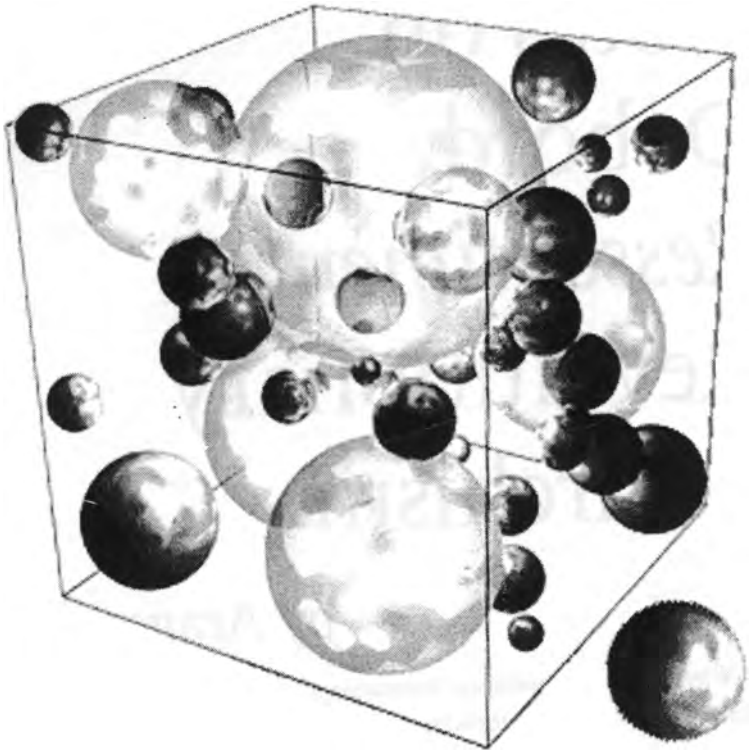

Debord, *Ressentiment*, & Revolutionary Anarchism

Notes on Debord, *Ressentiment* & Revolutionary Anarchism

by Aragorn!

Why does the Situationist International continue to be such a rich source of inspiration for anarchist thinkers and activity today? They were a decidedly not-anarchist group whose ostensible leader Guy Debord's ideas resonated much more with Marx, Korsh, and Adorno than Bakunin or Kropotkin. Naturally much of the influence of the SI is based on the theory that the general strike in France in May of 1968 represents the highest form of struggle against the dominant order in this historical period. This theory isn't necessarily supported by other social struggles of the past 30 years[1] but does correspond nicely to an anarchist framework of what social transformation *should* look like. Therein lies the tension and rationale for the continuing interest in the SI and Guy's work in particular.

If the SI were represented by one book it would be Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*. If one portion of that book concerns anarchists and particularly anarchist self-knowledge it would be chapter four—The Proletariat as Subject and Representation. Debord damns anarchists' historical failure to theorize or accomplish that goal especially in those times when anarchists were best equipped and positioned to do exactly that.

These critiques deserve further examination. In this context we will use the

newest translation from Ken Knabb.

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The First International's initial successes enabled it to free itself from the confused influences of the dominant ideology that had survived within it. But the defeat and repression that it soon encountered brought to the surface a conflict between two different conceptions of proletarian revolution, each of which contained an authoritarian aspect that amounted to abandoning the conscious self-emancipation of the working class. The feud between the Marxists and the Bakuninists, which eventually became irreconcilable, actually centered on two different issues—the question of power in a future revolutionary society and the question of the organization of the current movement—and each of the adversaries reversed their position when they went from one aspect to the other. Bakunin denounced the illusion that classes could be abolished by means of an authoritarian implementation of state power, warning that this would lead to the formation of a new bureaucratic ruling class and to the dictatorship of the most knowledgeable (or of those reputed to be such). Marx, who believed that the concomitant maturation of economic contradictions and of the workers' education in democracy would reduce the role of a proletarian state to a brief phase needed to legitimize the new social relations brought into being by objective factors, denounced Bakunin and his supporters as an authoritarian conspiratorial elite who were deliberately placing themselves above the International with the harebrained scheme of imposing on society an irresponsible dictatorship of the most revolutionary (or of those who would designate themselves as such). Bakunin did in fact recruit followers on such a basis: "In the midst of the popular tempest we must be the invisible pilots guiding the revolution, not through any kind of overt power but through the collective dictatorship of our Alliance—a dictatorship without any badges or titles or official status, yet all the more powerful because it will have none of the appearances of power." Thus two ideologies of working-class revolution opposed each other, each containing a partially true critique, but each losing the unity of historical thought and setting itself up as an ideological authority. Powerful organizations such as German Social Democracy and the Iberian Anarchist

Federation faithfully served one or the other of these ideologies; and everywhere the result was very different from what had been sought.

Anarchists have continued to deny the viability of the critique of anarchist authoritarianism. Debord cites Bakunin's "Invisible Dictatorship" as evidence of the kind of disconnect that anarchist organizational philosophy has suffered in the service of the perception of effectiveness. It is unclear whether a truly anti-authoritarian organizational philosophy has the capacity to wage a revolution that dismantles class society and the bureaucratic organization of the state. We do know that the authoritarian mechanisms of the Bolsheviks, Maoists, and other Communist groups have resulted in regimes that, while qualitatively different than the regimes they replaced, have not ended class society or the state.

Debord's assumption is that the conscious self-emancipation of the working class will be the agent of social transformation *and* the power in a future revolutionary society[2]. Like most statements about a possible future that has little to no historical precedent it could as easily be said that he is right as that he is wrong.

The theory that the self-emancipation of the working class a) is possible, b) would result in a total social transform, and c) that this transformation would follow the desires of a classless, stateless society is (in order of statement); implausible, plausible and barely plausible. This bleak assessment isn't offered specifically as a counterpoint to the sophisticated theories of left-communists who continue to pursue and cheerlead efforts for the development of this theory as those efforts are respectable within their own logic. Instead this assessment is motivated by the desire to explicate the difference between a theory and a fact. Most adherents to Debord's theory of social transformation[3] (derived in part from Socialism or Barbarism) desire it so greatly that they are only willing to discuss it within its own logic. As that logic is contained within the framework of the impossible (or, differently stated, the Not Happened Yet) questioning the framework in pursuit of challenging its foundation (even if done in a civil manner and with good faith) is seen as counter-revolutionary, reactionary, and as rejecting a class analysis (which, within this logic means the same thing as counter-revolutionary).

Why is the theory that the self-emancipation of the working class will transform class society implausible? On some level this statement refers to the confla-

tion of theory within the social sciences to reality (or to possible reality). What is the motivation of theory within the revolutionary tradition? Is it to develop theory or to develop strategy? Should evaluations of such a theory be based on historical evidence, an analysis of modern conditions, or are the theories of revolutionary thought sacrosanct? Put differently, is the expression of the theory also the desire and practice of said theory? Clearly these questions beg further pursuit and are laid down within this context to express the levels of hesitation that should inform an approach to this theory. To answer the initial question, the theory of working class transformation seems historically most appropriate to a time prior to World War II and the time of disconnect between industrial production and the centers of world-wide political, economic, and military power. Additionally it appears to be a theory at crossroads to concepts like Debord's Spectacle, Adorno's analysis of The Culture Industry and even Marx's theory of alienation.

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The fact that anarchists have seen the goal of proletarian revolution as immediately present represents both the strength and the weakness of collectivist anarchist struggles (the only forms of anarchism that can be taken seriously — the pretensions of the individualist forms of anarchism have always been ludicrous). From the historical thought of modern class struggles collectivist anarchism retains only the conclusion, and its constant harping on this conclusion is accompanied by a deliberate indifference to any consideration of methods. Its critique of political struggle has thus remained abstract, while its commitment to economic struggle has been channeled toward the mirage of a definitive solution that will supposedly be achieved by a single blow on this terrain, on the day of the general strike or the insurrection. The anarchists have saddled themselves with fulfilling an ideal. Anarchism remains a merely ideological negation of the state and of class society — the very social conditions which in their turn foster separate ideologies. It is the ideology of pure freedom, an ideology that puts everything on the same level and loses any conception of the "historical evil" (the negation at work within history). This fusion of all partial demands into a single all-encompassing demand has given anarchism the merit of representing the rejection of existing conditions in the name of the whole of life rather than from the standpoint of some particular critical specialization; but the fact that this fusion has been envisaged only in the absolute, in accordance with individual whim and in advance of any practi-

cal actualization, has doomed anarchism to an all too obvious incoherence. Anarchism responds to each particular struggle by repeating and reapplying the same simple and all-embracing lesson, because this lesson has from the beginning been considered the be-all and end-all of the movement. This is reflected in Bakunin's 1873 letter of resignation from the Jura Federation: "During the past nine years the International has developed more than enough ideas to save the world, if ideas alone could save it, and I challenge anyone to come up with a new one. It's no longer the time for ideas, it's time for actions." This perspective undoubtedly retains proletarian historical thought's recognition that ideas must be put into practice, but it abandons the historical terrain by assuming that the appropriate forms for this transition to practice have already been discovered and will never change.

This thesis represents a complex and multiform criticism of anarchism, including a critique of anarchist immediatism, a-historicism, anti-intellectualism, maximalism, idealism, and of being a-dialectical and ideological. There is also a throw-away statement about how individualist anarchist shouldn't be taken seriously which, given Debord's purpose in seeing the self-emancipation of the working class shouldn't come as a big surprise. All of these are couched more as assertions than as developed criticisms but infer a sophisticated analysis that should have been taken more seriously over the past 40 years (SoS was written in 1967) than they have been.

