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Introduction

Internationalism has been a central tenet of revolutionary socialism at least since the establishment of the First International in 1864. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century anarchists played a key role in its articulation. This article investigates what anarchist internationalism entails by examining the work of two neglected writers, Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) and Rudolf Rocker (1873-1958). Coomaraswamy’s perspectives were anti-colonial and anti-imperialist while Rocker’s were anti-fascist and anti-totalitarian. Whereas Rocker was centrally involved in the international anarchist movement, Coomaraswamy stood on its fringes. However, as I will show both outlined an internationalist vision of self-government, which has to be distinguished from nationalist state domination. In doing so, both invoked a distinctively anarchist concept of internationalism as non-domination.

Constance Bantman notes that internationalism “was one of the few clear and stable principles of anarchism” (Bantman, 2006: 963). Yet in anarchist writing this commitment is often expressed negatively as a critique of nationalism, and referred to a diverse set of sociological and political phenomena, all associated with the state: territorialisation, centralisation, chauvinism, racism, militarism, colonialism, imperialism, patriotism and war preparedness (Tolstoy, 1990 [1900]; Kōtoku, 2015 [1901]; Goldman 1979 [1915]; Perlman, 1984; Bookchin, 1995: 71; Ferlinghetti, 2006). This conceptual mirroring explains why “internationalism” featured so prominently in anarchist politics and highlights the basis of the anarchist critique of “nationalism”. But it sheds less light on the anti-nationalist internationalism anarchists proposed.

In standard histories of nationalism anarchism barely warrants a mention (Alter, 1990; Breuilly, 1993; Hobsbawm, 1992). Scholars of internationalism habitually turn to Marxism to find critical internationalist approaches to nationalist struggles (Forman, 1998: 10; Pasture and
When anarchism is discussed, it tends to be as a variant of anti-nationalist class theory (Conversi, 2016). This reinforces the view of socialist internationalism as a failed doctrine involving an inconsistent commitment to proletarian solidarity (Conversi, 2000: 4; Özkirimli, 2000: 25-33). Benedict Anderson’s transnational history of ‘militant nationalisms’ in the Philippines and Cuba corrected this assessment. His contention that European anarchism was a spur for anti-colonial independence movements placed anarchism at the heart of a transformative anti-imperialist project. Yet he also considered anarchism as a derivation of Marxism, albeit one which was more sympathetic to rural workers and middle-class intellectuals than the Marxist mainstream (Anderson, 2005: 2). Describing it as libertarian, anti-hierarchical and wedded to “propaganda by the deed” (2006: 72), he argued that anarchism captured the imagination of anti-imperialists during a period of rapid change, when global power was being dramatically reconfigured. He did not discuss anarchist responses to that reconfiguration: anarchism was seen as a potent political force but not a distinct intellectual current.

Historians of anarchism have examined the intersection of anarchism and nationalism (Knowles, 2003; Levy, 2004; Ramnath, 2011; Shaffer, 2013). There is now a growing record of anarchist engagements in national liberation struggles, for example in Italy, Ireland, Cuba and India (Ravindranathan, 1988; Pernicone, 1993; Guterriez and Ferretti, 2019; Shaffer, 2005; Laursen 2017). Conceptions of anarchist internationalism are often embedded in this literature, but rarely made explicit. A related body of research, stimulated by Anderson’s transnational analysis, discusses anarchism’s cosmopolitan aspirations (Bantman, 2013; Bantman and Altena, 2015; Galián, 2020). This work substantiates Anderson’s claims about anarchism’s global reach but also underlines the apparent failings of anarchist internationalism. Bantman and Altena observe that anarchist networks were often racist, Eurocentric and insular and that anarchist internationalism was defined by a commitment to decentralised federation that was too accepting of existing national boundaries (Bantman and Altena, 2015: 15).
How did anarchists understand internationalism? Asking this question serves two purposes. Firstly, it provides a fuller account of internationalist thought during the “first globalisation”, a period of state building, global capitalist expansion and nationalist ferment (Buzan & Lawson, 2013). Secondly, it injects anarchist perspectives into debates about self-government and national self-determination which otherwise revolve around the configuration of the relationship of “nation” to “state” (Kedourie, 1966; Gellner, 1997; Gans, 2003).

The following discussion falls into two parts. Firstly, building on explorations of the anarchist critique of republicanism, it presents an account of anarchist internationalism as non-domination. Secondly, it considers how anarchists extended the critiques of republicanism which had first aired in 1848 in response to national independence struggles, in the context of anti-colonial struggle and nationalist resurgence. Specifically, I contrast Coomaraswamy and Rocker’s responses to the global spread of capitalism and the evolution of the European state. Both rejected nationalist aspirations for independent statehood because this entailed domination. However, for Coomaraswamy, internationalism involved resistance to Empire and industrialised western culture and this, in turn, meant asserting local perspectives imperilled by globalisation. Rocker, in contrast, associated nationalism with statism, the eclipse of liberalism and the rise of fascist and communist dictatorship; the reconstruction of Hellenic “culture”, which he associated with federal organisation and the recovery of mutual understanding, was the remedy.

Anarchism is rightly understood as a modern doctrine and a product of the American and French Revolutions. Yet it is not well served by prevalent conceptual and theoretical frames of nationalism studies. Ideological approaches reinforce a morphological schema that fails to adequately encompass anarchism (Freeden, 1998). As will be seen in Rocker’s work, anarchism endorses revolutionary values - liberty, equality and fraternity – shared with republicans, liberals and other socialists. But it is not defined by its relationship to liberalism or socialism. Modernist frameworks of nationalism (Conversi, 2012) risk pigeonholing anarchism as an atavistic and utopian protest (Hobsbawm, 1963). Similarly, the distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism, modelled
as an expression of the particular and the universal, relies on a conception of the state and society that anarchists flatly reject (Finlayson, 1998; Buber, 1957). The following discussion highlights some conceptual overlaps between anarchism and nationalism studies but takes anarchist political thought as the main point of reference in order to explain anarchism internationalism.

