

SOCIAL ANARCHISM AND THE REJECTION OF MORAL TYRANNY

Outside philosophy departments, most self-identified anarchists are social anarchists who reject both the legitimacy of the state and private property. By contrast, most anarchist philosophers are of the pro-market variety. As a result, a philosopher has yet to write an analytic defense of social anarchism. Jesse Spafford fills this gap by arguing that social anarchism is a coherent philosophical position that follows from a more basic, plausible principle that constrains which moral theories are acceptable. In the process of articulating and defending social anarchism Spafford stakes out a number of bold and original positions (e.g., that people own themselves and nothing else), while providing novel solutions to some of the classic problems of political philosophy (e.g., luck egalitarianism's problem of stakes). His distinctive study offers an overarching, unified political theory while also advancing many of the more fine-grained debates that occupy political philosophers. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

JESSE SPAFFORD is a lecturer at Victoria University of Wellington. His work explores debates between libertarians, socialists, and anarchists over the moral status of the market and the state. He is the author of a number of articles in journals including *Philosophical Studies*, *Synthese*, and the *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*.

SOCIAL ANARCHISM AND
THE REJECTION OF MORAL
TYRANNY

JESSE SPAFFORD

Victoria University of Wellington



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-37539-9 — Social Anarchism and the Rejection of Moral Tyranny
Jesse Spafford
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009375399

DOI: 10.1017/9781009375429

© Jesse Spafford 2023

This work is in copyright. It is subject to statutory exceptions and to the provisions
of relevant licensing agreements; with the exception of the Creative Commons version
the link for which is provided below, no reproduction of any part of this work may
take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

An online version of this work is published at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1010/9781234567890>
under a Creative Commons Open Access license cc-by-nc 4.0 which permits re-use,
distribution and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial purposes
providing appropriate credit to the original work is given and any changes made are
indicated. To view this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>

All versions of this work may contain content reproduced under license from third
parties. Permission to reproduce this third-party content must be obtained from these
third-parties directly. When citing this work, please include a reference to the

DOI: 10.1017/9781009375429

First published 2023

First paperback edition 2025

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-009-37544-3 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-009-37539-9 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page vii</i>
Introduction	I
1.1 The Boundaries of Anarchism	6
1.2 The Aims of the Book	13
1.3 Something for Everyone	16
1 Social Anarchism	21
1.1 The Consent Theory of Legitimacy	22
1.2 The Lockean Proviso	25
1.3 The Self-Ownership Thesis	32
1.4 The Advantages of Anarchist Self-Ownership	42
1.5 The Rejection of Private Property	49
1.6 Anarchist Claim Rights	49
1.7 Is Anarchist Self-Ownership Too Permissive?	55
1.8 Is Anarchist Self-Ownership Too Restrictive?	59
1.9 Conclusion	65
2 The Moral Tyranny Constraint	68
2.1 The Moral Tyranny Constraint	69
2.2 Explicating the Constraint	70
2.3 Defending the Constraint	74
2.4 Three Implications of the Constraint	80
2.5 Three Objections to the Constraint	87
2.6 Conclusion	91
3 You Own Yourself and Nothing Else	92
3.1 The Proviso and Private Property	93
3.2 The Lockean Proviso and Self-Ownership	97
3.3 Comparing Baselines	103
3.4 Defending and Emending the Nonexistence Baseline	108
3.5 Appropriation and Children	116
3.6 Conclusion	119

4	Property and Legitimacy	121
4.1	Territorial Legitimacy	122
4.2	A Consent Theory of Territorial Legitimacy	124
4.3	The Absence of Appropriation	129
4.4	Land, Resources, and Artifacts	130
4.5	Initial Appropriation and Obligation Imposition	132
4.6	The Propertarian Objection	135
4.7	Commonsense Distinctions	138
4.8	Consent Theory and Self-Ownership	141
4.9	Philosophical Anarchism and the Anarchist Conclusion	149
4.10	Conclusion	151
5	Entitlement Theory without Entitlements	152
5.1	Hobbesian Moral Tyranny	155
5.2	The Incompatibilist Argument	157
5.3	The Left-Libertarian Solution	159
5.4	Just Holdings vs. Just Distributions	161
5.5	Is Entitlement Necessary for Justice?	162
5.6	Wilt Chamberlain and the Anarchist Conclusion	164
5.7	Libertarian Egalitarianism	168
5.8	Conclusion	173
6	Luck Egalitarianism without Moral Tyranny	174
6.1	Three Objections to Prudential Contextualism	176
6.2	Moralized Contextualism	178
6.3	A Theory of Sanctionable Choice	179
6.4	Applying the Theory	187
6.5	Anarchism without Moral Tyranny	192
6.6	Amending the Theory	193
6.7	Additional Advantages of the Theory	195
6.8	The Disadvantage Creation Account	197
6.9	Conclusion	201
7	A State-Tolerant Anarchism	203
7.1	Two <i>Desiderata</i> of Political Anarchism	204
7.2	Twelve Analyses of Statehood	205
7.3	A State-Tolerant Anarchism	215
7.4	In Defense of Philosophical Anarchism	217
7.5	Conclusion	223
	<i>References</i>	224
	<i>Index</i>	234

Acknowledgments

There are so many people who have contributed to this book in so many ways, either by providing substantive feedback on its arguments, asking helpful questions at conferences, suggesting ways for me to improve my writing, or providing me with the inspiration and material support that I needed to complete the project.

I am indebted, first, to Hilary Gaskin at Cambridge University Press for believing in this project and patiently working with me to get it published. Special mention also goes to Adina Preda for giving me the opportunity to work on the book (and for her many helpful comments). I am also grateful to Peter Vallentyne, Carol Gould, Eric Roark, Kei Numao, Fabian Wendt, Miranda Fricker, Charles Mills, and multiple anonymous reviewers for providing generous, detailed, and constructive feedback on various chapters of the book. I further benefitted from the many helpful comments and suggestions made by participants at the Locke and Lockeanism Working Group Meeting; the Philosophy, Politics, and Economics Society Annual Meeting; the American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Conference; the Georgetown Institute for the Study of Markets and Ethics (GISME) workshop; and the Trinity Centre for Justice and Values Works in Progress Workshop. Chris Fowler provided some much-needed assistance when it came to finding elegant numbers for the tables in Chapter 6. And this book would not have been completed without the outstanding mentoring, advocacy, and emotional support provided to me by my parents, friends, partner, undergraduate mentors (Peter Kung, Susan McWilliams, and Michael Green), graduate advisor (Carol Gould), and postdoctoral supervisor (Adina Preda). I am also thankful to the editors and anonymous reviewers of *Philosophical Studies* for their helpful comments on my paper “Luck Egalitarianism without Moral Tyranny” (published in 2022), which I have adapted into Chapter 6 of this book.

In terms of financial support, this project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon

2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement No. 819043). Some of the ideas in this book also emerged out of my dissertation, which was generously supported by the American Council of Learned Societies and the solidarity and collective bargaining efforts of the Professional Staff Congress.

Finally, I am thankful for all of the countless anarchists, socialists, and other radicals whose writings – in books and zines, on forums and walls – influenced this book. I hope that those reading the book will find its various arguments to be similarly useful.