The anarchist belief (or more modernly stated, principle) that total social transformation can happen at any time, that the possibility is eternally present, can either be understood as the expression of a great naiveté or of a willful forgetfulness. There are very few anarchists (who have been anarchists for any period of time) who don't remember the failures of the 20th century revolutions for anarchists. Mexico, Russian, and Spain resound loudly in the anarchist imagination. This anarchist principle of immediatism should be seen as a result of two conflicting origins, anarchist idealism (that Debord criticizes in this context and in another that we will examine below) and the origins of revolutionary anarchism in the work of Bakunin. Bakunin believed that only three conditions were necessary for a social revolution. These were sheer hatred for the conditions in which the masses find themselves, the belief the change is a possible alternative, and a clear vision of the society that has to be made to bring about human emancipation. This is in stark contrast to Marx's historical materialist perspective that perceives communism to only be possible as a result of an explicit class struggle. Put another

way, Bakunin's revolutionary vision originates in hatred and results in emancipation—entirely subjective values. Marx's revolutionary vision starts from an analysis of class stratification leading to conflict and ends in a new economic relationship (or mode of production) that resolves this conflict. The anarchist principle of immediacy relates to the ambivalence that most anarchists have about materialist programs of social change.

The critique of anarchist maximalism[4] is more complicated and continues to plague most radicals, anarchist or not. It goes without saying that if one desires a society without political representation then working within the infrastructure of a world *with* this representation would put one at odds with themselves. Combine this conflict with the lack of a materialist (or programmatic) vision of social transformation and the result is that anarchists tend to reflect a wide range of approaches. This appears from the outside as anarchist incoherence (regarding issue of reform, revolution, and effectiveness) and from the inside results in great divisiveness (that is likely a close approximation of the liturgical conflicts within the Communist International's—but without the bloodshed). Anarchists are not the only ones to argue for non-specialist, non-compromised practice. Camatte puts it well in *Against Domestication*[5].

> We are faced today with the following alternatives: either there is actual revolution—the whole process, from the formation of revolutionaries to the destruction of the capitalist mode of production—or there is destruction, under one form or another of the human species. There is no other possibility. When revolution is unleashed there will be no need to justify what is happening; rather it will be a question of being powerful enough to avoid abuses and excesses. And this is possible only if individual men and women, before the revolutionary explosion, begin to be autonomous: since they don't need any leaders, they can gain mastery over their own revolt.

Debord's strongest critique of anarchists regards their claim to the ideology of pure freedom. Anarchists usually put this as having a practice that does not separate ends and means—meaning that a primary anarchist activity is the examination of any and all activities and projects with the microscope of freedom. There are numerous examples but a simple, and common, one is the belief that consensus decision making is the anti-authoritarian way to make decisions. Consensus promoters see it as so emblematic of anarchist process that when non-anarchist groups use the model they are characterized as having anarchist

methods (or practicing anti-authoritarian decision making).

Within the context of revolutionary struggle anarchist adherence to the principle of freedom (as ideology) has generally entailed turning complicated situations into simple choices and then taking the option least likely to succeed. The example of the Spanish Civil War is particularly painful in this regard. Several "influential militants" met with the Popular Front government on July 20th 1996 (after the initial repulsion of the military coup in Barcelona) and in a resulting meeting decided to allow the government to stay in office (at exactly the moment when they had the most leverage to throw them out). As a result the CNT-FAI collaborated with the rest of the Popular Front in (eventually) dismantling (by legitimizing and then ceding) the generalized libertarian communist project rather than implementing it by an "anarchist dictatorship."[6]

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The anarchists, who explicitly distinguish themselves from the rest of the workers movement by their ideological conviction, reproduce this separation of competencies within their own ranks by providing a terrain that facilitates the informal domination of each particular anarchist organization by propagandists and defenders of their ideology, specialists whose mediocre intellectual activity is largely limited to the constant regurgitation of a few eternal truths. The anarchists' ideological reverence for unanimous decision making has ended up paving the way for uncontrolled manipulation of their own organizations by specialists in freedom; and revolutionary anarchism expects the same type of unanimity, obtained by the same means, from the masses once they have been liberated. Furthermore, the anarchists' refusal to take into account the great differences between the conditions of a minority banded together in present-day struggles and of a postrevolutionary society of free individuals has repeatedly led to the isolation of anarchists when the moment for collective decision making actually arrives, as is shown by the countless anarchist insurrections in Spain that were contained and crushed at a local level.

Along with a further expansion of the critique of consensus decision making is a fascinating analysis of anarchist timing. If this sketch of Spain is true (which is arguable) then anarchists are being accused of being too absorbed in their own internecine

decision making struggles to pay attention to the needs of the greater struggle (as in what is outside of their own organizations). Regardless of how appropriate this analysis is in regards to the Spanish Revolution it is entirely appropriate generally. While this problem of timing, focus, and scale can be seen as debilitating within the context of military conflict it continues to be a struggle in any project that does not maintain the organizational flexibility to include what would usually be called management functions. If your project is limited to self-maintenance, to adherence to a mission statement, and to developing proposals that remain limited enough in scale to be consensed upon, you will continue to be out-organized by groups who consider macro-priorities. The personal is the political and is a cul de sac for a type of manipulation that may be in the service of freedom but only of the most cerebral type.[7]

Where we do go from here?

Anarchists have taken Debord seriously, to the extent that they have, in several different ways, most of which he would not have approved. One way has been to entirely embrace his criticism of anarchist failure within the context of the self-emancipation of the working class and, as a result, abandon the topic of the failure. Another is to extend the analysis of the Spectacle (through the concept of the integrated spectacle[8]) back in time to a point of an original alienation. Yet another has been to critically engage with Debord without particularly engaging with the project of social transformation. Finally there are those who would pursue the implications of Debord's critique of anarchist practice and ideology towards ends yet discovered but without his particular motivation (of the self-emancipation of the working class). Debord's debt to Marx isn't one owed by anarchists.

1 The essential example would include the Zapatistas and the question of what does struggle look like. Increasing work for decreasing gains? Negotiated conflict with weakened states? At what price the illusion of autonomy?

2 Aphorism 123

3 This theory is actually quite popular among the far left. Varients include most left-communists, so-called class struggle anarchists, and paleo-marxists.

4 "Maximalist Anarchism," John Moore

5 Jacques Camatte, *Against Domestication*

6 See Lawrence Jarach's *The Spanish Revolution* in the latest (#62) issue of *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* for further analysis of this point.

7 Aphorism 94

8 In 1967 I distinguished two rival and successive forms of spectacular power, the concentrated and the diffuse. Both of them floated above real society, as its goal and its lie. The former, placing in the fore the ideology grouped around a dictatorial personality, had accompanied the totalitarian counter-revolution, Nazi as well as Stalinist. The latter, driving salaried workers to freely operate their choice upon the great variety of new commodities that confront them, had represented the Americanization of the world, a process which in some respects frightened but also successfully seduced those countries where it had been possible to maintain traditional forms of bourgeois democracy. Since then a third form has been established, through the rational combination of these two, and on the basis of a victory of the form which had showed itself stronger: the diffuse. This is the integrated spectacular, which has since tended to impose itself globally.
-*Comments on Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord (IV)

The Tyranny of Tyranny

By Cathy Levine

An article entitled 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness' which has received wide attention around the women's movement, (in MS, Second Wave, etc) assails the trend towards 'leaderless', 'structureless' groups, as the main - if not sole - organisational form of the movement, as a dead-end. While written and received in good faith, as an aid to the movement, the article is destructive in its distortion and maligning of a valid, conscious strategy for building a revolutionary movement. It is high time that we recognise the direction these tendencies are pointing in, as a real political alternative to hierarchical organisation, rather than trying to nip it in the bud.

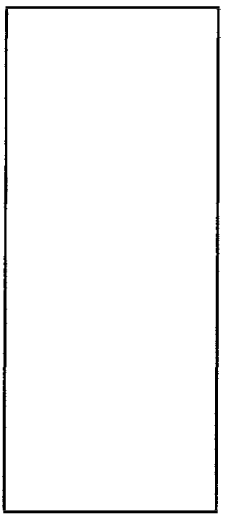
There are (at least) two different models for building a movement, only one of which does Joreen acknowledge: a mass organisation with strong, centralised control, such as a Party. The other model, which consolidates mass support only as a coup de grace necessity, is based on small groups in voluntary association.

A large group functions as an aggregate of its parts - each member functions as a unit, a cog in the wheel of the large organisation. The individual is alienated by the size, and relegated, to struggling against the obstacle created by the size of the group - as example, expending energy to get a point of view recognised.

Small groups, on the other hand, multiply the strength of each member. By working collectively in small numbers, the small group utilises the various contributions of each person to their fullest, nurturing and developing individual input, instead of dissipating it in the competitive survival-of-the-fittest/smartest/wittiest spirit of the large organisation.

Joreen associates the ascendency of the small groups with the consciousness-

raising phase of the women's movement, but concludes that, with the focus shifting beyond the changing of individual consciousness towards building a mass revolutionary movement, women should begin working towards building a large organisation. It is certainly true and has been for some time that many women who have been in consciousness-raising groups for a while feel the need to expand their political activities beyond the scope of the group and are at a loss as to how to proceed. But it is equally true that other branches of the Left are at a similar loss, as to how to defeat capitalist, imperialist, quasi-fascist Amerika.



But Joreen fails to define what she means by the women's movement, which is an essential prerequisite to a discussion of strategy or direction.

The feminist movement in its fullest sense, that is, as a movement to defeat Patriarchy, is a revolutionary movement and a socialist movement, Placing it under the umbrella of the Left. A central problem Of women determining strategy for the women's movement is how to relate to the male Left; we do not want to take their, Modus Operandi as ours, because we have seen them as a perpetuation of patriarchal, and latterly, capitalist values.

Despite our best efforts to disavow and dissassociate ourselves from the male Left, we have, nonetheless, had our energy. Men tend to organise the way they fuck - one big rush and then that "wham, slam, thank you maam", as it were. Women should be building our movement the way we make love - gradually, with sustained involvement, limitless endurance - and of course, multiple orgasms. Instead of getting discouraged and isolated now, we should be in our small groups - discussing, Planning, creating and making trouble. We should always be making trouble for patriarchy and always supporting women - we should always be actively engaging in and creating feminist activity, because we ail thrive on it; in the absence of feminist activity, women take to tranquillizers, go insane and commit suicide.

