

# INTRODUCTION

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Michael Freeden's (1996) morphological approach to studying ideologies focuses on how major ideologies are based on the decontested meanings of political concepts. The approach builds on two basic assumptions – that people think about politics in patterned ways and that political thinking has a conceptual structure. Given that most political concepts are essentially contested, any given ideology develops from certain shared understandings of those concepts. Conceptual meaning is thus decontested – made fixed or stable, but only temporarily – within a given ideological context.

This approach to analyzing ideologies traces how decontested concepts exist in particular constellations or clusters within any given ideological family. The general morphological structure consists of three types of concepts – core, adjacent, and peripheral (Freeden 1996, 77–82; 2013, 124–126). Core concepts are the enduring and indispensable ones; they are the concepts that provide an ideology with its essential identity, with the views that separate it from other perspectives. Adjacent concepts provide additional nuance and anchoring for some of the core concepts; they help give a bit of specificity and context for core concepts. Peripheral concepts are those that provide an ideology with the flexibility it needs to adapt to changing circumstances; they are tied to particular times and places, to the concerns of the moment.

In the context of this structure of meaning, various kinds of relationships among an ideology's concepts are possible. Noteworthy relationships include what Freeden (2003, 60–66) calls “the four Ps”: (1) *proximity* – the ability of concepts to define each other; (2) *priority* – core versus periphery; (3) *permeability* – the extent to which ideologies intersect and overlap; and (4) *proportionality* – the relative space or attention to particular issues given by the ideology. In the context of both structure and relationships, the morphological approach enables

one to tell both synchronic and diachronic stories about the development of any given ideology.

Freeden's method differs from other approaches used by political philosophers and theorists interested in anarchism. Freeden distinguishes his conceptual approach from analytical philosophy, which, in some forms examines anarchism in terms of universal principles tested through logical analysis for consistency and defended through argumentative rigor. Robert P. Wolff's (1976) account develops a "philosophical anarchism" based on the single supreme value of rejecting all coercion. As such, it provides a very thin description of anarchism. Paul McLaughlin (2007, 29) by contrast identifies anarchism through two wider universal characteristics: a) a principled skepticism toward all forms of authority, especially, but not solely, state authority and b) a commitment to eradicating illegitimate forms of authority.

There are problems with this analytical approach to anarchism. First, in the case of Wolff – and those who follow him, like Dudley Knowles (2001; 2007) and A. John Simmons (1987; 1996) – the approach ignores the accounts of anarchism by actual anarchist movements and thus misrepresents the ideology in favor of an academic construction. Further, the analytic approach by concentrating on identifying universal characteristics overlooks the ways that ideologies develop historically and in distinctive locations. In addition, analytical philosophy's stress on logical consistency mischaracterizes ideologies, which often have contradictory – albeit constrained – features that are necessary for them to function. The tendency to overstress logical consistency occurs as the analytic approach tends to check each principle in abstract against the others and highlight areas of disagreement and conflict. The conceptual approach, by examining constituent concepts as mutual parts of an ideological cluster identifies how each concept is understood in relation to the others (proximity) and conflicts are diminished by their priority.<sup>1</sup> By utilizing Freeden's morphological approach, the authors in this volume describe the changing priority and proportionality of the concepts, highlight their proximity to each other with frequent cross-referencing to other pivotal concepts, and discuss the relative permeability of these concepts with other ideological clusters.

There are other, useful, theoretical approaches to developing the understanding of key ideologies or cultural phenomena. The canonical *Dictionary of Marxist Thought* produced by Tom Bottomore et al. (1983) provides often detailed, expert explanations of major terms and theoretical developments within Marxism. Despite its brevity and its Leninist leanings, the entry on anarchism by Geoffrey Ostergaard (1983) is largely supportive and knowledgeable, though largely concerned with anarchism's relationship to Marxism. However, because it covers hundreds of concepts and theorists, the book's breadth makes it hard to discern which takes greatest priority – even the length of entries is not a necessary mark of importance to political movements rather than to theoretical debates. In many cases, unlike in conceptual-morphological analysis, the

*Dictionary's* concentration is on exegetic analysis of Marx's true meaning, rather than how concepts, theories, and ideologies are interpreted by the movements that use them.

