

'Anarchism is merely nineteenth century liberalism taken to its logical extreme.' Discuss.

19th Century liberalism:

- Classical liberalism.
- Belief in primacy of the individual, freedom (negative freedom), democracy, free-market.

It can be argued that INDIVIDUALIST anarchism is classical liberalism to its logical extreme.

Individualist Anarchism:

- FREE market.
- Highly individualistic.
- Optimistic view of human nature
- Stateless society.
- Emphasis on freedom and civil liberties (as well as emphasis on equality)

Comparison between individualist anarchism and liberalism:

View on Human nature/individual:

- Both believe in the primacy of the individual – highly atomistic (atomism and Stirner-egoism) Egoism implies that the individual is at the centre of the moral universe with everything revolving around them. (Taking liberalism to the extreme – individual is free to do what they want, without regard to anyone, and are capable and rational of doing so.)
- Hobbes and Locke – 'reason guided creatures' but also self serving and highly egotistical. This differs to anarchists slightly who hold a much more POSITIVE view of human nature and say that we are not only reason guided and know what we want and capable of doing so, but we are also able to live according to universal moral laws. i.e. live harmoniously amongst one another.
- Mill – 'other regarding acts'. This implies that there are certain things that we, as humans should not be able to do e.g. physical harm (harm principle). Anarchists on the other hand believe that people are reason guided to know what is right or wrong for themselves, and will thus know what is best not to do to someone else. (i.e. don't need to be told what we can/can't do by authority)
- NATURAL ORDER (Godwin) – Anarchists believe that everything can fit into place and emerges if left alone (links with view on economy and state – i.e. a belief in a stateless and free market society). Hobbes and liberals regard the need for a state to prevent 'a war of all against all'.

View on state and authority:

- This is the main distinction between classical liberals and anarchists. Whereas liberals have a fear of power ('Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely' – Lord Acton), they still believe in a need for a state. Anarchists on the other hand believe that any state is punitive, corrupt, sovereign etc. and poses a threat. 'The best government is one that does not

- govern at all' (Thoreau adaptation of Thomas Jefferson who stated that the best government is one that governs the least – i.e. should be checked)
- Paine – state = 'necessary evil'. Anarchists refute this liberal view and would argue that all states are UNNECESSARY and EVIL. They have a total rejection of any sort of authority.
 - Locke – minimal/night watchman state. Proudhon argued on the other hand that the state is coercive, compulsory, punitive, sovereign and does not allow any freedom for the individual, but rather offers a façade in creating the that government is minimal.
 - Liberals believe in constitutionalism and consent and the Social contract theory. They believe that through this, the government is checked, and that they in return, protect our rights by limiting a small percent of our freedom. Anarchists on the other hand argue that the Social contract theory is a façade and gives the myth that we are born into this world where our liberties are protected. Instead, they say the SCT is a way for the government to exercise even more control by taking away even more liberty. Godwin criticises this and argues that if left alone, we as humans will benefit and no one will suffer. (As we are all rational and equal humans in the first place).
 - Liberals believe that a state can protect 'life, liberty and property' and freedom. However, anarchists (ALL not just individualistic ones) believe that we can only be truly free when the state has been abolished.

View on democracy:

- Classical liberals support REPRESENTATIVE democracy, albeit limited. Anarchists on the other hand advocate DIRECT DEMOCRACY (Rousseau) which is considered to be the only form that can guarantee freedom by having direct influence themselves. 'Obedience to a law that once prescribes to oneself' – only laws that we have to answer to are the ones we place on ourselves.
- Anarchists argue that representative democracy is a FAÇADE and an attempt to disguise the oppressive and exploitative state and nature of political authority. Locke argues that we should have protective democracy which is designed to protect our natural rights. (Thus a state is needed to help ensure this) – Representative democracy upholds principle of consent, which liberals believe is a check on power and anarchists believe to be useless.
- Class. Liberals have more faith that democratic rule can protect against despotic rule. Whereas, anarchists argue that any representation is no better than any other system that depends on a sovereign state and political authority.

View on economy:

- Free market/Adam Smith versus TOTAL free market where individuals should be entirely free to let the market do as it wants without any interference from a state.
- Liberals believe that some public goods need to be supplied by a state whereas anarchists argue (Rothbard and Friedman) that even public goods can be supplied privately (Anarcho-capitalism). (highly optimistic view of free market/Warren and Tucker – pursuit of self interest can be more enlightened and mutually beneficial)

However there are differences between liberalism and anarchism that proves that anarchism can be seen as 19th century liberalism to its logical extreme:

- Instead of limited government – NO STATE.
- FREE market, no intervention.
- Individuals can work together without the state as a 'protector'. (more optimistic view of human nature)
- Constitutionalism and consent are not necessarily accountable ways of legitimising a government. All governments are bad in anarchist point of view.

In addition, Collectivist anarchism is far from being similar to liberalism, and arguably is socialism taken to its logical extreme. Thus, anarchism partly is liberalism taken to its logical extreme, however there is a huge distinction between liberalism and collectivist anarchism.

Classical Liberalism	Collectivist Anarchism
Humans are atomistic/egotistical/individualism (view on human nature)	Humans are sociable and cooperative (Bakunin)/collectivism (refute the idea of primacy of the individual) Positive view of human nature. 'Social solidarity is the first law, freedom is the second'
Defend capitalism/private property/free market (view on economy)	'Property is theft' (Proudhon). A belief in common ownership/communism. End vision of a communist society with no state rather than a capitalist society.
Prioritise Freedom	Freedom is only attainable when full emancipation is achieved.
Reformist (based on progress)	Revolutionary action to achieve goals.

Conclusion:

Individualist anarchism can be considered as an extreme form of liberalism, but with some key distinctions. For example, view on the state differs greatly (protects freedom vs. removes freedom).

Anarchists tend to value both EQUALITY and FREEDOM more or less equally, and thus is a distinction from liberals who advocate freedom as the core principle.

Finally, it can be seen that collectivist anarchism is far from being an extreme form of liberalism, but rather and extreme form of socialism.