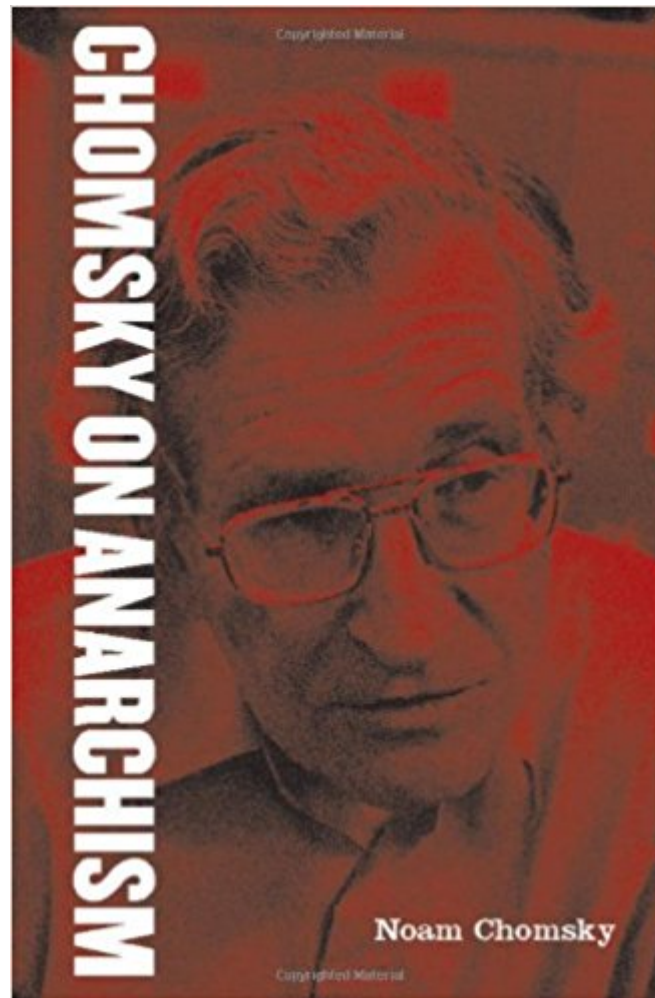




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# Chomsky On Anarchism



## Synopsis

We all know what Noam Chomsky is against. His scathing analysis of everything that's wrong with our society reaches more and more people every day. His brilliant critiques of—among other things—capitalism, imperialism, domestic repression and government propaganda have become mini-publishing industries unto themselves. But, in this flood of publishing and republishing, very little ever gets said about what exactly Chomsky stands for, his own personal politics, his vision of the future. Not, that is, until *Chomsky on Anarchism*, a groundbreaking new book that shows a different side of this best-selling author: the anarchist principles that have guided him since he was a teenager. This collection of Chomsky's essays and inter-views includes numerous pieces that have never been published before, as well as rare material that first saw the light of day in hard-to-find pamphlets and anarchist periodicals. Taken together, they paint a fresh picture of Chomsky, showing his lifelong involvement with the anarchist community, his constant commitment to nonhierarchical models of political organization and his hopes for a future world without rulers. For anyone who's been touched by Chomsky's trenchant analysis of our current situation, as well as anyone looking for an intelligent and coherent discussion of anarchism itself, look no further than *Chomsky on Anarchism*. Noam Chomsky is one of the world's leading intellectuals, the father of modern linguistics, an outspoken media and foreign policy critic and tireless activist. He lives in Boston, Massachusetts.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Noam Chomsky is one of the world's leading intellectuals, father of modern linguistics, outspoken media and foreign policy critic and tireless activist. Barry Pateman is the curator of the Emma Goldman Archive at the University of California Berkeley and wrote the introduction to AK Press' Chomsky on Anarchism.

Chomsky on Anarchism By Noam Chomsky Selected and edited By Barry Pateman Book Review By Richard E. Noble

Noam Chomsky, I would say, is our number one American dissident. He is obviously an extremely intelligent individual. Reading any of his works is an experience to say the least. He has been around forever but my personal exposure is fairly recent. He is tough on governments ... all governments. Which brings this reader to ask, "He certainly can't be against 'government' in itself, can he?" Well, it seems that he can. He refers to himself as an anarchist. Before I started researching Unionism in America and around the world, I was like most. I associated Anarchism with the word anarchy. This is not the case. Anarchism and anarchist have a range that swings from terrorist to "do gooder" moral reformers. But what about Mr. Chomsky? Where did he fall into this range? What does Chomsky believe he is? He is such a bitter critic of the U.S. and Israel and the world at large, he prompts one to ask what solutions he has to offer to all our world problems. Finding or figuring out what Mr. Chomsky believes and what his answers are is not as easy as it is with some other authors. Bertrand Russell, for example, wrote an essay entitled "What I Believe". Now Bertrand Russell was also a very intelligent man. Many of his works are beyond my level of understanding. Yet, one can pick up Bertrand's work on this subject and when finished reading, have an understanding of his personal beliefs. It is rather simple and straightforward. It is not so simple with Mr. Chomsky. As far as I know with all of his books he has not written a book specifically dedicated to his personal beliefs, political or religious. This volume consists of a group of selected essays and interviews through which the editor, Barry Pateman, attempts to expose to the reader the personal political beliefs of Mr. Chomsky, specifically related to his declaration of anarchism. It begins with a dissertation written in 1969 by Mr. Chomsky on what he calls "Liberal Scholarship." This lecture is almost one hundred pages long. The first half of the lecture deals with some of the published attitudes of these Liberal Scholars towards the Vietnam War. I found this presentation very interesting especially with regards to the liberal scholarship on how to deal with insurgencies. I must admit that after a while the liberal scholars began sounding like Dr.