Internationalism as non-domination

Lucien Van der Walt and Hirsch examine anarchist internationalism in the context of “imperialism” during the “first globalisation” (2010: xxxi). This perspective is similar to Anderson’s but their thesis is quite different. Whereas Anderson examines the influence of the anarchist avantgarde in international politics, van der Walt and Hirsch outline a concept of anarchist internationalism and emphasise the role that workers’ organisations played in its elaboration.

Examining the ideas of Michael Bakunin, Marx’s leading adversary in the First International, van der Walt and Hirsch find two guiding principles. The first is an assertion of cosmopolitanism defined as solidarity. Solidarity was the “principle of ‘respect for humanity’ based on “the recognition of human right and human dignity in every man, [sic] of whatever race” or “colour”(van der Walt & Hirsch, 2010: lvii). The second is linked to what Daniel Guérin once described the “right of secession” (1970: 67). Secession meant self-government “premised on individual freedom through cooperation, and classlessness as well as statelessness” (van der Walt & Hirsch, 2010: lxii emphasis original). In sum, anarchist internationalism, they argue, was cosmopolitan because it involved the promotion of “international unity, anti-militarism and anti-colonialism” (ibid., lvii). It was secessionist because, in Bakunin’s words, the “right to freely uniting and separating” was recognised as “the first and most important of all political rights” (ibid., lxii).

Solidarity and secession underpinned a commitment to non-domination derived from a critique of republicanism that had been solidified after the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871. Like republicans, anarchists argued that non-domination was a benchmark for freedom. Contrary to those liberals who grounded freedom in access to rights and resources, they contended that the
power relationships that structure position and status were also repressive (Schuppert, 2013: 258). Metaphorically, domination was encapsulated in the idea of the master-slave relationship and epitomised by absolutism.

Republicans associated non-domination with constitutionalism: the constitution made the principles regulating social life transparent and ensured that laws were tailored to citizens’ interests, thereby safeguarding individuals from arbitrary control. By contrast, anarchists used the critique of enslavement to attack liberal and republican constitutions. Pursuing the logic of the republican position they exposed the dependent wage-relation created by the right to private property, the subordination of women through marriage and prostitution, and the supremacist assumptions ingrained in the corporate colonisation of territories populated by non-European indigenous peoples (Kinna and Prichard, 2019; Kinna, 2019). According to the anarchist critique, republican constitutionalism was in its way as arbitrary as absolutism. Power was no longer mystified by clerics, but the rule of law performed similar magic by institutionalising prevailing power relations and effectively concealing them under the banner of “freedom”.

Anarchists from William Godwin, the eighteenth-century philosopher, to Leo Tolstoy, the novelist and Christian anarchist, argued that the constitution of the state had multiple negative effects both within and between states. Much of their analysis focused on the psychology of patriotism and the imperialist and colonial attitudes it bred. Anarchists rejected the distinction which republicans made between belligerent nationalism and virtuous patriotism (Viroli, 1995): for them “love of country” was just another mechanism of compliance, part and parcel of domination. In their view, it was nonsense to imagine states which had been constituted through violence and domination as exemplars of virtue. Emma Goldman, soon to be deported and rendered stateless by the US Government for campaigning against conscription, observed that “‘America first’” meant upholding institutions that “protect and sustain a handful of people in the robbery and plunder of the masses ... drain the blood of the native as well as of the foreigner, and turn it into wealth and power” (Goldman, 1979 [1915]: 305).
Goldman’s view, supported by an extensive body of explanatory theory (Kropotkin, 1943 [1903]; Kropotkin, 1913), was underpinned by a rejection of the status that constitutionalism conferred on citizens as members of the political community. Bakunin gave vent to the critique in a hostile attack on Giuseppe Mazzini’s unification programme, using the term “popular idealism” to describe how “living popular Italy” had been reinvented as a “construct, an abstraction ... something theological” called “the people” or “the multitude” (Bakunin, 2016 [1872]: 190-191). The generalised view that sprang from this criticism was that constitutionalism involved the transformation of social beings into abstract citizens, the coercive alignment of individual decision-making to the common good and the regulation of the rights and duties of individuals as “nationals” (Adams, 2019). It achieved solidarity while denying secession.

The anarchist critique of abstraction held the principles of anarchist internationalism - solidarity and secession - in tandem. Anarchists were internationalists who argued for the reconstitution of “living popular” groups to facilitate strong bonds of solidarity within and between them. As van der Walt and Hirsch’s note anarchists “always supported some notion of national freedom” (2010: lxii, emphasis original) and after 1848 they considered the “social” and “national” questions to be inextricably bound (Shaffer and Laforcade, 2015). Yet anarchist internationalism diverged from nationalism because the intra and inter-group relationships “followed from the anarchist opposition to hierarchy, and stress on voluntary cooperation and self-management” (van der Walt and Hirsch, 2010: lxii). Internationalism entailed bottom-up decentralised federation. Nationalism, in contrast, was a “definite doctrine” directed top-down towards the realisation of “discrete nations each requiring its own nation-state to express its general will” (ibid: lxi).

The concept of nation that anarchists proposed also marked a departure from liberal and republican nationalism. P-J Proudhon, the first propagandist to positively embrace the moniker ‘anarchist’ designated the nation as a “natural group” defining it as a collective or agglomeration brought together by the voluntary acceptance of conditions of solidarity (Prichard, 2013: 103). Pinpointing the rise of coerced nationhood and the loss of voluntary association to Alexander the
Great’s domination of the confederation of Hellenic peoples, Proudhon contended that anarchist federation “assured nationality” but firmly rejected nations that were “pointless” and “dangerous” (Hyams, 1979: 259). In the modern era, anarchists habitually disagreed about the designation of purposeful and pointless struggles; Proudhon and Bakunin adopted contrasting positions on the Risorgimento and Polish independence (Kofman, 1968). But in principle, they were anti-nationalist because they rejected the “modernist” contention that nations were or should be congruent with states while also asserting, against “primordialists”, a “plebiscitary” concept that rooted nationhood in voluntary agreement. As Bakunin put it, nations were like individuals. They possessed unique characters and could have no other. But it did not follow that nations or individuals had a right, “to nationality or individuality as special principles” (1990 [1873]: 46).