Raymond Williams' (1976) highly influential work in radical cultural studies, *Keywords* – which oddly is not referred to by Freeden in his main morphological works – identifies the social impacts of contested cultural terms.<sup>2</sup> Williams traces the changes in meanings of contested terms diachronically and synchronically, and notes how they are sites of conflict. Williams rightly identified the contested nature of core concepts, however, unlike the morphological approach, he underplays the ways in which ideologies attempt to decontest them. Similarly, there is little cross-referencing to other proximate terms that provide the means for temporarily fixing meanings in order to provide a guide for action. Williams' work, although highly political, nevertheless focuses on cultural developments rather than political movements per se. So, whilst major ideologies are covered, including anarchism, their accounts are short. Like Ostergaard in the *Dictionary*, Williams is not unsympathetic in his description of anarchism, but also largely locates it in relation to Marxism – which, in its later manifestations, Williams considers as having incorporated anarchism's main features.

Although the conceptual-morphological approach has been used by Freeden and other scholars to distinguish the familiar generic ideologies, anarchism has not yet been given a full-scale, book-length treatment. Certainly, the nature of anarchism as ideology or political theory makes such a treatment difficult. Insofar as particular anarchists resist being pigeonholed or having their views taken as representative of the whole, the varieties of anarchism are legion. Further, contemporary anarchists (theorists and activists alike) have regarded anarchism not as a settled point of view, a theory per se, but rather as a set of commonly used practices and actions. Because its approach to politics is not like the others, and because its adherents resist being saddled with the status of an ideology, anarchism has not been given the same treatment as liberalism or conservatism, say. Yet, despite the assertions of some activists, anarchism does indeed serve them as a guiding perspective, as a political theory, as an ideology. As such, it seems appropriate to analyze it morphologically.

One reason for doing so is to better understand the underlying values of anarchism. Many contemporary theorists of anarchism have suggested that it is fundamentally an ethical point of view, but the grounds of that ethic are often left unstated and unspecified. A morphological analysis of anarchism would provide the conceptual underpinnings for such ethical claims. A second reason for studying anarchism using Freeden's perspective is that conceptual analysis within the anarchist tradition is still rather underdeveloped. In other volumes in which anarchists engage in conceptual analysis, the only concept that ever seems to be under review is "anarchism" itself. Such an approach assumes what should be the result, namely, an understanding of the core ideas of anarchism. This brings us to the final reason for developing the morphology of anarchism. Doing so will help

anarchists manage the boundary problem that currently confronts them. With anti-statist attitudes – attitudes that have long been central to the anarchist tradition – becoming prominent on the economic and political right, anarchists seeking to sharpen their message and identity are struggling to determine what is central and unique to their ideas and actions. As a result, we believe that a conceptual morphology, sensitive to both academic and practical concerns, would be of significant value to theorists and activists alike.

## Two Modes of Decontestation

Disagreements over the meaning of basic political concepts such as freedom, equality, and justice result from the fact that such concepts are “essentially contested” – i.e., they lack a “clearly definable general ... or correct use” and, as such, are subject to “inevitably endless disputes” over their meanings (Gallie 1956, 168–169). As Freeden (1994, 141–143; 2013, 119) points out, this is because the range of possible meanings for such concepts exceeds what “can be expressed in any single account or definition.”

Consider the concept of “equality,” for example. In order to use this concept, one must first assign a particular meaning to it. This, in turn, requires one to identify its referent – i.e., what it is a concept of. The problem, of course, is that equality “carries more than one meaning” and so is understood by different people in different ways (Freeden 2015, 124). Some claim that it refers to political equality, others to social equality, still others to economic equality, and so on. Indeed, even those who agree that “equality” has multiple referents may disagree over the individual meanings of these referents or their relative significance within the overall meaning of the concept itself. So whilst equality was a core concept in earlier forms of anarchism, appearing regularly in analyses and proposals by, for instance, Bakunin and Goldman in their writings on women, marriage and family, and demands for economic and social equality alongside political equality (Bakunin 1953, 326–327; Bakunin 1972, 86–87; Goldman 1969, 47–67, 195–212), they, like Freeden (1994, 143–144), were aware of its multiple meanings. Their claims for equality were therefore premised upon a recognition of difference and individualized self-development (Bakunin 1972, 87–88; Goldman 1969, 70–71, 78). As a result, whilst the discourse of equality has not disappeared from anarchism, it has largely been subsumed as a component of other core concepts like freedom, anti-hierarchy, and intersectionality.

As noted previously, Freeden’s (2015, 124; 1996, 88) morphological approach defines ideologies as complex “clusters” or “composites” of decontested political concepts “with a variety of internal combinations.” This definition involves two important claims: first, that ideologies are assemblages of particular political concepts “characterized by a morphology” – i.e., an inner structure that organizes and arranges those concepts in particular ways; and second, that they “decontest” political concepts – i.e., “remove [them] from contest by attempting to assign

them a clear meaning” (Freeden 1996, 77; 2015, 59). The first of these features is a function of the second, and vice versa. On the one hand, an ideology’s structure is determined by the ways it decontests the concepts it contains. On the other hand, the decontested meanings assigned to these concepts are determined by how they are organized and arranged within the ideology, as well as the historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts within which the ideology itself is situated (Freeden 2015, 54, 76–77).