Josef Mengele and other intellectuals and scientists of the Nazi era. This is a bit scary, especially when Noam gets into the scholars and their understanding and applications of the school of behaviorism, reward and punishment being the approved method as opposed to the idea of "winning hearts and minds." That the human subjects of the insurgency were to be looked at and treated as in the category of animals, rats and monkeys and not human beings, was shocking coming from American sources. One quote from one of the Liberal Intelligencia of the period in this section: "Science, as everyone knows, is responsible, moderate, unsentimental, and otherwise good. Behavioral science tells us that we can be concerned only with behavior and control of behavior. Therefore we should be concerned only with behavior, and it is responsible, moderate, unsentimental and otherwise good to control behavior by appropriately applied reward and punishment. Concern for loyalties and attitudes is emotional and unscientific. As rational men, believers in the scientific ethic we should be concerned with manipulating behavior in a desirable direction and not be deluded by mystical notions of freedom, individual needs, or popular will." And this was part of the logic used to support the massive carpet bombing in the North and elsewhere, napalm and Agent Orange. Though interesting and enlightening, I found no connection in this part of the lecture to anarchism. In the second half of the lecture Professor Chomsky takes on the Spanish Civil war in the 1936 and 1937. This is one area of World War II that I have neglected and it always has me confused. Like who supported who and what was going on altogether. Well, as I understand now, Franco was a Fascist. He was aided militarily and supportively by both the Germans under Hitler and the Italians under Mussolini. Winston Churchill seems to be the only one in Europe who did not line up with Franco - one of his better decisions. He made some doozies. But Chamberlain and the British government did. They were more fearful of the spread of Russian Communism than fascism. At this time they looked at Hitler and his Nazi government as a possible future ally against Stalin and the Russians. Roosevelt, in America, had much the same attitude. So, consequently, we had the free world all lined up in support of another fascist in Europe. There were Russian supported communists also participating in this mess. What was interesting for me to learn was that these Spanish communists had very dissimilar views from their Russian theoretical benefactors. It might be more accurate to state that the Russian Communists were no longer the saviors of the working class, if they ever were. In this conflict, the Spanish Communist and the Russians supported the established Republic, not the revolt of the workers as one might expect. The worker revolt in Spain at the time was the purview of Mr. Chomsky's anarchists. Professor Chomsky is no supporter of Russian Communism. He goes on at some length expressing his distaste for Lenin, Stalin and what they helped to evolve in the Russian Federation. Make no mistake; Chomsky is no fan of Russian

Communism. But in this half of the story the author gets into Anarchism and the several anarchist takeovers going on at this time as a part of this attempted overthrow of the Republic. It is all very confusing, but Noam uses this part of his lecture to defend the anarchists and their attempts and successes against the Liberal Historical offerings of other experts. Anarchism here, I interpret as "worker control" of whatever ... an industry, a farm, a town or local government or all of the above. The Lincoln Brigade and Ernest Hemmingway and "For Whom the Bell Tolls," by the way, were anti-fascist and supported the Republic. An interview which begins on pages 133 and discusses "The Relevance of Anarcho-Syndicalism" makes it very plain to me that what the author refers to as Social Libertarianism offers no solutions to our present government addiction. In order for the dreams and aspirations of this group to become a possibility requires a fundamental transformation in human nature, "an inner spiritual awakening" of sorts is the aspiration of the author. I don't see such a thing ever happening. In the author's anarchist world there is no need for militaries and "in a decent society everyone should have the opportunity to find interesting work." Yeah, that would be nice. "Miss, this toast is burnt. My check please and don't expect a tip." The author says he is a Social Libertarian. This is to be distinguished from the popular right wing libertarians so prominent on the political scene today. I have read mostly right wing libertarians and they have a similar problem. They have a lot of things they would like to do away with but have very few realistic solutions as to what these things might be replaced with where necessary. We all have dreams but are they possible must be considered also. There is one constant refrain throughout this book. It goes like this: I don't know the answer to that question; I'm not trying to be evasive; We'll just have to wait and see; We just don't know; it will require time and experimentation. Mr. Chomsky has a dream but even he has no picture of this dream to convey. In truth, he doesn't know what it is himself. If he does, it didn't come through to me. In the meantime he has a whole world of criticisms and very good criticisms of what is going on around us under our very noses. He is always a champion against violence, needless killing and wars in general. He is always worth reading. He sees things that most of us never notice and often aren't even aware of. He does admit in one interview in this work that he is not in favor of all revolutionary changes. For example he would rather support the status quo in America today and its present Obama Government than support right wing radicals, like the Tea Baggers, whose ideas would certainly make things worse, in his opinion. I definitely agree with that. The author makes numerous references to Mikhail Bakunin. He mentions several times Bakunin prescient prediction of the negative consequence of a Bolshevik or Red Russia. Bakunin is noted to be the father of Anarchism. I have yet to read anything by this anarchist philosopher. He looks like a good starting point. One last criticism. The word "freedom"

