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**Anarchistické pojetí Boha**

**An Anarchist concept of God**

Bakalářská práce

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### **Prohlášení**

Prohlašuji, že jsem předkládanou bakalářskou práci Anarchistické pojetí Boha vypracoval samostatně s použitím níže uvedených pramenů a literatury. Dále prohlašuji, že tato práce nebyla využita k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze dne

Ondřej Mazura

## **Annotation**

This work, entitled: An anarchist concept of God concerns itself with the interconnection of religiosity and spirituality with anarchism. However, the introduction and definition of various anarchist schools of thought is its secondary objective. The main objective is to propose a concept of God that will correspond to the values of this broad social and political movement by comparing different historical and contemporary approaches that combine spirituality with the desire for freedom. From this comparison, I then compile the concept itself

## **Anotace**

Tato práce, nazvaná Anarchistické pojetí Boha, se zabývá propojením religiozity a spirituality s anarchismem. Představení a vymezení různých anarchistických myšlenkových škol je však až jejím sekundárním cílem. Hlavním cílem je navrhnout nové, anarchisické pojetí Boha, které bude korespondovat s hodnotami tohoto širokého sociálního a politického hnutí. Tohoto cíle se pokusím dosáhnout prostřednictvím komparace rozličných historických i současných přístupů, které kombinují spiritualitu s touhou po svobodě. Z této komparace poté sestavím samotný koncept.

## **Keywords**

Anarchism, freedom, power, religion, spirituality, concept of God, Taoism, Buddhism, Process theology, heresy in Christianity

## **Klíčová slova**

Anarchismus, svoboda, moc, náboženství, spiritualita, pojetí Boha, Taoismus, Buddhismus, Procesuální teologie, hereze v křesťanství

# Table of contents

<b>Introduction</b>	7
<b>1. What is anarchism?</b>	9
1.1 Definition of Anarchism	9
1.2 What is Anarchism against?	10
1.2.1 State and Government	10
1.2.2 Ownership and Capitalism	11
1.2.3 Religion and Church	13
1.3 Freedom as a key positive value	15
1.4 From freedom to diversity	16
1.4.1 Individual anarchism	17
1.4.2 Social anarchism	18
1.4.3 Pacifist anarchism	19
1.4.4 Anarchism without adjectives	20
1.4.5 Contemporary anarchism	20
<b>2. Anarchism and religion?</b>	22
2.1 First religious forerunners of Anarchism	23
2.1.1 Taoism	23
2.1.2 Buddhism	25
2.2 Anarchist tendencies in Christianity	27
2.2.1 God against rulers	28
2.2.2 Jesus Christ	29
2.2.3 Heresy in the middle ages	29
2.3 Reflections of spirituality and religion within Anarchism	31

2.3.1 Two representatives from 19th and 20th century	32
2.3.2 Reflections in contemporary Anarchism	33
<b>3. Anarchist Concept of God</b>	<b>36</b>
3.1 What concepts of God are in contrast to anarchist values?	37
3.1.1 God's characteristics contradicting Anarchism	37
3.1.2 An anarchistic God can't be strictly Biblical	38
3.2 A possible anarchistic concept of God	39
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>42</b>

## **Introduction**

Anthropological theory teaches us that the graduation ceremony at high school is a rite of passage, by which we leave childhood and enter adulthood. This ritual led me to Prague, where the world was full of possibilities. As a person interested in politics, I soon found myself at the center of socio-political events where I met the Czech anarchist movement. At the same time, my studies at the Hussite Theological Faculty were my first major contact with religion. I come from a family of two baptized atheists, so my Alma mater was an important environment for me to think deeply about my own spirituality for the first time in my life. These two factors were the main motive for the writing of this bachelor thesis, the subject of which is the Anarchist concept of God. The chosen title of this work may seem nonsense, since anarchists are, after all, great critics of religion. I will describe this critique throughout my work, but at the same time I am going to show that many anarchistic schools are in fact highly religious or spiritual. The main aim of this work is to present a concept of God that best matches the religious and spiritual theory and practice of anarchism, that corresponds with this theory and practice, and might therefore find acceptance by some anarchists as their own.

The word anarchism is nowadays burdened with negative connotations. The idea commonly raises resistance or even hatred in people. This is, perhaps, due to the way in which anarchism is presented by the media, where it is presented to a great extent only in connection with crime or some other field of conflict. The media love conflicts. The secondary aim of this work is to present anarchism without these media shortcuts, as an inexorable critique of any form of human oppression, as a wide social movement and political philosophy, as a way of life.

In the first chapter I broadly define anarchism both negatively, as a critique of various forms of domination and coercion, and positively, as a movement and philosophy that understands freedom as its key value.

In the second chapter, I will outline an eventual accord between diverse religious thoughts and anarchist theory by pointing to the traces of anarchistic ideas

in several religions that existed long before anarchism was formulated as a political philosophy. I then introduce spiritually anarchistic thinkers, and show the influence of those religions on diverse contemporary anarchist schools of thought.

In the third chapter I define a possible anarchist concept of God, first by excluding certain known concepts, then, after narrowing the field and together with my knowledge of the defined theory and praxis of anarchism and its values, I propose the concept itself.

# 1. What is anarchism?

## 1.1 Definition of Anarchism

“That which Western man secretly desires and is the core of his religious feeling of civilized exclusivity, is precisely why we are afraid of anarchists, namely that which we ourselves never dare, but look up to and we swear by. This is why it is useful to know the anarchist’s truth” Martin Škabraha (Tomek; Slačálek, 2006a).

As with many other terms, there is no such thing as a simple definition of anarchism. It can be described as a social and political philosophy coherently formulated in 19th century, but it is more-likely a wide range of social and political ideas influenced and formed by many movements and personalities, some of which existed and lived long before that date, while others reflect those ideas to this day, long after that date.

One of the earliest definitions of anarchism comes from the eleventh edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica, and it is written by the Russian revolutionary Peter Kropotkin, one of the important representatives of anarchism. Kropotkin (1911) describes it as a “principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government - harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilized being.”

This definition demonstrates the core of our problem. Anarchism is, to a certain extent, a theory, but at the same time, a principle of life. In other words, it is simultaneously a utopian thought and a social practice aimed at trying to get us as close as possible to that utopia (Bertolo, 1993, s. 101). Its interest is primarily focused on various forms of praxis, as the quote suggests, that in his social relations, a man has need to embody the society he wishes to create. Nor can he

create freedom by authoritarian means, that is, from the top down. And therefore, your means must be in accordance with your goals (Graeber, 2012, s. 37).

## **1.2 What is Anarchism against?**

To some extent, anarchism is defined negatively; it criticizes and strictly opposes any form of domination and oppression. The roots of oppression are seen in the power of some humans over other humans. This power can be manifested, for example, politically and economically, but also by instilling the values of hierarchy, for instance by educating youth to obedience, or by so called cultural hegemony, by which the rulers are manipulating adults into consuming myths of a their dominant ideology through media and other means, that are changing their beliefs, perceptions and values.

Anarchism tries to describe all existing manifestations of power in their entirety; it leads a struggle against them and efforts to implement non-oppressive alternatives into the social structure (Tomek; Slačálek, 2006a, s. 15). In the next section, I will briefly introduce those institutions<sup>1</sup> that anarchism understands as primarily involved in the oppression of man, and against which it stood throughout the history. Although many institutions fall within this definition, and given the scope of my thesis, I focus on three general forms of domination: political power, economical superiority and religious authority. Even with this limitation, I am only able to point towards a small fraction of the institutions that function as oppressive powers.