Debates in contemporary political theory help elucidate the anarchist position. From an anarchist perspective, the longstanding disputes about the compatibility of liberal constitutionalism with cultural identity (Gerson and Rubin, 2015) misdiagnoses the problem of nationalism as a question of the state’s internal operation and normative commitments. For Chaim Gans, the choice facing “statist” and “cultural” nationalists is whether to use national culture to pursue state policy or use the mechanisms of the state to protect cultural homogeneity (2003: 1-2). Similarly, shifts in republicanism towards cosmopolitanism remain problematic from an anarchist point of view. As James Bohman explains, the principle of “freedom from domination and servitude” applied to world citizenship implies two things for republicans. First, that “citizens are sovereign to the extent that they are able collectively to authorize ... uses of public power in their public deliberation”. Second, that “self-governance over the authority to incur obligations can no longer solely be realized in the form that republicanism has classically favoured: the territorially and culturally bounded city-states or nation states” (2001: 4). Neither tackles the domination arising from the power to confer or remove the status of citizenship.

As cosmopolitans (Levy 2011) anarchists are sometimes painted as romantics who fail to grasp the importance of government (Calhoun 2008). Anarchist internationalism paints a different
picture. The cosmopolitan aspects of the principle evoke what Vivienne Jabri calls a “liberal” and a “political” principle of solidarity. The first locates solidarity in “a transcendent sphere of humanity” while the second emphasises “local expressions of resistance against exclusionary practices” (Jabri, 2007: 716). Following Proudhon, anarchists typically understood solidaristic relations as immanent rather than transcendent, treating practices of resistance as motors of solidarity. The secessionist element resonates with Iris Marion Young’s idea of “together-in-difference”. This principle derives from the attempt to normalise the claims and situations of indigenous peoples to articulate an idea of self-determination as non-domination. Describing this idea as “a mode of being together with other self-determining units” Young argued that it demanded “joint governance among self-determining units” and “regulated relations with other jurisdictions”. Self-determination as non-domination “entails federalism” because “the people or unity claiming self-determination dwells together with others” and faces common problems (Young, 2005: 140; 147 emphasis original).

Anarchists argued similarly with respect to internationalism.

To summarise the argument so far, anarchist internationalism had two main elements - cosmopolitan and secessionist – and these structured a concept of internationalism as non-domination. The paradoxical quality of the anarchists’ acceptance and critique of the nation is explained by this combination. As internationalists, anarchists rejected the statist configuration of the nation and called instead for the reconstitution of self-governing “natural” groups. As cosmopolitans, they argued for solidarity to build genuine community. As secessionists, they called for the reattribution of sovereignty from the state to the individual: that implied voluntarism or free agreement to keep the possibility of reconstitution perpetually open and protect against entrenchment of power (Kinna, 2015).

How then, were anarchists to combat globally structured systems of domination in their own geographical and historical locations? This was the question that Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) and Rudolf Rocker (1873-1958) attempted to answer. As will be seen, they produced contrasting models of international community.
Internationalism and non-domination

Coomaraswamy and Rocker

Coomaraswamy and Rocker have very different positions in the history of anarchist ideas. Although Rocker is not always placed at the heart of the “canon”, he is usually regarded as one its brightest lights. Having defected from the German Social Democratic Party in 1891, he settled in London’s East End and took an active role in labour organising, editing the Yiddish language libertarian paper *Arbeter Fraint* and guiding the 1912 tailors strike (Rocker, 2005 [1956]; Fishman, 1975). Rocker had close connections with leading figures in the movement and was one of Emma Goldman’s most trusted correspondents. Interned as an enemy alien in 1914, he lost many of these contacts: in 1917 he felt the world “was becoming empty” around him (Rocker, 2005 [1956]: 204). However, returning to Germany after the war’s end he resumed his activities with anti-war syndicalists. In 1933, forced to flee Germany, he headed for America where he spent the rest of his life. There he revived friendships with old comrades in the Jewish libertarian movement, lectured coast-to-coast and continued to publish. His mini-classic *Anarcho-Syndicalism* appeared in 1938, a year after the first English-language edition of his masterpiece *Nationalism and Culture*.

By contrast, Coomaraswamy has only recently been placed in the anarchist fold (Antliff, 2001; 2004). Born in Sri Lanka, then Ceylon, Coomaraswamy was raised in Britain and regularly moved between the mother country and its Indian colony until he settled permanently in the US. William Morris’s defence of decorative arts as a socially transformative politics opened his path to politics and he followed it first as an educationalist, promoting the teaching of Indian vernacular languages and the revival of Indian culture (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 90). An admirer of the poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore, he was a critical participant in the “Swadeshi” movement which was galvanised by the partition of Bengal in 1905. Coomaraswamy shared Tagore’s interest in national education and his enthusiasm for the revival of Indian literature; his detailed study of Indian arts and crafts was inspired by his relationship with the Tagore family. In Britain he found common ground with the sculptor Eric Gill, (another of Morris’s admirers), and with members of Alfred
Orage’s Nietzschean-anarchist *New Age* group, notably the guild socialist A. J. Penty (Lipsey: 110-111). His background perhaps suggests that he was one of Anderson’s “bourgeois” intellectuals, attracted to the libertarianism of anarchism. But Coomaraswamy also advocated anarchy as resistance to tyranny (Coomaraswamy, 1918: 137) and linked it to a social programme. Co-editing *Essays in Post-Industrialism* with Penty, he coined the term “post-industrialism” (Marien, 1977: 417). The outbreak of war prevented its publication, but the proof copy captures his vision: “to protest against the idea of muddling through, laissez-faire, or opportunist politics, as an effective means to a higher civilization (better quality of life): and to point out the more practical way of art, religion, and philosophy” (Coomaraswamy and Penty, 1914: viii).

