It could become the justification of the behaviour of egoism and the interests of the most powerful individuals within society. The only manner in which this possibility can be avoided is not by relying on the optimistic goodwill of the anarchists, but instead by establishing a democratic state and government that can implement laws that are in the interests of the population. This process will be ensured to be reasonable and in the interests of the people because it is based on the application of their democratic consent. Hence it is democracy and not anarchism which will be the most reliable expression that society is not organised in the interests of the few.

An important problem with the anarchist standpoint is that the rejection of authority means that the logical alternative can only be the justification of the self-interests of the most powerful people within society. Anarchists can only dismiss this problem by assuming the most naïve view about human nature and its apparent goodness. But the possibility to promote a situation in which humans can be encouraged to act in terms of co-operation and goodness requires a just form of economy and the role of democratic political procedures. This prospect means that the state is truly accountable and responsive to the wishes of the people. However, to the anarchist this possibility for promoting human interaction and altruism would be considered to be impermissible because of the justification of the importance of authority in the form of the state. What is not explained by anarchism is how society could function in a cohesive and emancipatory manner without these political structures that could promote democracy, social equality and justice. Instead in some unexplained manner it is being argued that society could spontaneously realise the goals of egalitarianism and participation without having a definite structural basis to achieve these objectives. In some vague manner an optimistic emphasis on the potential of human goodness is meant to achieve these aims without being expressed by definite forms of authority, or without the importance of the state. Hence it is not surprising that anarchists argued that their aims could be realised in terms of the application of reason rather than in terms of the establishment of emancipatory structures: “Goodwin based his model of a harmonious free society on the reign of reason in accordance with universal moral laws. Through education and enlightenment, people would become more rational and recognize universal truth and their common interests and act accordingly.”(2) But this standpoint could only be a hope because it was based on the vague aspiration that at some point in history human behaviour would act in terms of this perspective. But what such an approach lacked was any recognition of the social agency that would realise these aims, and there was no definite strategy that could advance the prospect of these expectations, and instead there was only a vague hope that anarchism could be realised. It is true that people like Kropotkin did outline important principles about the significance of co-operation. The problem was that this was not connected to a definite strategy like the aim of proletarian revolution. Instead Marx could outline how in terms of the character of the capitalist economy that social co-operation was being developed, and this would promote the possibility of proletarian revolution. But Anarchism could not support such a standpoint because it was based on the emphasis on the role of collective struggle, and the apparent justification of the domination of society by the working class. So instead of any apparent support for collective action the Anarchists had to be content with vaguely calling for the formation of communes instead of a revolutionary state. (3)

However, there is one possible exception to this reduction of anarchism to a collection of principles which are to be spontaneously realised by some vague act of spontaneous activity, and this is represented by the detailed political economy and analysis of political structures carried out by Proudhon. His conception of a future type of economic activity was most famously elaborated in his work: What is Property?(4) Proudhon begins his book by asking what seems to be a most relevant question: why is there so much suffering, poverty, and inequality in the world, and why has it been difficult to try and overcome this situation?(5) But this development seems to be in contradiction with the fact that in some contrasting sense it is not possible to conduct human relationships without the expression of a sense of justice: “Justice is the celestial body which governs societies, the pole around which the political world turns, the principle and rule of all transactions. Nothing takes place between men but in the name of right, nothing without the invocation of justice....If then the idea we form of justice and right is badly defined, it is imperfect or even false, it is clear that all our legislative applications will be wrong, our institutions vicious, our politics erroneous, and as a result there will be disorder and social chaos.”(6) Thus Proudhon in a direct but perceptive manner indicates that humans attempt to realise their relations in terms of the principle of justice, but there must be something about their institutions which undermines the realisation of this aspiration. Hence the crucial question for humanity is to resolve this contradiction in terms of its economic and political activity. He is making the simple point that it will be possible to resolve the limitations of the situation because humans cannot ontologically act and relate to each other without this sense of justice. This inherent aspect of what it means to be a human should provide the impetus to resolve the limitations of injustice that are prevalent in the present.

The superiority of Proudhon's argument, unlike that of many anarchists, is that whilst they generally connect their aspirations to some vague and distant future, and outline their aims in terms of the application of moral principles, Proudhon adopts a different approach. He indicates that the role of justice is part of an inherent human condition in terms of its existing social relations. But this principle has not been realised because of the flaws of existing institutions and forms of social connections. Hence the strategy is simple and yet practical and precise. It is to realise the aim of justice in a more consistent manner in the sphere of the economy and politics. Furthermore, it will be possible to be successful in this task because justice is part of what a human being is. Indeed in a distorted and inadequate manner justice is presently being realised, but the limitations of the existing institutions means that this aim is expressed in a flawed manner. With this very simple perspective, Proudhon has taken anarchism from the realms of vague philosophical aspiration and instead defined it in terms of a definite and practical strategy. He is also to define the social agency for his aim, which will be expressed by the role and interests of labour.

Proudhon also upholds his standpoint in terms of articulating a historical perspective. He outlines how the Roman Empire upheld privilege and the distortion of justice, but this was challenged by Jesus Christ who proclaimed the gospel of justice. But this promise became betrayed by the accommodation of the Church with the Empire. However, the French revolution has revived the conception of justice in terms of the principle of equal sovereignty in relation to the establishment of the democratic republic.(7) But people did not become equal citizens despite advances in their situation. Proudhon outlines that one of the major reasons for inequality despite apparent formal political equality is because labour cannot realise an effective control of the property it utilises in the task of production. This is because labour does not have ownership of the property that is utilised in economic activity. Instead some people have access to the proceeds of labour without having carried out a productive role. Such a situation is a distortion of the basis of how an economy should develop in terms of the principles of justice and equality: “Men lived in a community, whether positive or negative it matters little, where there was no property, not even private possession. The increase of possession gradually forcing people to labour for their support, they agreed, whether formally or tacitly, it makes no difference that the labourer should be the sole proprietor of the product of his labour; that is they simply agreed that thereafter none could live without working. It necessarily followed that to obtain equality of subsistence there must be equality of labour, and that to obtain equality of labour, there must be equality of opportunities to work. Whoever got possession, without labour, and by force or by cunning, of another means of subsistence, destroyed equality and placed himself above or outside the law. Whoever monopolised the means of production on the grounds of greater industry, also destroyed equality. Equality was the expression of right and whoever violated it was unjust.”(8) Thus Proudhon established that it was not ownership of the means of labour which in and of itself generated economic inequality but instead it was the monopoly control of the process of productive activity at the expense of the interests of labour which created inequality. Thus the task was to create equal ownership of the means of production by labour if the inequality and injustice of society was to be overcome. Only the act of labour should express the right of ownership of a given part of land or productive apparatus. Instead some people are able to acquire the benefits of land or the means of production without exercising productive effort. This is the basis of economic injustice.

In other words Proudhon has contributed to the understanding that the character of the capitalist or major land owner is that they benefit from the work carried out by labour despite not carrying similar productive tasks. Therefore in order to overcome this injustice it is necessary that labour acquires effective control and ownership of the property utilised in order to perform the tasks of work. Marx would contend that this standpoint can only uphold the conception of a small property owning democracy. But this criticism is unfair. Instead Proudhon has outlined what is necessary if the forces of big capital are to be denied control of economic activity. It is necessary to end the ownership of productive activity by the forces of big capital and instead restore the control and possession of the process of work by establishing the ownership of labour over production. This approach may seem to benefit the promotion of a small scale property owning system, but such a development does not undermine the ability of individual labour to co-operate with each other and so create a collective form of economy. The point is that the individual property owners would relate to each other in terms of being part of a division of labour in which they could exchange the products of their work. In this manner co-operative work would be developed which would facilitate the ability to meet the needs of society. The crucial point that Proudhon is making is that if labour does not have ownership of the means of production in terms of the right of possession, the possibility is that it could be exploited by the more powerful owners of the means of production, who have acquired their economic power because of the effective expropriation of the ability of labour to own and control the process of economic activity. This point became relevant after the October revolution because as a result of the lack of workers management and control of production, the emerging bureaucratic state effectively owned and organised the process of production by labour. The workers had no right to define the tasks of production because they lacked effective ownership of the means of production. In contrast, the principles of Proudhon are the basis to oppose this expropriation of the powers of labour by the state because he established that labour should own the means of production. The point is that if labour has the effective freedom to unite in order to collectively organise production then this will not mean that what is being justified is a return to capitalism. Instead Proudhon has outlined the most important principle opposing the prospect of the development of capitalism which is that of the individual ownership of property by labour. Such a possibility would undermine the tendency for capital to accumulate as a result of the capitalist acquiring the ownership of the means of production by the process of the expropriation of labour. Instead if individual labour has ownership of the process of economic activity it then has the ability to unite in order to develop more collective forms of labour. Hence one of the most important mistakes of Marxism was to equate the character of property with being merely the basis for capital accumulation. In contrast, Proudhon understood that this view was a mistake and that instead if individual labour had control over property then this situation of equality would undermine the ability and feasibility for the forces of capital to acquire control and ownership of the means of production. However, Marx did not accept this point because to him private property was synonymous with the generation of the role of the capitalist. Hence he did not recognise that if labour had the ability to truly control property such a development would act as a bulwark against the generation of capitalism. Instead if labour controlled property it could become the basis to promote socialism without having to go through the period of capital accumulation. When capitalism did occur it became the first thing that resulted was to undermine the ability of labour to own and control property by a process of expropriation of the means of production which ended the situation of a small scale property owning democracy.