According to Freeden, ideologies assign fixed meanings and degrees of relative significance to concepts by means of two basic operations. The first, which we will call “micro-decontestation,” involves identifying, defining, and organizing their “micro-components” – i.e., the particular referents that specify what they are concepts *of* (Freeden 2013, 124–125). Every concept has several possible micro-components, each of which, in turn, has several possible meanings and degrees of relative significance within the overall concept. This allows for “diverse conceptions of any concept” and an “infinite variety” of “conceptual permutations” within “the ideational boundaries ... that anchor [them] and secure [their] components” (Freeden 2013, 124, 126, 128, 125.).

The second, which we will call “macro-decontestation,” involves arranging concepts within a hierarchy of “core,” “adjacent,” and “peripheral” elements as well as determining their relative significance among other concepts of the same type (Freeden 2013, 125). The core concepts of a particular ideology, as we have noted, are distinguished by their “long-term durability” and are “present in all known cases of the ideology in question” (Freeden 2013, 125–126). As such, “they are indispensable to holding the ideology together, and are consequently accorded preponderance in shaping that ideology’s ideational content” (Freeden 2013, 126). Adjacent concepts, in contrast, “are second-ranking in the pervasiveness and breadth of meanings they impart to the ideology in which they are located. They do not appear in all its instances, but are crucial to finessing the core and anchoring it ... into a more determinate and decontested semantic field” (Freeden 2013, 125). Lastly there are peripheral concepts, which are “more marginal and generally more ephemeral concepts that change at a faster pace diachronically and culturally” (Freeden 2013, 125). Each of these categories, moreover, has an internal hierarchy that accords different degrees of “proportional weight” to the concepts they comprise (Freeden 2013, 125). (See Table I.1.)

As an example of micro-decontestation, let us suppose that there are two ideologies, A and B, both of which recognize “the good life” as a core concept. Let us further suppose that A identifies “the good life” exclusively with happiness, whereas B identifies it exclusively with freedom. In this case, we would say that A and B identify “the good life” with different micro-components insofar as they have different understandings of what “the good life” is a concept of. On the other hand, even if A and B agree that “the good life” refers to both happiness and freedom, they may nonetheless assign these referents different meanings (as when, for example, A defines happiness in terms of the absence of pain and B

**TABLE I.1** The Two Modes of Decontestation.

<i>Micro-decontestation</i>	<i>Macro-decontestation</i>
<p>Meaning is assigned to a concept on the basis of its internal components. This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determining which individual micro-components are included in a concept and which are excluded</li> <li>• Assigning meanings to individual micro-components</li> <li>• Assigning varying degrees of relative significance to individual micro-components</li> </ul>	<p>Meaning is assigned to a concept on the basis of its relationship to other concepts. This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determining which individual concepts are included in an ideological morphology and which are excluded</li> <li>• Identifying individual concepts as core, adjacent, or peripheral</li> <li>• Assigning varying degrees of relative significance to all the individual concepts within a particular level of the conceptual hierarchy</li> </ul>

defines it in terms of well-being or flourishing) and/or different degrees of significance (as when B regards freedom as more integral to the good life than happiness and A does the opposite). For Freedden (2013, 124), it is precisely conceptual permutations of this sort that account for variation within otherwise stable ideological families as well as their development and evolution “at variable speeds across time and space.”

As an example of macro-decontestation, let us suppose that A recognizes both “individualism” and “the good life” as core concepts, whereas B recognizes “the good life” as a core concept but not “individualism.” In A’s case, the importance ascribed to individualism will necessarily be reflected in the particular meaning it assigns to the good life, and vice versa. The same is not true of B, since it doesn’t recognize individualism as a core concept. Thus, although A and B both recognize the good life as a core concept, the particular meanings they assign to it will differ depending on the presence or absence of other concepts, as well as the way concepts are positioned within the ideological morphology. Even if A and B both recognize individualism and the good life as core concepts, they may nonetheless accord them different degrees of proportional weight – for example, B might regard the good life as more important than individualism and A might do the opposite – and, in so doing, assign them different meanings.