### **1.2.1 State and Government**

If we can define anarchism as a rejection of coercion and domination in all forms, we must surely include oppression by state government within this rejection. (Bufe, 2003) Before the emergence of a coherent anarchist movement, a very comprehensive view of a stateless social order was developed by the British thinker and social activist William Godwin, in his work: *An Enquiry Concerning the*

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<sup>1</sup> The term Institution is used there in a sociological meaning of the word.

*Principles of Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness.* This work, inspired by revolutionary France, reflects the political situation of Britain at the time of its writing. The book was a great success; it offered a theoretical background to many British critics of the existing social order, and a blueprint for potential revolutionary practice. The British government of the late eighteenth century was able to secure its position of power due to oppressive actions and a set of laws known as Gagging Acts. Godwin's influence can be seen in the prime minister's efforts to censor it (Marshall, 2008, s. 191).

Godwin believed that humanity is part of a universal moral order, and that it is therefore possible to grow a society based on moral law. He understood such a society as a naturally developing phenomenon, functional in complete freedom, without any form of political government. Godwin saw a primary obstacle in the human path to freedom in the lack of education; without which one's uncontrolled passions will lead him or her to chase for power. The only starting point to liberation is a proper education (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006a, s. 52). Godwin's ideal man is not driven by his own advantage, ambition, or eagerness for fame. Such a person is not jealous; he does not compare his achievements with the achievements of others. The sole purpose of his actions is the welfare of the whole society (Eltzbacher, 1900, s. 37). Max Stirner, another strong critic of the state and government does not share this opinion. Stirner doesn't believe anything unifies mankind and refers to the very notion as a false idea of humanity. Instead, he praises one's ego, one's own will, and tries to defend this free egoism of an individual from anything that would disturb it. The state is among these things. According to Stirner, the state only exists in combination with a "ruling will" by which the will of the individual is suppressed, as it would otherwise cancel the state. (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006a, s. 60-79).

### **1.2.2 Ownership and Capitalism**

In its narrowest sense, anarchism is simply the rejection of the state and of oppressive government, but in a wider sense it also stands against capitalism, a system that necessarily creates a strong inequality between men, as it is designed to

produce rich and poor. This inequality is then manifested domination by the rich, a few wealthy men, who usually control the means of production, giving orders to the poor, who have little choice but to listen – and obey. (Bufe, 2003)

“Property is theft!” (Proudhon, 1890)

This famous quote comes from Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the thinker who first publicly declared himself an anarchist. Proudhon was dealing with the substance of ownership, and became convinced, that private ownership leads to the monopoly and therefore that it needs to be rejected. (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006b, s. 291-292) Proudhon asks provocative questions that challenge the very basis of ownership, such as: “By what right man has appropriated wealth which he did not create, and which Nature gave to him gratuitously,” and “how can the supplies of Nature, the wealth created by Providence, become private property?” (Proudhon, 1890) He argues that the Earth was created and given to all, not sold to some; and that its creator showed no partiality, and therefore it is a pointless human fabrication to divide the earth between our own and foreign territories, and then to declare ownership upon that. Proudhon points out that people appropriated not only the land, but also water and air because the property of the surface carries within it the property from the top to the lowest point (Proudhon, 1890). Imagine that we see a spring located on someone else’s land; can we drink from it? Certainly not, it would be theft. But don’t we need water in order to survive? As well as sun, or air? What is more important in this case: private property or a human life?

Proudhon writes that: “water, air, and light are common things, not because they are inexhaustible, but because they are indispensable;” and, he continues: “Likewise the land is indispensable to our existence, — consequently a common thing, consequently insusceptible of appropriation; but land is much scarcer than the other elements, therefore its use must be regulated, not for the profit of a few, but in the interest and for the security of all. In a word, equality of rights is proved by equality of needs” (Proudhon, 1890).

Ownership thus creates inequality. When you are born, you own nothing, but somebody already owns the whole world around you, almost every piece of it.

This means that your freedom to use or to enjoy it is limited. Rich men are free to a much greater degree than the poor men. The easiest example how to illustrate this is to ask yourself two following questions: does the ownership of a broadcasting tv station gives you influence? And who can afford to buy such a tv station? The answer is quite obvious. A workers freedom to act is limited; they are forced to sell their labor in order to survive. Meanwhile the rich do not have to work, and therefore have far more time to do what they desire, to pursue their interests or satisfactions (Bufe, 2003).

But people did not appropriate only land, air and water, they, as Proudhon (1890) puts it, even sold one's right to travel. What else is a passport than a small book thanks to which you can be taxed and tracked? Passports should be a sort of a recommendation or security certificate of its owner, but it is not. Possession of a passport doesn't lead to the freedom to travel. Possession of a private jet instead, easily does.

With his strong criticism Proudhon inspired many later anarchists, but it is fair to add that a minor current in anarchism understood ownership as a guarantee of an individuals freedom. (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006a, s. 16) However, for the majority of anarchists, ownership is connected with capitalism, and is especially nowadays seen as a major source of oppression.

### **1.2.3 Religion and Church**

With regard to its relationship to religion, anarchism likewise hasn't a single position; and further on I will write about a wide range of religious and anarchist ideas that overlap. However in this section I will focus on an anarchist critique of religion postulated by the anti-clerical and anti-religious mainstream of Western anarchism (Taylor, 2008, s. 49). As with capitalism or government, the main anarchist critique of religion focuses on the Church and its tendency to manipulate people in order to strengthen its own position of power.

Most European classical anarchist theorists strongly opposed religion, and they often disputed religious claims from scientific and positivistic positions. Religion was understood as an obscurantism that negates the natural world by

telling stories of the supernatural. (Ibid.)

The Russian revolutionary and founding personality of the European anarchist movement, Michail Bakunin, gave us one of the most well-known anarchist critiques of religion. In his book *God and the State*, Bakunin (2014) analyzes why and how the religion of his time acted successfully on the masses. He understood that people had faith in God as a consequence of their desperate position in life. Economic divisions within society had left many in poverty and despair, living lives with no horizon, with no alternative, with no vision of a better future. These people then seek escape from such life and have only three possible options, two of them fanciful and only the third realistic. According to Bakunin (2014, s. 17), the fictitious escapes are represented by the Cabaret, i.e., the revelry of the body, and by the Church, the revelry of the soul; the real escape can only be reached through the social revolution.

The system of religion, however, uses social domination to keep people in a state of submissiveness and subjugation, accomplished through an alliance between the coercive power of the state and the ideological power of the Church (Taylor, 2008, s. 49). Opportunities for people to obtain deeper knowledge are prevented by a systematic effort of those in power. They feed the masses with religious myths in order to limit their critical thinking. Bakunin (2014, s. 16-17) proves this argument by pointing out that the faith in God is strongest in the poorest, rural areas, where people are still very uneducated, overwhelmed by everyday work, and lacking in free time and intellectual stimuli. This means that Bakunin understood the Church as standing in direct opposition to real solutions provided by social revolution. Coupled with secular rulers, the Church defends its share of power and prevents people from achieving freedom.

Not just the freedom to educate themselves, but the freedom to emancipate themselves, the freedom from oppression. This freedom (of mankind) namely rests in the obedience only to those laws that exist naturally, those that he or she recognizes as such and are not forced upon him or her by a foreign will of God in any form. (Bakunin, 2014, s. 32) This harsh criticism stands on an accurate analysis of the position of religion before the changes brought by the Enlightenment in the

18th century. Although weakened by revolution and secularization, The Roman Catholic Church was still able to maintain a strong position even in this period. Bakunin saw this, was aware of the consequences, and didn't spare an even stronger criticism: the "Idea of God implies the abdication of human reason and justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty, and necessarily ends in the enslavement of mankind, both in theory and in practice." (Bakunin, 2014, s. 26)

### **1.3 Freedom as a key positive value**

As described above, anarchism stands in opposition: in opposition to various manifestations of power, and against all possible forms of domination or oppression. But its orientation on social practice demonstrates the effort not only to criticize, but also to offer alternatives. Therefore, it would be wrong to understand anarchism only in this negative definition and remain blind to its positive side.