The other extreme from inactivity, which seems to plague Politically active people, is over-involvement, which led, in the late '60s, to a generation of burnt-out radicals. A feminist friend once commented that, to her, "being in the women's movement" meant spending approximately 25% of her time engaging in group activities and 75% of her time developing herself. This is a real, important time allocation for 'movement' women to think about. The male movement taught us that 'movement' People are supposed to devote 24 hours a day to the Cause, which is consistent with female socialisation towards self-sacrifice. Whatever the source of our selflessness,

however, we tend to plunge ourselves head-first into organisational activities, neglecting personal development, until one day we find we do not know what we are doing and for whose benefit, and we hate ourselves as much as before the movement. (Male over-involvement, on the other hand, obviously unrelated to any sex-linked trait of self-sacrifice, does however smell strongly of the Protestant/Jewish, work/ achievement ethic, and even more flagrantly, of the rational, cool, unemotional facade with which Machismo suppresses male feelings.)

These perennial Pitfalls of movement people, which amount to a bottomless Pit for the movement, are explained by Joreen as part of the 'Tyranny of Structurelessness', which is a joke from the standpoint that sees a nation of quasi-automatons, struggling to maintain a semblanceof individuality against a post-technological, military/industrial bulldozer.

What we definitely don't need is more structures and rules, providing us with easy answers, pre-fab alternatives and no room in which to create our own way of life. What is threatening the female Left and the other branches even more, is the 'tyranny of tyranny', which has prevented us from relating to individuals, or from creating organisations in ways that do not obliterate individuality with prescribed roles, or from liberating us from capitalist structure.

Contrary to Joreen's assumption, then, the consciousness-raising phase of the movement is not over. Consciousness-raising is a vital process which must go on, among those engaged in social change, to and through the revolutionary liberation. Raising our consciousness - meaning, helping each other extricate ourselves from ancient shackles - is the main way in which women are going to turn their personal anger into constructive energy, and join the struggle. Consciousness-raising, however, is a loose term - a vacuous nothingism, at this point - and needs to be qualified. An offensive television commercial can raise a women's consciousness as she irons her husbands shirts alone in her house; it can remind her of what she already knows, ie that she is trapped, her life is meaningless, boring, etc - but it will probably not encourage her to leave the laundry and organise a houseworkers' strike. Consciousness-raising, as a strategy for revolution, just involve helping women translate their personal dissatisfaction into class-consciousness and making organised women accessible to all women.

In suggesting that the next step after consciousness-raising groups is building a movement, Joreen not only implies a false dichotomy between one and the other, but also overlooks an important process of the feminist movement, that of building a women's culture. While, ultimately, a massive force of women (and some men) will be necessary to smash the power of the state, a mass movement itself does not a revolution make. If we hope to create a society free of mate supremacy, when we overthrow capitalism and build international socialism, we had better start working on it right away, because some of our very best anti-capitalist friends are going to give us the hardest time. We must be developing a visible women's culture, within which women can define and express themselves apart from patriarchal standards, and which will meet the needs of women where patriarchy has failed.

Culture is an essential part of a revolutionary movement - and it is also one of the greatest tools of counter-revolution. We must be very careful to specify that the culture we are discussing is revolutionary, and struggle constantly to make sure it remains inveterately opposed to the father culture.

The culture of an oppressed or colonised class or caste is not necessarily revolutionary. America contains - both in the sense of 'having' and in preventing the spread of - many 'sub-cultures' which, though defining themselves as different from the father culture, do not threaten the status quo. In fact, they are part of the 'pluralistic' American one-big-happy-family society/ethnic cultures, the 'counter-culture'. They are acknowledged, validated, adopted and ripped off by the big culture. Co-opation.

The women's culture faces that very danger right now, from a revolutionary new liberating girdle to MS magazine, to The Diary of a Mad Housewife. The New Woman, ie middle-class, college-educated,mate-associated can have her share of the American Pie. Sounds scrumptious - but what about revolution? We must constantly re-evaluate our position to make sure we are not being absorbed into Uncle Sam's ever-open arms.

The question of women's culture, while denigrated by the arrogant and blind male Left, is not necessarily a revisionist issue. The polarisation between masculine and feminine roles as defined and controlled by male society, has not only subjugated women, but has made all men, regardless of class or race, feel superior to women - this feeling of superiority, countering anti-capitalist sentiment, is the lifeblood of the system. The aim of feminist revolution is for women to achieve our total humanity, which means destroying the masculine and feminine roles which make both men and women

only half human. Creating a woman's culture is the means through which we shall restore our lost humanity.

The question of our lost humanity brings up the subject that vulgar Marxists of every predilection have neglected in their analysis for over half century - the psycho-sexual elements in the character structure of each individual, which acts as a personal policeman within every member of society. Wilhelm Reich began to describe, in narrow, heterosexual, male-biased form, the character armour in each person, which makes people good fascists or, in our society, just good citizens. Women experience this phenomenon every day, as the repressed feelings, especially obvious among our male friends, who find it so difficult to express or even 'expose' their feelings honestly. The psychic crippling which capitalist psychology coerces us into believing is the problems of the individuals, is a massive social condition which helps advanced capitalist society to hold together.

Psychic crippling of its citizens makes its citizens report to work, fight in wars, suppress its women, non-whites, and all non-conformists vulnerable to suppression. In our post-technological society, every member of which recognises this as being the most advanced culture, the psychic crippling is also the most advanced - there is more shit for the psyche to cut through, what with Jonathan Livingston Seaquil and the politics of 'You're okay, I'm okay', not to mention post-neo-Freudians and the psycho-surgeons. For the umpteenth time, let it be said that, unless we examine inner psychic shackles, at the time we study outer, political structures and the relationship between the two, we will not succeed in creating a force to challenge our enemy; in fact, we will not even know the enemy. The Left has spent hours and tomes trying to define the ruling class; tee ruling class has representative pigs inside the head of every member of society -thus, the logic behind so-called paranoia. The tyranny of tyranny is a deeply-entrenched foe.

Where psychological struggle intersects political involvement is the small group. This is why the question of strategy and tactics and methods of organisation are so crucial at this moment. The Left has been trying for decades to rally people into the streets, always before a number sufficient to make a dent exist. As Stone pointed out, you can't make a revolution when four-fifths of the people are happy.

Nor should we wait until everyone is ready to become radical. While on the one hand, we should constantly suggest alternatives to capitalism, through food co-ops, anti-corporate actions and acts of personal rebellion, we should also be fighting against capitalist psychic structures and the values and living patterns which derive from them. Structures, chairmen, leaders, rhetoric - when a meeting of a Leftist group becomes indistinguishable in style from a session of a US Senate, we should not laugh about it, but re-evaluate the structure behind the style, and recognise a representative of the enemy.

The origin of the small group preference in the women's movement -and by small group I refer to political collectives - was, as Joreen explains, a reaction against the over-structured, hierachical organisation of society in general, and male Left groups in particular. But what people fail to realise is that we are reacting against bureaucracy because it deprives us of control, like the rest of this society; and instead of recognising the folly of our ways by returning to the structured fold, we who are rebelling against bureaucracy should be creating an alternative to bureaucratic organisation. The reason for building a movement on a foundation of collectives is that we want to create a revolutionary culture consistent with our view of the new society; it is more than a reaction; the small group is a solution.

Because the women's movement is tending towards small groups and because the women's movement lacks direction at this time, some people conclude that small groups are to blame for the lack of direction. They wave the shibboleth of 'structure' as a solution to the strategic stalemate, as if structure would give us theoretical insight or relief from personal anxieties. it might give us a structure into which to 'organise', or fit more women, but in the absence of political strategy we may create a Kafkaesque irony, where the trial is replaced by a meeting.

The lack of political energy that has been stalking us for the last few years, less in the women's movement than in the male Left, probably relates directly to feelings of personal shittiness that tyrannize each and every one of us. Unless we confront those feelings directly and treat them with the same seriousness as we treat the bombing of Hanoi, paralysis by the former will prevent us from retaliating effectively against the latter.

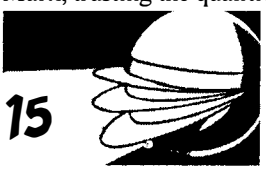
Rather than calling for the replacement of small groups with structured, larger groups, we need to encourage each other to get settled into small, unstructured groups

which recognise and extol the value of the individual. Friendships, more than therapy of any kind, instantly relieve the feelings of personal shittiness - the revolution should be built on the model of friendships.

The omnipresent problem which Joreen confronts, that of elites, does not find solution in the formation of structures. Contrary to the belief that lack of up-front structures lead to in- sidious, invisible structures based on elites, the absence of structures in small, mutual trust groups fights elitism on the basic level - the level of personal dynamics, at which the individual who counters insecurity with aggres- sive behaviour rules over the person whose insecurity main- tains silence. The small personally involved group learns, first to recognise those stylistic differences, and then to appreciate and work with them; rather than trying to either ignore or annihilate differences in personal style, the small group learns to appreciate and utilise them, thus strengthening the personal power of each individual. Given that each of us has been socialised in a society in Which individual competition with every other individual is the way of existence, we are not going to obliterate personal-styles-as-power, except by constant recognition of these differences, and by learning to let differences of personal style exist together. Insofar as we are not the enemy, but the victims, we need to nurture and not destroy each other. The destructive elements will recede gradually as we grow stronger. But in the meantime we should guard against situations which reward personal style with power.

Meetings award prizes to the more aggressive, rhetorical, charismatic, articulate (almost always male). Considering how much the various derivatives of the term 'anarchism' are bandied about, very few people in the Left have studied anarchism with any seriousness. For people priding themselves on cynicism about social taboos, we sure are sucked in by this taboo against anarchism.