In short, there are many different ways to decontest concepts at both the micro- and the macro-level. Sometimes these differences are a function of the identification, definition, and organization of micro-components within the concepts themselves. At other times they are a function of the presence or absence of other concepts; of the relative position of concepts within the morphology; or of the different levels of proportional weight accorded to concepts that occupy the same relative position in the morphology. This means that even ideologies that recognize the same core concepts can be and often are quite different from one another. It also means that a single ideological tradition can include a variety of

distinct tendencies. For instance, deeper green anarchisms include principles of anti-hierarchy and horizontalism but by giving greater priority to ecocentrism, the notions of agency, organization, and methods differ from more labor-orientated anarchisms that give greater priority to economic exploitation at the point of production (Williams 2009; Franks 2016). Similarly, insurrectionary anarchism is marked from more stable forms of social anarchism, but the former's shift in the proportionality of the core given to immediacy has now emerged as a micro-component of prefiguration (Williams and Thomson 2011).

## A Morphology of Anarchism

The scholarly literature on anarchism has grown significantly in the last couple of decades (Kinna 2012, 3). However, sustained efforts to explore aspects of the anarchist tradition from the standpoint of ideology or political culture have been relatively few in number (Gordon 2008). Freeden's projects like the *Journal of Political Ideologies* and the *Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* have given space to summaries and analyses of different aspects of anarchism that apply, assess, and refine his method (Adams and Jun 2015; Pauli 2015; Franks 2013, 2016) and it has also been adopted elsewhere (Kinna and Prichard 2012). More typical approaches tend to provide an overview of anarchist ideas and have gravitated either toward historical surveys (Woodcock 1983; Berry 2009; Marshall 2010) or toward primers for the curious (Ward 1996; Rooum 2001; Sheehan 2003; Milstein 2010). Rather than attempt to formulate a unitary definition of anarchism as an ideology or political theory, this book emerges out of our attempt to apply Freeden's conceptual-morphological analysis to anarchism as an ideology.

After identifying some core, adjacent, and peripheral concepts of anarchism, we enlisted the help of authors whose work on anarchism has been particularly noteworthy. Each of the chapters that follow explores a specific concept and discusses its significance within the anarchist tradition broadly construed – that is, the explorations are not necessarily tied to any given thinker, time period, or tendency within the anarchist movement. As ideological concepts are to be understood in their relations to other concepts, the chapters below will necessarily cross-refer and interrelate. Each chapter is sorted into one of three parts, corresponding to whether it addresses a core, an adjacent, or a peripheral concept.

### **Core Concepts**

Part 1 contains chapters that explore the core concepts of anarchism as an ideology. These are the concepts that, for any ideology, “are both culturally and logically necessary to its survival” (Freeden 1996, 78). The ways in which their meanings are decontested and their relationships are set help us understand what separates anarchism from other ideological perspectives – whether compatible with or antagonistic to anarchist ideas.

In this first part of the book, we begin with basic values. Chapter 1 directs our attention to anarchism's opposition to hierarchy in human relations. As a fundamentally anti-authoritarian perspective, it seeks both to demolish the institutions that promote hierarchy and to construct viable alternative organizations. Chapter 2 highlights the role played by prefiguration in the organizations, intentions, and practices of anarchist activists. In Chapter 3, the focus is on freedom, which has often been identified as the anarchist value *sine qua non*. However, careful examination of the concept's use in the tradition reveals that there is no single conception of freedom that all anarchists share.

After reviewing core values, we turn to a set of concepts that shape what anarchists do. Chapter 4 begins at the most general level by examining the concept of agency. Within the anarchist tradition, how one conceives of the capacity for free choice and autonomous action – that is, for self-determination – shapes the direction that a radical politics may take. With Chapter 5, we explore another concept routinely employed as a synonym for anarchism, namely direct action. Engaging in (anti-)political practices in an unmediated way, acting as if one were already free, has long characterized the anarchist resistance to the state and other forces of domination. Finally, in Chapter 6, we conclude the first part of the book by examining the extent to which anarchism defines itself as a revolutionary doctrine, to which it embraces revolution as the vehicle for social and political transformation.

### ***Adjacent Concepts***

Part 2 contains chapters that explore the concepts that we regard as adjacent ones. Adjacent concepts, as we have noted, provide additional nuance and anchoring for some of the core concepts. They make the connections across concepts and ideologies that create “the meanings necessary to provide interpretations of political reality and plans for political action” (Freedman 1998, 752).

