Benjamin R. Tucker was born in Massachusetts in 1854, educated in a Quaker school, and raised in the radical intellectual environment of the Boston area at the time. He found himself drawn into anarchism as a young man and became a journalist and editor. After working for just over a decade at the Boston Daily Globe, he founded the journal *Liberty*, which became one of the most prominent outlets for individualist anarchism in the Gilded Age. When his bookstore in New York City was destroyed in a fire in 1908, he shut down *Liberty* and moved to France. He died there in 1939.

In the late nineteenth century, anarchism in the United States was divided into two camps. The collectivist anarchist camp was particularly influenced by European immigrants such as Johann Most and Emma Goldman, was rooted in the communist tradition, and often embraced violence to achieve its goals. The individualist anarchist camp was rooted in the American abolitionist tradition of Josiah Warren, Henry David Thoreau, and Lysander Spooner and favored passive resistance as the means of overthrowing the state rather than either democratic politics or violent revolution. Tucker was among the most prominent advocates of that individualist tradition in the Gilded Age.

Probably no agitation has ever attained the magnitude, either in the number of its recruits or the area of its influence, which has been attained by Modern Socialism, and at the same time been so little understood and so misunderstood, not only by the hostile and the indifferent, but by the friendly, and even by the great mass of its adherents themselves. This unfortunate and highly dangerous state of things is due partly to the fact that the human relationships which this movement—if anything so chaotic can be called a movement—aims to transform, involve no special class or classes, but literally all mankind; partly to the fact that these relationships are infinitely more varied and complex in their nature than with which any special reform has ever been called upon to deal; and partly to the fact that the great molding forces of society, the channels of information and enlightenment, are well-nigh exclusively under the control of those whose immediate pecuniary interests are antagonistic to the bottom claim of Socialism that labor should be put in possession of its own.

... For it is a curious fact that the two extremes of the vast army now under consideration, though united, as has been hinted above, by the common claim that labor shall be put in possession of its own, are diametrically opposed to each other in their fundamental principles of social actions and their methods of reaching the ends aimed at than either is to their common enemy, the existing society. They are based on two principles the history of whose conflict is almost equivalent to the history of the world since man came into it; and all intermediate parties, including that of the upholders of the existing society, are based upon a compromise between them. ...
The two principles referred to are Authority and Liberty, and the names of the two schools of Socialistic thought which fully and unreservedly represent one or the other them are, respectively, State Socialism and Anarchism. . . .

. . . I must first describe the ground common to both, the features that make Socialists of each of them.

The economic principles of Modern Socialism are a logical deduction from the principles laid down by Adam Smith in the early chapters of his “Wealth of Nations,”—namely, that labor is the true measure of price. But Adam Smith, after stating this principle most clearly and concisely, immediately abandoned all further consideration of it to devote himself to showing what actually does measure price, and how, therefore, wealth is distributed. . . . Socialism, on the contrary, extends its function to the description of society as it should be, and the discovery of the means of making it what is should be. . . .

First, then, State Socialism, which may be described as the doctrine that all the affairs of men should be managed by the government, regardless of individual choice.

Marx, its founder, concluded that the only way to abolish the class monopolies was to centralize and consolidate all industrial and commercial interests, all productive and distributive agencies, in one vast monopoly in the hands of the State. . . .

Such is the economic programme of State Socialism as adopted from Karl Marx. . . . In this country the parties that uphold it are known as the Socialistic Labor Party, which pretends to follow Karl Marx; the Nationalists, who follow Karl Marx filtered through Edward Bellamy; and the Christian Socialists, who follow Karl Marx filtered through Jesus Christ.

What other applications this principle of Authority, once adopted in the economic sphere, will develop is very evident. It means the absolute control by the majority of all individual conduct. . . . Such liberty as might exist would exist by sufferance and could be taken away at any moment. Constitutional guarantees would be of no avail. There would be but one article in the constitution of a State Socialistic country: “The right of the majority is absolute.”

The claim of the State Socialists, however, that this right would not be exercised in matters pertaining to the individual in the more intimate and private relations of his life is not borne out by the history of governments. It has ever been the tendency of power to add to itself, to enlarge its sphere, to encroach beyond the limits set for it; and where the habit of resisting such encroachment is not fostered, and the individual is not taught to be jealous of his rights, individuality gradually disappears and the government or State becomes the all-in-all. Control naturally accompanies responsibility. Under the system of State Socialism, therefore, which holds the community responsible for the health, welfare, and wisdom of the individual, it is evident that the community, through its majority expression, will insist more and more on prescribing the conditions of health, welfare, and wisdom, and thus impairing and finally destroying individual independence and with it all sense of individual responsibility.

