

## Tyler Durden's Anarchism in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*

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### Abstract

The research focuses on Tyler Durden's Anarchism in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*. The theory used is the theory of Political Philosophy stated by Berkmen. The objective of the study is to find out the portrayal of Tyler Durden's anarchism. The research method used is qualitative, intrinsic and extrinsic approaches to analyze the problems. The result of this study shows that Tyler Durden's characteristics of anarchism are portrayed by six characteristics. They are self-ownership, self-governing, free association, Utopian, nihilism, and anti-establishment.

Keywords: Anarchism, free association, Political Philosophy,

### A. INTRODUCTION

In both political and linguistic theories, anarchism is the most misunderstood idea. Generally, the term is used to mean (a situation that is) "chaos" or "without order". As a result, anarchists are thought to want social chaos and a return to the "law of the jungle". Anarchism is a part of socialism, which means that this understanding is more care about the fate of the people in the lower class and helps them to be free from the shackles of capitalism. As anarchism is a kind of human problem, anarchism can be found in human culture such as in literature. According to Goldman (1917:17) in her book entitled *Anarchism and Other Essays* Anarchism is a philosophy that believes that humans as members of society will bring about the best benefits for all if they are not governed or live in the shackles of authority. Anarchists believe that humans are creatures who can naturally live in harmony and freedom without the intervention of power. It is depicted in the novel by Tyler Durden when he doesn't have moral beliefs and is not being held back by material possessions to achieve whatever he wants to achieve.

According to Berkmen (2003), true anarchist equality implies freedom, not quantity. Therefore, Equality does not mean an equal amount but equal opportunity. Based on the discussion above, there are some indicators of equality: the existence of equal opportunity, the existence of equal conditions, and the absence of social diversity. Anarchism means a

condition or society where all men and women are free, and where all enjoy equally the benefits of an ordered and sensible life. This research studies the anarchism in Tyler Durden's which explores the world view that is held by the author of the novel through the portrayal of Tyler Durden's anarchism

Literary works are divided into three genres which are poetry, drama, and prose (Pradopo, 1994:27). In this study, the researchers chooses drama. According to Archer, Gendrich, and Wood in their book entitled *Theatre: Its Art and Craft* (2003:34) drama is a narrative about human life in form of dialogue which is presented or performed by using conversation and action. It can be performed on stage, on the radio, and even in novels. Since the source of data in this study is novel, Zatin's book entitled *Novels and Plays of Eduard Manet: An Adventure in Multiculturalism* (2010:123) states that by the late 1960s, in France and other European countries novels is consider part of the drama. The researchers prefers drama over other literary genres because drama is attractive, impactful, and real as it presents characters along with natural and credible aspects.

At a glance, it can be seen that the "enemy" of the anarchism movement is all forms of authority, and the most obvious form of authority is the modern state. For anarchists, the state is seen as having monopolized various lines of power: territorial power, jurisdictional power, the power to control resource wealth, and the use of the positive legal system, whose existence often eliminates all forms of law that are considered "negative" such as customary law and many other laws.

*Fight Club* is a 1999 novel by Chuck Palahniuk. In *Fight Club*, one of the protagonists, Tyler Durden, aims to disband society programs, attack consumerism, and disrupt the established social order. Tyler Durden is the split personality of The Narrator. He was created by the perfect storm of insanity caused by the narrator's insomnia and his empty life of wage slavery and consumerism. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fight\\_Club](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fight_Club))

The reason why the researchers chooses to analyze Tyler Durden's Anarchism in *Fight Club* novel is that there are two interesting points. The first interesting point is how the book tells the tragic reflection of the world. The modern world is frustrating and depressing. People spend their lives working in a call center or behind desks, slowly becoming unhappy until they become depressed and want to kill themselves. The modern world drives people crazy in its unbearable and suffocating ways. It's a concrete jungle, and not all of us find happiness in the endless grey days of everyday life. Then comes Tyler, who wants to destroy the social work in this world. With project mayhem, he wants to create a world where debt, rule, and hierarchy, perishes and everybody will be equal with each other. Another interesting point from this novel is how Tyler dies because of his anarchism.