But what is the secret seasoning of this political philosophy, which is also a basis of the Western man's "religious feeling of civilized exclusivity" as Škabraha puts it (Tomek; Slačálek, 2006a)? It's freedom, and in contrast to the negative definition of Anarchism, freedom is its key positive value. An emphasis on freedom can also be seen as important in other political ideologies, which were formulated alongside and along with anarchism, and were part of the same discussion: i.e., democracy and liberalism. However these are criticized from the anarchistic perspective for their inconsistency in upholding the ideals of freedom and for their compromises leading to other forms of oppression (Tomek; Slačálek, 2006a, s. 15).

Freedom has two important aspects, one of which is positive, while the second is negative. In its negative sense, it is a freedom of an individual from his society, his opportunity to do whatever he wants to do. This individual aspect of freedom is highly praised by today's liberal democracies, which draw from neoliberalism and other ideologies. But if this negative sense of freedom were to be understood as absolute, it would create a "natural" order, where only the strongest would survive on the corpses of the less strong. Or in other words, it would create chaos, which is how the mainstream commonly misrepresents anarchy today. To

the contrary, anarchism in fact limits the negative aspect of individual freedom: it is okay only so long as it doesn't intervene others (Bufe, 2003). Anarchists argue that in order to reach a real freedom, we cannot focus only on the negative aspect of freedom; we must also focus our attention on the positive aspect of freedom, which is one's freedom to participate in the decision making processes of the society of which one is a member. After all, a human being not only wants to be part of a society, he needs to in order for his survival (Tomek; Slačálek, 2006a, s. 16).

It is also one's freedom to act, to enjoy or use; this is where we can see a very strong inequality. Access to the world's resources, from food to water and even to a freedom to move is highly dependent on where and to whom you are born. A rich person "could easily buy dozens of daily newspapers or television stations to propagate his views and influence public opinion. How many working people could do the same?" Chaz Bufe provocatively asks (2003) in order to point out why positive freedom has to be an important aspect of anarchist thought. Because without the greatest possible freedom for all, there can be no such thing as disengagement from oppression.

For anarchists, freedom consists of both aspects described above, or more accurately, the two are indivisible. Freedom's individual (negative) and social (positive) aspects are of the same importance. (Tomek; Slačálek, 2006a, s. 617) This approach leads to a constant balancing in order to achieve harmony. Harmony between one's autonomy from others and one's equality together with others.

#### **1.4 From freedom to diversity**

As I described above, freedom is a key positive value of anarchism, which is consistently being over thought. Freedom necessarily results in diversity (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006b, 12); it is therefore false to call anarchism an ideology, which exists to be blindly followed. It is more of a set of thoughts and opinions, which are shared with anybody who wants to read them, confront them, or get inspired by them. But these thoughts and opinions very often disagree with each other or even deny each other while remaining under one "roof" of anarchism.

The question thus arises. Can we even talk about anarchism in the singular?

It is definitely not a unified worldview system, but there can still be found one connecting point, a basis of all forms of anarchism; this is the struggle for freedom. The plurality of anarchist thought is determined by differing views on how to answer this same question of how to achieve human freedom. This means that various anarchist schools of thought are conditioned by a duality of freedom and diversity, which can't exist without each other (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006b, 23). In contrast to schools of Marxism, such as Leninism, Maoism or Trotskyism, which are distinguished by their founders, anarchist schools of thought almost always emerge from their form of practice, and are thus named by their organizing principle (Graeber, Grubacic, 2004). So there are Anarcho-Syndicalists, Anarcho-Communists or Anarcho-Pacifists and many others.

“Anarchists like to distinguish themselves by what they do, and how they organize themselves to go about doing it” (Graeber, 2004, s. 5). Their schools of thought were formed in different times and in different places, under different conditions and shaped by various authors with diverse experience (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006b, 23). This means that each of them found a unique answer to how removing people from coercion can be achieved. In the following sections, I will present the primary categories by which anarchist school of thoughts are divided, in order to make the plurality of anarchistic thinking more visible.

### **1.4.1 Individual anarchism**

“Individualist anarchists, as their name suggests, prefer individual solutions and have a more individualistic vision of the good society” (McKay, 2008, s. 139). If freedom is a key value of anarchy, it is for individualists understood as a freedom of each specific human being. Therefore from the economic point of view, they believe that freedom can be achieved by extending personal ownership to every person (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006b, s. 28). What does this mean?

Individualists argue that people should be able to sell the means of production they use. (Means of production are itself seen as a product of labor.) But individualists still reject capitalist property rights, if somebody do not use the means of production, it reverts back into common ownership and others can use it.

For anarchist individualists, this would result in workers' control of production, and to the end of capitalism. (McKay, 2008, s. 143). Another important phenomenon that endangers the freedom of the individual is pressure from society. Individualists focus supporting self-sufficiency and the proudness of a person facing the influence of the society that always tends to extrude what is different. (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006b, s. 29).

### **1.4.2 Social anarchism**

To some extent, social anarchism stands in opposition to individual anarchism; it sees "individual freedom as conceptually connected with social equality and emphasize community and mutual aid." (Suissa, 2001, s. 630) But the differences between social anarchists and anarchist individualists are still just in their differing opinions on how to achieve one's freedom, while they both still stand against state, capitalism, and anti authoritarian (McKay, 2008, s. 141). Social anarchism, unlike individual anarchism, argues that freedom can be achieved by voluntary association for the purpose of production and by the collective ownership of its resources. (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006b, s. 33, 34)

Social anarchists, in opposition to the individualists, do not believe that capitalism can be reformed by focusing on the person's rights and freedom. Social anarchists don't undermine the importance of strengthening libertarian tendencies by social struggle, but they want to abolish the capitalist system by revolution. (McKay, 2008, s. 141) Social anarchism is in fact a term that includes three slightly different strategies, collectivism, communism and syndicalism, all of which reject markets; though mutualism, which praises non-capitalist markets, is included in individual anarchist school of thought (McKay, 2008, s. 150).

Anarcho-communism advocates distribution according to human need and desire. Work would not be rewarded by its importance or difficulty; instead, everybody would gang up to cooperate in solidarity and for the common goal. This means that wages would be abolished in order to help the principle of reciprocity. (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006b, s. 39)

Anarcho-syndicalism is a form of specific anarchist praxis bound to unions.

The organization of workers was hiding tremendous potential; when anarchists realized this, they joined the trade unions and inspired them with radical anarchistic thought, which offered workers an active struggle for their cause, taught them to take the initiative and to enforce better living standards instead of begging for them. (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006b, s. 45)

Anarcho-collectivism advocates collectivization of the means of production, workers themselves would be managers, owners and producers of their own work. While in communism everybody does and gets as much as he wishes, “collectivism is more likely to be based on the distribution of goods according to the labour contributed” (McKay, 2008, s. 152)

### **1.4.3 Pacifist anarchism**

“Anarchist movement has always placed a lot of time and energy in opposing the military machine and capitalist wars while, at the same time, it was supporting and organising armed resistance against oppression.“ (McKay, 2008, s. 160) Anarchism largely reflects violence of the powerful in all its forms; but also, it often praises the violence of the powerless as the most sufficient form of defense against violence from the top. Pacifist anarchists are deeply concerned that the use of violence can lead to that situation where the anarchists themselves, after removing the rule of illegitimate authorities by revolutionary violence, become the new oppressors. (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006b, s. 73) They reject violence as an authoritarian and coercive method, which is in contradiction to anarchist principles.