Although their lives spanned nearly the same period of the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth century, there is no evidence that Coomaraswamy and Rocker were familiar with each other’s writings or even knew of each other’s existence. Their approaches to nationalism and internationalism were not, then, part of a conscious exchange. The First World War brings them into an interesting relation, triggering the flash point for their most significant contributions to anarchist internationalism. Having advocated “neutrality of thought” in 1914, Coomaraswamy left England in 1916 in order to avoid conscription (Lipsey, 1977: 122). Appointed curator of Indian art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in 1917, he published “the first summation” of his ideas in 1918 (Lipsey, 1977: 150), a collection of essays published as *The Dance of Śiva*. Thereafter he rebalanced his interests in politics, art and philosophy in favour of the latter (Sedgwick, 2004: 35). As his biographer Roger Lipsey notes, Coomaraswamy’s position in Boston did not mean that he ceased “to speak his mind” (Lipsey, 1977: 136). His abhorrence Christian missionary and European arrogance and ignorance permeates his post-war correspondence. As a mature scholar he denounced the fallacy of progressivist doctrines just as he had done in his youth. He told one correspondent that western models of development looked “good” to westerners because they “imply power in the hands of those who possess them; to the backward races, so called, they are known almost only as powers of
death-dealing” (Coomaraswamy, 1988: 66). This critique infused his philosophy of art, but after 1918 the politics it implied was no longer his primary concern.

While Coomaraswamy’s writing on nationalism and internationalism diminished after the end of the First World War, Rocker made his weightiest statement about anarchist internationalism in the build-up to the Second. *Nationalism and Culture* was originally conceived in 1933 when he was still in Germany, keen to analyse the “social problems” that were resolved so catastrophically with the establishment of the Third Reich. Its arguments were expressed in “sharpest opposition to all the theoretical assumptions that underline the idea of the ‘totalitarian state’” (Rocker, 1978 [1947]: vii). Like many anti-totalitarians, Rocker placed both Soviet dictatorship and Nazism in the same bracket. However, he defended liberalism not as a bulwark but as an imperfect, best-available ideological alternative. Reasoning in 1941 that “the barbaric suppression of all cultural achievements will bring about the collapse of civilisation in general, if Hitler should unfortunately be victorious”, (Rocker, 1944: 7) he declared his support for the Allies against Germany. Having opposed the First World War as an antimilitarist, Rocker explained that the ethical judgments which justified resistance to Nazism had been entirely lacking then (Rocker, 1978 [1947]: 35-41). Outraged by this apparent U-turn, former anarchist comrades maintained an anti-war line and endorsed Marcus Graham’s 1942 refutation of Rocker’s argument (Graham, 1944). The genuinely internationalist policy “upholds and proclaims the international solidarity of the working class; the struggle of the workers of all lands against the ruling class which exploits and oppresses them” (Graham, 1944: 4). For Rocker, this position relied on a critique of capitalism that smacked of Marxist determinism.

Given Coomaraswamy’s background in art and Rocker’s in syndicalism, it would easy to place them at opposite poles of the anarchist spectrum. Coomaraswamy found an attractive model for anarchist freedom in Nietzsche’s “will to power” (Coomaraswamy, 1981: 139). Rocker used Nietzsche’s idea to describe the dynamics of nationalism. Yet they had more in common than this polarising distinction might suggest. Like Coomaraswamy, Rocker also defended individual autonomy, repeatedly referring to William Godwin to assert the anarchist principle that individual is
“the measure of all things”. There were similarities, too, in the circumstances of their lives: both spent considerable periods in exile and lived “cosmopolitan lives”. While it is not my purpose to investigate how their experiences shaped their conceptions of internationalism, I want to defuse the potential objection that their accounts of internationalism might reflect their different positions on anarchism’s libertarian spectrum.

Ananda Coomaraswamy’s National Idealism

Coomaraswamy’s internationalism was moulded by British imperialism and Indian nationalism. Like Tagore, he rejected the dichotomy between nationalism and internationalism (Tagore, 1918; Williams, 2007), calling himself a nationalist in response to imperialism, and an internationalist in respect of Indian nationalism. He labelled the fusion “national idealism”. Its two currents were necessarily connected: when he attacked imperialism, he did so as a critic of Indian nationalism and he called for Indian cultural renewal as a cosmopolitan.

For Coomaraswamy, imperialism was a form of slavery and a hang-over from the West’s absolutist past (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 3) and it meant “the subordination”, “political and economic ... moral and intellectual” of “many nationalities to one” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 2).

Aligning Indian nationalism with nationalist movements in Japan and Ireland, he once described the “objective of the true nationalists” as “the control of government” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: v). But if this statement suggested that his nationalist ambition was to achieve of sovereign independence, it was misleading. Understanding nationalism as a principle of self-government, Coomaraswamy gave the idea an anarchist spin. In an essay on autonomy, he distinguished “the will to govern” or the “will to govern others” from the “will to power” or “the will to govern oneself” (Coomaraswamy, 1918: 138-9). The former was a chaotic form of anarchy that led to tyranny, (notwithstanding the best intentions of its advocates). The latter, which he recommended, was “an anarchy of spontaneity”. This preference was central to his conception of nationalism.
Nationalism meant “national self-consciousness”. Since it was “essentially” linked only to an understanding of “geographical unity, and a common historic evolution or culture”, it was not determined by “race”, a common or distinctive language or shared religion (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 5). Understood like this, nationalism implied “national freedom” based on the rejection of Empire (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 3) or the recognition of “the rights and worth of other nations to be even as one’s own” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 2). It was thus “inseparable” from internationalism. Accordingly, when Coomaraswamy spoke approvingly of Indian, Japanese and Irish nationalism he imagined movements directed against the global spread of Empire and the “premature and artificial cosmopolitanism” that threatened to “destroy in nations, as modern education destroys in individuals, the special genius of each” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: vii). National idealists, genuine cosmopolitans like himself, thus were struggling for “the future greatness of civilisation and the richness of the world’s culture” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 2). Coomaraswamy had been brought into the nationalist debate by Lord Curzon’s decision to partition Bengal in 1905, which had caused widespread protest and outrage. But he argued that his “inspiration” was “not hatred or self-seeking” but love: “first of India, and secondly of England and of the World”. He continued: “the highest ideal of nationality is service; and it is because this service is impossible for us so long as we are politically and spiritually dominated by any Western civilisation, that we are bound to achieve our freedom” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: viii).