## **B. RESERACH METHOD**

The researchers conduct a qualitative research design since it deals with spoken language and its context. The research emphasizes analyzing anarchism occurring in the main character of the novel. The Source of data is taken from the novel *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk. The technique of data collection is content analysis.

## **C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

To know the portrayals of Tyler's Anarchism, the researcherr analyzes the problems by using several characteristics of anarchism. The portrayals in Tyler's anarchism are self-ownership, self-governing, free association, utopian, nihilism, and anti-establishment.

### **1. Self-ownership**

The first characteristic which indicates Tyler Durden's anarchism is self-ownership. As an anarchist, Tyler believes that he has the freedom to do what he's going to do to himself. Tyler doesn't mind when Joe's property gets burned down as long he can get out from the shackle that entangles his spirit because of his property. It can be proven by the following quotation:

"I'm breaking my attachment to physical power and possessions," Tyler whispered, "because only through destroying myself can I discover the greater power of my spirit." (Palahniuk, 1996:122)

The quotation above shows that when Joe is being asked by the detective about his condominium explosion, Tyler said that Joe should not mind about his condominium, so he can become alive, and not become the slave of his consumerism habits.

The proof of Tyler's Anarchism is also shown by his self-ownership when the detective is trying to explain the cause of the condominium explosion to Joe. It was a homemade bomb and the detective tries to accuse Joe who made the explosion. Joe tries to deny it, but Tyler believes it's fine if Joe wants to confess that he wants to be free from his possession and tease him. It can be seen in the following quotation.

"The liberator who destroys my property," Tyler said, "is fighting to save my spirit. The teacher who clears all possessions from my path will set me free." (Palahniuk, 1996:123)

The quotation above shows that Tyler will do anything he wants to achieve his freedom. It is very simple about what Tyler wants from the start.

## 2. Self-Governing

The second characteristic of Tyler's anarchism is self-governing. Self-governing is a belief in people's ability to manage themselves without government. As an anarchist Tyler thinks the government only exists to maintain inequality between the rich and the poor and they try to rule the people by making a rule that only will be beneficial to them. The government is only an institutionalized crime' that steals property from individuals by the threat of aggression. Tyler believes it's better to use self-governing

Tyler's self-governing appears when Tyler plans for the project mayhem with Joe and rants about people in today's society. Only being a puppet that only a sacrifice to the rich people. They don't maximize their potential to lead themselves. It can be proven in the quotation below.

"I see the strongest and the smartest men who have ever lived," he says, his face outlined against the stars in the driver's window, "and these men are pumping gas and waiting tables."

"If we could put these men in training camps and finish raising them."

"All a gun does is focus an explosion in one direction."

"You have a class of young, strong men and women, and they want to give their lives to something. Advertising has these people chasing cars and clothes they don't need. Generations have been working in jobs they hate, just so they can buy what they don't need." (Palahniuk, 1996:168)

The quotation above shows that Tyler's self-governing appears when he believes he can raise people better than the government because the government only cares for itself. Because the government is trying to create a society with inequality between the rich and the poor that does not have the same opportunity. That's why it makes people suffer because the rules that the government creates are only beneficial to certain people and will exploit the poor people. For example, workers are forced to sell their labor at market prices. In their work, workers produce goods that are a part of their daily life and provide services. However, the workers are rewarded in the form of wages less than the value of the product and the services they provide because the government does not protect the poor people. That will only be beneficial to rich people.

The second self-governing of Tyler occurs when Tyler tells the member of Project Mayhem what is the goal of Project Mayhem. It is to teach the member that they can make history with their power and fight inequality. It can be seen in the quotation below.

When Tyler invented Project Mayhem, Tyler said the goal of Project Mayhem had nothing to do with other people. Tyler didn't care if other people got hurt or not. The goal was to teach each man in the project that he had the power to control history. We, each of us, can take control of the world. (Palahniuk, 1996:135)

According to the quotation above, the thesis writer concludes that Tyler wants every member of Project Mayhem to be independent. He doesn't care if in the process they get hurt or not, because they will fight the higher-ups like the authority and government to achieve the power to control history and take control of the world around us. The goal of Project Mayhem is to make a self-governing society.