Pacifist anarchism admits the use of violence in self defense, or when it is otherwise necessary; it however warns that violence is often counterproductive because it gives the state an excuse for stronger repression. (McKay, 2008, s. 164) Pacifist anarchism also points out that in an open conflict, the state is much stronger and therefore whenever you violently confront it, it just wins. Anarcho-pacifists see a smarter approach in offering a different narrative; anarchists should expose the aggressive and violent acts of the state, nuclear weapons, drones etc., and stand against them with an alternative of life preservation, with nonviolent tactics, fighting for the public opinion. (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006b, s. 76)

#### **1.4.4 Anarchism without adjectives**

Anarchism without adjectives is an effort to combine a number of anarchist thoughts and movements. It is a reaction to the never-ending dispute about the form of a free future society, and was firstly coherently presented by Spanish anarchists. Anarchism without adjectives sees anarchism as a possibility of freedom and the absence of doctrines. Those doctrines were seen in various schools of anarchist thought, which presented themselves by adding different adjectives in front of the word anarchism. Adjectives symbolized adoption of dogmas, which completely contradict the meaning of anarchism (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006b, s. 49, 50). Anarchism without adjectives is simply an attitude to tolerate the coexistence of different views and connect them under the rubric of the struggle for common cause. Paradoxically, it is sometimes described as a similar such doctrine, with the only difference that it doesn't put an adjective before itself, as does the individualist, collectivist, feminist, communist etc. anarchists. (McKay, 2008, 183)

#### **1.4.5 Contemporary anarchism**

In this section, I concentrate on the basic description of contemporary forms of anarchism, so I'll not describe just one particular school of thought, but instead, I'll mention more of them. But first, what is contemporary anarchism? How can it be recognized from former anarchism? The American anthropologist David Graeber argues that in the present we can observe an invisible gap between an older and a younger generation of anarchism. The first was politically formatted in the 60s, during a countercultural revolt of a young generation. This generation worked mainly through highly visible organizations like Anarchist federation etc.

The latter generation consists of young activists, who are much more informed cultural criticism, in feminist and ecological arguments, and who organize themselves in various smaller groups and social movements. Unlike the former generation, which often thought anarchist theory over and over. Younger anarchists focus on developing new forms of practice (Graeber, Grubacic, 2004). Occupy Wall Street exemplifies this protest movement by raising issues of social and economic inequality right in the heart of the corporate financial center. Occupy

“was not the product of a single organizational structure,” in fact, “it made an effort to manage its affairs by radical consensus and endless discussion” (Calhoun, 2013). These new forms of decision-making processes, most visible across various Occupy movements where thousands of activists try to decide every process together by consensus, are among the most obvious forms of such practice developed by a latter generation of anarchists. (Graeber, Grubacic, 2004)

Anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho-pacifism are considered classical anarchist schools of thought and were, therefore, described above. But both can also be found among contemporary anarchist schools as they are represented in various current movements. With these, we can observe post-classical schools, an example of such contemporary anarchist practice is Anarcha-feminism, which combines “a radical critique of capitalism and the state with an equally powerful critique of patriarchy<sup>2</sup>” (Mckay, 2008, 166). This critique is based on a recognition of male domination which can be seen throughout our society. Men rule and decide, they sit on most positions of power and are paid on average far better than women for the same work.

Green anarchism, another contemporary school of thought, is also a part of a very wide movement that combines a critique of state and capitalism with the exploitation of Nature and its resources for profit. Some critics of the ecological situation found alternatives for a more sustainable forms of life and various political strategies for their goals in anarchist theory. (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006b, s. 78-79) Green anarchism divides into smaller philosophies and movements, such as Social ecology, Anarcho-Naturism and Anarcho-primitivism, with the last being the least followed but also most radical. It advocates a rejection of the complex technological civilization, and offers an opposing alternative of return to the communal life that we lived before the Neolith. (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006b, s. 83)

In current anarchist practice, there is also a connecting element that tries to organize different anarchists together under the principles of anarchism with none of the adjectives described above. This element is called Synthesis anarchism; it exists in many countries institutionalized into anarchist federations that try to bring

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<sup>2</sup> Patriarchy stands for a government controlled by a man or a group of men.

together all anarchist tendencies and accept them, in order to strengthen the collective effort for radical social change (McKay, 2008, s. 2605).

## **2. Anarchism and religion?**

Despite the fact that the great majority of anarchists “have opposed religion and the idea of God as deeply anti-human and a justification for earthly authority and slavery” (McKay, 2008, 176), there is also a long history of various anarchist thought and practice which have spiritual views and strong religious dimensions (Taylor, 2008, s. 49). And since anarchist ideas (as any other ideas) are not shaped in a space-time vacuum, diverse spiritual and religious influences were inevitable.

There were many radical anti-authoritarian thinkers long before anarchism was coherently formulated, many of whom worked from within religious movements and backgrounds. Their thoughts often inspired latter anarchist thinkers who saw similarities with their own ideas. But also, after the formation of a comprehensive anarchist movement, there were streams, schools of thoughts or individual thinkers who combined anarchist ethics with Christian ethics or anarchist critique of power with a similar critique formed in spiritual philosophies etc. (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006b, s. 68). My main goal in this part of the thesis is to outline an eventual accordance between diverse religious thoughts and anarchist theory, and to describe various interconnections between wide spiritual tendencies and broad anarchist praxis, and to do so chronologically. Due to the extent of my work, I will concentrate only on selected elements that relate anarchism to spirituality and religion.

### **2.1 First religious forerunners of Anarchism**

Anarchism is considered to be relatively young political philosophy, as it was coherently formulated in 19th century, but its roots can be traced to the time long before Christ’s birth. The first footprints of ideas similar to anarchism, lead us to ancient China and India, where we can examine original eastern traditions and the spiritual thoughts of Taoism and Buddhism within them.

#### **2.1.1 Taoism**

“The Way of Heaven reduces whatever is excessive and supplements whatever is insufficient. The Way of Man is different. It reduces the insufficient to

offer to the excessive” (Lao Tzu 1963: 174).

In his book, *Demanding the impossible*, Peter Marshall (2008, s. 53) argues that the first anarchistic thoughts were postulated by Taoism, a philosophical tradition of ancient China, in as early as in 6th century BC<sup>3</sup>. But Taoism, isn't just one of the oldest philosophies of the world, it is also a form of spirituality. Lao Tzu, who is considered to be its founder, “presents a vision of nature and human society as an organic unity-in-diversity in which the uniqueness and creative activity of each part of the whole are valued” (Taylor, 2008, s. 50). This vision formed an opposition to Confucianism, which (among other things) advocates a subordination of order and positive attitude towards society, with an emphasis on its development.

Confucius, founder of Confucianism, was also a politician, and a person with a certain amount of influence. Feudal China of his day was governed by the Zhou dynasty, the government was centralized and bureaucratic, Confucius supported this system. He called for a society, in which everybody knows his place; he believed that no one is capable of self-government (Marshall, 2008, s. 53). Taoism opposed those ideas; it understood the developed society as leading to unnatural principles, such as authority, governance, and the state. Instead, it offered an emphasis on actions in harmony with nature, those actions were understand as natural, one should think about nature, observe it and try to understand it (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006a, s. 30).