Thus the only problem with Proudhon's standpoint was not its supposedly unrealistic nature, but instead the fact that he advocated it after capitalism had become an established fact in France as in other advanced nations. But what he had indicated was how the process of this development of capitalism had occurred in terms of the ending of the rights of property which had developed in feudal times, and which were present in agricultural society. Indeed, Marx himself outlined the process by which the situation of individual artisan work was transformed by the development of capitalism and the monopoly ownership of the means of production by the entrepreneur. But the actuality of this expropriation of the property of labour in the development of capitalism did not mean that Proudhon had not established an important strategy for how socialism could be realised. He was outlining that the workers should attempt to re-establish ownership, and therefore control of the means of production. He was implying that only if the forces of labour could transform the process of production into becoming an expression of their genuine property would it be possible for labour to realise authentic emancipation and so overcome the domination of the capitalist. This point was to have genuine validity when the Stalinists acted to ensure that the state would have effective ownership and control of the means of production of the so-called socialist economy. Hence Marx was wrong to consider that Proudhon's approach represented petty bourgeois illusions about the progressive role of property. Instead Proudhon was outlining that without labour re-establishing ownership and control of the means of production it could not be emancipated. It could be suggested that this view is flawed because Proudhon was essentially interested in the role of individual ownership of property by labour. This point is formally true, but it is possible to extent Proudhon's view and to suggest that historical events have shown that without control of property by labour it cannot be emancipated from the alienated control of production by powerful economic forces.

Proudhon was making the valid point that the ownership of individual property by labour was the most effective manner in which equality could be realised. This point was most emphatically proved when the collectivisation of the peasantry by the Stalinist state led to the end of generally individual forms of land ownership and their replacement by the bureaucratic domination of the state. This act was justified because it was considered that individual ownership of property was reactionary, or the basis of the possible restoration of capitalism. But in practice it represented a bulwark against the attempt of the state to extend its repressive and alienating control and ownership of the property of the peasants. The genuinely progressive measure would have been for the peasants to voluntarily co-operate together in order to enhance productivity and progress. The point being made is that the approach of the Bolsheviks under Stalin was to justify the primacy of the aims of the state when contrasted to the rights of labour. This standpoint was upheld in supposed Marxist terms by maintaining that the interests of labour were based on ending individual property which had to be undermined and transformed in terms of the interests of the state. It was theoretically possible to uphold this standpoint because Marx had apparently defined the interests of labour in terms of collective production which would be represented by the transitional role of the commune state. But the problem was that under Stalinism the commune state had been replaced by the domination of the party elite. In this context what was truly progressive was to uphold the connection between labour and property, or the ability to control and utilise the means of production in terms of the aspirations established by the workers and peasants. This approach represents the legacy of Proudhon, but it was rejected by the Bolsheviks as expressing the perspective of syndicalism. Instead the priorities of the state were upheld to the detriment of the interests of labour, whether workers or peasants, because instead the state was considered to be the true guardian of their interests. This meant the factories could be taken from the control and possession of the workers, and the land of the peasants could be collectivised, in terms of the view that the state personified the actual interests of these social forces.

In other words the theoretical problem was that whilst Marxism had correctly outlined the necessity of the role of the state in terms of expressing the genuine interests of the workers and peasants, this standpoint was not elaborated in terms of the character of the state being in the genuine interests of labour. Instead the ambiguity of the Marxist approach, which was only partially overcome in terms of the conception of the participatory commune state, led to a situation in which the accumulation of omnipotent powers by the state was justified because it was argued that such a situation corresponded to the interests of the workers and peasants. But what had occurred was that the property of the forces of labour had been expropriated by the state in the name of the aims of socialism. It could be suggested that the workers and peasants were not cultured sufficiently to be able to preside over the construction of socialism, but this justified view did not mean that it was necessary and essential to effectively expropriate the possessions of labour, whether it be the ending of workers control of the factories, or the collectivisation of the land. Instead it would have been more principled if the state had tried to encourage the development of workers management of the factories and promoted the cultivation of the land by the peasants. Instead of this perspective it was argued that it was necessary to develop state ownership and control of the means of production of the workers and peasants in the name of socialism. This conception of what was meant by socialism became the justification to deny the development of the property of the producers in terms of the principle of the expression of the role of ownership by labour, and as a result they could not control the process of production in their own interests. Instead the aims of the state were imposed on the process of production. This problem had not been anticipated by Marx and Engels because they assumed a genuine identity of the role of the state and the interests of the workers. Instead it was Proudhon who outlined the basis to recognise the development of the problem of the generation of the economic power of the state to the extent that the property of labour was effectively expropriated and so the workers became powerless. His answer was that labour should have ownership and control of the means of production that it utilised in economic activity. Marx's objection to this standpoint was that it would justify a society of small owners and producers, who would eventually be expropriated by the formation of big capitalists. This point is true if we are considering the situation in which capitalism is being encouraged by a bourgeois state and the relations of production generate the accumulation of capital. But under a different situation what could be developed instead would be workers control and the co-operative development of agriculture by the peasants. In the situation of an emerging socialist society the ownership of property by the workers would become the basis to promote socialised forms of production under their control. The state could either encourage this development, or alternatively impose its alienating domination by the nationalisation of production without the effective involvement of the workers. Such a development would mean the expropriation of the property of the workers in the name of the aims of socialism. The point is that the workers in the revolutionary process have ended the domination and ownership of the means of production by the capitalists. They have re-gained effective ownership of property. In these circumstances the state can either encourage the further development of workers control or alternatively impose its own domination of the factories in the name of the interests of socialism. Furthermore, the Bolsheviks would claim that the latter policy was dictated by the situation of the time, which consisted of the dramatic decline of production and the necessity to develop a war economy. This point has validity, but did this mean that the workers would be encouraged to produce in an efficient manner in a situation in which they had been effectively expropriated and their property had been taken over by what was emerging as a bureaucratic state? Instead of an elitist form of nationalisation it would have instead been more constructive to have connected the continuation of workers control, in terms of the importance of the factory committees, with the connected role of experts. However, the development of one man management meant that the property of the workers was effectively nationalised and organised in terms of the imperatives imposed by the state onto the producers who were subordinated within the relations of production. Thus the essential point of Proudhon is true that only if the property of labour is upheld will it become possible for the producers to define and determine their own priorities and so act in accordance with their own interests. But such an approach was rejected as an expression of the aims of the reduction of labour to the activity of small scale commodity production. What was ignored by this dismissal of workers control as a syndicalist deviation was that if labour was able to own and control the means of production as its property this would be an incentive to organise and develop production in an efficient manner. Instead it was argued by most of the Bolsheviks, with the exception of people like Kollontai, that only the state could define the possibility to promote the advance of the productive forces in an efficient manner. This standpoint could be justified because Marx and Engels had failed to describe the role of labour within an emerging socialist society. But this deficiency is precisely why we have to utilise the views of Proudhon as an alternative. It could be argued that his views have no relevance because they imply the development of small scale commodity producers with ownership of their means of production. But such a view is to ignore the more important conclusions that we can make from the approach of Proudhon, as we will attempt to indicate.

