4.6 Collectivist and Individualist Anarchism: Tensions Within the Tradition

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 55 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short answers may be in note form unless a question asks for full sentences. The final levels-marked essay must be written in full sentences and reach a judgement. This pack addresses Edexcel 9PL0 Non-core Political Ideas on anarchism.

1 From POL.NCI6, identify one individualist anarchist claim about individual sovereignty and the person.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 This question tests knowledge of methods from POL.NCI6: state two tactics both collectivist and individualist anarchists have used historically.

(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)

3 From POL.NCI6, explain briefly why collectivist anarchists are more likely than individualist anarchists to stress class conflict as a motor for social change.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 From POL.NCI6, explain briefly one criticism individualist anarchists make of collectivist plans for communal ownership.

(Total for Question 4 is 5 marks)

5 Evaluate the extent to which anarchists disagree over the organisation of a stateless society, POL.NCI6. Write a developed essay that analyses points of disagreement and agreement, uses relevant examples, and reaches a reasoned judgement.

(Total for Question 5 is 24 marks)

6 From POL.NCI6, explain two practical mechanisms collectivist anarchists propose to ensure cooperative decision making in a stateless society.

(a) Explain one mechanism such as federated councils or workplace councils. **(3)**

(b) Explain a second mechanism such as mutual aid networks or participatory budgeting. **(3)**

(Total for Question 6 is 6 marks)

7 Distinguish between collectivist and individualist anarchist views of property, POL.NCI6. Produce a short analytical answer that explains the key differences and their implications.

(Total for Question 7 is 10 marks)

Mark scheme · 4.6 Collectivist and Individualist Anarchism: Tensions Within the Tradition

Question 1

identifies individual sovereignty or the claim that each person is the ultimate owner of their body and labour	**B1**
brief development, e.g. opposition to any collective claim that overrides personal autonomy	**B1**

Answer: The idea of individual sovereignty, that each person is the ultimate owner of their body and labour and should not be subordinated to collective claims.

Question 2

one accurate tactic, e.g. direct action	**B1**
a second accurate tactic, e.g. mutual aid or small scale organisation	**B1**
brief linking phrase showing both strands have used these tactics	**B1**

Answer: Direct action and mutual aid or small scale organisation, both used by different anarchist groups as means to bypass state institutions.

Question 3

identifies that collectivist anarchists view social relations in terms of class and economic structures	**B1**
explains that collective ownership proposals arise from seeing exploitation of labour by capitalists	**B1**
identifies that revolutionary, mass action or syndicalist organisation is emphasised	**B1**
brief development linking these to the idea that changing ownership removes class domination	**B1**

Answer: Collectivist anarchists analyse society in class terms and see exploitation of labour by capital owners as central; therefore they advocate collective ownership and mass or syndicalist action so that changing ownership structures removes class domination and creates egalitarian, cooperative production.

Question 4

identifies a criticism such as threat to individual autonomy or coercive enforcement by collectives	**B1**
explains how collectivist structures might impose duties or communal claims on individuals	**B1**
identifies concern about property rights in the sense of personal possession and labour	**B1**
provides a brief example or hypothetical effect on personal freedom	**B1**
develops why this criticism matters to individualist anarchist theory	**B1**

Answer: Individualist anarchists argue collectivist communal ownership risks imposing collective duties or informal coercion that undermine personal autonomy; they fear that communal claims over resources could be enforced in ways that restrict an individual's control over their labour and possessions, which contradicts the individualist emphasis on personal sovereignty.

Question 5

Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**
Level 1 Basic, limited knowledge of collectivist and individualist anarchism with little or no developed analysis or evaluation of organisational disagreements. Claims are general and unsupported.	**1-6**
Level 2 Clear knowledge of both strands with some developed analysis of how they propose to organise a stateless society. Evaluation is present but may be one sided or rely on description rather than comparative judgement.	**7-12**
Level 3 Detailed and accurate knowledge used to construct a sustained analysis that compares collectivist and individualist organisational models, weighs strengths and weaknesses, and reaches a supported judgement on the extent of disagreement.	**13-18**
Level 4 Sophisticated, wide ranging knowledge and focused analysis that directly addresses the question, comparing models of ownership, decision making, economic coordination and enforcement, considering practical and normative strengths and weaknesses, and reaching a clearly substantiated and balanced judgement on the extent and significance of anarchist disagreement.	**19-24**