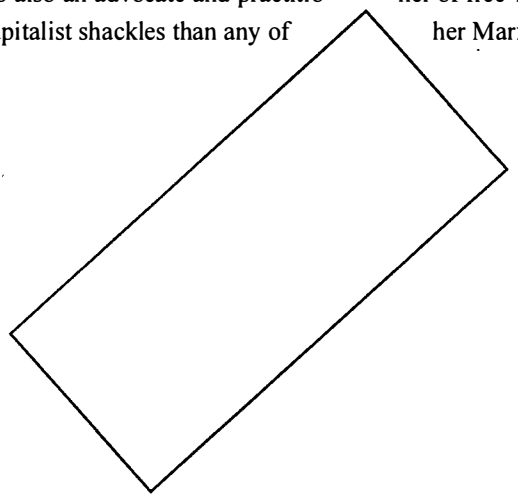
Like masturbation, anarchism is something we have been brought up to fear, irrationally and unquestioningly, because not to fear it might lead us to probe it, learn it and like it. For anyone who has ever considered the possibility that masturbation might provide more benefits than madness, a study of anarchism is highly recommended - all the way back to the time of Marx, when Bakunin was his most radical socialist adversary... most radical, because he was a dialectical giant step beyond Marx, trusting the qualities of individuals to save humanity.



Why has the Left all but ignored anarchism? It might be because the anarchists have never sustained a revolutionary victory. Marxism has triumphed, but so has capitalism. What does that prove, or what does it suggest but that maybe the loser, up to this point is on our side? The Russian anarchists fiercely opposed the very revisionist tyranny among the Bolsheviks that the new Left would come to deride with sophomoric callousness, before their old Left parents in the '60s. Sure, the old generation of American Leftists were narrow-minded not to see capitalism regenerating in Russia; but the tunnel vision with which we have charted a path of Marxist-Leninist dogma is not something to be proud of either.

Women, of course, have made it out of the tunnel way before most men, because we found ourselves in the dark, being led by the blind men of the new Left, and split. Housewife for the revolution or prostitute for the proletariats; amazing how quickly our revision restored itself. All across the country independent groups of women began functioning without the structure, leaders and other factotems of the male Left, creating independently and simultaneously, organisations similar to those of anarchists of many decades and locales. No accident either.

The style, the audacity of Emma Goldman, has been touted by women who do not regard themselves as anarchists... because Emma was so right-on. Few women have gotten so many men scared for so long as Emma Goldman. It seems logical that we should study Emma, not to embrace her every thought, but to find the source of her strength and love of life. It is no accident, either, that the anarchist Red Terror named Emma was also an advocate and practitioner of free-love; she was an affront to more capitalist shackles than any of her Marxist contemporaries.



Anarchism and Poststructuralism

on Todd May's *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*

by John Moore

Any discussion of the interface between anarchism and poststructuralism is likely to be written from one side of the fence or the other, and this will inevitably affect the nature of the analysis undertaken. This text is written from the poststructuralist side, and as a result one must carefully scrutinise the author's grounding in anarchism. The book's bibliography provides a useful indicator in this respect. The anarchist titles listed comprise two books by Bakunin, three by Kropotkin, one by Proudhon, one by Bookchin, one by Ward, *Reinventing Anarchy*, *The Anarchist Reader*, and the standard overviews by Woodcock and Joll. The most notable aspect of this list is its omissions.

Elsewhere I have argued that anarchist history, on the model of feminist history, can be assigned a two phase periodisation. Just like first-wave feminism, anarchism has an early phase, conveniently labelled as classical anarchism. From its intellectual origins in Godwin and Proudhon, classical anarchism developed into its mature form during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, finding its climactic expression (but also its swansong) in the Spanish Revolution. This is the phase of anarchism which Woodcock pronounced dead in the mid-1950s in the first edition of Anarchism.

But unbeknownst to those immersed in classical anarchist traditions, a new, second-wave of anarchism (akin and indeed roughly contemporaneous with second-wave feminism) was stirring. The Situationists represent a convenient marker of the transition point, and serve as origin for the remarkable efflorescence of second-wave anarchism that is currently underway. Second-wave anarchism is still frequently not even recognised by anarchists and commentators who still cling to the idea that classical anarchism is the one and only true form of anarchism, even though first-wave anarchism was seen as moribund by Woodcock

forty years ago.

As a result, many outside the anarchist milieu are given the misleading impression that a) classical anarchism is anarchism, b) anarchism is therefore an historical phenomenon, and thus c) there are no current manifestations of anarchist praxis. The unfortunate consequences of these misconceptions can be seen in May's understanding of anarchism. With the partial exception of Reinventing Anarchy, the anarchist titles in May's bibliography consist entirely of texts on or by classical anarchists. (Ward, like Goodman, can perhaps be seen as a transitional figure, but his grounding in the British anarcho-reformist tradition of Godwin and Read underscores his classical anarchist orientation. Bookchin, particularly in light of Social Anarchism or Lifestyle-Anarchism, can be unproblematically characterised as a late manifestation of the classical anarchist tradition.)

The question that must be addressed to May's text is: Where are the second-wave anarchists? Where are Debord, Vaneigem, Perlman, Zerzan, and so on? This is not mere pedantry. May is able to cast poststructuralist thinkers as latter-day anarchists precisely because his knowledge of anarchism suggests that currently there is an intellectual vacuum where classical anarchism used to be. The fact that this vacuum is an illusion—an illusion partly fostered by commentators who are either ignorant of, or refuse to acknowledge the existence of, second-wave anarchism—casts an unfortunate doubt on the validity of May's project.

May's book 'attempts to capture what is—or what ought to be—most lasting in the legacy of post-structuralist thought: its anarchism' (155). In order to achieve this aim, May distinguishes between three types of political philosophy:

formal, strategic, and tactical. Formal political philosophy is 'characterized by its cleaving either to the pole of what ought to be or to the pole of what is at the expense of the tension between the two' (4). It provides abstract discussions of the large-scale principles that define the ideal society, and thus generates a totalising, unitary explanation of social relations.

Strategic political philosophy, on the other hand, is concerned with the historical implementation of political philosophies and thus with the pragmatic methodological concerns of achieving political goals. As a result, it 'involves a unitary analysis that aims toward a single goal' (11). In the strategic perspective, power is seen to emanate from a particular centre (e.g., the State, capitalist economic relations) which then provides the focus for practical activities.

In contrast to these totalising forms of political expression, however, tactical political philosophy refuses to align itself with the poles of either what is or what ought to be, preferring to oscillate between the two. Refusing any grand narrative or totalising explanation, the tactical perspective does not see power as residing in a specific locus, but as arising at a number of sites and in the interplay between these sites. In practical terms, this means that political intervention must be local and plural, rather than general and unified. It also has important implications for social agency in that it questions the legitimacy of representation. If the sites of power are multiple, then no one vanguard group is in a privileged position to speak or act on behalf of others.

For May, poststructuralist political philosophy differs from other types of politics because it affirms the tactical rather than the formal or the strategic. However, in anarchism—despite its ambivalent commitment between tactical and strategic thinking—he perceives "a forerunner to current poststructuralist thought' (13). In an interesting discussion. May exposes the failures of Marxism in terms of its adherence to rigid forms of formal and strategic thinking. He then proceeds to a consideration of anarchism (for which read: classical anarchism) and thence to a discussion of the compatibility of anarchist and poststructuralist thinking, with the aim of outlining (in the words of a chapter title) the 'steps toward a poststructuralist anarchism'.

The problem with this project is that it remains framed entirely within terms of classical anarchism. May sees (classical) anarchism as unsatisfactorily ambivalent in its strategic and tactical tendencies. The reason for these contradictory commitments is easily deduced. Classical anarchism is strategic insofar as it locates the source of power in a single institution—the State, but tactical where it resists the different types of power that emerge where the State exists. For May, however, the fact that (classical) anarchism—in contrast to Marxism -has pronounced tactical tendencies remains sufficient to cast it as a 'forerunner' of poststructuralist politics, and to characterise the latter as the contemporary form of (intellectual) anarchism.

This is clearly unsatisfactory as well as inac-

curate. Anarchism is not the forerunner of anything—least of all a pallid academic tendency such as poststructuralism—because it is not a dead Victorian doctrine, but a living, thriving project. The fact that it has undergone various transformations during its second-wave which have rendered it invisible or unrecognisable to some, should not disguise the fact that classical anarchism can no longer be taken as the basis for discussion of contemporary anarchism. Second-wave anarchism has expanded the project of the classical anarchists: the focus of contemporary anarchism is not the abolition of the State, but the abolition of the totality, of life structured by governance and coercion, of power itself in all its multiple forms. And it is here that contemporary anarchism departs markedly from May's poststructuralist anarchism. Not least in the fact that second-wave anarchism incorporates an explicit rejection of the political as an appropriate focus for practice.

In dealing with issues of power. May draws extensively upon Deleuze, Lyotard and (particularly) Foucault. While approving of the classical anarchist recognition that power is arranged through intersecting networks rather than exclusively through hierarchies, he asserts: 'The anarchist picture of networks requires deepening' (51). And the poststructuralist analysis of power is to provide this development. Poststructuralism, for May, rejects 'the a priori of traditional (i.e., classical] anarchism* (85): the notion of power as solely a negative, repressive force, and the notion of subjectivity as a viable source of political action. On the basis of a critique of these ideas from a poststructuralist perspective. May postulates 'a new type of anarchism' (85) which rejects strategic thought for a comprehensive tactical approach: poststructuralist anarchism. The fact that 'a new type of anarchism'—i.e., second-wave anarchism—already exists, and has on occasion (e.g., in Zerzan's "The Catastrophe of Postmodernism') been very critical of the poststructuralist project, escapes May altogether.

Following Foucault et al. May affirms the idea that power is not always suppressive, but sometimes productive. But like his poststructuralist mentors, he fudges the issue, from an anarchist perspective, by reiterating this familiar formula. Whether power is suppressive or productive, it is still power that is 1 say, it still uses force (whether overtly or insidiously) to construct and defin individuals and make them think or act in particular ways. Whether power say 'thou shall not...' or 'here are your options ...', coercion is involved.

"One would not call all exercises of power oppressive," May states (96). But surely that depends upon whom one is. May admits that 'anarchists are suspicious of all power' (61), although (as far as the second-wave is concerned) suspicion is a far too cautious term for a project aimed at the abolition of the ensemble of power relations, the control complex itself. But this is not the case with Foucault, who is

quoted approvingly as saying:

relations of power are not something bad in themselves, from which one must free oneself.... The problem is not of trying to dissolve them in the Utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give one's self the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the ethos, the practice of self, which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination. (123)

The references to law, management and minimalist domination, plus the explicit anti-utopian stance, suggest the incompatibility of Foucauldian ideology with contemporary anarchism, and undermine May's claims for a poststructuralist anarchism. "The question," May avers, 'is not whether or not there is power, but which relationships of power are acceptable and which are unacceptable" (123) But this is merely the question of liberalism, and indicates the recuperative nature of poststructuralism in co-opting radical impulses.