The methodology of Proudhon is simple. The relationship of nature to our interests of humans is so important that this cannot mean that a few individuals should have domination over it utilisation. Instead the rights of property in relation to nature, or in general must be connected to those of equality: “Similarly the land is indispensable to our existence, thus a common thing and insusceptible of appropriation; but land is much scarcer than the other elements, and so its use must be regulated not for the profit of a few but in the interest and for the security of all. In short equality of rights is proved by equality of needs. Now equality of right, for something which is limited in amount, can be realised only by equality of possession.”(9) Hence the argument being made is that if there is a situation in which a few people own the means of production, or the land, this indicates that the majority of the people are being deprived of their ability and capacity to utilise these means of production in terms of the interests of themselves and society. The only just situation is one in which they are able to own and organise property in equal terms. But in order to realise this possibility it will be necessary to overcome the present situation in which a few people are able to own and control the means of productive activity, or property, at the expense of the majority. It will require a struggle against the forces of capital if the principle of the equality of property is to be realised. Marx would presumably dismiss this perspective as an expression of a retrogressive attempt to bring back small scale production, and so deny the actual and potential tendencies for co-operative production that presently are being developed within large scale capitalism. But this would be a dogmatic view because equality of property for many small producers and owners implies that they would be encouraged to co-ordinate their activity in terms of being able to realise a higher material standard of living. Hence if effective ownership and control of property by labour is realised then this will enable the organisation and distribution of production to occur in an egalitarian manner. The point is that Proudhon is not primarily praising the role of small scale production instead he is indicating the emancipatory promise implied by the realisation of the equality of possession of the means of production. Only in this manner can labour realise its ability to determine and define its capacity to organise economic activity in accordance with its interests. This potential does not mean that small scale production should be the norm, instead what becomes possible is that labour is able to utilise this situation of possession of property in order to realise the potential for equality in terms of economic development. The ownership of property is the basis of the expression of the principle of equality, and so capitalism is a distortion of this approach because it implies the actuality of inequality between the few that have property in comparison to the many who do not. Hence it is a caricature to define capitalism as a property owing democracy. Instead it is the denial of this standpoint, and instead property is the privilege of a few powerful owners and labour is in a situation in which it does not have any property in economic terms. Thus to realise a situation in which labour has equal conditions to own property is a revolutionary act and would mean undermining the economic power of the capitalist. In this situation of equality of property it would be logical and practical for the forces of labour to combine in order to consolidate their ownership and control of property. But Marx does not recognise that this aspect should be an integral aspect of the revolutionary process because he is reticent to differentiate between the role of property and capitalism. Instead he considers that they represent a connected whole. However, what he ignores with this criticism is that the actual major aspect of the standpoint of Proudhon is the importance of equality. Hence the progressive role of property should not be about the possibility to develop small scale private production but is instead about the possibilities of equality of possession. The logical outcome of this situation is that the many property owners would combine in a mutually beneficial manner in order to realise the potential of their ownership of the means of production. It would in contrast be a contradiction to undermine the principles and premises of equality of possession in order to promote the expropriation of the many producers in the interests of an emerging capitalist class. Hence what Proudhon is implying is that in the past equality of possession never effectively existed, and this is why such an aim, if realised in the present, would represent progress for the producers. Indeed he is arguing that the only basis in which his aim could be consistently realised is not by the supposed goodwill of existing authorities, but instead by the universal consent of the people. Thus what he is advocating is not a constitutional measure but is instead effectively an act of revolution. This is because he is suggesting that the situation in which the capitalist employs workers for the purpose of their collective production means that they create in terms of wealth more than they are paid in wages. Such a situation represents the justification of the exploitation of the workers. The only manner in which this process of exploitation can be overcome is by the division of property: “But if the property is divided, all conditions will be equal, and there will no longer be either great capitalists or great proprietors.”(10)

In other words the aim of Proudhon is to advocate a strategy in which the exploitation of labour by capital can be ended, and his perspective is to suggest that the ability of the capitalists to dominate labour can be overcome by distributing their property to labour in terms of the principle of equality. This point is elaborated by Proudhon to contend that if we assume the application of the workers to the generation of wealth is equal then they should be rewarded in terms of the principle of equality, and as production becomes collective the workers have the right to an equal share of the profits. But how is this principle of equality to be realised, to Proudhon the answer is that the property of the capitalist would be distributed in terms of equal shares to the workers. This process would mean a transformation of the relations of production in favour of the producers on the basis of the realisation of the principle of equality in terms of the possession of property. Hence what would be established would be the undermining of the unequal economic power of capital over labour, an end to its ability to exploit the workers and instead the creation of an egalitarian society based on the equal access to property and the wealth generated as a result. Indeed, so committed to equality is Proudhon that this approach means that he denies that the more productive workers should be rewarded more than the less productive workers: “If you give me, on the contrary, a society in which every kind of talent is in numerical agreement with the needs of society, and in which each producer is in made to produce only that which is required by his special function, I will while preserving the hierarchy of functions of fortunes, deduce the equality of fortunes.”(11) Hence the approach of Proudhon is in no manner a justification for the view that the realisation of the possession of property should become the basis for the generation of inequality in the accumulation of wealth. Instead it should be a principle of society that it is based on the expression of equality despite the necessary diversity of the different types of work. In this situation it will not be possible for the accumulation of capital to develop in terms of the generation of some forms of productive activity that are able to acquire greater rewards than other forms. Instead equality as a principle of the application of work will mean that the only form of society that is possible will be socialism. This point is not recognised by Marx because to him the situation of the ownership of property by labour can only generate the conditions for the development of capitalism. In contrast it is also not surprising that Proudhon contends that the exchange of goods of equal worth should not realise a profit. Consequently, Proudhon is trying to prove that a society without the generation of inequality in rewards is possible even if labour has the ability to act in an independent manner on the basis of individual work and exchange. But the most important point is that such a type of society would only be a pre-condition for its development into something higher. The ability of the worker to have the means and possibilities to generate their own forms of economic activity would suggest that the impetus for combination with other workers would be created: “The individual man can supply but a very small portion of his needs; all his power lies in association and in the intelligent combination of universal effort. The division and cooperation of labour multiply the quantity and the variety of products, and specialization improves their quality.”(12) Hence the autonomy of labour does not imply that it is possible to develop production and distribution in a solitary form. Instead the cooperation of the division of labour is required in order to realise human needs, and this process implies that the forces of labour will be encouraged to develop collective forms of production. Therefore it is a caricature of Proudhon's position to imply that it merely upholds individual forms of economic activity. Instead the opposite conclusion is required. What he has developed is an understanding of how socialism is possible as the logical expression of the realisation of the ability of labour to have equal access to property.

Thus it is not surprising that Proudhon comments that: “All industries are united by mutual relations in a single group; all productions perform reciprocal service in ends and means; all varieties of talent are but a series of metamorphoses from the inferior to the superior.”(13) And: “Now this incontestable and uncontested fact makes all individual production common....The producer himself has the right only to that portion of his product which is expressed by a fraction whose denominator is equal to the number of individuals of which society is composed.....The labourer is not even possessor of his product, scarcely has he finished with it when society claims it.”(14) Hence it is being argued that the role of individual labour is merely the form of a wider economic content. The impetus of individual production is in order to create goods that are for the purposes of society, and this aspect is the basis of exchange and distribution. Therefore it would seem logical that the autonomous character of production would become modified and instead become part of a collective economic effort in both the creation of goods and their exchange. This possibility could occur because the principle of equality in remuneration for production would not be undermined. The principle of equality would mean that the property owning democracy would become transformed, but it is necessary to accept that without the generation of a property owning democracy the promotion of equality could not occur. This is the point outlined by Proudhon, but which is not accepted by Marx. Instead Marx can only envisage that inequality and capital accumulation would result from a situation of a property owning democracy. But Proudhon is trying to outline why this prospect can be avoided. He tries to establish why this development can instead result in transition to socialism. His approach can be vindicated in the tragic terms that the ignoring of his perspective meant that the Bolsheviks rejected the right of labour to have ownership of their property and so instead upheld the primary role of the state. What was not recognised was that a property owning democracy could be the most advanced basis to promote socialism.

What was glossed over by Marxism, and by the Bolsheviks in particular, was that if labour had the rights of ownership of property then such a situation expressed the possibility of both equality in economic activity because all the owners had the capacity to control their production, which meant they could create according to their aims and aspirations. The result was the creation of goods which could be exchanged in terms of comparable items which had also been produced under similar equal conditions. But if the rights of ownership by labour were ended, and replaced by the role of the state, then labour was reduced to a servile status which meant that the process of the creation of goods and wealth was under the control of a distinct and alienating form of economic power, like the nationalised economy. This development would actually represent a regression from the possibility of realising the effective emancipation of labour. This situation is no different from when labour was exploited because the control and ownership of the product he/she created occurred in a situation where the economic power is with the private capitalist. The character of the nationalised economy which lacks any ability for labour to control or own the product they create must undermine any possibility for the state to express the interests of the workers. Only if labour is able to establish effective ownership of the product can this development ensure that the state is not an expression of antagonistic interests which act according to their own distinct interests. The problem was that the interpretation of Marxism carried out by the Bolsheviks lacked this perspective of how the interests of labour could be realised in the most effective manner. Instead they assumed that the party state would be able to act on behalf of the working class without this situation resulting in the creation of a contradiction between the interests of party and class. In contrast, Proudhon was emphasising what would be the conditions in which not only the primacy of labour within society would be realised, but that also the inter-connections between the workers would correspond to the principles of equality. In such a situation the role of a party state would be superfluous. We may argue that this rejection of the role of the state is unrealistic, but the emphasis on the importance of labour for defining the future society is of the most crucial importance.