### **3. Free Association**

The third characteristic of Tyler's anarchism is free association. Free association is the idea that we have the freedom to do anything in the world. Tyler's free association occurs when Tyler is eating his breakfast with Joe inside the house. Then, Tyler tells Joe what they can do when they create Project Mayhem and imagine they plant a vegetable in a golf course that is private property. They want to set the world free. It can be seen in the quotation below.

It was at breakfast that morning that Tyler invented Project Mayhem. We wanted to blast the world free of history. We were eating breakfast in the house on Paper Street, and Tyler said, picture yourself planting radishes and seed potatoes on the fifteenth green of a forgotten golf course. (Palahniuk, 1996:138)

The quotation above shows that Tyler wants to make a new world where the old rules do not exist anymore. Tyler believes that he has to do something to make this world better. The goal of Project Mayhem is the destruction of civilization. Therefore, Tyler can make the new world imagined by him.

The second free association Tyler appears when Tyler makes an example of some rules that are not necessary to Joe. He does not have to follow the rules. Some rules exist because of the burden from the previous generation's choices like global warming, and animal extinction. It can be seen in the quotation below.

"Recycling and speed limits are bullshit," Tyler said. "They're like someone who quits smoking on his deathbed." (Palahniuk, 1996:138)

From the quotation above Tyler's free association comes when he thinks about recycling and speed limits are not matter because what matter is whether he chooses to obey them or not.

All this rule is meaningless because they will happen sooner or later like telling people to quit smoking when they are on the verge of death.

#### **4. Utopian**

The fourth characteristic of Tyler's anarchism is utopian. Utopian is used to describe a political or religious philosophy that claims it is possible to build a new and perfect society in which everyone is happy. As an anarchist, Tyler is also a Utopian because he believes it is possible to create an alternative "perfect" society in which today's social, economic, and political evils are removed and people can realize their full potential. It can be seen in the quotation below.

It's Project Mayhem that's going to save the world. A cultural ice age. A prematurely induced dark age. Project Mayhem will force humanity to go dormant or into remission long enough for the Earth to recover. (Palahniuk, 1996:138)

The quotation above shows that Tyler wants to destroy the world society by creating project mayhem. Using Project mayhem to save the world and saving the world from the greater hierarchy of power, so everybody can do as they please. That's how Tyler shows his utopian characteristic of anarchism.

The second portrayal of Tyler's utopia is when Tyler explains to Joe what is project mayhem and its objective. Then, Tyler asks Joe if he is okay with anarchists because of his action by creating project mayhem. It can be seen in the quotation below.

"You justify anarchy," Tyler says. "You figure it out." Like fight club does with clerks and box boys, Project Mayhem will break up civilization so we can make something better out of the world. (Palahniuk, 1996:138)

From the quotation above, Tyler wants to make a utopian by creating project mayhem. Same as the fight club makes better in the member by destroying each other, Tyler wants to make a better out of the world by destroying today's society and civilization.

#### **5. Nihilism**

The fifth characteristic of Tyler's anarchism is nihilism. Nihilism refers to a person who doesn't bow down to any authority, and who doesn't accept any principle of faith. As an anarchist Tyler also believes in nihilism. The nihilism makes Tyler often have opposite beliefs and ideas from normal people.

Tyler's nihilism appears when he spreads a belief in religion that there is a possibility that God can hate people. Joe hears this idea and remembers it was Tyler's dogma because it

was written and copied in everywhere when he speaks with the mechanic, the member of the fight club, and soon becomes a member of the project mayhem in their house. It can be proven in the quotation below.

"What you end up doing," the mechanic says, "is you spend your life searching for a father and God." "What you have to consider," he says, "is the possibility that God doesn't like you. Could be, God hates us. This is not the worst thing that can happen." (Palahniuk, 1996:156)

The quotation above shows that Tyler's dogma has reached people around him. As a normal belief that God must be loving for all his people, Tyler's nihilism shows that there is a possibility that God despises people. How Tyler comes up with this idea because he thinks being bad to get God's attention is better than getting no attention at all. Because God's hatred is better than God's indifference.