For contemporary anarchism, no relationships of power are acceptable. 'If power is suppressive, then the central political question to be asked is: When is the exercise of power legitimate, and when is it not?' (61). But for second-wave anarchism, the answer is the same, whether power is suppressive or productive: never! 'Given that the old answers to political problems—appropriating the means of production, seizing or eliminating the state, destroying all relations of power—are found to be lacking, what perspective can poststructuralist theory offer for thinking about political change as well as power and political oppression?' (112). Aside from the fact that for anarchists these are social not political problems, the putative failure of 'the old answers' is not proved and thus cannot be taken as a given. What can be established, however, is that the perspectives offered by poststructuralism are reformist.

May offers an unconvincing defence to the charge of reformism: "The mistake that is made in contrasting revolution and reform lies in the assumption that the former involves a qualitative change in society, while the latter involves only a quantitative change. However, on the alternative picture of politics being sketched here, there are in reality only quantitative changes, qualitative ones being defined in terms of them' (54). But this too fudges the point. Revolution (better: insurrection) depends on a rupture, whereas the poststructuralist perspective offered here depends on piecemeal change, the mark of the reformist, and never results in that

definitive break. Further, from a second-wave perspective, the totality—the totality of power relations—cannot be resisted in piecemeal fashion, and thus poststructuralist anarchism could never hope to engage in dismantling the totality. As May remarks, "The task of a poststructuralist politics is to attempt to construct power relations that can be lived with, not to overthrow power altogether'(114).

In fact, by undermining subjectivity as the basis from which to launch resistance. May leaves no space from which the totality might be questioned.

> The point of [classical] anarchism's resort to the idea of a benign human essence is to be able to justify its resistance to power. Suppose that anarchists had a different view of power, one that saw power not solely as suppressive but also as productive: power not only suppresses actions, events, and people, but creates them as well. In that case, it would be impossible to justify the resistance to all power; one would have to distinguish clearly acceptable creations or effects (as opposed, in the case of the suppressive assumption, to exercises) of power from unacceptable ones (63).

The coercive nature of both suppressive and productive power has been demonstrated above, and there is little sense in staging a defence of classical anarchism. However, the intent of this passage is clear, by discrediting the notion of essentialism. May attempts to undermine the anarchist project of resisting all power. This ploy remains ineffective when applied to second-wave anarchism, however.

While classical anarchism may rest its claims on Being, second-wave anarchism emphasises Becoming. Following from Nietzsche's notion of self-overcoming, the Situationists stress radical subjectivity as the basis for resistance. The project of resisting the totality rests, not on some essentialist human subject, but on the subject-in-process, or better, the subject-in-rebellion: the radical subject. The processual nature of this identity undercuts May's charge of essentialism, but at the same time provides a basis in lived experience for resistance to the totality, rather than reformist quibbling over acceptable and unacceptable forms of power.

May has written a stimulating and readable book, and one worth reading alone for its candour about the politics of poststructuralism. This text allows one to think through important issues, even though one's conclusions differ widely from those held by the author. On one level, however, the text stands as an indictment of the distance between academia and contemporary anarchism, and between anarchist commentators and the present anarchist milieu.

Anarchism and the Politics of *Ressentiment*

By Saul Newman

"A word in the ear of the psychologists, assuming they are inclined to study ressentiment close up for once: this plant thrives best amongst anarchists..."[1]

1. Of all the nineteenth century political movements that Nietzsche decries—from socialism to liberalism—he reserves his most venomous words for the anarchists. He calls them the "anarchist dogs" that are roaming the streets of European culture, the epitome of the "herd-animal morality" that characterizes modern democratic politics.[2] Nietzsche sees anarchism as poisoned at the root by the pestiferous weed of ressentiment—the spiteful politics of the weak and pitiful, the morality of the slave. Is Nietzsche here merely venting his conservative wrath against radical politics, or is he diagnosing a real sickness that has infected our radical political imaginary? Despite Nietzsche's obvious prejudice towards radical politics, this paper will take seriously his charge against anarchism. It will explore this cunning logic of ressentiment in relation to radical politics, particularly anarchism. It will attempt to unmask the hidden strains of ressentiment in the Manichean political thinking of classical anarchists like Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Proudhon. This is not with the intention of dismissing anarchism as a political theory. On the contrary, one might argue that anarchism could become more relevant to contemporary political struggles if it were made aware of the ressentiment logic of its own discourse, particularly in the essentialist identities and structures that inhabit it.

Slave Morality and Ressentiment

2. Ressentiment is diagnosed by Nietzsche as our modern condition. In order to understand ressentiment, however, it is necessary to understand the relationship between master morality and slave morality in which ressentiment is generated. Nietzsche's work On the Genealogy of Morality is a study of the origins of morality. For Nietzsche, the way we interpret and impose values on the world has a history—its origins are often brutal and far removed from the values they produce. The value of 'good,' for instance, was invented by the noble and high-placed to apply to themselves, in contrast to common, low-placed and plebeian.[3] It was the value of the master—'good'—as opposed to that of slave—'bad.' Thus, according to Nietzsche, it was in this pathos of distance, between the high-born and the low-born, this absolute sense of superiority, that values were created.[4]

However, this equation of good and aristocratic began to be undermined by a slave revolt in values. This slave revolt, according to Nietzsche, began with the Jews who instigated a revaluation of values:

3. "It was the Jews who, rejecting the aristocratic value equation (good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = blessed) ventured with awe-inspiring consistency, to bring about a reversal and held it in the teeth of their unfathomable hatred (the hatred of the powerless), saying, 'Only those who suffer are good, only the poor, the powerless, the lowly are good; the suffering, the deprived, the sick, the ugly, are the only pious people, the only ones, salvation is for them alone, whereas you rich, the noble, the powerful, you are eternally wicked, cruel, lustful, insatiate, godless, you will also be eternally wretched, cursed and damned!'"[5]

4. In this way the slave revolt in morality inverted the noble system of values and began to equate good with the lowly, the powerless—the slave. This inversion introduced the pernicious spirit of revenge and hatred into the creation of values. Therefore morality, as we understand it, had its roots in this vengeful will to power of the powerless over the powerful—the revolt of the slave against the master. It was from this imperceptible, subterranean hatred that grew the values subsequently associated with the good—pity, altruism, meekness, etc.

5. Political values also grew from this poisonous root. For Nietzsche, values of equality and democracy, which form the cornerstone of radical political arose out of the slave revolt in morality. They are generated by the same spirit of revenge and hatred of the powerful. Nietzsche therefore condemns political movements like liberal democracy, socialism, and indeed anarchism. He sees the democratic move-

ment as an expression of the herd-animal morality derived from the Judeo-Christian revaluation of values.[6] Anarchism is for Nietzsche the most extreme heir to democratic values—the most rabid expression of the herd instinct. It seeks to level the differences between individuals, to abolish distinctions, to raze hierarchies to the ground, and to equalize the powerful the powerless, the rich and the poor, the master and the slave. To Nietzsche 'It is bringing everything down to the level of the lowest common denominator—to erase the pathos of distance between the master and slave, the sense of difference and superiority through which great values are created. Nietzsche sees this as the worst excess of European nihilism—the death of values and creativity.

6. Slave morality is characterized by the attitude of ressentiment, the resentment and hatred of the powerless for the powerful. Nietzsche sees this attitude as an entirely negative sentiment—the attitude of denying what is life-affirming, saying 'no' to what is different, what is 'outside' or 'other.' Ressentiment is characterized by an orientation to the outside, rather than the focus of noble morality—which is on the self.? While the master says 'I am good' and adds as an afterthought, 'therefore he is bad,' the slave says the opposite—'He (the master) is bad, therefore I am good.' Thus the invention of values comes from a comparison or opposition to that which is outside, other, different. Nietzsche says: "...in order to come about, slave morality first has to have an opposing, external world, it needs, psychologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act all,—action is basically a reaction."8 This reactive stance, this inability to define anything except in opposition to something else, is the attitude of ressentiment.

It is the reactive stance of the weak who define themselves in opposition to the strong. The weak need the existence of this external enemy to identify themselves as 'good.' Thus the slave takes 'imaginary revenge' upon the master, as he cannot act without the existence of the master to oppose. The man of ressentiment hates the noble with an intense spite, a deep-seated, seething hatred and jealousy. It is this ressentiment, according to Nietzsche, that has poisoned the modern consciousness, and finds its expression in ideas of equality and democracy, and in radical political philosophies, like anarchism, that advocate it.

7. Is anarchism a political expression of ressentiment? Is it poisoned by a deep hatred of the powerful? While Nietzsche's attack on anarchism is in many respects unjustified and excessively malicious, and shows little understanding of the complexities of anarchist theory, I would nevertheless argue that Nietzsche does uncover a certain logic present in anarchism's oppositional, Manichean thinking.

It is necessary to explore this logic that inhabits anarchism—to see where it leads and to what extent it imposes conceptual limits on radical politics.

8. Anarchism as a revolutionary political philosophy has many different voices, origins and interpretations. From the individualist anarchism of Stirner, to the collectivist, communal anarchism of Bakunin and Kropotkin, anarchism is diverse series of philosophies and political strategies. These are united, however by a fundamental rejection and critique of political authority in all its forms. The critique of political authority—the conviction that power is oppressive, exploitative and dehumanizing—may be said to be the crucial politico-ethical standpoint of anarchism. For classical anarchists the State is the embodiment of all forms of oppression, exploitation and the enslavement and degradation of man. In Bakunin's words, "the State is like a vast slaughterhouse and an enormous cemetery, where under the shadow and the pretext of this abstraction (the common good) all the best aspirations, all the living forces of a country, are sanctimoniously immolated and interred."[9] The State is the main target of the anarchist critique of authority. It is for anarchists the fundamental oppression in society, and it must be abolished as the first revolutionary act.