What Proudhon was trying to establish was that without the primacy of labour for defining the character of economic activity, the only other outcome would be the justification of exploitation, either in terms of the primacy of the role of the state, or acceptance of the domination of the capitalist within the process of production. He outlines in detail that if property is under the ownership of the capitalist, the result will be that the workers lacks any effective control over the process of production, and instead earns an income that is only inadequately able to purchase the goods necessary for subsistence. This situation of inequality is because of the lack of power of labour over the process of production. Hence in terms of the unequal conditions of production that result from the domination of the capitalist, the 'right' to own property can only impoverish the worker and mean that he cannot adequately realise the means of subsistence. Such a situation has resulted from the lack of economic power of the producer within the economic activity controlled by the capitalist. It would seem that there is no alternative to this situation, but humans as labour reject this social condition as being against our sense of equality and justice. Furthermore, only the capitalist benefits from the present unequal situation. In contrast: “Except for the proprietor, we labour for each other; we can do nothing by ourselves without the assistance of others, and we continually exchange products and services with each other. What are these if not social acts?”(15) Thus the possibility for a different and more equal society is not unrealistic or merely the expression of a utopian imagination. Instead within the formal context of the unequal relationships of capitalism there is the expression of an alternative in terms of the inherently social and collective character of production by labour. The possibility of an alternative is empirically expressed in our regular relations and connections, but it is repressed by the domination of the capitalist, who distorts the inherent social solidarity of labour for his own ends. In other words: “Sociability is the attraction felt by sentient beings for each other; justice is the same attraction, accompanied by reflection and knowledge.”(16) This development of moral and social reasoning is the outcome of the inherent character of our productive activity despite the distortions introduced by capitalism. The conclusion is that our very economic and practical activity means that justice is possible: “What is it then to practice justice? It is to give each an equal share of wealth under equal conditions of labour; it is to act socially.”(17) In other words we know what justice is because it is possible for labour to establish equality in the process of wealth formation. But in order for this possibility to be realised we need to overcome the domination of the capitalist, or the connected defence of economic inequality by the role of the state. But in order that this possibility be realised it is vital that labour act in order to establish equal conditions of production and wealth creation. Hence it is not sufficient and principled for an alternative agency to substitute itself for the revolutionary activity of labour. Instead only labour has the interest and ability to bring about the necessary transformation of the relations of production. Thus, Proudhon is suggesting, in a manner as emphatic as Marx, that the required act of changing the relations of production in order to consistently express the principles of justice and equality must be an act of the self-agency of labour. Only labour, which is exploited by capital, can know how fairness can be realised. Thus the question of what are rights expresses the perspective of how society can be changed for the better by the most exploited and principled social agency: “What is the right of labour? It is the right to be permitted to obtain one's share in the wealth by fulfilling the required conditions. It is the right of society, the right of equality.”(19)

Thus the issue of strategy is simple. It is the promotion of the moral reason of labour that it is being exploited under the present unequal conditions of the domination of the capitalists over production. The result of this awareness is that the present situation of injustice is intolerable, and so only overcoming of this condition by ending the hegemony of the capitalists within the relations of production is vital. Only in this manner can the unequal distribution of wealth within the relations of production be ended, and instead the producers can act to bring about a situation of equality which will be in accordance with their interests. Hence it is only in these terms that all forms of inequality in the remuneration of labour can be overcome and instead equality in the application of reward for work be established. This standpoint seems to be very simple, but it is based on the realisation that only labour has the interest and incentive to establish an economy on the basis of the principles of justice and equality. Hence Proudhon has outlined a convincing and important perspective of the importance of labour as a social agency of change, but he has also, in a manner more emphatic and detailed than Marxism, indicated how its role is crucial for the development of a new type of economy and society. In contrast to Marx, Proudhon did not outline the role of co-operative production as being merely an expression of the imperatives of capital accumulation. Instead he contends that social forms of production are inherent to the character of labour, and so must contradict the logic of capitalism. The role of the capitalist is to uphold the private appropriation of production which undermines its contrasting aspect in terms of the cooperative character of economic activity which is based on the principles of solidarity and justice rather than private greed. Thus it seems realistic and credible that the importance of cooperation can be realised if capitalism is overthrown.

In contrast, Marx's approach seems to be more utopian because he is not able to support the approach of Proudhon and instead labour is conceived as being effectively the instrument of the imperatives of capital accumulation: “When the prevailing system is the production of commodities,, i.e. where the means of production are the property of private persons and the artisan therefore either produces commodities in isolation and independently of other people, or sells his labour power as a commodity because he lacks the means to produce independently, the above mentioned pre-supposition, namely co-operation on a large scale can be realized only through the increase of individual capitals, only in proportion as the social means of production and subsistence are transformed into the private property of the capitalists.”(19) Thus in these terms the process of production is based on the subordination of the role of co-operative labour to the aims of capital accumulation. There is no contradiction between the activity of socialised production and the interests of the process of capital accumulation. Hence it would seem that the only basis to emancipate co-operative labour is by the political act of the role of a party, or the related act of revolution under the auspices of the leadership of a vanguard organisation. Marx does effectively connect the importance of the co-operative production of the working class with the role of the class struggle, but what he does not establish is how this aspect of social activity could become the major principle and basis of the creation of an alternative society to capitalism. Instead he is effectively content to contend that the development of socialism is generated within capitalism. This point must be true in order to uphold the standpoint that socialism is more than a good idea, and instead has an objective basis within the processes of capitalism, but what would be more effective from his standpoint would be outlining the major features of communism within capitalism. His reticence to carry out this task meant that his error was the opposite to that of anarchism which did outline, often in detail, the character of the society being advocated.

Proudhon is adamant that the alternative to a situation of unequal property ownership and capitalism is not communism. He maintains that: “Communism is inequality, but in a sense opposite to that of property. Property is the exploitation of the weak by the strong; communism is the exploitation of the strong by the weak.....In communism the inequality comes from making mediocrity of talent and achievement equal to excellence.”(20) The reason that he provides why communism would not be a satisfactory alternative to capitalism and unequal property ownership is that it is an extreme form of reaction which would not tackle the major limitations of the previous form of system: “Communism rejects independence and proportionality; property satisfies neither equality nor law.”(21) He does not explain how it would be possible for the supposedly weak to become so powerful that they effectively exploit the so-called strong, and so his dislike of communism effectively amounts to a dogmatic view that is not based on consideration and reflective thought. But, at least he is not content with merely opposing communism and instead outlines his conception of an alternative society in terms of the application of four major conditions. Firstly, equality of conditions or means of labour, secondly that the role of law does not undermine the capacity for independence, thirdly that the independence of the individuals can express the importance of application of private reason without being restricted by the law, fourthly, that proportionality should be exercised without undermining the principles of equality. Thus liberty is reconciled with the importance of equality, and the rule of law occurs without the necessity of government. This situation would encourage the development of an economy in which products are exchanged in accordance with equivalent values, and so the promotion of self-improvement in terms of the ability to create and produce is not at the expense of anyone else. Instead of unequal property and wealth for a few people this situation is replaced by the role of labour for all: “All human labour being the result of collective force, all property therefore becomes collective and undivided; in more precise terms, labour destroys property.”(22) This situation means that inequality in wages becomes unjust and is no longer possible because value is expressed by the equivalence of products in the act of exchange, and because products are of equal value profits cannot be made. There is an equality of social conditions: “Free association, liberty, which is limited to maintaining equality in the means of production and equivalence in exchanges, is the only possible, the only just, the only true form of society.”(23)

In other words in brief but effective terms Proudhon has outlined the principles of an alternative society to that of capitalism. It would be a caricature to describe it as a property owning democracy, or some form of justification of small scale individual property. Instead what he is concerned to establish is the conditions for equality within society that would overcome the problem of exploitation because of the accumulation of wealth by the capitalist at the expense of the workers. What his answer to these limitations consists of is that labour would be able to establish free and equal relations because the transformed conditions for production and distribution enable the exchange of goods of equal value. This implies that the domination of the capitalist is replaced by the genuine autonomy of the workers who are able to determine the conditions of their work, and establish the principles of the exchange of goods without any justification of this process being at the expense of any of the partners in this process. What he is actually outlining is the possibility for the forces of labour to be able to develop the process of production and exchange without any exploitation occurring. Only in this manner can it be said that a society that is without any economic domination has been created. In other words he is primarily attempting to establish that economic activity can occur without inequality because it is based on the interests and activity of labour. This principle should have been consistently accepted by the Bolsheviks. Instead what occurred was that they justified the more elitist view that what constituted progress towards realising the aim of socialism was defined by the importance of the party state. In that manner it was possible to actually justify the view that the state could dictate to the forces of labour how they should implement the plans of production. It was not the role of labour to define how the aim of economic equality should be realised. Indeed the ultimate justification of the ideology of Stalinism was that inequality and the effective exploitation of labour was principled in the name of economic development. However, if Marxism had effectively accepted the premises of Proudhon concerning the connection between the role of labour, and the possibility of economic equality, possibly these distortions of its doctrine could have been tackled more effectively. Instead, Marxism became transformed into an approach in which the party instructs the proletariat as to how its liberation can be realised. Marx himself did oppose this standpoint, but it was his various omissions in his approach, as in relation to not developing Proudhon's views about labour, which unintentionally contributed to the development of Bolshevik elitism.

