

sacred to be disturbed by a close investigation.” I offer these examples not to show that all anarchists share the same view of their doctrine’s relationship with the scientific method, but rather to gainsay what I suppose is an assumption held in common by many who read this.

None of the standard caricatures prevailing today about anarchists are any more accurate in characterizing them than are similarly uninformed reader’s digest versions of other philosophical persuasions. There are, to be sure, anomalous and unrepresentative nutcases and genuine criminals circulating among the ranks of all the various “-isms,” yet special derision is reserved for anarchists.

But again, why? Market anarchists believe simply that relationships between people ought to be consensual and based upon the foundation of mutual respect, that a true free market means that no person or group has special privileges fashioned by coercion and violence. Details vary among anarchists — and are as fiercely and thoughtfully debated as in other circles — but all harbor a conscientious objection (if I may borrow the phrase) to the state’s actual, physical domination and displacement of voluntary society.

The state is merely an idea, one way of thinking about given social questions, and one that would appear as true and as unavoidable today as, for instance, the geocentric model in astronomy. And while history has vindicated the likes of Copernicus and Galileo with respect to their judgments of that model, we nevertheless think it impossible that anarchists could be correct in their criticisms of the current system.

The anarchists I know, quite contrary to the conventional wisdom, do not oppose the state out of some erratic, unformed reflex reaction against authority. Indeed, the natural instinct in favor of freedom that I believe humans have has been very meticulously trained out of us from the time we enter the total state’s K-12 propaganda mills.

Instead, anarchism is for its advocates — in the words of Edward Abbey — “not a romantic fable but [a] hard-headed realization,” an embrace of empirical reality rather than an avoidance of it. The protesters of the Occupy movement are yearning for an alternative; anarchism is the scientific one, the substantive argument against politics and economies based on violence and oppression. The death of the state is no more scary or dangerous than the death of the idea that the earth is flat.

# The Occupation Movement Reader



from the Center for a Stateless Society  
[www.c4ss.org](http://www.c4ss.org)

## Introduction

The Center for a Stateless Society is a market anarchist media center. Among the materials we produce and distribute are freely republishable op-ed pieces on current events from a market anarchist perspective. Below are some collected op-eds on the topic of the Occupation Movement. Please visit our web site at [www.c4ss.org](http://www.c4ss.org) for more.

## An Open Letter: Wall Street Couldn't Have Done It Alone

by Sheldon Richman, Oct 8, 2011

To Occupy Wall Street:

Wall Street couldn't have done it alone. It takes a government and/or its central bank, the Federal Reserve System, to:

- \* Create barriers to entry for the purpose of sheltering existing banks from competition and radical innovation, then "regulate" for the benefit of the privileged industry;
- \* Issue artificially cheap, economy-distorting credit in order to, among other things, give banks incentives to make shaky but profitable mortgage loans (and also to grease the war machine through deficit spending);
- \* Make it lucrative for banks – and their bonus-collecting executives — to bundle thousands of shaky mortgages into securities and other derivatives with the knowledge that government-sponsored enterprises Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and other companies, all subject to powerful congressmen looking for campaign contributions, will buy them after a government-licensed rating cartel scores them AAA;
- \* Inflate an unsustainable housing bubble by the foregoing and other methods, enticing people to foolishly overinvest in real estate.
- \* Work closely with lending companies to establish a variety of programs designed to lure people with few resources or bad credit into buying houses they can't afford;
- \* Attract workers to the home-construction bubble, setting them up for long-term unemployment when the bubble inevitably bursts;
- \* Implicitly guarantee big financial companies and/or their creditors that if they get into trouble they will be rescued;
- \* Compel the taxpayers to bail out those companies and/or creditors when the roof finally falls in.

No bank or group of banks could do these things on its own in a freed market. It takes a government-Wall Street partnership – the corporate state — to create such misery and exploitation.