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Such is the ideal of the logical State Socialist, such the goal which lies at the end of the road that Karl Marx took. Let us now follow the fortunes of Warren and Proudhon, who took the other road—the road of Liberty.

This brings us to Anarchism, which may be described as the doctrine that all the affairs of men should be managed by individuals or voluntary associations, and that the State should be abolished.

When Warren and Proudhon, in prosecuting their search for justice to labor, came face to face with the obstacle of class monopolies, they saw that these monopolies rested upon Authority, and concluded that the thing to be done was, not to strengthen this Authority and thus make monopoly universal, but to utterly uproot Authority and give full sway to the opposite principle, Liberty, by making competition, the antithesis of monopoly, universal. . . . The query then naturally presented itself why all
prices do not fall to labor cost; where there is any room for incomes acquired otherwise than by labor; in a word, why the usurer, the receiver of interest, rent, and profit, exists. The answer was found in the present one-sidedness of competition. It was discovered that capital had so manipulated legislation that unlimited competition is allowed in supplying productive labor, thus keeping wages down to the starvation point, or as near it as practicable; that a great deal of competition is allowed in supplying distributive labor, or the labor of the mercantile classes, thus keeping, not the prices of goods, but the merchants’ actual profits on them down to a point somewhat approximating equitable wages for the merchants’ work; but that almost no competition at all is allowed in supplying capital, upon the aid of which both productive and distributive labor are dependent for their power of achievement, thus keeping the rate of interest on money and of house-rent and ground-rent at as high a point as the necessities of the people will bear.

... *Laissez faire* was very good sauce for the goose, labor, but very poor sauce for the gander capital. But how to correct this inconsistency ... that was the problem.

Marx, as we have seen, solved it by declaring capital to be a different thing from product, and maintaining that it belonged to society and should be seized by society and employed for the benefit of all alike. ... 

... Proudhon and Warren found themselves unable to sanction any such plan as the seizure of capital by society. ... So they raised the banner of Absolute Free Trade; free trade at home, as well as with foreign countries ... *laissez faire* the universal rule. Under this banner they began their fight upon monopolies, whether the all-inclusive monopoly of the State Socialists, or the various class monopolies that now prevail.

Of the latter they distinguished four of principle importance: the money monopoly, the land monopoly, the tariff monopoly, and the patent monopoly.

... The development of the economic programme which consists in the destruction of these monopolies and the substitution for them of the freest competition led its authors to a perception of the fact that all their thought rested upon a very fundamental principle, the freedom of the individual, his right of sovereignty over himself, his products, and his affairs, and of rebellion against the dictation of external authority. Just as the idea of taking capital away from individual sand giving it to the government started Marx in a path which ends in making the government everything and the individual nothing, so the idea of taking capital away from the government-protected monopolies and putting it within easy reach of all individuals started Warren and Proudhon in a path which ends in making the individual everything and the government nothing. If the individual has the right to govern himself, all external government is tyranny. Hence the necessity of abolishing the State. ... The Anarchists are simply unterrified Jefferson Democrats. They believe that “the best government is that which governs least,” and that that which governs least is no government at all. Even the simple police function of protecting persons and property they deny to governments supported by compulsory taxation. Protection they look upon as a thing to be secured, as long as it is necessary, by voluntary association and cooperation for self-defense, or as a commodity to be purchased, like any other commodity, of those who offer the best article at the lowest price. In their view it is in itself an invasion of the individual to compel him to pay for or suffer a protection against invasion that he has not asked for and does not desire. And they further claim that protection will become a drug in the market, after poverty and consequently crime have disappeared through the realization of their economic programme. Compulsory taxation is to them the life-principle of all the monopolies, and passive, but organized, resistance to the tax-collector they contemplate, when the proper time comes, as one of the most effective methods of accomplishing their purposes.
Nor does the Anarchist scheme furnish any code of morals to be imposed upon the individual. “Mind your own business” is the only moral law. Interference with another’s business is a crime and the only crime, and as such may properly be resisted. In accordance with this view the Anarchists look upon attempts to arbitrarily suppress vice as in themselves crimes. They believe liberty and the resultant social well-being to be a sure cure for all the vices. But they recognize the right of the drunkard, the gambler, the rake, and the harlot to live their lives until they shall freely choose to abandon them.

... They look forward to a time when every individual, whether man or woman, shall be self-supporting, and when each shall have an independent hoe of his or her own, whether it be a separate house or rooms in a house with others; when the love relations between independent individuals shall be as varied as are individual inclinations and attractions; and when the children born of these relations shall belong exclusively to the mothers until old enough to belong to themselves.

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