But why does this above criticism of Marxism not mean that it is logical and possible to admit that anarchism is a superior doctrine? The answer is that Proudhon's advances were not consolidated and elaborated in a consistent manner. Instead historically various anarchists, and their movements, have emphasised the importance of ending the role of the state. They have not elaborated what social agency could bring this about, and instead anarchism has often become a form of an individualist doctrine. Indeed it can be argued that anarchism has often degenerated into becoming a justification of capitalism in terms of an emphasis of the role of the market and a limited role for the state. In this context, it is still \Marxism which has upheld a principled perspective of class struggle and advocated a form of society based on the principles of co-operation and solidarity. Hence Marxism upholds the themes that were elaborated by Anarchists theorists like Kropotkin in the past. This does not mean that Marxism has been unable to overcome the limitation of dogmatism, but anarchism has only been able to uphold its relevance in terms of promoting syndicalism. The ultimate problem for anarchism is that it is unrealistic because it is based on the view that authority itself is authoritarian and so should be replaced with what is effectively the spontaneous harmony of society. This view is unrealistic not only because it is unworkable but also because humans recognise the importance of authority in order to regulate their social affairs. The complex question is how can we develop a form of authority that does not justify exploitation or injustice? In this context the aim is to create the conditions for the formation of a democratic state that will be able to promote the ability of human beings to realise the demise of systems of inequality. However, we have learnt from Proudhon that this task of establishing an egalitarian society is primarily the role of labour. Only the emancipation of labour can promote the conditions for the liberation of all of society. In this sense, Marxists actually shares the aim of Proudhon, even if they have often distorted and undermined the realisation of this standpoint because of the elitist interpretation of what is meant by socialism. But if defined in its most principled form, Marxism would be understood as the perspective of the self-emancipation of the working class. But it is Proudhon who has elaborated this aim in the most detailed and convincing terms. Hence the conclusion that we should make from this recognition of the importance of Proudhon is that there is not a simple division between these two ideologies. Instead Marxism can be improved and made more principled by the acceptance of the importance of thinkers like Proudhon and Kropotkin.

It is interesting that in his critique of Proudhon Marx does not deny the importance of the role of labour that has been outlined by his polemical adversary. Instead his critique concentrates on the issue of the limitations of Proudhon's political economy, such as the problems in the elaboration of the character of exchange and value. But there is an affinity with Proudhon when Marx concludes his critique with an emphasis on the revolutionary role of the working class: “An oppressed class is the vital condition for every society founded on the antagonism of classes. The emancipation of the oppressed class thus implies necessarily the creation of a new society. For the oppressed class to be able to emancipate itself it is necessary that the productive powers already acquired and the existing social relations should no longer be capable of existing side by side. Of all the instruments of production, the greatest productive power is the revolutionary class itself. The organisation of revolutionary elements as a class supposes the existence of all the productive forces which could be engendered in the bosom of the old society.”(24) Whilst this comment is an expression of a perspective that is based on the emergence of historical materialism, which indicates that the productive forces are the primary basis for the possibility of social change, the view of Marx is not opposed to that of Proudhon. From the application of different methodologies they have come to the same conclusion that it is the task of labour to aspire to overcome capitalism if a society based on equality is to be realised. Proudhon has generally applied a moral approach, which is admittedly with a tendency towards historical generalisation in its standpoint. In contrast, Marx is developing an understanding in which the imperatives of the productive forces is implying that the working class has a revolutionary task to overcome the domination of capital. But despite Marx's polemical vehemence when criticising Proudhon, what cannot be obscured is the high level of agreement that he has with Proudhon concerning the progressive role of labour. In this context, it could be argued that there is a possible convergence between Marxism and anarchism. However, the history of Marx's differences with Bakunin, and the opposition of the Bolsheviks to anarchism, meant that this convergence was never realised. It could also be argued that the contemporary history of anarchism has intensified these differences. This is because the recent offensive of capital against labour has led to the emergence of what has been called anarcho-capitalism. Therefore instead of a convergence of anarchism and Marxism, which seemed possible in the 1960's, there has instead been the emergence of a libertarian form of anarchism which is pro-capitalist and so indifferent to its socialist origins. Hence it is no longer a matter of debate as to whether Marxism or anarchism is superior as a form of emancipatory ideology. Instead it would seem that in theoretical and practical terms that anarchism has exhausted itself as a progressive form of opposition to capitalism. Thus the central task is to outline how Marxism rejects the view of anarcho-capitalists like Robert Nozick. His approach is an expression of the standpoint of bourgeois ideology, and is an essential aspect of the political justification of the offensive of capital against labour. However, the few remaining left wing anarchists would presumably argue that Nozick does not express a standpoint that corresponds to a genuine expression of their approach. This point may be true, but we are under an obligation to try and indicate how Marxism is opposed to what is the most influential and important contemporary expression of the anarchist viewpoint. Peter Marshall tries to differ anarchism from the views of Nozick by maintaining that he is in favour of the minimal state.(25) This point may be true, but this aspect does not mean that Nozick is not influenced by anarchism as the basis of his major form of ideological approach. The problem for left wing anarchists is that their approach has become the basis of inspiration for the most right-wing defence of capitalism and opposition to the welfare state. The only manner in which left wing anarchism can be revived is to develop a contemporary form of renewal of the approach of Proudhon. But this task does not seem to be carried out. Instead the right wing libertarian anarchists are still ideologically hegemonic, and so it is the urgent task of Marxism to repudiate them. Unfortunately left wing anarchists are ineffective in relation to this task because they share the libertarian opposition to the welfare state. Hence in the last analysis there is a form of convergence between left and right anarchism in terms of opposition to any form of state intervention which has improved the social conditions of the working class. In contrast, Marxism knows how to defend reforms because it recognises that they express an integral aspect of the class struggle. Thus it is the anarchist dislike of the state which has led to the effective convergence between left and right wings of anarchism. Only Marxism can defend progressive ideas because of its more consistent revolutionary approach.

Robert Nozick in his book: 'Anarchy, State and Utopia' accepts that there may be some merit in the anarchist view that society could exist without a state, but the problem is that it is not possible to establish an agency for the enforcement of the law and resolving conflicts between individuals. (26) In these circumstances protective agencies would arise in order to uphold the interests of people in establishing stable authority. But the problem is that given the lack of a central authority, conflict would arise between what are rival protective agencies. This situation can only be resolved by the formation of one universal and dominant protective agency, of what could be called a minimal state: “Out of anarchy, pressed by spontaneous groupings, mutual protection associations, division of labour, market pressures, economies of scale, and rational self-interest, there arises something very much resembling a minimal state, or a group of geographically distinct states.”(27) Hence if the state was not formed it would not be possible to establish social cohesion in terms of the rule of law, and the ability to establish an accepted form of political legitimacy. In other words, the anarchists do not explain how a society that lacked this form of authority could function without degenerating into a condition of tension and conflict. Instead the state is able to generate the possibility to promote stability and the ability to resolve disagreements between people and groups. But this argument in favour of the formation of the state does not mean that its role should be something other than minimal. Instead, the approach of Nozick is modest and limited. The role of the state is defined merely by its ability to uphold social cohesion. It should not have ambitions to promote other aims such as the redistribution of wealth. Instead the assumption is that the state is limited to what are primary functions, and this implies that the economy will be based on the role of private entrepreneurs. In other words the role of the state is essentially limited and defined in the following terms: “”A state claims the monopoly on deciding who may use force...it says that only it may decide who may use force and under what conditions; it reserves to itself the sole right to pass on the legitimacy and permissibility of the use of force within its boundaries; furthermore it claims the right to punish all those who violate its claimed monopoly. The monopoly may be violated in two ways: (1) a person may use force though unauthorized by the state to do so, or (2) though not themselves using force a group or person may set themselves up as an alternative authority (and perhaps even claim to be the sole legitimate one) to decide when and by whom the use of force is proper and legitimate.”(28)

Consequently, Nozick has transformed anarchist influences about the necessary limitations of the state and modified these views into being an argument in favour of a minimal state. But this standpoint is connected to an implicit conservatism. This is because he is effectively suggesting that stability and cohesion will be upheld by the state being able to ensure that disruptive political change does not occur. The role of the state as the guardian of the law implies that it will be against any possibility of revolutionary transformation of society. Instead the state upholds the existing economic system of capitalism because this type of economy corresponds most smoothly with the role of the state as the guardian of the law and social tranquillity. This means the state is connected with the interests and aims of the capitalist class. Therefore if the state was to become the expression of the interests of socialism it would no longer be a minimal state. Instead the character of the state would have changed. Indeed, the type of state being advocated by Nozick would not even be a redistributive welfare state. This is because the modest intervention of the state in this manner would be to undermine its inherent minimal character. Thus it could be argued that Nozick shares the anarchist distaste for the state, except in the terms of it being a vital instrument for the rule of law and social cohesion. His standpoint is the logical outcome of anarchist thought but also recognises that its traditional denial of the role of the state was unrealistic. Hence he agrees with Hobbes that without a central form of authority society would be a state of nature in which the most powerful individuals could dictate to others. Thus his standpoint is an effective response to what is the crucial limitation in the approach of anarchism in terms of its dogmatic rejection of the state. However, his interpretation of the flaws in anarchism also means that he justifies a conservative standpoint. The emancipatory and utopian imagination of anarchism is replaced with a right wing justification of the minimal state and capitalism. Anarchism has been transformed into the politics of Thatcher and Reagan.