But just as importantly, we need to move as quickly as possible to reduce our vulnerability to repression by the state, by developing alternative economic and security organizations outside the framework of the state and corporations. The key players in this effort are assorted projects to decentralize the Internet and make it less vulnerable to interdiction, digital currency projects, encryption and darknet projects, and economic relocalization efforts like permaculture and micromanufacturing.

We need, above all, to understand the proper goal of our American Arab Spring, our Fall Revolution: Not seizing control of the state or directing its policies, but rather rendering it irrelevant and harmless to our efforts to build the kind of society we want right where we live.

## The Science of Anarchism

by David S. D'Amato, Oct 10, 2011

Columbia University professor of journalism Todd Gitlin writes ("The Left Declares Its Independence," New York Times, October 8th) "the core of the [Occupy] movement ... consists of what right-wing critics call anarchists." Rather than taking the same snide, dismissive approach to anarchism typical of the news media and academia, he goes on to observe that "[t]he culture of anarchy is right," that the interests of "[t]he corporate rich" largely control both major American political parties.

Gitlin describes contemporary anarchism accurately (if generally) as "a theory of self-organization," one opposed to a plutocracy of elites who have "artfully arranged a mutual back-scratching society to enrich themselves." For my life, I can't think of a better way to describe the way that the state and capital work together against the common man and genuine free markets.

Gitlin is surprisingly genial toward anarchism, or at least toward his own image of it, but anarchists are still widely regarded as agents of chaos. The question: Why?

I've always been of the general opinion that the project of science itself is inherently subversive, dangerous to established ways and their guardians. Science, the quest for truth with its empirical and rational methods, explodes our preconceptions and offers us glimpses at the workings of a reality that still seems little understood and out of reach.

If the subatomic particle did not spring into being when human beings discovered it, but was always there, then we must wonder what kinds of marvels — today only the subjects of science fiction — will soon be revealed as truths. Of today's ideas, we must wonder too which of them that are now the in realm of the eccentric or kook are in fact that wave of the future.

Through the history of the idea, and even before there was a name to designate it, anarchism's adherents found it through a range of paths. Nineteenth century American anarchist Benjamin Tucker labeled his ideas "scientific anarchism," the natural and inevitable result of consistently recognizing the "Sovereignty of the Individual."

Albert R. Parsons, another American anarchist, similarly called anarchism "the usher of science," setting it in opposition to schools of thought that "considered [some ideas] too

not libertarianism is a relevant movement for our time depends on which side wins the battle for its soul.

## **Occupy Wall Street: Will the Other Shoe Drop?**

by Kevin Carson, Oct 4, 2011

While we're cheering on the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street, let's consider what's happened to most of the other major waves of radical revolt in America.

For example, there's the wave of radicalism in response to the forced government corporatization of the economy in the late 19th century, a process cemented by the devil's bargain in the election of 1876 to give the White House to the GOP's plutocratic stooges in return for federal acquiescence in the establishment of Apartheid in the former Confederate states. That wave of radicalism, associated with the rise of the Knights of Labor, culminated in a nationwide general strike for the eight-hour day. The populist revolt came to an end with the nationwide reaction and repression following the Haymarket bombing, during a May Day 1886 demonstration in Chicago.

A subsequent wave of radicalism, exemplified by such movements as the Wobblies and the Nonpartisan League, was destroyed by the twin repressions of the War Hysteria and the Red Scare under St. Woodrow.

The wave of radicalism associated with the Seattle anti-WTO demonstration of 1999, and the anti-globalization movement that sprang from it, fizzled out in the face of ramped up police-statism and jingoist reaction after 9/11.

Now we're experiencing another global movement, sparked in part by Wikileaks, spreading from Tunisia and Egypt to Spain and Greece to Wisconsin and Israel, and just beginning its latest phase with Occupy Wall Street. It's the most exhilarating time for enemies of the corporate state since the anti-globalization movement of 1999-2001, and probably since the global youth movement of the late '60s.