James Brow notes that Coomaraswamy’s concern to awaken Indian consciousness and “arrest the degeneration” of its culture “did not require the wholesale rejection of Western culture” (Brow, 1999: 71). But it came close. While he identified sources of western renewal in Nietzsche, Ruskin and Morris, Coomaraswamy observed that the best Europeans were out of step with western civilization and were valiantly fighting against the “spirit of the age” (1909a: 90; 1918: 121). The dominant culture, seeping through Empire and ruinously re-structuring India’s socio-economic systems, was materialist, individualist and Puritanical. He rejected the whole package.
In economics, Empire spelt the introduction of “Manchesterism” or “Laissez Faire”. It guaranteed “a man’s sacred individual liberty to make things as badly as he likes, and to undermine the trade of his fellows on ... a basis of competition in cheapness not in excellence” (Coomaraswamy, 1909b: 64). In this way, Empire destroyed India’s craft economy. The “self-contained and independent village community, with its cultivated and forest lands, and its communal cultivation” had given way to “tea and rubber estates” with “planters clamouring for a hut tax to induce the villager to work for them at ... rates profitable ... to the canny shareholder away in England and Scotland” (Coomaraswamy, 1909b: 81-2). In politics, Empire relocated power from local elites to non-Indian governors. The ostensible aim of liberal government was to prepare subject people for democracy. But in reality, it attacked “responsibility, and the natural motives for public spirit”, rendering the subject class unfit for independent action (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: v). In India, imperial rule had fashioned a new kind of hierarchy, one based on bureaucratic efficiency. This innovation had aesthetic as well as sociological ramifications. The “king’s palace” had been replaced by a standard issue Government building, “even uglier than in England, and a good deal more out of place”. A battalion of “government clerks”, who slaved away “for ten cents bonus for every error detected in somebody’s accounts”, came with it (Coomaraswamy 1909b: 81-2). British imperialists scrupulously upheld the principle of authority yet stripped it of its grandeur and majesty. Local inhabitants were forced to defer to officials who guarded their status as foreigners by refusing to “‘make themselves one with the religion of the people’” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: v). In one vivid picture of British rule he depicted “the Governor, a mere five years’ visitor, ignorant even of the people’s language, much more so of their traditions and their ideals” going “with his English wife and her fashionable lady friends to open a bazaar in aid of the local missionary school for the daughters of the Kandyan chiefs” (Coomaraswamy 1909b: 81-2).

In his exploration of Indian schooling Coomaraswamy did not dwell on Lord Macaulay’s famous 1835 Minute on Education. But Macaulay’s notorious claim that a “single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia” informed his critique
(Macaulay, 1920 [1835]; Coomaraswamy, 1918: 128). His complaint was that the British had junked a rich indigenous literature and instituted a factory-model for instruction. Notwithstanding the educational initiatives advanced by Tagore and others, the opportunity to develop mutual exchange through intercultural discussion had been lost (MacDonald, 2016). Education was geared towards “the mere acquisition of knowledge” not the “development of personality” (Coomaraswamy, 1918: 133). It was now a “mill” which succeeded only in “crushing all originality and imagination in the unfortunate individuals” who passed through it (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 116). Coomaraswamy focused this attack on women’s education and especially on Christian missionary schools. Here, education was characterised by “the regimentation of the garments both of soul and body” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 126). Girls were instructed to acquire “mere accomplishments” and encouraged to play the piano and master foreign European languages as if they were in England, competing in an “overstocked matrimonial market” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 137). To add insult to injury, this impoverished programme of instruction was presented as a route to liberation. The “majority of professing Christians”, Coomaraswamy argued, imagined their “Indian sisters” as “helpless prisoners awaiting their release at the hands of chivalrous Western knights” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 144). Flatly rejecting the perspective, he described the missionary conscience as “a greater obstacle in the way of India’s freedom, than even Imperial greed” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 144).

The grievance underpinning this critique was that the British only saw the shortcomings of Indian society. Routinely diagnosing the causes of social inequality in the caste system, they wrongly exaggerated the rigidity of the caste system and rashly condemned caste hierarchy without considering the structural inequalities created by monetised class culture. “Of caste” Coomaraswamy noted, “only evil is spoken” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 146). The same conviction explained his critique of Swadeshi and other Indian nationalist movements. Coomaraswamy’s view was that they had absorbed too much from the British and wrongly sought to ape a model of development that had consigned India’s traditions to the past. Too often Swadeshi appealed “to a
purely material ideal of prosperity” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 161). Its advocates failed to understand that civilisation consisted “not in multiplying our desires and the means of gratifying them, but in the refinement of their quality” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 155). Likewise, the nationalists dreamed of rivalling Imperialist commercial success: “In India the primary aim of at least a certain section of the Nationalist party, has been to compete with Europe in cheapness”. Demanding protections on trade to enable Indian manufacturers to compete with British producers, they promised India “free in name, but subdued by Europe in her inmost soul”. The gains were not worth “the price of freedom” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: i). Coomaraswamy instead argued for the “protection of standard”. This meant “absolute prohibition of the importation of any goods whose quality falls below the standard established”, not “taxation of imports” (Coomaraswamy, 1909b: 64).