Nozick outlines his opposition to social justice in the following terms: “Why not....hold that some persons have to bear some costs that benefit other people more, for the sake of the overall social good? But there is no social entity with a good that undergoes some sacrifice for its own good. There are only individual people, different individual people, with their own individual lives. Using one of these people for the benefit of others, uses him and benefits the others. Nothing more. What happens is that something is done to him for the sake of others. Talk of an overall social good covers this up....To use a person in this way does not sufficiently respect and take account of the fact that he is a separate person, that his is the only life he has. He does not get some overbalancing good from his sacrifice, and no one is entitled to force this upon him – least of all a state or government that claims his allegiance...and that therefore scrupulously must be neutral between its citizens.”(29) Thus Nozick assumes that society is composed of a collection of contrasting and autonomous individuals with their own distinct interests. Hence there can be no conception of a collective social good. Thus if a person has to contribute more in tax this apparent infringement on their rights is considered to be more important than the related fact that these taxes will go towards financing the National Health Service, which is to the benefit of all citizens. Instead Nozick is assuming that only a low tax regime, which goes towards maintaining the minimal state, should be the only contribution that a person should have to make in relation to the interests of society. In all other aspects people are individuals with their own distinct interests and the state should not interfere in the realisation of these interests. It should not be the concern of the state that in this situation some people will benefit more than others because of the necessary competition between individuals which will be created by a society devoted to the aims of self-interest. However, in this situation the minimal state will have to be a strong state in order to repress the discontent created by a society in which some individuals are able to advance at the expense of others. In contrast, the advocates of social justice assume that people regardless of different circumstances can have similar interests in developing a situation of equality and provision for public services. This standpoint assumes that social harmony can be created in terms of the realisation of justice in relation to the inherent common interests generated by the promotion of the general welfare of society by a reforming government. But a government based on the minimal state principle will be dedicated to the ending of a welfare state because this form of society will be considered to be against the principles of individual interest. This approach was carried out by Thatcher and Reagan, but the result was artificial depression and mass unemployment. Thus the logic of the perspective of Nozick is to justify a situation which is biased in favour of the wealthy and is against the interests of the majority of society.

In other words his standpoint promotes the intensification of class struggle and the end of the social gains made by people in the post-war period. The supposed advancement of the principles of individual interests is actually a formula to uphold the action of the state to worsen the social conditions of the working class, and of all those that had relied on the benefits provided by the public services. He upholds his standpoint because he rejects any valid conception of the social good. But what his view of a society of distinct individuals means in practice is to provide the ideological justification for the offensive of capital against labour in the 1980's. Presumably, Nozick could support this intensification of class struggle because to him the rights of individuals are not being undermined by the actions of what is a minimal state. Instead, to him it is a state that promotes social welfare that is detrimental to society because it must erode the rights of individuals. The actual fact that such a state is a promoter of the interests of all of society is something that is not credible to him because the very character of such an interventionist state is to undermine the interests of many different individuals. This standpoint implies that he does not believe in the possibility of social harmony within capitalism. But what his perspective glosses over is that his approach must favour the interests of the capitalists, and the role of the free market. Thus he implicitly equates the importance of individual interest with the aims of the entrepreneur. In this context, the welfare state, which is financed by progressive taxation, must be against the interest of the wealthiest individuals, even if its aims are the collective good of all of society. This pro-capitalist logic of his standpoint indicates that his emphasis on individual autonomy actually expresses support for the capitalists as a social class. He is justifying the class struggle from the viewpoint of the entrepreneur.

Nozick upholds his standpoint by suggesting that it is impractical to impose social obligations on people in order to realise the principles of fairness. (30) But this is a dogmatic view because it could be the policy of a government that has been elected with a democratic mandate to introduce policies which represent the aims of fairness. If the people support this standpoint, and the government is determined to implement this approach, then it would seem that there is nothing implausible about the possibility of establishing a society based on fairness. But Nozick does not consider these political conditions, and instead his view that society is composed of autonomous individuals means that he contends in a dogmatic manner that agreement about fairness can never be realised. But the problem with his approach is that he considers his standpoint as the expression of the only credible interpretation of social reality. No other interpretations of society are possible. But this view is a dogmatic standpoint which contrasts with the actual development of the welfare state in the past. But Nozick ignores the actuality of empirical history and instead outlines what he considers to be a crucial practical objection to the possibility to realise fairness: “At the very least one wants to build into the principle of fairness the condition that the benefits to a person from the actions of others are greater than the costs to him of doing his share. How are we to imagine this?”(31) He provides some hypothetical examples, which are so outlandish that we cannot but agree with his apparently infallible logic. But if we ignore his biased examples we can provide from history, and often recent history, instances in which society has corresponded to the aims of fairness. The only reason why these examples have often been undermined is not because of any supposed impracticality in relation to social policy, but rather because right wing governments have come to power with the aim of undermining the gains of the welfare state. Nozick's views are ultimately based on his understanding that the state is only justified as a monopoly expression of authority and the right of enforcement of the law and coercion in its given territory. Thus in accordance with this definition it cannot have any other functions or policies like the aspiration to realise social justice. But, even if we accept that his standpoint provides a plausible conception of how the state originated this does not mean that its trajectory should be defined by its apparent beginning. Instead we can establish that the role of the state has evolved in relation to the importance of the pressures of the democratic electorate. The development of social discontent meant that the state had to either attempt to satisfy the aspirations of an often disgruntled people, or else have to tackle the possibility of its revolutionary overthrow because of mass struggle. The result was the modification of the actions of the state in order to tackle issues involving the principles of social justice and fairness. If such aims had been as impractical, as Nozick wants us to believe, then it would not had been possible to create the welfare state. Therefore the ideology that Nozick upholds is actually a contemporary expression of the view that the welfare state is no longer practical because of the importance of the competing interests within society. It is not his theoretical reasoning that has supposedly proved its superiority, but rather that his approach has provided practical justification for the offensive of capital against labour. The point is that his ideas have become ideologically significant, but this does not mean that an alternative standpoint is somehow no longer credible. Instead it is possible to outline a conception of the common interest which would effectively oppose Nozick's emphasis on the competing interests of individuals. However, this task of generating a reformist approach has been discredited by the demise of the Soviet Union, and the supposed discrediting of socialism. The result of this situation led to the right wing trajectory of Social Democracy. In this situation it seemed that the ideas of Nozick had become the new 'common sense'. This point was apparently reinforced by the view that history had ended with capitalism. Hence it was political developments which appeared to provide the approach of Nozick with its ultimate credibility. But, ultimately the apparent inability of the working class to change society has provided the most important justification for the supposed superiority of the standpoint of Nozick.