9. This last point brought 19th-century anarchism into sharp conflict with Marxism. Marx believed that while the State was indeed oppressive and exploitative, it was a reflection of economic exploitation and an instrument of class power. Thus political power was reduced to economic power. For Marx the economy rather than the State was the fundamental site of oppression. The State rarely had an independent existence beyond class and economic interests. Because of this the State could be used as a tool of revolution if it was in the hands of the right class—the proletariat.[10] The State was only dominating, in other words, because it was presently in the hands of the bourgeoisie. Once class distinctions have disappeared, the State will lose its political character.[11]

10. Anarchists like Bakunin and Kropotkin disagreed with Marx precisely on this point. For anarchists, the State is much more than an expression of class and economic power; it has its own logic of domination and self-perpetuation, and is autonomous from class interests. Rather than working from the society to the

State, as Marx did, and seeing the State as the derivative of economic relations between capitalism and the rise of the bourgeoisie, anarchists work from the State to society. The State constitutes the fundamental oppression in society, and economic exploitation is derived from this political oppression. In other words, it is political oppression that makes eco- nomic oppression possible.[12] Moreover for anarchists, bourgeois relations are actually a reflection of the State, rather the State being a reflection of bourgeois relations. The ruling class, argues Bakunin, is the State's real material representative. Behind every ruling class of every epoch there looms the State. Because the State has its own autonomous logic it can never be trusted as an instrument of revolution. To do this would be to ignore its logic of domination. If the State is not destroyed immediately, if it is used as a revolutionary tool as Marxists suggest, then its power will be perpetuated in infinitely more tyrannical ways. It would operate, as Bakunin argues, through a new ruling class—a bureaucratic class that will oppress and exploit work the same manner as the bourgeois class oppressed and exploited them.[13]

11. So the State, for anarchists, is a priori oppression, no matter what form it takes. Indeed Bakunin argues that Marxism pays too much attention to the forms of State power while not taking enough account of the way in which in which State power operates: "They (Marxists) do not know that despotism resides not so much in the form of the State but in the very principle of the State and political power."[14] Oppression and despotism exist in the very structure and symbolism of the State—it is not merely a derivative of class power. The State has its own impersonal logic, its own momentum, its own priorities: these are often beyond the control of the ruling class and do not necessarily reflect economic relations at all. So anarchism locates the fundamental oppression and power in society in the very structure and operations of the State. As an abstract machine of domination, the State haunts different class ac- tualizations—not just the bourgeoisie State, but the workers' State too. Through its economic reductionism, Marxism neglected the autonomy and pre-eminence of State—amistake that would lead to its reaffirmation in a socialist revolution. Therefore the anarchist critique unmasked the hidden forms of domination associated with political power, and exposed Marxism's theoretical inadequacy for dealing with this problem.

12. This conception of the State ironically strikes a familiar note with Nietzsche. Nietzsche, like the anarchists, sees modern man as 'tamed,' fettered and made impotent by the State.[15] He also sees the State as an abstract machine of domination, which precedes capitalism, and looms above class and economic concerns. The State is a mode of domination that imposes a regulated 'interiorization' upon the populace. According to Nietzsche the State emerged as a "terrible tyranny, as a repressive and ruthless machinery," which subjugated, made compliant, and shaped the population.[16] Moreover the origins of this State are violent. It is imposed forcefully from without and has nothing to with 'contracts.'[17] Nietzsche demolishes the "fantasy" of the social contract—the theory that the State was formed by people voluntarily relinquishing their power in return for the safety and security that would be provided by the State. This idea of the social contract has been central to conservative and liberal political theory, from Hobbes to Locke. Anarchists also reject this theory of the social contract. They too argue that the origins of the State are violent, and that it is absurd to hold that people voluntarily gave up their power. It is a dangerous myth that legitimizes and perpetuates State domination.

The Social Contract

13. Anarchism is based on an essentially optimistic conception of human nature: if individuals have a natural tendency to get on well together then there is no need for the existence of a State to arbitrate between them. On the contrary, the State actually has a pernicious effect on these natural social relations. Anarchists therefore reject political theories based on the idea of social contract. Social contract theory relies on a singularly negative picture of human nature. According to Hobbes, individuals are naturally selfish, aggressively competitive and egotistic, and in a state of nature they are engaged in a war of "every man, against every man" in which their individual drives necessarily bring them into conflict with one another.[18] According to this theory, then, society in a state of nature is characterized by a radical dislocation: there is no common bond between individuals; there is in fact a constant state of war between them, a constant struggle for resources.[19] In order to put a stop to this state of permanent war, individuals come together to form a social contract upon which some kind of authority can be established. They agree to sacrifice part of their freedom in return for some kind of order, so that they can pursue their own individual ends more peacefully and profitably. They agree on the creation of

a State with a mandate over society, which shall arbitrate between conflicting wills and enforce law and order.

14. The extent of the State's authority may vary from the liberal State whose Power is supposedly tempered by the rule of law, to the absolute State power—the Leviathan—dreamt up by Hobbes. While the models may vary, anarchists argue that the result of this social contract theory is the same: a justification of State domination, whether it be through the rule of law or through the arbitrary imposition of force. For anarchists, any form of State power is an imposition of force. The social contract theory is a sleight of hand that legitimates political domination—Bakunin calls it an "unworthy hoax!"[20] He exposes the central paradox in the theory of the social contract: if, in a state of nature, individuals exist in a state of primitive savagery, then how can they suddenly have the foresight to come together and create a social contract?[21] If there is no common bond in society, no essence within humans which brings them together, then upon what basis can a social contract be formed? Like Nietzsche, anarchists argue there is no such agreement, that the State was imposed from above, not from below. The social contract tries to mystify the brutal origins of the State: war, conquest and self-enslavement, rather than rational agreement. For Kropotkin the State is a violent disruption of, and an imposition upon, a harmoniously functioning, organic society.[22] Society has no need for a 'social contract.' It has its own contract with nature, governed by natural laws.[23]

15. Anarchism may be understood as a struggle between natural authority and artificial authority. Anarchists do not reject all forms of authority, as the old cliché would have it. On the contrary, they declare their absolute obedience to the authority embodied in what Bakunin calls 'natural laws.' Natural law are essential to humanity's existence according to Bakunin—they surround us, shape us and determine the physical world in which we live.[24] However this is not a form of slavery because these laws are not external to us: "those natural laws are not extrinsic in relation to us, they are inherent in us, they constitute our nature, our whole being physically, intellectually and morally."[25] They are, on the contrary, what constitute humanity—they are our essence. We are inextricably part of a natural, organic

society according to Kropotkin.[26] Anarchy then, is based on a specific notion of human essence. Morality has its basis in human nature, not in any external source: "the idea of justice and good, like all other human things, must have their root in man's very animality."[27]

16. Natural authority is implacably opposed to "artificial authority." By authority Bakunin means power: the political power enshrined in institutions such as the State and in man-made laws.[28] This power is external to human nature and an imposition upon it. It stultifies the development of humanity's innate moral characteristics and intellectual capacities. It is these capacities, anarchists argue, which will liberate man from slavery and ignorance. For Bakunin, then, political institutions are "hostile and fatal to the liberty of the masses, for they impose upon them a system of external and therefore despotic laws."[29]

17. In this critique of political authority, power (artificial authority) is external to the human subject. The human subject is oppressed by this power but remains uncontaminated by it because human subjectivity is a creation of natural, as opposed to a political, system. Thus anarchism is based on a clear, Manichean division between artificial and natural authority, between power and subjectivity, between State and society. Furthermore political authority is fundamentally repressive and destructive of man's potential. Human society, argue the anarchists, cannot develop until the institutions and laws which keep it in ignorance and servitude, until the fetters which bind it, are thrown off. Anarchism must, therefore, have a place of resistance: a moral and rational place, a place uncontaminated by the power that oppresses it, from which will spring a rebellion against power. It finds this in an essential human subjectivity. Human essence, with its moral and rational characteristics, is an absent fullness that lies dormant in man, and will only be realized once the political power negating it is overthrown. It is from this place of absent fullness that will emanate the revolution against power. The innate morality and rationality of man will counteract political power, which is seen as inherently irrational and immoral. According to anarchist theory, natural law will replace political authority; man and society will replace the State. For Kropotkin, anarchism can think beyond the category of the State, beyond the category of absolute political power, because it has a place, a ground from which to do so. Political power has an outside from which it can be criticized and an alternative with which it can be replaced. Kropotkin is thus able to envisage a society in which the State no longer exists or is needed; a society regulated not by political power and authority, but by mutual agreements and cooperation.[30]

18. Such a society is possible, according to anarchists, because of the essentially cooperative nature of man.[31] Contrary to the Darwinist approach that insists on an

innate competitiveness in animals—the 'survival of the fittest'—Kropotkin finds an instinctive cooperation and sociability in animals, particularly in humans. This instinct Kropotkin calls mutual aid and he says: "Mutual aid is the predominant fact of Nature."[32] Kropotkin applies these findings to human society. He argues that the natural and essential principle of human society is mutual aid, and that man is naturally cooperative, sociable and altruistic, rather than competitive and egotistic. This is the organic principle that governs society, and it is out of this that notions of morality, justice and ethics grow. Morality, Kropotkin argues, evolves out of the instinctive need to band together in tribes, groups—and an instinctive tendency towards cooperation and mutual assistance.[33] This natural sociability and capacity for mutual aid is the principle that binds society together, providing a common basis upon which daily life can be conducted. Therefore society has no need for the State: it has its own regulating mecha- nisms, its own natural laws. State domination only poisons society and destroys its natural mechanisms. It is the principle of mutual aid that will naturally replace the principle of political authority. A state of 'anarchy,' a war of "all against all" will not ensue the moment State power has been abolished. For anarchists, a state of 'anarchy' exists now: political power creates social dislocation, it does not prevent it. What is prevented by the State is the natural and harmonious functioning of society.