The chapters in the second part of the book extend our thinking about the core concepts. Chapter 7 examines how anarchists prefer social relations that are not only anti-hierarchical in aim, but also horizontalist in practice. Horizontalism in this sense connotes the anarchist preference for acting through leaderless, autonomous, and directly democratic mobilizations. Chapter 8 reveals that anarchists have spent much time discussing how to organize to meet social needs and achieve their political goals. Showing a marked preference for organizations that are free – voluntary and libertarian – anarchist ideology understands organization in ways that express and expand upon its core concepts. Similarly, the exploration of micropolitics in Chapter 9 moves beyond general values underlying large-scale political action to a recognition that anarchists seek to extend the struggle against domination into every sphere of life. Finally, with Chapter 10, we conclude our look at adjacent concepts by examining the prevalence of anti-capitalist views within the anarchist tradition.



### ***Peripheral Concepts***

Part 3 contains chapters that explore the concepts that we regard as important, but peripheral ones for anarchism. Peripheral concepts enable an ideology to further link its core concepts and basic ideas to concrete reality. They provide the flexibility an ideology needs not only to meet the challenges of time, place, and circumstance, but also to begin its evolution in response to social and political change. Peripheral concepts appear either on the margin or on the perimeter. On the margin, an ideology contains ideas and concepts “whose importance to the core, to the heart of the ideology, is intellectually and emotionally insubstantial” (Freeden 1996, 78). Ideas on the perimeter include a range of specific policy proposals or concrete applications of more general concepts (Freeden 1996, 80).

In this part, the chapters treat concepts and ideas that address any number of contemporary concerns to which anarchists must pay heed as they work out the implications of their ideology. Chapter 11’s focus on intersectionality reminds us that, in the complex societies of the twenty-first century, anarchism must account for diverse instantiations of oppression, while recognizing the interdependence of various systems of domination. Though anarchism appears as a revolutionary ideology, Chapter 12 shows how a longstanding tension between reform and revolution, and the ambivalent attitudes such a tension fosters, characterize thinking about anarchist identity and anarchist practice.

In Chapter 13, the authors present an anarchist critique of work and discuss the possibilities for creating an anarchist work ethic – a study that returns us to thinking about anarchism as a theory of organization. Chapter 14 highlights the ways in which the quintessential anarchist ethos of DIY (Do It Yourself) yields a set of principles for translating key concepts and ideas into practice across various domains. Finally, in Chapter 15, we recognize that anarchism has considered ecological issues more often and more deeply than other radical ideologies – an important contribution to a world facing the potentially catastrophic effects of global climate change.

### **Conclusions**

This book brings together contributions from prominent scholars of anarchism to identify, describe, and analyze key political concepts and their positions within anarchist ideological structures. The chapters are free-standing in that they provide clear, useful, and well-researched accounts of key concepts, but they also inter-relate as each concept is understood in relation to the others. As such, this volume provides a sophisticated and sustained application of Freedén’s conceptual-morphological analysis to anarchism. Collectively these contributions describe and highlight the relative stability of anarchist core concepts, but also their adaptability as they draw in and interact with adjacent and peripheral concepts.

To be sure, the book resulting from this collaborative project to study anarchism in the manner of Freeden's morphological approach has its limitations. Certainly, we did not attempt to account for every conceivable concept that has entered the anarchist lexicon. Ideologies evolve to deal with new material challenges and to compete with the responses from rival ideologies. As a result, new concepts arise and the relative status of existing concepts changes. Any project such as this must necessarily have a finite scope. Choices have to be made in order to begin the project and see it through to realization. Indeed, this effort, like any other, has to come to an end somewhere and sometime. More significantly, conceptual analysis of any kind runs the risk of remaining abstract and idealistic. It is easy to regard our project as one that neglects the material contexts in which ideologies appear and are employed. Still, we believe that each author of the chapters that follow has tried to remain in touch, explicitly or implicitly, with important practical concerns.

Nevertheless, by concentrating on the patterns of concepts and their relative interactions, we believe that the book will be a resource for further studies into various hybrids and sub-categories of anarchism – new anarchisms, insurrectional anarchisms, and post-anarchisms, as well as more familiar eco-anarchisms, anarcho-feminisms, anarcho-syndicalisms, and libertarian Marxisms. It will also provide a basis for examining the permeability of anarchist concepts, sketching the possibilities for developing solidarities based on shared norms and practices, and identifying where apparently similar terminology belies a significantly different worldview.

## Notes

- 1 For further discussion of analytical versus conceptual approaches, see Benjamin Franks (2011) and Nathan Jun (2016).
- 2 Some theorists like Dean Blackburn (2017) have drawn some parallels between shared features of Freeden and Williams, with respect to the critique of liberal and orthodox Marxist accounts of ideology.

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