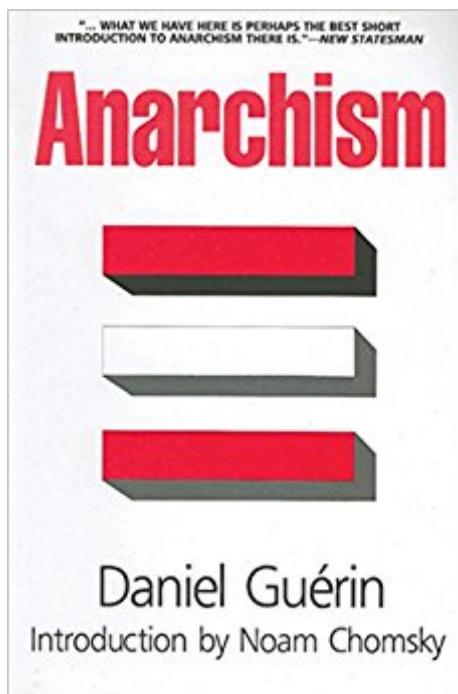


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Anarchism: From Theory To Practice



Book Information

File Size: 1003 KB

Print Length: 166 pages

Publisher: Monthly Review Press (January 1, 1970)

Publication Date: January 1, 1970

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00MRWHCW8

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #446,181 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #155

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Customer Reviews

I'm personally not an anarchist, but this was a very good introduction to the historical and philosophical underpinnings of anarchism. Very attractive ideology in some ways, but ultimately did not convince me of it. Good read however.

For those looking for an introduction to alternative philosophical understanding of social organization, this book is an excellent primer. Guerin offers a detailed history of Anarchism and its' various interpretations. It provides interpretations and documentations of the incredible events that may have presented the possibility of real change in the practical application of this alternative approach in organizing society from the bottom- up and not what we have today, top- down hegemony. If there is a reason for hope, it may start here.

that Anarchism was a form of socialism. I thought of it as a right-wing form of extreme libertarian

thought. To find out that it is a form of non-state socialism, libertarian-socialism, helps me understand so many things. Like the problems between the anarchists and the communists during the Spanish Civil War. Now I understand WHY they were on the same side to start with. The book is a nice little book, a one day book, that can be finished quickly and allow you to take your first step into the wonderful world of no-state or non-state socialism. Self-management, hostility to government control, and liberal democracy are all factors that define it and really helped me pin it down. Get this book.

Daniel Guerin's book is the best summary of the writings of early anarchist political theory that I've ever read. The only drawbacks are a failure to provide citations for the sources quoted and of course its age. Having been published in the 1970's it is in serious need of an update to include the writings of Bookchin, Zerzan, Black and Chomsky just to name a few. But with those quibbles aside this could and should be a textbook for either organized classroom study of anarchist history and thought or an excellent resource for the autodidact. I recommend it highly.

I would like to preface this review by stating that I bought this book as an introduction to a topic I know nothing about. So the fact that it didn't grab me may have as much to do with my expectations of it being an introductory book to anarchism (which it clearly isn't) than anything else. The author obviously has a deep understanding of the theory and history of anarchism but the reader must have at least a fundamental understanding of the topic before jumping in. In my experience a good author can make a difficult topic easily understandable but he failed to do this. I gave this book 3 stars because, in this case, the failings were equal on the part of both author and reader. I would be interested in suggestions other readers have on a good introductory book to the topic because, as the title states, this book is not for the layman.

This book is an attempt at defining anarchism and describing a few attempts at anarchist organization of production in the first half of the 20th century. The principal founding theorists of anarchism are the Frenchman Proudhon and the Russian Bakunin, both of whom lived in the mid-19th century. As with most ideologies, the fine points of anarchism have been fiercely debated, however, there is general agreement that anarchism is at heart a philosophy that emphasizes the freedom of the individual to "bring to full development all the powers, capacities, and talents with which nature has endowed him, and turn them to social account." It is decidedly not the individualism of a capitalistic, free-market system. Individuals are to be empowered through

self-directed collectives of worker organizations or communes. Both private property and the State are anathema to anarchists because of the prerogatives of coercion associated with those entities and concepts. Even in so-called social-democracies, periodic voting is seen as no more than a cover for their fundamentally authoritarian nature. Anarchists regard themselves as libertarian socialists, without state ownership of productive property. That is in contrast to those socialists who see a role for the state, such as occurred with the Russian revolution of 1917. Anarchists view this situation as an example of authoritarian socialism. Anarchists hardly advocate disorganization, or at worst, a chaotic society. However, they are extremely fuzzy when it comes down to the specific organization of a complex society on anarchist terms, or on the capacity of the average man to actually practice self-governance in concert with his fellow man. They are loath to suggest that a vanguard of intellectual elites is necessary to bring about an anarchist model of society.

Furthermore, in the absence of the state, anarchists are faced with creating society-wide bodies for necessary coordination with all the attendant problems of authority. The concept of federalism supposedly applies. Interestingly, they claim that secession from a federation is permitted, but no entity would want to. Seems like they dance around the practicalities of authority. Given its origins in the 19th century, anarchism seems to assume that most individuals are part of large manufacturing concerns with a high degree of geographical coherence, such as the steel-producing towns of Pennsylvania of the early 20th century where everyone was connected with one large mill. In that case, the organization of people in worker collectives, unions, or communes is perhaps not a major issue. This book makes no attempt at fitting anarchism in with a complex society of diverse enterprises with employees scattered over huge metropolitan areas. It's quite easy to sympathize with the anarchist sentiment of not wanting to be subject to the tyrannies of the powerful, small or large, in workplaces or by government. But this book is very short on the practicalities of anarchism. Its assessments of very short-lived attempts at anarchism, whether it be in Spain, Italy, Russia, etc are rather more optimistic than realistic. The book is dated, having been written over forty years ago. The Russian, as well as the Yugoslavian, socialist experiment has long since fallen by the wayside. Furthermore, the book, though not long, is not well organized, is repetitious, and lacks coherency. Perhaps that simply reflects the muddiness of anarchism. The serious student of anarchism will want to consult additional sources.

Thanks. Everything was great. I really appreciate it. It came fast and was exactly as described. thanks again. blah blah.

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