19. For Hobbes, State sovereignty is a necessary evil. There is no attempt to make a fetish of the State: it does not descend from heaven, preordained by divine will. It is pure sovereignty, pure power, and it is constructed out of the emptiness of society, precisely in order to prevent the warfare immanent in the state of nature. The political content of the State is unimportant as long as it quells unrest in society. Whether there be a democracy, or a sovereign assembly, or a monarchy, it does not matter: "the power in all forms, if they be perfect enough to protect them, is the same."[34] Like the anarchists, Hobbes believes that the guise taken by power is irrelevant. Behind every mask there must be a pure, absolute power. Hobbes's political thought is centered around a desire for order, purely as an antidote to disorder, and the extent to which individuals suffer under this order is incomparable to the suffering caused by war.[35] For anarchists, on the other hand, because society

regulates itself according to natural laws and because there is a natural ethics of cooperation in man, the State is an unnecessary evil. Rather than preventing perpetual warfare between men, the State engenders it: the State is based on war and conquest rather than embodying its resolution. Anarchism can look beyond the State because it argues from the perspective of an essential point of departure—natural human sociality. It can, therefore, conceive of an alternative to the State. Hobbes, on the other hand, has no such point of departure: there is no standpoint that can act as an alternative to the State. Society, as we have seen with Hobbes, is characterized by rift and antagonism. In fact, there is essential society to speak of—it is an empty place. Society must therefore be constructed artificially in the shape of the absolute State. While anarchism can rely on natural law, Hobbes can only rely on the law of the State. At the heart of the anarchist paradigm there is the essential fullness of society, while at the heart of the Hobbesian paradigm there is nothing but emptiness and dislocation.

Manicheism

20. However it may be argued that anarchism is a mirror image of Hobbesianism in the sense that they both posit a commonality that derives from their indebtedness to the Enlightenment. Both emphasize the need for a fullness or collectivity, some legitimate point around which society can be organized. Anarchists see this point of departure in the natural law which informs society and human subjectivity, and which is impeded by the State. Hobbes, on the other hand, sees this point of departure as an absence, an empty place that must be filled by the State. Hobbes's thought is caught within the paradigm of the State which functions as the absolute conceptual limit. Outside of it are the perils of the state of nature. Political theories such as this, based on the social contract are haunted by the threat that if one gets rid of the State, one will revert back to a state of nature. Anarchism, because it proceeds from a radically different conception of society and human nature, claims to be able to transcend this quandary. But can it?

21. Anarchism operates within a Manichean political logic: it creates an essential, moral opposition between society and the State, between humanity and power. Natural law is diagrammatically opposed to artificial power; the morality and rationality immanent in human subjectivity comes into conflict with the

irrationality and immorality of the State. There is an essential antithesis between anarchism's uncontaminated point of departure, constituted by essential human subjectivity, and State power. This logic which establishes an absolute opposition between two terms—good and evil, black and white, humanity and the State—is the central feature of Manichean thought. Jacques Donzelot argues that this logic of absolute opposition is endemic to radical political theory:

Political culture is also the systematic pursuit of an antagonism between two essences, the tracing of a line of demarcation between two principles, two levels of reality which are easily placed in opposition. There is no political culture that is not Manichean.[36]

22. Moreover, anarchism, in subscribing to this logic and making power the focus of its analysis, instead of economy as Marxism did, has perhaps fallen into the same reductionist trap as Marxism. Has it not merely replaced the economy with the State as the essential evil in society, from which other evils are derived? As Donzelot argues:

> No sooner has one decided on good or bad grounds—no matter which—that capitalism is not the unique or even principle source of evil on earth that one rushes to substitute for the opposition between capital and labour that between State and civil society. Capital, as foil and scapegoat, is replaced by the State, that cold monster whose limitless growth 'pauperises' social life; and the proletariat gives way to civil society, that is to say to everything capable of resisting the blind rationality of the State, to everything that opposes it at the level of customs, mores, a living sociability, sought in the residual margins of society and promoted to the status of motor of history.[37]

23. Opposing living sociability to the State, in the same way that Marxism opposed the proletariat to capitalism, suggests that anarchism was unable to transcend the traditional political categories which bound Marxism. As Donzelot argues, Manicheism is the logic that skewers all these theories: it is the undercurrent that runs through them and circumscribes them. It does not matter if the target is the State, or Capital, or anything else; as long as there is an enemy to destroy and a subject who will destroy it; as long as there is the promise of the final battle and final victory. Manichean logic is, therefore, the logic of place: there must be an essential place of power and an essential place of revolt. This is

the binary, dialectical logic that pervades anarchism: the place of power—the State—must be overthrown by the essential human subject, the pure subject of resistance. Anarchism 'essentializes' the very power it opposes.

24. Manichean logic thus involves a reverse mirroring operation: the place of resistance is a reflection, in reverse, of the place of power. In the case of anarchism, human subjectivity is essentially moral and rational while the State is essentially immoral and irrational.[38] The State is essential to the existence of the revolutionary subject, just as the revolutionary subject is essential to the existence of the State. One defines itself in opposition to the other. The purity of revolutionary identity is only defined in contrast to the impurity of political power. Revolt against the State is always prompted by the State. As Bakunin argues "there is something in the nature of the State which provokes rebellion."[39] While the relationship between the State and the revolutionary subject is one of clearly defined opposition, the two antagonists could not exist outside this relationship. They could not, in other words, exist without each other.

25. Can this paradoxical relationship of reflection and opposition be seen as a form of ressentiment in the Nietzschean sense? I would argue here that although there are differences, the Manichean relationship of opposition between the human subject and political power that is found in anarchism the general logic of ressentiment described above. This is for two reasons. Firstly, as we have seen, it is based on the moral prejudice of the powerless against the powerful—the revolt of the 'slave' against the 'master.' We can see this opposition to power clearly in anarchist discourse, which pits the essential 'moral' and 'rational' human subject against the essentially 'immoral' and 'irrational' quality of political power. It is evident in the opposition of natural to a official authority that is central to anarchism. Secondly, ressentiment is characterized by the fundamental need to identify oneself by looking outwards and opposition towards an external enemy. Here, however, the comparison to anarchism is not so clear-cut. For instance, one could conceivably argue that anarchist subjectivity and ethics—the notion of mutual aid and assistance—is something that develops independently of political power, and that therefore it does not need an oppositional relationship with the State in order to define itself. However, I would suggest that although anarchist subjectivity does develop in a 'natural' system which is radically exterior to the

'artificial' system of political power, it is precisely through this assertion of radical exteriority that ressentiment emerges. Anarchism subscribes to a dialectical logic, according to which the human species emerges from an 'animal-like' state, and begins to develop innate moral and rational faculties in a natural system.[40] However, the subject finds this development impeded by the 'irrational,' 'immoral' power of the State. Thus the subject cannot achieve his full human identity as long as he remains oppressed by the State. This is why, for Bakunin: "The State is the most flagrant negation... of humanity."[41] The realization of the subject is always stultified, deferred, put off, by the State. This dialectic of Man and State suggests that identity of the subject is characterized as essentially 'rational' and 'moral' only insofar as the unfolding of these innate faculties and qualities is prevented the State. Paradoxically the State, which is seen by anarchists as an obstacle to the full identity of man, is, at the same time, essential to the formation of this incomplete identity. Without this stultifying oppression, the anarchist subject would be unable to see itself as 'moral' and 'rational.' His identity is thus complete in its incompleteness. The existence of political power is therefore a means of constructing this absent fullness. I would argue, then, that anarchism can only posit the subject as 'moral' and 'rational' in opposition to the 'immorality' and 'irrationality' of political power. In the same way the identity of the 'slave' is consolidated as 'good' by opposing itself to the identity of the 'master' which is 'evil.' Nietzsche would see in this an attitude of ressentiment par excellence.

26. So the Manicheism that inhabits anarchist discourse is a logic of ressentiment that for Nietzsche is a distinctly unhealthy outlook, emanating from a position of weakness and sickness. Revolutionary identity in anarchist philosophy is constituted through its essential opposition to power. Like Nietzsche's reactive man, revolutionary identity purports to be unpolluted by power: human essence is seen as moral where power is immoral, natural where power is artificial, pure where power is impure. Because this subjectivity is constituted within a system of natural law—as opposed to artificial law—it is a point which, while oppressed by power, remains outside power and unpolluted by it. But is it?

27. Bakunin himself throws some doubts on this when he talks about the power principle. This is the natural lust for power which Bakunin believes is innate in every individual: "Every man carries within himself the germs of the lust for power,

and every germ, as we know, because of a basic law of life, necessarily must develop and grow."[42] The power principle means that man cannot be trusted with power, that there will always be this desire for power at the heart of human subjectivity. While Bakunin intended to warn others of the corrupting danger inherent in power, he has perhaps unconsciously exposed the hidden contradiction that lies at the heart of anarchist discourse: namely that, while anarchism bases itself upon a notion of an essential human subjectivity uncontaminated by power, this subjectivity is ultimately impossible. Pure revolutionary identity is torn apart, subverted by a 'natural' desire for power, the lack at the heart of every individual. Bakunin suggests that this desire for power is an essential part of human subjectivity. Perhaps the implication of Bakunin's power principle is that the subject will always have a desire for power, and that the Object will be incomplete until it grasps power. Kropotkin, too, talks about the desire for power and authority. He argues that the rise of the modern State can be attributed in part to the fact that "men became enamored of authority."[43] He implies, then, that State power is not completely an imposition from above. He talks about self-enslavement to law and authority: "Man allowed himself to be enslaved far more by his desire to 'punish according to law' than by direct military conquest."[44] Does the desire to "punish according to law" grow directly out of humanity's natural sense of morality? If this is the case, can human essence still be seen as unpolluted by power? While anarchism's notion of subjectivity is not entirely undermined by this contradiction, it is nevertheless destabilized by it: it is made ambiguous and incomplete. It forces one to question anarchism's notion of a revolution of humanity against power: if humans have an essential desire for power, then how can one be sure that a revolution aimed at destroying power will not turn into a revolution aimed at capturing power?