Indicative content:

- Clarify the scope of disagreement: organisation covers ownership of production, decision making, economic coordination, and mechanisms of conflict resolution and enforcement in a stateless context.
- Collectivist positions: collective ownership of means of production, federation of councils or syndicates, workplace democracy, emphasis on class analysis and mass direct action or syndicalism to abolish capitalist property relations, mechanisms such as federated councils, participatory planning and mutual aid networks for distribution.
- Individualist positions: defence of personal sovereignty and possession based property in personal goods and labour, voluntary exchange, small scale markets or mutual credit, reliance on reputation, voluntary arbitration and private associations for enforcement rather than collective control of resources.
- Practical debates: planning versus market coordination, risks of informal coercion in collectivist federations versus risks of inequality and power concentration in individualist market arrangements, and differing views on scalability of voluntary institutions.
- Normative debates: collectivist focus on social equality and removal of exploitation versus individualist emphasis on freedom from collective claims and the moral primacy of personal autonomy.
- Areas of agreement: anti statism, rejection of hierarchical coercive institutions, support for voluntary association and direct action, and often a distinction between personal possessions and productive property even where they disagree on ownership models.
- Evaluation of coherence and feasibility: assess how each model addresses coordination, incentives, conflict resolution and protection of vulnerable individuals; consider historical examples or movements that illustrate strengths and weaknesses, such as anarcho syndicalist organising in early 20th century Spain or individualist mutualist experiments.
- Consider hybrid or pluralist possibilities: some anarchists propose mixed systems that blend collective management of large scale resources with strong protections for individual autonomy, reducing the apparent polarity.
- Conclusion: weigh whether disagreements are fundamental and irresolvable or whether they are differences of emphasis that could be mediated in pluralist, federated arrangements; a balanced judgement might argue that disagreements are significant regarding economic organisation and the primacy of equality versus autonomy, but not absolute, since both sides share core anti statism and commitment to voluntary, non coercive institutions.

Question 6

(a) identifies a mechanism, e.g. federated councils or workplace councils **B1**

(a) explains how it operates, e.g. local councils send delegates to higher federations with recallable mandates **B1**

(a) explains how this secures cooperative decision making without a state **B1**

(a) Answer: Federated local councils or workplace councils, where local units elect or appoint delegates with a clear, recallable mandate to coordinate with other councils at a higher level, allow decisions to be made collectively and accountably, avoiding centralised state power while enabling coordination across regions or industries.

(b) identifies a mechanism, e.g. mutual aid networks or participatory budgeting **B1**

(b) explains how it functions practically **B1**

(b) explains how it builds cooperation and decentralised provision of goods and services **B1**

(b) Answer: Mutual aid networks or participatory budgeting allow communities to pool resources and decide priorities through open, deliberative processes, strengthening cooperative provision of goods and services and enabling local accountability without hierarchical state structures.

Question 7

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Level 1 Basic, partly accurate description of one strand only or simplistic contrast with little explanation of implications. **1-3**

Level 2 Clear description of both collectivist and individualist views with some analysis of differences and limited explanation of practical implications. **4-6**

Level 3 Detailed, accurate explanation contrasting collectivist and individualist property theories, with developed analysis of their practical and ethical implications and a clear sense of why the difference matters for organising a stateless society. **7-10**

Indicative content:

- Collectivist anarchists view property in the means of production as a social relation that should be held collectively or commonly, supporting communal ownership, cooperatives and use rights rather than private capitalist ownership.
- Individualist anarchists distinguish personal possession and property created by individual labour from capitalist property in means of production; they defend possession based on use and personal autonomy and are suspicious of any collective claim that overrides individual control of person and labour.
- Collectivists emphasise class relations and argue collective ownership removes exploitation and enables planned cooperative production; individualists argue strong collective property claims risk informal coercion and reduce personal autonomy.
- Implications: collectivist property models favour democratic workplace control, redistribution and federated management of resources; individualist models favour voluntary exchange, individual control of produced goods and personal possession norms, which could produce different economic outcomes and tensions about resource allocation.
- A strong answer may note convergence points, e.g. both can reject capitalist private property concentrated in a minority, and both often distinguish personal possessions from productive property, but the crucial distinction is over social ownership versus individual sovereignty over labour and its fruits.