Nozick outlines his objection to what he describes as a distributional state in the following terms: “There is no central distribution, no person or group entitled to control all the resources, jointly deciding how they are to be doled out. What each person gets, he gets from others who give to him in exchange for something or as a gift. In a free society, diverse persons control different resources, and new holdings arise out of the voluntary exchanges and actions of persons.....The total result is the product of many individual decisions which the different individuals are entitled to make.”(32) What Nozick has described is a society in which commodity production and exchange is considered to be the most accepted form for the distribution of goods. What is not explained is that it is perfectly possible as a result of government policy to modify this situation, such as promoting the provision of goods made available to the poorest sections of society. The point is that whilst Nozick has outlined what he considers to be an ideal form of the allocation of resources within society, it is quite feasible that this situation will be challenged and modified because of the pressures of the popular will. Indeed this is what has happened during much of the twentieth century. Therefore what could be considered to be an ideal to which people should conform is constantly being modified in terms of actual events. Hence politics has been characterised by the uncomfortable fact for Nozick that the distribution that has resulted from commodity exchange has been considered to be insufficient for many groups of people. The result has been agitation and pressure in order to change this situation. But Nozick cannot allow for the influence of the empirical because it constitutes a violation of the principles of distribution according to value rather than morality which he has outlined. He argues that the alternative to his approach is to justify a situation in which the state, or some other institution, interferes in the economic relations between people who would no longer be able to transfer resources to each other without the intervention of some external agency. (33) This point may have some validity but what Nozick is unwilling to contemplate is that such a development could be beneficial for the members of society. He is not willing to contemplate the gains of this interventionist development, and instead believes that the principle of voluntary transfers of resources would re-assert itself. It is true that such a situation occurred in the USSR but this was because people did not consider that the economy corresponded to the principle of social justice. If a genuine socialist economy based on the realisation of the principle of need could be established then this would indicate that the standpoint of Nozick was inferior in terms of the ability to realise the aims of social equality. However, Nozick would consider that this perspective is invalid, impractical and impermissible, because it contradicts the supposedly infallible principle of the voluntary transfer of resources via the situation of commodity exchange. What he is unwilling to accept is that such an economy is effectively an expression of a utopian imagination because the state is constantly interfering with its expression because of problems in the process of distribution. Indeed without this interference of the state the people may be motivated to end the limitations of the commodity economy.

But Nozick cannot recognise any of these difficulties with his standpoint, and instead considers that even the imposition of income tax as an infringement on the economic rights of individuals.(34) He comments that: “The man who chooses to work longer to gain an income more sufficient for his basic needs prefers extra goods or services to the leisure and activities he could perform during the possible non-working hours; whereas the man who chooses not to work the extra time prefers the leisure activities to the extra goods or services he could acquire by working more. Given this, it would be illegitimate for a tax system to seize some of a man's leisure (forced labour) for the purposes of serving the needy, how can it be legitimate for a tax system to seize some of a man's goods for that purpose?”(35) But what this standpoint ignores is that a tax system that may seem to be unfair in terms of higher levels imposed on extra earned income is also the basis to finance the various public services that are of benefit to everyone. Hence what seems to be an example of unequal sacrifice is actually an expression of the realisation of a collective social good. But Nozick cannot recognise this possibility because he can only contemplate a society based on the autonomy and competition between different individuals. This means he can only accept the role of taxes in order to finance the minimal state. However, Nozick is not unaware of the potential to realise the collective social good in terms of the principle of distribution when he comments that: “When... principles of distributive justice are built into the legal structure of society, they....give each citizen an enforceable claim to some portion of the sum total social product, that is to the some portion of the sum total of the individually and joint made products.”(36) But he considers that this approach represent a rejection of the economic rights of the individual, what he does not accept is that the role of progressive taxes generates the development of social provision that benefits all members of society. Hence it is entirely possible that people would be willing to contribute their taxes if the result was the generation of improved and more efficient public services. In contrast, Nozick is unwilling to accept that distribution can result in the promotion of the interests of all of society because he does not effectively have any conception of the common good, except in terms of the role of the minimal state.

His standpoint implies that it would be a rejection of the rights of the individual to attempt to realise the principle of distribution. Hence he rejects any suggestion that the members of society would benefit from the application of the principles of distribution. Instead he implies that if society was based on the principles of justice and fairness this would only result in individuals competing with each other for a greater share of the public resources. Thus he cannot contemplate the possibility of mutual welfare for all in terms of the realisation of social cooperation. Instead a situation of distribution can only in his opinion lead to intensified competition between individuals. This is because we cannot establish the principle of the common good. Instead: “It might be said that one cannot disentangle the contribution of individuals who cooperate; everything is everyone's joint product. On this joint product, or any portion of it, each person plausibly will make claims of equal strength; all will have an equally good claim, or at any rate no person has a distinctly better claim than any other. Somehow.... it must be decided how this total product of joint social cooperation (to which individual entitlements do not apply differentially) is to be divided up: this is the problem of distributive justice.”(37) But this view ignores the fact that it is quite feasible to express the common good in terms of some having greater need, and so expressing a claim to a bigger share of the resources that will be distributed. It is not possible or feasible to strictly adhere to the principle of totally equal shares for everyone. Thus this principle of apparent inequality actually represents equality in terms of expressing the possible to realise the principle of satisfying what is the greatest need in terms of the standpoint of priority.

But Nozick considers that any form of distribution in terms of social cooperation is impractical in the terms he has outlined, instead the only form of distribution that he can consider to be fair and practical is one based on commodity exchange: “Let us drop our assumption that people work independently, cooperating only in sequence via voluntary exchanges, and instead consider people who work together to produce something. Is it now impossible to disentangle people's respective contributions? Anyway once again we have a situation of a large number of bilateral exchanges: owners of resources reaching separate agreements with entrepreneurs about the use of their resources, entrepreneurs reaching agreements with individual workers or groups of workers first reaching joint agreement and then presenting a package to an entrepreneur, and so forth.”(38) In other words it is assumed that because the different portions of the resources are impossible to define because of social allocation, this implies that fair distribution is impossible to realise. This is a very dogmatic standpoint, and ignores the fact that distribution constantly occurs as a result of social policy. The point is that the amount for each individual is entirely secondary when compared to the overall collective benefit of social distribution. But each individual knows that at any given moment they can benefit from the role of the distribution of resources in terms of access to public services. This point is not recognised by Nozick because he can only dogmatically contemplate the importance and practically of individual exchange in terms of the role of commodity exchange. In this manner he can outline what seem to be valid reasons why distribution by the government is impractical. The uncomfortable empirical fact is that his theoretical reasoning has been undermined by actual practical experience is not acknowledged by his justification of dogmatic reasoning. Instead he can only contend that distribution cannot occur because of his own objections! This standpoint is totally unrealistic and ignores the actuality of the development of the welfare state.

Nozick outlines his criticism of the conception of a collective social good in the following manner: “To focus upon the benefits of the less better and worse endowed cooperating together, we must try to imagine less extensive schemes of partitioned social cooperation in which the better endowed cooperate only among themselves and the worse endowed cooperate only among themselves with no cross cooperation. The members of both groups gain from the internal cooperation within their respective groups and have larger shares than they would if there was no social cooperation at all. An individual benefits from the wider scheme of extensive cooperation between the better and worse endowed to the extent of his incremental gain from this wider cooperation; namely, the amount by which his share under a scheme of general cooperation is greater than it would be under one of limited intragroup (but not cross group) cooperation. General cooperation will be of benefit to the better or worse off endowed if....the mean incremental gain from general cooperation (when compared to limited intragroup cooperation) is greater in one group than it is in the other.”(39) In other words he cannot envisage a situation in which all of society could benefit from the distribution of resources. Instead one group, or individuals, will invariably benefit from the allocation of resources because he can only envisage a type of society in which people are in competition with each other for the goods that have been created. But this view ignores the fact whilst distribution may favour a given group at any one moment in time, this does not mean that the whole of society does not benefit from this situation. For example, the National Health Service may be used by a specific group at any one moment in time, but this does not mean that this institution has become unavailable for use by other social groups. Instead it is available for all citizens of the UK. This point can be made about other services such as education or public libraries. The point is that government policy with a distributional character does not discriminate in terms of its ability to be utilised by all citizens. Obviously this does not mean that all of these services are used uniformly by all the various social groups. For example, libraries may be visited more frequently by those with a good education, but this does not mean that potentially it cannot be used by anyone who is resident within the UK. The point being made in reply to Nozick is that it would be a denial of the principle of distribution if access to resources was biased in favour of any given social group. Instead the very merit of distribution is that it is based on the principle of universality, or the promotion of what is a collective social good. It would be to defeat the purpose of distribution if it was based on the interests of one social group at the expense of another. In this context, to some extent distribution can overcome some of the inequalities generated by the role of the capitalist form of production and exchange. This is a system that does promote the interests of thee capitalists at the expense of the workers. Indeed, it is the justification of the role of capitalism which means that Nozick rejects the possibility that distribution can promote the interests of all members of a given society.