needs to be defined. Freedom is one of those words like justice, truth, and God. They can be defined a million ways by a million different people. For example, if I say, "All people should speak the truth, seek and promote justice and live their lives according to the will of God," what have I said? This phrase could be cheered by Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Protestants, Skinhead Nazis, soldiers on both lines of most battlefields and the majority of even our present day Congress - Republican and Democrat. Even Atheists could support it depending on the definition of God. I read a very good book by Eric Foner a while back entitled "The Story of American Freedom." In this work Mr. Foner follows the word "freedom" throughout American history. As he points out, depending on the current definition, one man's freedom can be another man's slavery as was the exact case in the American Civil War. The Hobo Philosopher is a writer and author of: America On Strike.

great

Noam Chomsky has been on the world top '10' intellectual list for years. He is known for his work on speech acquisition through his studies as a linguistics professor at MIT. Chomsky became active in politics as a young professor & has an in depth view of the different types of governing bodies that exist today. His belief that anarcho syndicalism is the highest ideological form of government we should be working toward is explained in this book. Read it & become a more thoughtful human being.

want to know the shock value of the common sense - read Chomsky. and get blasted! this is simply a Monstrous Synthesis! :) it's enough with just chapter Two and chapter Six for you to get blessed still don't know - is this Outrageous or just simply Ridiculous. you can compare 5 interviews in this book with say interviews with NC done by David Barsamian but the main thing of course are essays - each one is enough to make every bipartisan kid screaming - so get blasted ASAP!!

Of interest if you're devoted to Noam Chomsky and want to read all his work. I found it pretty dull going.

As with most of Professor Chomsky's words - whether they're watched or read - his assessments are crisp, concise, and factual (with tons of references.) I highly recommend it.

Good condition. Great content; even for someone who thought he'd got the gist of Chomsky

already.

"Chomsky on Anarchism" is a collection of writings and interviews with Noam Chomsky that addresses the topic of anarchism. Arranged in chronological order and spanning over five decades, the essays provide an unique perspective on Mr. Chomsky's intellectual development into one of today's most influential and prominent critics of capitalism. The book demonstrates that anarchist theory has significantly influenced Mr. Chomsky's thought, revealing a side of Mr. Chomsky that is often implied but infrequently made explicit in his writings. Among the eleven works, I found "Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship" (1969) to be a particularly appealing critique and discussion of the Vietnam War and the anarchist society that emerged briefly in Spain during its Civil War in the 1930s. Here, Mr. Chomsky displays at a relatively early point in his career the qualities for which he would become famous; his biting satire and devastating deconstruction of the powerful, in this case directed at the false justifications for the war in Vietnam and the West's non-support for Spanish democracy, provides many thought-provoking and timeless truisms. "Containing the Threat of Democracy" (1990) is another noteworthy piece in that it exemplifies a mature writer who has a masterful command of history, social theory and criticism. Mr. Chomsky brilliantly draws on Enlightenment thought to critique how the powerful have used the force of law to enable the rule of the few over the many, with a wide-ranging discussion of how Western elitism has resulted in genocide, war and repression under the guise of civilization. We learn how the business class has allied with the government to use propaganda to serve their mutual interests and mold public opinion, thereby allowing poverty and violence to persist and preventing a more meaningful form of democracy to emerge. Mr. Chomsky directly addresses anarchism in response to questions from several interviewers. Citing Daniel Guerin as a major influence, Mr. Chomsky explains that anarchism requires structure at the local, national and international levels but is characterized by its lack of a central authority. Mr. Chomsky believes that developing a successful anarchist society will require time and experimentation; he also contends that state intervention will be necessary to ensure a successful transition from capitalist rule to absolute democracy. Ultimately, Mr. Chomsky makes a strong argument that humanity will gain mightily from solving the problem of authoritarian oppression and applying its collective wisdom to the positive task of building an anarchist society grounded in the principles of peace, freedom and equality for all.

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