Coomaraswamy’s national idealist programme was “a struggle for spiritual and mental freedom from the domination of an alien ideal”. It would be achieved by recovering traditions in Indian poetry and art, the use of vernacular languages to educate all children irrespective of caste, and the revival of craft traditions (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: ii). The latter involved both caste and guild. These much-maligned institutions were essential to the recovery of the craftsman’s “pride and his duty (dharma)”. While the guilds provided essential economic and legal protections, safeguarding members from exploitation for profit, caste assured fulfilment. It expressed the idea that each person is “born to his ordained work, through which alone he can spiritually progress” (Coomaraswamy, 1909b: 65). These institutions freed workers to become artists: training with masters not for them and acquiring discipline through the mastery of skills not the dictates of managers. Instead of churning out goods and delivering services, they created beautiful artefacts. In doing so, they transformed manufacture from a tawdry mechanical process into a divine act. Latin “facere (in manu-facture), like Sanskrit kar (in karma, work), to make”, Coomaraswamy later speculated, “had once no other meaning than … to ‘make holy’” (Coomaraswamy, 1944: xiii). This principle animated traditional Indian craft. The craftsman “conceives of his art … as originating in the divine skill of Visvakarma, and revealed by him” (Coomaraswamy, 1909b: 73).
Coomaraswamy was keen to show that this national programme was not a western import. He uncovered local practices to explain the overlaps with currents in western socialism. Socialist ideals, he asserted, “were already attained under the industrial systems prevailing in India. Each caste or trade possessed an organisation largely socialistic in character and embodying democratic and communistic ideals” (Coomaraswamy, 1909a: 164). Similarly, while acknowledging that westerners associated “the will to power” with Nietzsche, Coomaraswamy found it in *Bhagavad Gītā* and argued that it had deeper roots in eastern thought (Coomaraswamy, 1918: 118–138–9).

This correspondence between east and west was important because it suggested repetition and common origins rather than duplication or importation. Coomaraswamy later described himself as a perennialist, advancing a metaphysical conception that influenced Aldous Huxley’s understanding. Perennialism emphasised the continuities between global philosophies, religions and, as Huxley put it, the “traditionary lore of primitive peoples” (Huxley, 1947: 1). This conception was tangential to the idea, familiar in nationalism research, which stresses the intrinsic, unchanging qualities of historic nations (Özkirimli, 2000: 68). As Martin Sedgwick and Edward Crooks note, Coomaraswamy was also a Traditionalist (Sedgwick, 2004: 35; 53; Crooks, 2011: 82). As such, he veered towards Brahmanic elitism and defended *Sati* (Coomaraswamy, 1913). Critics note, too, that he de-radicalised Buddhism by incorporating it into Hinduism, in some ways paving the way for Hindu supremacism in the subcontinent (Raghuramaraju, 2013; Giri, 2010).

Meeting the objections put by critics that national idealism entailed a strongly anti-modernist bias, Coomaraswamy rejected what he considered to be the premises of modernist critique. Tradition, he said, “has nothing to do with any ‘ages’, whether ‘dark’, ‘primaeval’, or otherwise” (Coomaraswamy, 1988: 45; 49). Standing full square behind Eric Gill’s fusion of arts and crafts aesthetics with Catholicism, he rejected charges of medievalism in the same terms. Gill’s view, like his own, was about “first principles” not nostalgia (Coomaraswamy, 1988: 45). This argument also informed his belief that ideas and practices which had been transmitted from the beginning of time could be “lost” or expunged, as they had been in western culture and as a result of its spread. It
was central to his contention that internationalism offered a route to regeneration without domination.

As both a perennialist and Traditionalist, Coomaraswamy sought to halt the material and spiritual destruction of India by stimulating a national re-awakening and reconstituting the independent nation. His secessionist vision was not without domination but it expressed a solidarist internationalist ideal. The “degeneration of Asia” was “an evil portent for the future of humanity”, which foreshadowed not only the loss of India but the end of European civilisation as well: “Europe will not be able to fight Industrialism, because this enemy will be entrenched in Asia” (Coomaraswamy, 1918: 16).

Was this a restatement of the saviour thesis that Coomaraswamy decried in Christian missionaries? (Paranjape, 2007) Perennialism suggested otherwise because it rejected any hierarchical arrangement of superior and inferior cultures. Coomaraswamy argued that it was impossible to “establish human relationships with other peoples if we are convinced of our own superiority or superior wisdom, and only want to convert them to our way of thinking” (Coomaraswamy, 2005 [1943]: 213). His worry was that the west had lost sight of perennial first principles. The domination of Empire was not about the clash of cultures but the clash of materialism with culture. National idealism promised to halt the global degeneration of culture while also avoiding the transfer of power from Imperial to local elites. Natural hierarchy would be restored but this was a necessary scaffolding for non-dominating global relationships. Coomaraswamy recommended the reconfiguration of power relationships within and between nations. In his perspective, the re-constitution of India as a nation free of Empire was an act of solidarity, necessary for genuine internationalism.

Rudolf Rocker’s Nationalism and Culture

Rocker’s internationalism was shaped by the rise of fascism and the success of Bolshevism. He expounded this as a militant anti-nationalist, contrasting “culture” to nationalism to emphasise the
threat it posed to human well-being. Culture was the antithesis of state domination, inter-state aggression and cultural uniformity. In 1946, profoundly shaken by the breakdown of law in Europe, he proposed a “federated Europe with a unified economy, from which no people is excluded by artificial barriers” (Rocker, 1985: 553). Anarchist critics have since then remarked on the “colonial character” of his eurocentrism (White, 1999-2004). Yet while it is true his anti-nationalism was focused on European recovery, his analysis also hinted at a more capacious conception of the nation than his critics suggest.