The natural world was seen as a dynamic force of balance, that is producing order and harmony on its own, without unrequested human interference. Therefore ideal society of Taoists has the form of a simple decentralized community with egalitarian and compassionate approach (Taylor, 2008, s. 50). In his most important book called *Tao te Ching*, Lao Tzu described this poetically: “Heaven and Earth unite to drip sweet dew. Without the command of men, it drips evenly over all” (Lao Tzu, 1963, s. 156). Lao Tzu was a tough critic of his time, pointing out injustice resulting from the man's chase for political and economical powers and from violence and hierarchy which emerges because of this egotistical pursuit

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<sup>3</sup> It is not certain when Taoism originated, some authors point to the sixth century BC, while others point to the fourth century BC.

(Taylor, 2008, s. 50).

The spirituality of Taoism is easily recognizable. Its main thought is in the principle of simple and natural life. Such life is seen as the only right path (Tao), this Tao should be an intuitive way of one's perception; something lived through, a deep experience of his everyday being. Life, which follows Tao, is lived with a religious devotion, with an effort to find a balance between yin and yang, two complementary forces. Together and through its spirituality and mystical elements, Taoism offers a convincing expression of anarchist thinking, its praise of unity in diversity, its ideal of natural behavior towards the world and its strict rejection of development through domination and coercion (Marshall, 2008, s. 59). The similarity between Taoism and various forms of Green anarchism, such as Anarcho-primitivism or Anarcho-naturism is not a coincidence. Our society, after all, "even more than the one existing in the era of the Lao Tzu, possesses all the qualities that are the target of (his) work's devastating attack" (Clark, 1998). These school of thought take up the Taoistic idea of a non-hierarchical alternative society standing on the non-civilized ways of life. Their Tao can be seen in a natural and simple society of free individuals. Such an approach can't deny a content of a certain form of spirituality.

### **2.1.2 Buddhism**

As with Taoism, anarchist ideas can also be seen in Buddhism. But the proof of its anarchist aspects is more complicated, as, for example, in modern Sri Lanka we can observe ethno nationalistic tendencies, which are widely supported by its Buddhist clergy<sup>4</sup>. But there is a universal argument, which can also be related to contemporary Christianity or Taoism, that the Institutionalizing of religions deformed the original message, that the two are disconnected, and the institution no longer represent the message (Marshall, 2008, s. 60). Therefore, as everywhere else, even in Buddhism we can find bad doctrines, that distort Its real message. This does not, however, prevent us from understanding Buddhism as a forerunner

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<sup>4</sup> More about Sinhala buddhist ethno nationalism can be found there:  
<http://tamilnation.co/tamileelam/fundamentalism/index.htm>

of anarchism.

Ancient Buddhism comes from India and was established in the fifth century BC, therefore it is slightly younger than Taoism. Its founder is Shakyamuni Buddha. This important historical figure, an ascetic sage, questioned the caste system, the social order of ancient India, and raised doubt about the authority of Hindu Vedic scriptures, which can be understood as that era's ideological pillar in India (Taylor, 2008, s. 50). But Buddha didn't stop there, he criticized ignorance as leading to one's effort to achieve what he or she longs for. Buddha understood this motivated motion towards wealth or power as inevitably bringing pain and suffering (Marshall, 2008, s. 60).

To avoid such suffering one has to overcome his or her ego and get rid of all desires, but that alone is not enough. Truth can occur only when reached by an individual through direct and personal experience; this, however, is prevented. Instead, the authorities force us into the idea that truth is held by a certain person, by a sovereign for example, or that truth is in some written text, whether it is in the form of a law or a holy book. Buddhism goes further; it rejects these artificial powers and instead comes with the idea that an individual must not be tied by anything or attached to anything (Taylor, 2008, s. 50). It is these ideas that can be interpreted as corresponding to later anarchist thoughts.

The Buddhist "goal of non-attachment can be seen as an attack on the foundation of political, economic and patriarchal domination in the desire to aggrandize an illusory ego-self" (Taylor, 2008, s. 51), while its emphasis on mind and rationality, i.e. the quest for truth through our own conscious experience, can be understood as an effort to free everyone's thinking from various manipulations, cultural appropriations, and other freedom-taking and objectifying forms of reasoning (Ibid.). The similarity of this Buddhist critique with the anarchist criticism of various indivisibility of the individual is clearly visible. And as with Taoism, Buddhism is a form of spirituality, of life according to certain principles and teachings. Its emphasis on the individual experience of truth does not mean a completely lonely life outside of society. Buddhism also comes with its own ideal of a spiritual community that, instead of operating with the principle of economic

and political power, operates on the principles of reciprocity, compassion and recognition of true need (Ibid.) This ideal is not different from the anarchist-communist concepts of their ideal community.

Most extensively, Buddhism has developed ideas of freedom in its Zen school, which originated in China, where Buddhism was brought from India in sixth century after Christ, Zen Buddhism adepts understand Buddha as the first rebel, who broke his own bounding chain and thus liberated himself. Zen adepts are learning to also break out from their limiting habits and bounding perceptions or prejudice. There are Zen masters to guide them and point the way, but everyone has to make his decisions and find his own path towards freedom of soul (Marshall, 2008, s. 62). The founder of Zen Buddhism, Lin-Chi, explains the need to abolish every bias radically: “Whether you’re facing inward or facing outward, whatever you meet up with, just kill it! If you meet a Buddha, kill the Buddha. If you meet a patriarch, kill the patriarch!” (Lin-Chi, 1993). This citation is a classical Zen statement, which shows us its radically anarchistic point of view. Zen Buddhism argues that we can’t capture the nature of our reality by any concept because that is indefensibly simplifying, as the reality is ever changing and thus constantly overcomes all those conceptions as well as all other attempts to simplify it (Taylor, 2008, s. 51).

## **2.2 Anarchist tendencies in Christianity**

Anarchism and Christianity have many differences which can’t be ignored. The Christian Church has come from the oppressed position in a powerful position from which it has committed many unforgivable and unfair acts of domination and coercion throughout the history, but there can be also found streams within the Christian and Anarchist schools of thought where common ground can be found (Alexis-Baker, 2006, s. 76). There is no need to go far. The ideas that link anarchism and Christianity are found in the Bible, and in the behavior of Jesus Christ. In a sense, the later church moloch was far more distant from these ideas than anything else: this is especially true during the Middle Ages when Christianity often held the position of supreme authority, it is not by chance that the reform and

revolutionary currents within Christianity also arose at this time. These often criticized the alienation of the Church and their dignitaries from the teachings of the Bible and tried to show the right way of life, an alternative to what they considered spoiled.

### **2.2.1 God against rulers**

The Old Testament teaches us, by its chronological description of the government of the kings of Israel and Judah in the books of kings, that in most cases the use of political power leads only to general harm; that it is systematically bad (Marshall, 2008, s. 75). A similar rejection of the rule of one ruler can be found in the books of Samuel, where the free people of Israel do not know what to do with their acquired freedom, so they approach the Prophet Samuel to ask God who should be their king. But God, to their surprise, refuses to choose a ruler for them; instead, he makes it clear to them as to Samuel that by having a king the Israelites would reject God - but also the freedom from coercion, injustice, taxation and war, which God provides (Alexis-Baker, 2009, s. 78). The text itself, which can be found in the Bible, states: “He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. (...) He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day.” (1 Samuel 8:17-19).

We can also find the same idea in the New Testament,. The gospels and letters refuse authority and oppose it. In Romans, for example, we can read Paul’s dictum (Marshall, 2008, s. 75), which says: “There is no authority except that which God has established” (Romans, 13:1). But this is also seen as very problematic by many anarchist thinkers and is included in Bakunin’s critique of religion, because God itself is then a powerful ruler who must be obeyed. Some christians and anarchists have a different, less anthropomorphic concept of God, who they understand it in less closed ways. Referring to it as the Universe, the Earth, Natural order or Truth, they often treat God as something unobservable and unlimited by time or space.