The corporate state confronts a decentralized, network hydra of Wikileaks, the open source and free culture movements symbolized by The Pirate Bay, Anonymous, the Arab Spring, and now the Occupy Together movement. Together, they represent an agile, resilient, and mutually supporting enemy — perhaps the most dangerous internal enemy to corporate capitalism in a century or more. And the whole thing has mushroomed mostly in just a little over a year.

We need to be prepared for what the other side does next. Everyone capable of doing so needs to record and circulate footage of any police brutality or repression far and wide, in as many mainstream venues as possible. All movements in solidarity with the aims of Occupy Together should make common cause to provide political support for them, and exert maximum pressure on the state to stand down. In every community with an Occupy presence, all labor, civil liberties and social justice organizations should unite in community campaigns of support for the demonstrators.

So demonstrators, you are right. Something is dreadfully wrong. But your list of culprits is far from complete. So go ahead and protest outside Goldman Sachs and Bank of America. But also spend some time outside the White House, the Fed, the Treasury, and the Capitol Building. Together they are responsible for our current economic woes. These are the entities that control our fate and over which we have no real say. It's time for things to change.

Greed without political power is boorish. Greed with political power is dangerous.

The freed market is the alternative to what you properly despise.

## **Robbing Us Blind**

by David S. D'Amato, Oct 23, 2011

Calling attention to the crises spawned by contemporary global capitalism, the Occupy movement provides an opportunity for more than mere response to the symptoms of that system. Just as doctors would be remiss to merely attend to symptoms on an ad hoc basis, we who are concerned with social and economic justice must set ourselves upon the underlying disease.

That disease is authority, the state's introduction of coercion into social and economic relationships. Exploitation — an idea that many Occupy demonstrators have invoked to characterize the existing economic system — depends on what Herfried Münkler phrased “an imposition of asymmetrical exchange relations.”

“If force is introduced into the relationship,” Münkler continued, “it becomes asymmetrical and the two parties can no longer be considered equal.” The capitalism that the Occupy movement began to fulminate against is just such a system, one permeated by force and resulting in an arrangement of coercively managed deprivation.

Through an intermeshing web of legal tools, often implemented behind the pretext of protecting the “little people,” the power elite outlaws forms of competition that undermine oligopoly power. Absent the pressure of that competition, of a genuine free market, powerful institutions mulct exorbitant tolls from productive society.

Behind these barriers to market entry, behind contrived privileges and all manner of subsidies, big business exists in a world apart from true “market discipline.” As has often been noted, we have “socialism” for the rich and “capitalism” for the poor.

And it is indeed the working poor — much-maligned by an American Right that paints them as a group of slothful shirkers — who generally harbor all of the stereotypically right-wing attitudes about a hard day's work, who don't expect something for nothing.

The hated illegal immigrant, engaged in back-breaking hard labor for a mere pittance, knows a good deal more about “working for what you have” than the typical middle class xenophobe taking the Pat Buchanan/Lou Dobbs line on immigration. As with all things related to political rhetoric, the hypocrisy goes unremarked upon.

It is the largest, most entrenched corporations, held up as tireless and dynamic seedbeds of innovation, that in fact seek and expect handouts, that spend millions — those dollars themselves ill-gotten gains — to secure the privilege of not having to compete; it is they who most enjoy the spoils of a welfare system designed by and for the rich.

The conservative's condescending contempt for the welfare beneficiary ought to be directed at corporate dominance, at the companies enjoying a catalog of state-granted and -enforced special "rights."

The mainstream political colloquy, pitting the state against big business, takes for granted a kind of Robin Hood theory of intervention, suggesting that the primary function of the state is to hedge against "cutthroat competition" and provide a social safety net. But the actual role of the state in society is to allow a ruling elite to steal from the poor by restricting economic activity in ways that advantage established firms.

Talk radio blowhards insisting that the occupiers "go get a job," that giant corporations accurately represent libertarian and free market principles, are just not paying attention — in the alternative, they're deliberately misinforming their listeners.