The main plank of Rocker’s critique of nationalism was his view that the “the nation is not the cause, but the result of the state. It is the state which creates the nation, not the nation the state” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 200). Presenting a sweeping history of this relationship, he firstly exposed the power relationships that normalised political division through the construction of nation-states; secondly, examined the political theory of the nation-state; and thirdly, explained the folly of hitching liberation to nationalist struggles. Thereafter, he dismissed the body of science and political theory that claimed to demonstrate that ethno-national distinctions were natural, revealed counter-currents of European thought which expressed popular aspirations and concluded that nationalism had attacked and destroyed creative, communal forms of social life.

The tone of his closing analysis was pessimistic. He warned that nationalism threatened to overpower values of freedom, equality and fraternity which anarchists shared with liberals. Any hope of internationalism would die with them. In this sense, there was a strict dichotomy between “nationalism” and “culture”. At the same time, Rocker wanted to stress that culture, which he defined as “the conscious resistance of man against the course of nature”, was consistent with diverse social arrangements: “Even slavery and despotism are manifestations of the general cultural movement” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 342; 343). His normative argument, then, was that nationalism was a destructive culture which ought to be supplanted by a more advanced empowering form. This was anarchism. Presenting a critique of liberal abstraction, contract theory, French republicanism and German idealism, he distinguished anarchism from other revolutionary ideologies, and
remained sufficiently optimistic to imagine its realisation (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 96; 174). The culture he had in mind would be free from “any form of exploitation or slavery” and would treat social justice as the “mainspring of ... social activity”. It was based on the recognition of the “personal freedom of the individual and the union of all in the solidaric bonds”. It was “urged by an inner longing and spurred on by the influence of the social institutions under which we live”, even while liberals proved unable to stop fascists and Soviet communists from dismantling them.

Rocker used Nietzsche’s “will to power” to explain the rise of nationalism. Set against the “will to freedom” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 76), the will to power was an oligarchic tendency. This “most important driving force in history”, he argued, “always emanates from individuals or from small minorities” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 26). In the history of ideas, it was exemplified by Machiavellianism (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 98). In the history of modern Europe, Napoleon was its most important exemplar (Rocker, 1985 [1947]:182). Sometimes describing the will to power as ideological domination or hegemony and at other times as repression or tyranny, Rocker also defined it as a principle of sovereignty. It expressed the “desire to bring everything under one rule, to unite mechanically and to subject to its will every social activity” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 63). State centralisation and control were its hallmarks. Whereas the will to freedom was educative, the will to power stifled creativity. Thus, the extension of the state into schooling spelt the death of education. Education meant “the release of the natural dispositions and capacities in men for independent development”. Schooling, or what Rocker referred to as the “educational drill of the national state” destroyed “this natural expansion of the inner man by forcing upon him from without matters which, though originally alien to him, still must be made the leitmotif of his life” (409). Both uniformity and atomisation were the appalling effects of nationalism and the will to power.

Producing a comprehensive critique of the Marxist thesis that history was driven by changes in economic relations, Rocker located the “great struggles between capital and labour” within “this brutal spirit of mastery” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 40). In this way, he predicated capitalism on the prior existence of the state and on a religiously-informed “political theology” which taught that humans
were dependent on beneficent but fearful unknown powers (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 45). The will to power, presupposed the “exploitation of the weakest” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 93) but the “human slavery” it perpetuated was as much psychological as economic (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 79). Similarly, while struggles for economic advantage helped explain the incidence of war, the will to power was central to state aggression and domination. The will to power would only “tolerate an equally privileged power only so long as it can use it for its own purposes, or does not yet feel itself strong enough to engage in a fight for dominance” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 78).

Rocker’s thesis spotlighted the egregious inequalities of industrial society and suggested a functionalist view of nationalism to match it. The nation was an abstract concept used by elites to pattern communities by means of violence. It had no scientific foundation: race theory, ethnicity, the idea of the “community of destiny”, whether it was based on shared language, morals, customs, traditions, laws or decent, were all baseless. “Cultural nationalism” (an idea of organic community) appeared more benign, but Rocker argued that was indistinguishable from political nationalism (a civic project). Both were vehicles for the will to power (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 204). Similarly, while he maintained that some regimes were more prone than others to the corruptions of the will to power and recognised that nationalism could assume reactionary, revolutionary, dictatorial and democratic forms, he concluded that the process of nation-building invariably pointed in one direction.

Nationalism was a cover for the “gigantic centralization of all social forces” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 382). Accordingly, he emphasised the continuities between the Roman republic and Caesar’s dictatorship (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 380). Similarly, he regarded the nineteenth-century drive to Italian unification as flawed from the outset. Although it had been motivated by refined and lofty aspirations, the campaign had only furthered “the struggle of small minorities for political power” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 426). Indeed, noting the political abyss separating the Risorgimento from fascism, Rocker drew a “straight line” from Mazzini to Mussolini (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 201).

Rocker’s internationalist proposal to re-constitute Europe along anarchist federalist lines mirrored Proudhon’s analysis of the decline of “Hellenism”. He described the project as a revival of
the Greek spirit of freedom represented in “healthy decentralization” and the “internal separation” of “hundreds of little communities, tolerating no uniformity” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 365). He also presented it as a counter to Roman law. Rocker noted that cosmopolitan, libertarian Greek culture had collapsed from within as much as it had been attacked from without (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 372-3), but he linked the smothering of Hellenism to the Roman obsession “with dominion and military power” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 385). Roman ideals had dominated in Europe ever since. On this score, anarchism was a new expression of Greek internationalism as it had been articulated before Athenian institutions had been corrupted by will to power. Finding an affinity between anarchists and Sophists, especially Diogenes, Rocker argued that the Greeks had conceived internationalism as the “complete rejection of the state and all political institutions”. Their concept of the individual “as ‘the measure of all things’”, was another indicator of anarchist affinity: William Godwin had revived the idea two hundred years later (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 129).