Ultimately Nozick is against the principles of distribution because he contends that this means that the interests of the less well-endowed are upheld more than the more affluent: “If the better endowed group includes those who manage to accomplish something of great economic advantage to others, such as new inventions, new ideas about production or ways of doing things, it is difficult to avoid concluding that the less well-endowed gain more than the better endowed from the scheme of general cooperation. What follows from this conclusion? I do not mean to imply that the better endowed should get even more than they get under the entitlement system of social cooperation. What does follow from the conclusion is a deep suspicion of imposing, in the name of fairness, constraints upon the voluntary social cooperation....so that those already benefitting most from this general cooperation benefit even more.”(40) He is suggesting that people generally benefit from the advantages represented by capitalism, and so it would be to the disadvantage of the capitalist to impose extra taxes upon them in order to promote a system of distribution. But this standpoint ignores the fact that most systems of distribution do not alter the continued domination of the capitalist within the economy, and so do not undermine his/her ability to make profits, but what has been created are public services which can be utilised by everyone. There are no laws which would inhibit the ability of the capitalist to use the public services. So in that sense the process of distribution has benefitted everyone. Indeed a revolutionary Marxist would argue that the continuation of capitalism in these circumstances means that a situation of complete social justice has not been established. But Nozick in contrast would complain that it is not fair for the state to even attempt to impose greater taxes on the capitalist in the name of the public good. Furthermore, he caricatures what is being proposed by reformists like Rawls as the justification of the principle of equal distribution. But this is not what is being advocated. The aim of realising social cooperation or the collective good cannot be considered in terms of the standpoint of equal distribution. Indeed it is accepted that there will never be equal distribution, some will always utilise public services more than others because of their individual circumstances. But what should be absolute, is the principle that all citizens should be able to access services, or receive benefits, in terms of the criteria of need. The alternative is to uphold a situation of acute inequality in which the poor are in situation of acute poverty because it is believed that capitalism cannot afford a system of distribution. Indeed, this standpoint, which is effectively the view of Nozick, has been upheld by the aims of the recent offensive of capital against labour.

Thus it is of no surprise that Nozick bluntly contends that there is no incentive for the more affluent to support schemes of distribution because: “For entering into such social cooperation, beneficial to those less well off, would seriously worsen the position of the well-off group by creating relations of presumptive equality between themselves and the worse off group.”(42) This view indicates the reactionary character of Nozick's views, he ignores the fact that the rich may also benefit from the process of distribution and instead complains because the wealthy have to contribute to the wellbeing of the poor, who obviously benefit from public services. This standpoint is based on the implicit view that society is based on the class struggle, or rich against poor, and as a result he obviously supports the rich! For this reason he is against the development of the state to the point that it has more resources than the minimal state, because obviously such a situation would imply that its activity could benefit the poor. Hence he rejects any suggestion that such an interventionist state could be aspiring to realise the collective social good. Instead he is content to uphold the view that society is based on competing social groups, and in that process of antagonism he is supporting the interests of the most affluent.

Nozick outlines his opposition to the principle of equality in the following terms: “The major objection to speaking of everyone having a right to various things such as equality of opportunity....and enforcing this right, is that these “rights” require a substructure of things and materials and actions, and other people may have rights and entitlements over these. No one has a right to something whose realization requires certain uses of things and activities that other people have rights and entitlements over. Other people’s rights and entitlements to particular things....and how they choose to exercise these rights and entitlements fix the eternal environment of any given individual and the means will be available to him. If his goal requires the use of means which others have rights over, he must enlist their voluntary cooperation.”(42) But this approach does not explain how the process of distribution occurs. It is not based on the expropriation of the resources owned by one person without permission. Instead in the form of the election of a democratic government it has a mandate to implement a policy of distribution. In order that this policy can be financed requires obtaining taxes from all citizens. It does not necessarily require the nationalisation of the property of the capitalist. Furthermore, the utilisation of these taxes will be to the benefit of all citizens. Hence the process of distribution is not necessarily to the detriment of the capitalist. Instead all will gain from the allocation of resources in order to create the welfare state. But Nozick cannot recognise this advantage of distribution because he is against anything that implies that the rich will have to contribute towards the wellbeing of the poor. Thus he can only describe this process as expressing the transfer of resources from rich to poor. He cannot recognise how all the members of society can benefit from the policy of distribution and the creation of the welfare state. Indeed he can only describe the motive for equality in terms of the influence of envy, and so he cannot accept that there is actually a genuine motive as social justice or fairness. Implicitly he is providing the arguments as to why capital should retain its privileges in relation to the role of labour. In a complicated manner he is contending that the reason he is against distribution is that it would undermine the prestige of the entrepreneur. The welfare state is opposed because it is considered by Nozick as a possible prelude to socialism. The process of distribution could provide the impetus to the actual expropriation of the capitalists. Unfortunately this logic has never been accepted by the reformist advocates of the welfare state!

Nozick contends that the only moral expression of a system of distribution would be one based on the principle of voluntary contribution: “Since it would violate moral constraints to compel people who are entitled to their holdings to contribute against their will, proponents of such compulsion should attempt to persuade people to ignore the relatively few who don't go along with the scheme of voluntary contributions.”(43) What Nozick seems to have conveniently ignored is that if the system of financing distribution was based on voluntary contributions little money would be raised by this method. Instead the procedure of legally enforced taxation has proved to be the only reliable method by which finances can be raised for the purpose of distribution. If it was a voluntary system the rich would not contribute out of a sense of self interest, and so the poor would not be motivated to respond to the requirements of the scheme. Instead these types of objections can be overcome if people have to pay their taxes. Indeed this situation would be accepted as being the most fair and practical by the very people paying their taxes. The problem with Nozick's view is that he does not recognise the validity of established custom and practice of any conventional society and instead promotes an illusory view of reality because of his utopian imagination. Nozick argues that he is against the utilisation of the state for vested and powerful economic interests, but his actual practical policies promote this possibility such as promoting a situation in which the rich only paid minimal taxes to the state. Such a situation could only mean that the character of the state was one that favoured the interests of the rich. But he argues that only an interventionist state could become the bastion of privilege of particular interests. In contrast he contends that a minimal state is less likely to become the basis of the rule of a group. This is because: “The minimal state best reduces the chances of such takeover or manipulation of the state by people desiring power of economic benefits, especially if combined with a reasonably alert citizenry, since it is the minimally desirable target for such takeover or manipulation. Nothing much is to be gained by doing so, and the cost to the citizens if it occurs is minimized.”(44) This complacent approach ignores the fact that the minimal state has been the very agency of the forces of capital in its struggle to undermine the power of labour. Such a state is against the principle of distribution and so is in favour of low taxes, and primarily upholds the role of the state for the purposes of imposing authority and coercion. Thus in terms of policy and perspective such a minimal state could be said to be the most appropriate agency to implement the interests of big business. So Nozick's claim that such a state is effectively neutral in terms of its attitudes towards the citizenry is false. Instead the type of bourgeois state that is most impartial in its approach is one based on distribution or commitment to the common good. But such a state is generally in decline and has been replaced by the minimal state. This is because in the conditions of economic crisis and austerity it is not possible to have a state based on the policy of social justice. The ideological standpoint of Nozick corresponds to this recognition that the distributionist state is too generous in its allocation of social provision for its citizens.

But instead of addressing these objections to the minimal state, Nozick considers that it corresponds to any appropriate criteria that may be applied in order to define it as utopian. He concludes: “The minimal state treats us as inviolate individuals, who may not be used in certain ways by others as a means or tool or instruments or resources, it treats us as persons having individual rights with the dignity this constitutes. Treating us with respect by respecting our rights, it allows us individually or with whom we choose, to choose our life and to realize our ends and our conception of ourselves, insofar as we can, aided by the voluntary cooperation of other individuals possessing the same dignity.”(45) However, this apparent society of autonomous individuals is actually a justification of the rule of the most powerful and privileged within society. Beneath the utopian language this standpoint can only practically translate into the justification of a minimal state dominated by capital. The emancipatory standpoint of anarchism has been transformed into a liberalism that upholds the interests of capital and undermines the aims of labour. It is time for anarchism to recover the pro-labour stance of Proudhon. Marxism would also benefit from this development.

FOOTNOTES:

(1)Peter Marshall Demanding the Impossible Fontana Press, London 1993 p16

(2) ibid p17

(3) ibid p20

(4)Pierre Joseph Proudhon What is Property Cambridge University Press 1994

(5) ibid p15

(6) ibid p23

(7) ibid p24-29

(8) ibid p57

(9) ibid p73

(10Ibid p94

(11) ibid p102

(12) ibid p114

(13) ibid p115

(14) ibid p115

(15) ibid p177

(16) ibid p177

(17) ibid p177

(18) ibid p178

(19)Karl Marx Capital Penguin, London 1974 p775

(20)Proudhon op cit p197

(21) ibid p211

(22) ibid p215

(23) ibid p215-216

(24)Karl Marx: The Poverty of Philosophy, Collected Works volume 6 1845-48, Progress Publishers 1976 p211

(25)Marshall op cit p562-563

(26)Robert Nozick: Anarchy, State and Utopia, Blackwell, Oxford 1974 p1-12

(27) ibid p16-17

(28) ibid p23

(29)Ibid p32-33

(30) ibid p95

(31) ibid p94

(32) ibid p149-150

(33) ibid p163

(34) ibid p169

(35) ibid p170

(36) ibid p171

(37) ibid p186

(38) ibid p187

(39) ibid p193

(40) ibid p193-195

(41) ibid p223

(42) ibid p238

(43) ibid p268

(44) ibid p272

(45) ibid p333-334