The second nihilism Tyler expresses is when Tyler talks with Joe after they fight each other in the first fight club. He thinks that self-destruction is the answer to finding and discovering himself. It can be seen in the quotation below.

Maybe self-improvement isn't the answer. Tyler never knew his father. Maybe self-destruction is the answer. (Palahniuk, 1996:55)

From the quotation above, we can see that Tyler's nihilism is self-improvement just an empty goal to discover himself. He proposes a new idea of self-destruction to discover who he is and then build himself from scratch as it is more suitable with Tyler's past, as he was born an unwanted child by his father.

The third nihilism Tyler expresses when Tyler spread his ideology about disaster is a good thing. It can be seen in the quotation below.

"Disaster is a natural part of my evolution," Tyler whispered, "toward tragedy and dissolution." (Palahniuk, 1996:122)

According to the quotation above, We can see that Tyler believes in a disaster as a savior and a solution for his life, that can help him to get stronger.

The fourth nihilism Tyler expresses when Tyler asks Joe to hit him as hard as he can because he believes in self-destruction as a solution to find out about himself. It can be seen in the quotation below.

"Tyler said, "I want you to do me a favor. I want you to hit me as hard as you can." I didn't want to, but Tyler explained it all, about not wanting to die without any scars, about being tired of watching only professionals fight and wanting to know more about himself. About self-destruction. Palahniuk, (1996:58)

The quotation above shows that Tyler's nihilism is how he believes in self-destruction. He is tired of watching only professional fights, and he doesn't want to die without scars. Tyler believes that if he gets beaten up by Joe, he will know more about himself.

The fifth nihilism Tyler expresses is when he said it's okay to reach your lowest point in your life because the only way after that is to go up. It can be seen in the quotation below.

"If you lose your nerve before you hit the bottom," Tyler says, "you'll never really succeed." Only after disaster can we be resurrected. "It's only aft-er you've lost everything," Tyler says, "that you're free to do anything.", (1996:58)

From the quotation above it can be seen that Tyler tells Joe that to achieve the success he has to hit the rock bottom of his life. So, he can learn from his mistakes. Tyler believes that when Joe lost everything, Joe will appreciate more what he has and will have a greater motivation to achieve something in life.

## **6. Anti-Establishment**

The sixth characteristic of Tyler's anarchism is anti-establishment. Anti-establishment is a belief that stands in the opposition to the conventional politic, economy, and social ideas in society. As an anarchist, Tyler has anti-establishment in civilization and society. To achieve it, Tyler creates Project Mayhem, so he can do whatever he wants to do without being stopped by other people. It can be seen in the quotation below.

This was the goal of Project Mayhem, Tyler said, the complete and right-away destruction of civilization. (Palahniuk, 1996:138)

The quotation above shows that Tyler's anti-establishment is by destroying the conventional civilization such as government and social ideas using project mayhem. He tries to explain to Joe by destroying the civilization. He can make a brand-new civilization for a better world.

## **D. CONCLUSION**

The first portrayal of Tyler Durden's characteristic of anarchism is Self-ownership. It is seen when Tyler will do anything he wants to achieve his freedom. The second portrayal of Tyler Durden's characteristic of anarchism is self-governing. It is seen when showing that Tyler thinks the government only exists to maintain inequality between the rich and the poor. This self-governing appears usually when he feels how injustice the government does to the poor people and better to use self-governing to fight inequality.



The third portrayal of Tyler Durden's characteristic of anarchism is free association. It is seen when Tyler does not want to obey any rules in the world. As an anarchist Tyler also wants to have the freedom to do anything in the world. The fourth portrayal of Tyler Durden's characteristic of anarchism is utopian. It is seen when Tyler believes it is possible to create an alternative "perfect" society from the current one. The fifth portrayal of Tyler Durden's characteristic of anarchism is nihilism. It shows that Tyler often has opposite beliefs and ideas from normal people. The sixth portrayal of Tyler Durden's characteristic of anarchism is anti-establishment. It is seen when Tyler creates project mayhem to destroy the conventional civilization such as government and social ideas.

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