Rocker proposed a stateless, anti-capitalist decentralised federation as the only appropriate social model for the post-war world: “A European federation is the first condition and the only basis for a future world of federation, which can never be obtained without an organic union of European peoples”. Its main aim was to further “general interests” and guarantee “to each member of the federation the same right for its aspirations for political, economic and social development” (Rocker, 1985: 547-8). This would be achieved by internationalising “natural resources and territory affording raw materials”, secured by free agreements. Rocker proposed “mutual treaties and reciprocal covenants” to regulate “the use of all natural treasures”. It would ensure that resources were “available to all human groups” and prevent “new monopolies” capable of triggering “a new division into classes and a new economic enslavement” from arising “in the social body” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 527).

The forces behind the formation of this federation had a strong class aspect. Even in the world of nations, Rocker noted that displaced workers would find a “sphere among the members of his trade or class” when “the doors of another social class” would remain “hermetically closed
against him” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 271). Indeed, culture thrived in conditions of class equality. The disdain heaped on Rembrandt by the Dutch bourgeoisie was a measure of the “chasm between his art and the national lack of taste” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 503). However, Rocker anticipated that nationalist disintegration would bring future inter-cultural exchange. “Cultural reconstructions” he argued “always occur when different peoples and races come in to closer union”. Using a biological analogy, he continued, “[n]ew life arises only from the union of man with woman. Just so a culture is born or fertilized only by the circulation of fresh blood in the veins of its representatives” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 346).

While worker solidarity was an essential part of internationalist struggle, Rocker promoted internationalism principally as a humanist project. Humans were a single “physiological species”, all “children of the earth” subject “to the same laws of life”. Needs to alleviate “hunger” and to find “love” were identical and unwavering. Nationalism invented artificial and arbitrary barriers between peoples; internationalism would heal these divisions through voluntary union. In “all great epochs”, Rocker argued, “culture has marched hand in hand with the voluntary unity and fusion of different human groups”. Generalising from his own experiences, he added, “I appropriate alien matter because it brings me pleasure and becomes a part of my spiritual being; I assimilate myself to it until at last there is no boundary between myself and the alien matter”. All “cultural and mental occurrences are brought about” in the same way (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 350). The history of European arts and sciences were proof of the thesis. “Classicism and romanticism, expressionism and impressionism, cubism and futurism” were all “time-phenomena”. The bonds between artists “of the same school” were stronger than those binding artists of “the same nation”. Environment had “a certain influence upon the spiritual status” of artists, but it was minimal (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 516-7).

As Wright notes, Rocker adopted a “Hellenic” European social model to flesh out his internationalist anarchist federation. Rocker was especially enthusiastic about the medieval city states and, aligning himself with Charles Fourier, Proudhon and Pi y Margall (Rocker, 1985 [1947]:
he championed the Cantonal and commune movements of the nineteenth century. Wherever it had flourished, he argued, the will to freedom had had a distinctive institutional expression: there were “definite forms of economic and political life” which “frequently display an astonishing similarity even when we are dealing with peoples of different race who are widely separated from one another by continents and oceans” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 436). The argument had a Eurocentric bias. Yet when Rocker discussed the constituent units of the federation, he complicated the model by resurrecting the language of “nation” to distinguish an idea of home from the statist idea of nationalist division.

This idea of nation, he argued, was rightly used to describe “a human community whose members were born in the same place and were consequently held together by fundamental social relations”. It had nothing to do with the “modern idea of the nation ... which seeks to give the nations the widest possible boundaries” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 260). He found the same distinction in the history of ideas, contrasting Herder and Fichte: Herder was as an anti-nationalist theorist of home while Fichte was a fundamentally illiberal patriot for the German nation (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 190-91). Rocker also referred to Tagore’s distinction between the organic, social “nation” and mechanical nationalism. The former was “‘a spontaneous self-expression of man as a social being ... a natural regulation of human relationships” enabling individuals to “‘develop ideals of life in co-operation with one another’” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 274). The latter was “‘organized selfishness’” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 252). In the “‘organization-machine ... everything that was human becomes machine and turns the great wheel of politics without the slightest feeling of sympathy and moral responsibility’” (Rocker, 1985 [1947]: 409). With his sights set on correcting the murderous effects of European nationalism, Rocker failed to consider how nationalism might have been felt by non-Europeans. He also failed to apply his insights beyond the boundaries of Europe. Yet while the terms on which formerly colonised “nations” would be integrated or assimilated into the newly constituted cosmopolitan European confederation were left unresolved, his analysis of culture contained an idea of self-determination that was adaptable to postcolonial analysis.
Conclusion

In developing a conception of anarchist internationalism as non-domination, I have tried to give a fuller account of internationalist thought during a period of state building and global capitalist expansion, inject anarchist perspectives into debates about the right of self-government and national self-determination and indicate how anarchists have imagined a stateless, international order. Anarchists used place and will, not character to define the nation. Internationalism meant extending the principle of non-domination globally, negating rather than transcending state divisions.

Coomaraswamy’s and Rocker’s work illustrates how the experience of domination, as Empire and totalitarianism, shaped anarchist internationalist perspectives in different ways. For both, anarchist internationalism described a constitutional order capable of building relationships of solidarity. These were relationships of non-domination which recognised national communities while dissolving territorial borders. Rocker and Coomaraswamy both rejected nationalist aspirations for independence in the state, even if this also entailed the abolition of class divisions. For both, the nation was expressed through local practices. Both rejected the principles of membership that nationalists typically promoted through the state: shared language, religion, ethnicity or “race”. Similarly, both believed that new forms of internationalism would follow from the dismantling of state power and the reconstitution of nations. Internationalism was cosmopolitan but not necessarily hostile to the idea of homeland.

The gaps between Coomaraswamy and Rocker are also instructive. Their respective anticolonial and Eurocentric perspectives suggest that non-domination is best thought of as a tool which enables diverse communities to federate using principles of solidarity to redress historic and current inequalities. Coomaraswamy and Rocker show that anarchism internationalism is not a failed dream of class solidarity. Understood as a principle of non-domination, anarchist internationalism
becomes a project and a process. It creates tensions which test cosmopolitan ties and voluntary agreements. It does not model or replicate static configurations of power.