### **2.2.2 Jesus Christ**

Instead of trying to understand something inexplicable and infinitely complex, other Christians rather study the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, as he is very concrete and tangible representation of God's will in the people's world. They admire his universal love, his rebellion against the leaders, and his support of the weak and ill (Taylor, 2008, s. 52). The acts of Jesus Christ, as we know them from the bible, have certain political and social values. And those values are often very similar to anarchist values; the Son of God often helped people loosen their ties, whether those are in the form of sicknesses, social or cultural oppression, or other. He liberated, healed, taught and guided, and, to certain extent, he does so today (Alexis-Baker, 2008, s. 80). But most importantly, he inspired and inspires, us to hold that every human is capable of both universal love and rebellion against unjust orders, and that gluttony and continual accumulation of property is not a right thing: “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Matthew, 19:24) says Jesus to his disciples.

Instead of richness, he advocates voluntary poverty and shares goods with his followers by breaking bread. This can be understood as a communist practice (Marshall, 2008, s. 75); he also advises his disciples not to be like their kings and governors, and he constantly ridiculed political authorities of his time (Ibid.). In short, he rejects earthly rule, and his politics make him an enemy of established order, of status quo. This dimension of Jesus' teaching is evident from his birth and throughout his ministry (Alexis-Baker, 2008, s. 80). He does not want our blind faith; he encourages us to actively love our neighbor, as well as the enemy. This love is inclusive, and as a result, it leads to an equality that can only be achieved by determined work. The New Testament is a gospel about possibility of life in Christ and it advises how to achieve this ideal. The procedures and values it considers important are often identical to those praised in anarchist teachings (Ibid.).

### **2.2.3 Heresy in the middle ages**

Various movements and practices that obtained anarchist forms of spirituality have also emerged periodically throughout the history of Christianity

(Taylor, 2008, s. 51). Probably the best period in terms of the emerging of diverse revolutionary movements was the middle ages. The Medieval Church had a strong secular power, so too it had departed from its own teachings. Convulsed by fights for power among the clergy, the greed of individual church dignitaries resulted in papal schism, which was seen as a symbol of the corruption and sinfulness of the Church, which was strongly criticized, but also unable to react to this criticism, to suppress it. As a result of this inability, criticism grew and several significant corrective movements have emerged at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries. Political and economical factors have prepared the ground for reformation.

John Wycliffe and Jan Hus were among the loudest critics of the state of the church and they prepared the land for the fathers of the Reformation, Martin Luther and John Calvin. But some interesting heretical movements appeared well before. One of the most radical is known as the Heresy of the Free Spirit, which emerged at the end of the twelfth century. members of this Movement were not bound by any rules and enjoyed unlimited freedom (Marshall, 2008, s. 87), This heretical movement “is often considered the most anarchistic tendency within medieval and early modern Christianity” (Taylor, 2008, s. 51) as it “rejected the established Church, the state, law, private property and marriage” (Ibid.)

Anarchism can also be traced to the beginning of the Hussite movement that came into being around 1419 and which was inspired by the movement of free spirit, but especially by the teaching of Jan Hus, who had recently been executed by the Church. All authority that does not follow God's laws was unjustifiable for the Taborites, and should be overthrown by the people who will then establish an egalitarian society (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006a, s. 35). The Taborites founded a town in Bohemia, which they named Tabor, according to a mountain in Galilee, here they tried to establish a consumer communism order in which there would be no human authority, private property, or taxes (Marshall, 2008, s. 91). But their efforts soon failed under the pressure of the Hussite wars, as they soon began to collect bribes from villagers from around Tabor.

Just before this definitive turn, a radical faction separated from the Hussites, this fraction rejected many religious dogmas and broke with medieval social

morality, believing that the kingdom of God had already come, and that it should be carried out by people in their liberty and joy (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006a, s. 36). This radical faction, the Adamites, a community of several dozen men and women, had set up camp on an island of the river Nežárka, the group created its own social structure, developed its own value system, and established its own ceremonies and rituals, all of which were almost unimaginable to medieval society, and bold even in comparison to this day. In their community there was no priestly hierarchy, spiritual and military leaders were ordinary people who had acquired the natural authority among the people (Laube, 2016, s. 21-29).

They exercised what they understood as a natural freedom, which included nudity and the practicing of free love, but also common property (Taylor, 2008, s. 51). Their common ceremonies took the form of collective dances around a fire, which led to altered states of consciousness, and in which the participants achieved physical and spiritual fulfillment. Participants in these dances thus became active creators of a new kind of ceremony, a revolutionary religious mystery that was in sharp contrast to the limited traditional, individual union of man and woman as a couple, which made it impossible to experience a wider mutuality, reciprocity and sharing (Laube, 2016, s. 30). Women and men enjoyed an equal position in this community, which gave – especially to women, not only sexual but also social emancipation from the strict limitations of medieval customs and cultural rules (Laube, 2016, s. 32). However, there is little information available about the Adamite movement. Hussites captured and burned the Adamites, and the broadest description of this movement comes from the Hussite Bible, written by the celibate Laurence of Brezova. Some historians, therefore, concede that this description may be in fact defamation.

### **2.3 Reflections of spirituality and religion within Anarchism**

In *Our timeless thirst for freedom*, Contemporary anarchist author Paul Cudenec argues that what we call anarchism today is just a form of something rooted deep in human nature. Something that can be described as a deep human desire for freedom. Cudenec describes this desire as not driven by selfish

intentions; for him, it is represented by struggle for justice, solidarity and freedom for all. For Cudenec this desire, thirst, is inherent in the human spirit, which is, according to him, proven in that it can be found emerging in diverse forms, under various names, in different conditions throughout history, century after century (Cudenec, 2015). On previous pages, I have described some forms of this deep thirst of the human soul, a selection of those forms, which emerged before anarchism was formulated as we know it today. Now i will briefly introduce several authors who have represented and continue to represent this man's spiritual thirst for freedom after anarchism was formulated.

### **2.3.1 Two representatives from 19th and 20th century**

Even in early anarchism, which was (influenced by Bakunin and others) strongly against religion, we can find a distinct religious tendency, presented by the famous pacifist, Russian anarchist, Leo Tolstoy (Taylor, 2008, s. 52), who was brought to anarchist conclusions by his radical interpretation of the Gospels. According to Tolstoy, the gospels taught that one should live in peace with all men, not promise any oaths nor resist evil by force (Marshall, 2008, s. 82). He believed that “the time will come and is inevitably coming when all institutions based on force will disappear through their uselessness, stupidity, and even inconvenience becoming obvious to all” (Tolstoy, 1894). Tolstoy’s conception of God was different from the image of an almighty father that was under attack by the Anarchists of his time.

Tolstoy conceived of God as something impersonal, something that permeates everything, and he called it the reality or the truth. He refused the notion that the meaning of Christianity can be found in a transcendental God being or in an endless afterlife, full of rewards or punishments. Rather he claimed that the kingdom of God is already within us and can be found and reached by adopting Jesus' teaching of universal love (Taylor, 2008, s. 52). By this, Tolstoy discouraged the public from listening to church dignitaries; as a new authority, he offered them an interpretation of the Bible. In the Gospel of Matthew we read: “But seek first the

kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you” (Matthew, 6:33), while Tolstoy (1894) writes “to serve the kingdom of God, that is, to contribute to the establishment of the greatest possible union between all living beings”

Another important figure of early anarchist spirituality is the German non-violent revolutionary Gustav Landauer, who as part of his philosophy of mystical elements brings into the world his conception of Geist, Volk, and Nation. He focuses primarily on the role and position of an individual in the context of nature, what is it within a larger human community, and what is it within the surrounding spiritual reality (Taylor, 2008, s. 52), arguing that nation can be this larger peaceful human community, but Landauer's conception of nation was quite different from national states as we know them today, he saw it as stepping stone to internationalism, as an important interphase of a motion, that moves from the individual to the whole of humanity (Marshall, 2008, s. 412). This motion is central to his philosophy.