But their motivations shouldn't matter all that much to us; empirical facts should, and those are telling us that there really is something quite wrong with Wall Street and the statist economic model it represents. We can have law, order and real market exchange without the state, without masters and without tepid, state-centric plans for "reform." The change we wanted is long overdue, and so too is the demise of the state.

## Which Side Are You On?

by Kevin Carson, Oct 14, 2011

Occupy Wall Street has come under fire from some libertarians, on the grounds that it's relatively silent about the role of big government, and its proposed remedies lean heavily toward increased government intervention.

But it's quite understandable that many in the Occupy movement position themselves in opposition to the "free market" and in favor of government intervention. After all, ever since they were born they've heard loathsome cretins like Dick Arme, Tom Delay, along with the usual suspects on CNBC and the WSJ editorial staff, defend corporate capitalism as we know it and the unbelievable concentration of wealth and power as the result of "our free market system."

Every time you look at a debate on economic policy, the liberal is saying the free market can't be left to itself because the inevitable result is polarization of wealth and corporate tyranny. And the conservative is saying corporate tyranny and polarization of wealth are good things, and that government should stay out of it.

All the things the Occupiers are rightfully against, like the plutocratic oligarchy and abusive corporate power, they've seen defended — or attacked — in terms of "our free enterprise

system." If I thought the free market meant what Dick Arme said it was, I'd hate it too.

It's not their fault they've never heard a free market critique of corporate power, never heard anyone pointing out that big business is the biggest beneficiary of big government, and never heard a case for why genuine, freed market competition would be dynamite at the foundations of corporate power.

Even many libertarians who pay lip-service to condemning corporatism, it seems, are inclined to react defensively when they see what Nixon used to call the Dirty Effing Hippies criticizing big business.

There's a virally popular graphic making the rounds, a wide-angle photo of Occupy Wall Street demonstrators, with objects tagged "Cameras from Canon," "Phone from Apple," etc. This is just the umpteenth iteration of a recurring meme, each time presented with a knowing smirk as if it were some sort of original or witty observation — despite the fact it's already been dragged out by everyone, including a third-rate hack reporter at CNN.

It's a right-wing mirror image of the popular liberal "argument": "But how would we get our roooaads?!!" To look at the technological products which arose within a corporate-state economy, and to argue that anyone who uses those products is a hypocrite for criticizing corporate statism, is about as wooden-headedly stupid as Elizabeth Warren arguing for some sort of "social contract" where everyone's obligated to pay "their fair share" because they rely on taxpayer-funded roads or police.

One might as well take a photo from Tiananmen Square or from Moscow in the last days of the Soviet Union, and attach tags like "Bauxite from the Ministry of Non-Ferrous Metallurgy," "Cameras from Ministry of Consumer Electronics," etc.

As Charles Johnson, of the advisory board at the Center for a Stateless Society, puts it: "... if your aim is to use visual rhetoric to lodge a criticism of the people at Occupy Wall Street, then an image whose upshot is, roughly, 'the activities of giant corporations inescapably pervade absolutely every aspect of your everyday life' ... may not actually be as effective a criticism as you think it is."

There's nothing hypocritical about making the best choice available from the limited range of alternatives, despite paying rents in the process to companies in whose interest that range of alternatives was restricted, and simultaneously criticizing the injustice of hooking those companies into this system of state-enforced monopoly. That's for the very same reason that there's no hypocrisy involved in using state roads or post offices as the best alternative given one's limited choices, while still criticizing the state.

The folks occupying Wall Street are right on the mark when it comes to identifying the central evil in our economic system, regardless of sometimes fuzzy perceptions of the causality at work and wrongheaded proposals for remedying it: The unholy alliance of big business with the state, and the plutocracy that's enriched itself beyond human comprehension by extracting rents from the rest of us.

There are libertarians who get mad when they see Dirty Effing Hippies attacking big business, and there are libertarians who get mad when they see "libertarians" defending it. Whether or