4.7 Anarchist Thinkers: William Godwin and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: 30-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Spend approximately 30 minutes on this pack.

1 State two features of Proudhon's mutualism as an economic arrangement for a stateless society.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Give one similarity between Godwin's and Proudhon's visions of a stateless society, stated with a brief explanation and a date of the primary work where the idea is expressed.

(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)

3 Explain one criticism that Godwin levels at political institutions that rely on punishment rather than moral persuasion, with reference to Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793).

(Total for Question 3 is 5 marks)

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4 Evaluate the extent to which William Godwin and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon agree on how a stateless society should be achieved. In your answer, focus on means rather than the end and cover similarities and differences using evidence from Godwin's Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793) and Proudhon's writings (notably What is Property? 1840).

(Total for Question 4 is 24 marks)

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Mark scheme · 4.7 Anarchist Thinkers: William Godwin and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

one accurate feature, e.g. a system of small producers' associations exchanging goods by mutual credit	**B1**
a second accurate feature, e.g. contracts and federations of associations replacing state coercion in organising production and exchange	**B1**

Answer: Any two of: small producers' associations exchanging goods by mutual credit; a network or federation of self-governing associations; contractual relations rather than state-imposed laws; cooperative workshops and possession-based property rather than absolute private property rights.

Question 2

identifies a valid similarity, e.g. both advocate the reduction or abolition of state power	**B1**
briefly explains the similarity in one sentence	**B1**
gives a correct date for the primary work, e.g. Godwin 1793, Proudhon 1840	**B1**

Answer: Similarity: both thinkers envisage reducing or abolishing the coercive state. Godwin argues for the dissolving of government through private judgement in Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793); Proudhon argues for contractual federations and self-governing associations in What is Property? (1840).

Question 3

identifies the criticism, e.g. punishment undermines moral improvement and breeds hypocrisy or resentment	**B1**
explains why, e.g. coercive punishments substitute external compliance for inner moral change	**B1**
provides a consequence, e.g. reliance on punishment perpetuates dependence on institutions and prevents cultivation of private judgement	**B1**
supports with a brief textual or contextual reference to Godwin 1793	**B1**
offers a short development linking to the broader Godwinian aim of gradual, rational moral improvement	**B1**

Answer: Godwin criticises punishment-based institutions on the grounds that punishment produces external obedience rather than internal moral improvement; this breeds hypocrisy, resentment and dependency on authority, preventing the cultivation of private judgement that Godwin sees as necessary for a peaceful dissolution of government, as argued in Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793).

Question 4

Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**
Level 1 Basic, limited knowledge of Godwin and Proudhon with little or no developed comparison of their methods for achieving a stateless society. Evaluation is minimal or absent.	**1-6**
Level 2 Some accurate knowledge of both thinkers and a basic comparative analysis of methods, but explanation and evaluation are underdeveloped or one-sided. Uses limited textual support.	**7-12**
Level 3 Clear and accurate knowledge of both thinkers, with a sustained comparison of their proposed methods. Evaluation addresses strengths and weaknesses and uses relevant evidence, reaching a plausible judgement.	**13-18**
Level 4 Sophisticated and balanced evaluation that integrates comprehensive factual knowledge, conceptual analysis and critical assessment. Demonstrates comparative insight into why each thinker recommends particular methods, evaluates their practical and theoretical viability, and reaches a nuanced, justified conclusion on the extent of agreement.	**19-24**

Indicative content:

- Godwin's method: gradual moral improvement via private judgement and rational persuasion; rejection of political violence and revolution; belief that once individuals adopt reason and benevolence, institutions will wither away through enlightened civil behaviour, as set out in Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793).
- Proudhon's method: institutional and contractual reorganisation via mutualist mechanisms, possession instead of absolute property, people's banks and federations of self-governing associations; deliberate reform of economic and legal structures to eliminate exploitation and replace state coercion with contractual federation, as in What is Property? (1840).
- Similarity: both reject the legitimacy of the existing coercive state and seek non-authoritarian patterns of social organisation; both value voluntary association and emphasise decentralised forms of social order rather than centralised coercion.
- Difference: Godwin places primacy on individual moral transformation and persuasion, downplaying formal institutional redesign; Proudhon places greater emphasis on concrete institutional arrangements and contractual guarantees to prevent exploitation and to coordinate economic life without state coercion.
- Practical evaluation: assess Godwin's optimism about universal moral improvement and problems of scale, timing and free riders; evaluate Proudhon's proposals for mutual credit and federations for their practicality, potential to institutionalise liberty, and risks of new forms of economic dominance or informal coercion.
- Theoretical coherence: consider whether Godwin's emphasis on reason can produce the social conditions Proudhon seeks, or whether Proudhon's mutualist institutions presuppose a degree of moral reciprocity similar to Godwin's private judgement, suggesting complementary rather than strictly opposed approaches.
- Historical and empirical critique: note the differing 1793 and 1840 contexts, how industrial capitalism shaped Proudhon's focus on economic structures, while Godwin wrote in the aftermath of the French Revolution and Enlightenment thought; use this to explain why their methods differ.
- Conclusion: a reasoned judgement about the extent of agreement, for example that they agree in principle about antistatism and decentralisation but diverge significantly on means, with Proudhon favouring concrete institutional redesign and Godwin favouring moral persuasion, though both approaches may be mutually reinforcing.

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