Landauer argues that it is rooted deep in human spirit. Our soul seeks integrity and universality, some kind of underlying connection (Taylor, 2008, s. 52-53), which can be also interpreted as God, wholeness, truth or universum, but Landauer interprets it as “the underlying unity of all beings that encompasses both humanity and nature” (Taylor, 2008, s. 53). But how can this unity be reached? According to Landauer, it can only be achieved through the process of free socialism, where both a free individual and a free community can realize themselves (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006a, s. 379), socialism, as a cooperative society, where more loving human relationships are present, and thus can beat social organization based on domination and exploitation (Taylor, 2008, s. 53).

### **2.3.2 Reflections in contemporary Anarchism**

In today's unstoppably growing globalized world, which is inhabited by seven billion people, it would be too ambitious of an effort to try to describe all the individuals, communities and movements that represent spiritual or religious currents within anarchism. Trying to create such a description could encompass the

life of one researcher. For these reasons, I will present these tendencies only through selected specific examples, although I am aware that varying current practices may vary.

The first of my selected contemporary anarchist authors who are associated with spiritual anarchism is Gary Snyder, an American intellectual and poet who is best known for his association with the Beat generation and movement. But Snyder wasn't just enjoying the fruits of this inspiring counter-culture that emerged on the West Coast of the United States; he traveled back and forth between California and Japan, where he studied Zen Buddhism. In 1961, he published an essay called *Buddhist Anarchism*, in which he explained that there is an important connection between what we call Western and Eastern traditions (Graham, 2007, s. 240-241). The two, Snyder argues, complement each other: "The mercy of the West has been social revolution; the mercy of the East has been individual insight into the basic self" he wrote (1961), arguing that we need both heritages in order to defend "the right of individuals to smoke hemp, eat peyote, be polygynous, polyandrous or homosexual" (Ibid).

Snyder's interpretation of the Eastern tradition had a huge influence on the ecology movement of his time; he connected Western concepts of wilderness and wild nature with Taoism and Buddhism, and came up with the spirituality of place, which is influenced by one's behavior. If you develop an intimate connection with your region, Snyder claimed, you can build a better-thinking community with a drive for a higher purpose (Taylor, 2008, s. 53). In this, Snyder inspired a wide variety of contemporary anarchist ecological movements, including green anarchism and social ecology in which theoreticians John Zerzan and Murray Bookchin worked. A similar but quite distinct spiritual concept of contemporary anarchism comes to us from Hakim Bey, born Peter Lamborn Wilson, who is best known for his book *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone*.

Hakim Bey developed a concept he called ontological anarchism, which is inspired by a wide variety of spiritual traditions of various cultures around the world. It includes, among others, esotericism, sorcery and shamanism, but also Sufism, an Islam form of mysticism (Taylor, 2008, s. 55). Bey rejects the

authoritarianism, oppression, and sexual repression of contemporary Islam, while he simultaneously highlights the esoteric spirituality of its Sufi heretics and other misfits. And he does the same with other religions as well: he believes that they can provide a subversive orthodoxy against capitalism, and thereby trump the momentary social norms (Marshall, 2008, s. 681). Bey connects a broad spectrum of human activity under one roof. His “anarchic sensibility and spirituality encompass everything related to joy, eros, creativity, play, and ‘the marvelous’” (Taylor, 2008, s. 55): Temporary Autonomous Zones are places wherein which such things can be experienced (Ibid.)

### **3. Anarchist Concept of God**

It follows from the previous text that nothing less than the full liberation of all men can be considered as the main goal of anarchism. Needless to say, it's quite an ambitious goal, something forever incomplete. It is an endless work in process; many anarchists already deeply contemplated and tried different options for achieving human liberation, the very freedom that is the center of their interest. But there is still one thing that still remains largely a mystery for us, and that is to answer a simple question: What is truly human? We know about ourselves, that we came from Great apes, and that our brain is relatively bigger (or at least more complex), and many other facts we learned about ourselves through science and rational thinking. That we are, to a remarkable extent, irrational beings is among them. In connection with this, it seems ironic that some economists – especially political economists who now have a great influence on the social order, irrationally believe that we are perfectly rational. Therefore, and in spite of them, it is necessary for anarchism to accept human beings as a whole, both with their rationality and irrationality.

Anthropology teaches us that we are biological and social beings, dependent on our material and social environment, without which we cannot live. It also shows us that we actively experience the world around us, and that how we act influences the world, Our behavior has an impact on both the society and the structure of life around us (Bowie, 2008, s. 117), but our actions do not just influence, they are also influenced. They “are determined by what we think, by our values and belief systems. These in turn are actualized and reinforced by our education, through various aspects of our culture, and by means of ritual activity” (Ibid.). Anarchism is aware of those determinations and thus it criticizes whenever somebody tries to use any such institution: school, broadcasting station or other, in order to manipulate others. But the very conditioning of our actions by what we think, and the conditioning of what we think by the environment in which we grew

up and by the culture in which we live, can't be removed. Religion as a set of beliefs and spirituality as a set of actions are among these factors - and are often criticized as irrational. But irrationality is part of human nature, and people often "characterize themselves as religious and/or spiritual, understanding these concepts as independent, although perhaps related, qualities of what it is to be human" (Zinnbauer et al., 1997). Spirituality also "in some ways, empowers and enables individuals to cope and to grow more fully" (Frey et al., 2005). Religion and spirituality therefore have to be somehow incorporated in the anarchist's quest for freedom. But how? This is not a simple question to answer, as there are countless religious praxes – together with just as many concepts of God. What would an anarchistic concept of God look like? I will answer this question below, but in order to do so, I will first describe, how it can't be defined.

### **3.1 What concepts of God are in contrast to anarchist values?**

In order to create an anarchistic concept of God, we must first understand that Anarchist theology is political by nature. In previous chapters, I described anarchism both in its negative and positive definition, highlighting its values as well as that which it opposes; only these can serve as the building blocks of such concept. The easiest way to deduce how an anarchistic concept of God might be built is to turn the whole question, to begin by excluding some possible forms. Only then, can I analyze and work with those concepts not negatively affected.

#### **3.1.1 God's characteristics contradicting Anarchism**

The anarchistic God is not personal. Why so? God understood as a person who can feel emotions, has a will and its own intentions, is just another almighty leader who dominates us. Bakunin (2014) argues, that "the idea of (a) personal God, pure, eternal, absolute mind, creator and supreme master" leaves men in the position of slavery and falsehood (Ibid.). This is unacceptable for Anarchists, because it oppresses free will. Such a God is also associated with gender; this association, whether male, female or transgender, remains a limiting category, as it prioritizes one group of people over all others. So too, an anarchistic God is not

authoritative. Such authority is the sanction of some earthly authority. God as the authority was usurped in history by the institution of the Church, and then used against the freedom of the people. It goes without saying that anarchy opposes all such authorities, whether God or man, as they oppress people (Tomek, Slačálek, 2006a, s. 157), and that a God with such characteristic is in direct contradiction to anarchist ideas. Thus the anarchistic God is not sovereign, whether personal or impersonal, this God does not rule over the universe with people unable to act, passively observing his power while living their lives.

### **3.1.2 An anarchistic God can't be strictly Biblical**

Having rejected personified sovereign authority, I have to admit, that the anarchist God is also not Biblical, at least not literally, because in many parts of the Bible God is presented exactly by these characteristics. In the book of Isaiah, for example, God tells the people of Israel: "I foretold the former things long ago, my mouth announced them and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass" (Isaiah, 48:3) elsewhere, in the Gospel of John, Jesus talks about God to the people "You do not know me or my Father, (...) if you knew me, you would know my Father also." (John, 8:19) Similar quotations can be made from different parts of the Bible, but they themselves are often conflicting with other parts, which means the Bible cannot be taken literally. An anarchist approach to the Bible may perhaps be considered and criticized as heretical, as it would ignore dogmas and interpret revelation on its own, taking what it considers appropriate.

But is heresy really a bad thing? The Catholic Church had to deal with a great deal of heresies. Many of them were suppressed from a position of power. They challenged orthodoxy, official line of beliefs dictated by the powerful, by coming up with their own interpretation of the Bible. And from an anarchistic point of view this makes perfect sense because the validity of the Bible and of Christianity should definitely not rest on a single unquestionable interpretation. This would clearly lead to fundamentalism, which is not strictly and strongly held religion, but the corruption of religion done badly. (Bartley, 2006).

### 3.2 A possible anarchistic concept of God

By denying God as a person, anarchism tends to its understanding as an impersonal force, but even such force can be seen very differently. An impersonal God can, for example, be understood as a variation on The Absolute, something that is above all. There are very interesting theologies that understand God in this terms but which find common ground with Anarchism. Chief among them is Liberation theology, which “stresses the interrelatedness of differing structures of oppression and domination” (Vuola, 2005). One of the basic principles of Liberation theology and its central phrase is ‘preferential option for the poor’. Liberation Theology advocates for the poor and oppressed by pointing out that throughout the New Testament, God focuses on the well-being of the poor. This means that everyone should show solidarity with the poor in his prayers and actions. Catholic law states that Christians “are also obliged to promote social justice, and mindful precept of the Lord, to assist the poor” (Can. 222 §2).

But this approach is inconsistent. Liberal theology looks at the poor as wretches, as those who we need to help from ‘our’ higher position, and not as people equal to ourselves. Along with this, the concept of God by Liberal theology argues, God is not omnipotent in the traditional way and therefore it can’t end all evil in an instant. Rather, according to Liberal theology, God’s power is in God’s guidance towards liberation. This comes in the form of a relational power. God suffers with the oppressed, and therefore sides with them against the oppressors (Campolo, 2008). There is a visible emphasis on not only on God’s will to progress, but also on the progression of God’s will, which implies the negation of absolute power. But this concept of God still looks upon God as a mighty being, as an impersonal power, that is, once again, above us.

A more consistent concept of God is introduced by Process theology, which originated in the philosophy of the American polymath Charles Peirce, specifically in his essay *A Neglected Argument for the reality of God*. developed by the American philosopher Charles Hartshorne and Anglo-American Alfred North Whitehead’s Process philosophy. Whitehead was an English mathematician and thinker, he argued that the metaphysical reality is constantly changing by nature.

This approach is opposite from another and very influential understanding of reality. Greek philosophers saw true reality as infinite, not affected by time, based on permanent Essence (or God), while all other phenomena were ultimate, and thus subjected to this reality (Rescher, 1996). This Understanding of change as the core of reality opened space for a whole new theology and a whole new concept of God within it. Whitehead comes up with an idea, that God affects and is affected by temporal processes, therefore God is not unchanging and static, but this doesn't exclude God's eternity. Whitehead admits, that God will never die, but claims that It is affected by temporality: "the interplay between the thing which is static and the things which are fluent involves contradiction at every step in its explanation" says Whitehead (1978) and comes with a set of antitheses, which are an argument made in order to avoid self-contradiction by putting individual oppositions in contrast to each other and to include them in the character of God by that (Ibid.). "God and the World stand to each other in this opposed requirement" says Whitehead (Ibid.). The antitheses go thusly:

"It is as true to say that God is permanent and the World fluent, as that the World is permanent and God is fluent"

"It is as true to say that God is one and the World many, as that the World is one and God many"

"It is as true to say that, in comparison with the World, God is actual eminently, as that, in comparison with God, the World is actual eminently"

"It is as true to say that the World is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the World"

"It is as true to say that God transcends the World, as that the World transcends God"

"It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God"  
(Ibid.)

These antitheses pull God down from his divine throne. In this concept, God creates the World equally to how the World creates God. The world is

constantly changing and God interacts with it, therefore God is changeable. This means God is not at all omnipotent, God does not – cannot determine right from wrong, nor does it control events in the world. The world is in constant process that is realized by agents of free will. They are characterized by their self-determination (Cobb, c1976). The Godly influence on this creative operation of universal free will lies in God's offering of possibilities. "God is the aboriginal instance of this creativity, and is therefore the aboriginal condition which qualifies its action" Whitehead argues (1978). God's will is still in everything, but not everything that occurs is because of that will (Cobb, c1976).

This concept of God is consistently anarchistic, as it advocates the existence and importance of free will, through which it argues for diversity and basic equality in the world, both important anarchistic values. Process theologians also argue that God doesn't have coercive control over the World; they lower God's power to a truly minimal. This claim is source of major critique of process theology. Critics argue that such a conception of God reduces Its divine power to such a degree that God is no longer worthy of worshiping. But this is exactly the point Process theology is trying to make, God shouldn't be understood as an object of worship, the Christian concept of God is not worshipful because Its omnipotence doesn't make sense (Griffin, c2004). Process theologians often see God more in a terms of a impersonal "partner in crime", as something that is unceasing in convincing the world to love in peace and harmony, and who is directly affected by our joys as well as sorrows. This is summarized in Whitehead's famous definition of God as "the fellow-sufferer who understands" (Whitehead, 1978). This 'weakness', God's sensitivity, is Its strength.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of my bachelor thesis was to propose an anarchist concept of God. To achieve this goal, I chose a direct approach and structured the work accordingly. First, it was necessary to define anarchism and to present its criticism of state power, economic oppression, and the role of religion in the history of human coercion. Then I introduced anarchism as the opposite of strict doctrine, as a free space in which ideas can be formulated that try to work out how to achieve total human freedom. I also pointed out that the various anarchist schools of thought disagree on what that solution should be.

And from this diversity, which is significant for anarchism, I finally moved to those anarchist schools of thought that can be considered spiritual or religious. Here I concentrated on various inspirations based on religion, whether Zen Buddhism or heretical movements in Christianity, and presented chosen contemporary Anarchist authors who think about the relationship of anarchism and religiosity in their various works. While taking all these aspects into account, I suggested a possible concept of God that best matches anarchistic values.

The biggest problem I faced during my work was to narrow the selection, and present only a limit view of the many anarchistic streams of thought, as well as individual authors and religions that have influenced spiritual and religious Anarchism. However, due to the extent of the bachelor thesis, it was necessary. Sometimes it did not hurt. For example, the basic description of anarcho-capitalism simply does not fit with an anarchist concept of God. At other times, however, the necessity of curtailment has resulted in the mere mention of Sufism, which deserves its own subchapter, since it is a broad inner dimension of Islam in its beautiful and naturally anarchistic mysticism.

Finally, I must say that the anarchist concept of God I have outlined cannot be considered as the only right concept to be identified with by all anarchists. Many would argue that the only acceptable God is one who is equal to the people, while others say that no God is acceptable. The concept I have set out is to be more of an opportunity offered to anarchists looking for a spiritual superstructure, beyond their clear political anchor. It is proposed as support for those who want or need such

support in their lives. Just as I need it to see the meaning of my struggle for a world where people are, if not free in an absolute sense, at least freer than today. The struggle for a world where only eight people does not own as much as half the world's population – and thus have as much power. For a world rich with possibility for people of any gender, race, economic or social background. For a world where nature will not be devastated for profit. All power to the imagination!

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