Will to Power

28. Has anarchism as a political and social theory of revolution been invalidated because of the contradictions in its conception of human subjectivity?! Not necessarily. This paper has exposed a hidden strain of

ressentiment in the essentialist categories and oppositional structures that inhabit anarchist discourse notions of a harmonious society governed by natural law and man's essential communality, and its opposition to the artificial law of the State. However anarchism can free itself from these essentialist and Manichean categories can overcome the ressentiment that poisons and limits it. Classical anarchism is a politics of ressentiment because it seeks to overcome power. It sees power as evil, destructive, something that stultifies the full realization of the individual Human essence is a point of departure uncontaminated by power, from which power is resisted. There is a strict Manichean separation and opposition between the subject and power. However it has been shown that this separation between the individual and power is itself unstable and threatened by a 'natural' desire for power—the power principle. Nietzsche would argue that this desire for power—will to power—is indeed 'natural,' and it is the suppression of this desire that has had such a debilitating effect on man, turning him against himself and producing an attitude of ressentiment.

29. However perhaps one could argue that this desire for power in man is produced precisely through attempts to deny or extinguish relations of power in the 'natural order.' Perhaps power may be seen in terms of the Lacanian 'Real'—as that irrepressible lack that cannot be symbolized, and which always returns to haunt the symbolic order, disrupting any attempt by the subject form a complete identity. For Jacques Lacan: "... the real is that which always comes back to the same place—to the place where the subject in so far as he thinks, where the res cogitans, does not meet it."[45] Anarchism attempts to complete the identity of the subject by separating him, in an absolute Manichean sense, from the world of power. The anarchist subject, as we have seen, is constituted in a 'natural' system that is dialectically opposed to the artificial world of power. Moreover, because the subject is constituted in a 'natural' system governed by ethical laws of mutual cooperation, anarchists are able to posit a society free from relations of power, which will replace the State once it is overthrown. However, as we have seen, this world, free of power, is jeopardized by the desire for power latent in every individual. The more anarchism tries to free society from relations of power, the more it remains paradoxically caught up in power. Power here has returned as the real that haunts all attempts to free the world of power. The more one tries to repress power, the more obstinately it

rears its head. This is because the attempts to deny power, through essentialist concepts of 'natural' laws and 'natural' morality, themselves constitute, or at least are conditioned by relations of power. These essentialist identities and categories cannot be imposed without the radical exclusion of other identities. This exclusion is an act of power. If one attempts to radically exclude power, as the anarchists did, power 'returns' precisely in the structures of exclusion themselves.

30. Nietzsche believes that this attempt to exclude and deny power is a form of ressentiment. So how does anarchism overcome this ressentiment that has shown to be so self-destructive and life-denying? By positively affirming power, rather than denying it—to 'say yes' to power, as Nietzsche would put it. It is only by affirming power, by acknowledging that we come from the same world as power, not from a 'natural' world removed from it, and that we can never be entirely free from relations of power, that one can engage in politically-relevant strategies of resistance against power. This does not mean, of course, that anarchism should lay down its arms and embrace the State and political authority. On the contrary, anarchism can more effectively counter political domination by engaging with, rather than denying, power.

31. Perhaps it is appropriate here to distinguish between relations of power and relations of domination. To use Michel Foucault's definition, power is a "mode of action upon the action of others."[46] Power is merely the effect of one's actions upon the actions of another. Nietzsche, too, sees power in terms of an effect without a subject: "...there is no being behind the deed, its effect and what becomes of it; 'the doer' is invented as an afterthought."[47] Power is not a commodity that can be possessed, and it cannot be centered in either the institution or the subject. It is merely a relationship of forces, forces that flow between different actors and throughout our everyday actions. Power is everywhere, according to Foucault.48 Power does not emanate from institutions like the State—rather it is immanent throughout the entire social network, through various discourses and knowledges. For instance, rational and moral discourses, which anarchists saw as innocent of power and as weapons in the struggle against power, are themselves constituted by power relations and are embroiled in practices of power: "Power and knowledge directly imply one another."[49] Power in this sense is productive rather than repressive. It is therefore senseless and indeed impossible to try to construct, as anarchists do, a world

outside power. We will never be entirely free from relations of power. According to Foucault: "It seems to me that... one is never outside (power), that there are no margins for those who break with the system to gambol in."[50]

32. However, just because one can never be free from power does not mean that one can never be free from domination. Domination must be distinguished from Power in the following sense. For Foucault, relations of power become relations of domination when the free and unstable flow of power relations becomes blocked and congealed—when it forms unequal hierarchies and no longer allows reciprocal relationships.[51] These relations of domination form the basis of institutions such as the State. The State, according to Foucault, is merely an assemblage of different power relations that have become congealed in this way.' This is a radically different way of looking at institutions such as the State. While anarchists see power as emanating from the State, Foucault sees the State emanating from power. The State, in other words, is merely an effect of power relations that have crystallized into relations of domination.

33. What is the point of this distinction between power and domination? Does this not bring us back to the original anarchist position that society and our every day actions, although oppressed by power, are ontologically separated from it? In other words, why not merely call domination 'power' once again, and revert back to the original, Manichean distinction between social life and power? However the point of this distinction is to show that this essential separation is now impossible. Domination—oppressive political institutions like the State—now comes from the same world as power. In other words it disrupts the strict Manichean separation of society and power. Anarchism and indeed radical politics generally, cannot remain in this comfortable illusion that we as political subjects, are somehow not complicit in the very regime that oppresses us. According to the Foucauldian definition of power that I have employed, we all potentially complicit, through our everyday actions, in relations of domination. Our everyday actions, which inevitably involve power, are unstable and can easily form into relations that dominate us.

34. As political subjects we can never relax and hide behind essentialist identities and Manichean structures—behind a strict separation from the world of power. Rather we must be constantly on our guard against the possibility of domination. Foucault says: "My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous... If everything is danger-

ous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism."[52] In order to resist domination we must be aware of its risks—of the possibility that our own actions, even political action ostensibly again domination, can easily give rise to further domination. There is always the possibility, then, of contesting domination, and of minimizing its possibilities and effects. According to Foucault, domination itself is unstable and can give rise to reversals and resistance. Assemblages such as the State are based on unstable power relations that can just as easily turn against the institution they form the basis of. So there is always the possibility of resistance against domination. However resistance can never be in the form of revolution—a grand dialectical overcoming of power, as the anarchists advocated. To abolish central institution like the State with one stroke would be to neglect the multiform and diffuse re- lations of powe1 they are based on, thus allowing new institutions and relations of domination to rise up. It would be to fall into the same reductionist trap as Marxism, and to court domination. Rather, resistance must take the form of what Fou- cault calls agonism—an ongoing, s t r a t e g i c contestation with power-based on mutual incitement and provocation— without any final hope of being free from it.53 One can, as I have argued, never hope to overcome power completely—because every overcoming is itself the imposition of another regime of power. The best that can be hoped for is a reorganization of power relations—through struggle and resistance—in ways that are less oppressive and dominating. Domination can therefore be minimized by acknowledging our inevitable involvement with power, not by attempting to place ourselves impossibly outside the world of power. The classical idea of revolution as a dialectical overthrowing of power—the image that has haunted the radical political imaginary—must be abandoned. We must recognize the fact that power can never be overcome entirely, and we must affirm this by working within this world, renegotiating our position to enhance our possibilities of freedom.

35. This definition of power that I have constructed—as an unstable and free—flowing relation dispersed throughout the social network—may be seen as a non-ressentiment notion of power. It undermines the oppositional, Manichean politics of ressentiment because power cannot be externalized in the form of the State or a political institution. There can be no external enemy for us to define ourselves in opposition to and vent our anger on. It disrupts the Apollonian distinction between the subject and power central to classical anarchism

and Manichean radical political philosophy. Apollonian Man, the essential human subject, is always haunted by Dionysian power. Apollo is the god of light, but also the god of illusion: he "grants repose to individual beings... by drawing boundaries around them." Dionysus, on the other hand is the force that occasionally destroys these "little circles," disrupting the Apollonian tendency to "congeal the form to Egyptian rigidity and coldness."[54] Behind the Apollonian illusion of a life—world without power, is the Dionysian 'reality' of power that tears away the "veil of the maya."[55]

36. Rather than having an external enemy—like the State—in opposition to which one's political identity is formed, we must work on ourselves. As political subjects we must overcome ressentiment by transforming our relationship with power. One can only do this, according to Nietzsche, through eternal return. To affirm eternal return is to acknowledge and indeed positively affirm the continual 'return' of same life with its harsh realities. Because it is an active willing of nihilism, it is at the same time a transcendence of nihilism. Perhaps in the same way, eternal return refers to power. We must acknowledge and affirm the 'return' of pow- er, the fact that it will always be with us. To overcome ressentiment we must, in other words, will power. We must affirm a will to power—in the form of creative, life-affirming values, according to Nietzsche.[56]

This is to accept the notion of 'self-overcoming.'[57] To 'overcome' oneself in this sense, would mean an overcoming of the essentialist identities and categories that limit us. As Foucault has shown, we are constructed as essential political subjects in ways that dominate us—this is what he calls subjectification.[58] We hide behind essentialist identi- ties that deny power, and produce through this denial, a Manichean politics of absolute opposition that only reflects and reaffirms the very domination it claims to oppose. This we have seen in the case of anarchism. In order to avoid this Manichean logic, anarchism must no longer rely on essentialist identities and concepts, and instead positively affirm eternal return of power. This is not a grim realization but rather a 'happy positivism.' It is characterized by political strategies aimed at minimizing the possibilities of domination, and increasing the possibilities for freedom.

37. If one rejects essentialist identities, what is one left with? Can one have a notion of radical politics and resistance without an essential subject? One might however, ask the opposite question: how can radical politics continue without 'overcoming' essentialist identities, without, in Nietzsche's terms, 'overcoming' man? Nietzsche

says: "The most cautious people ask today: 'How may man still be preserved?' Zarathustra, however, asks as the sole and first one to do so: 'How shall man be overcome?'"[59] I would argue that anarchism would be greatly enhanced as a political and ethical philosophy if it eschewed essentialist categories, leaving itself open to different and contingent identities—a post-anarchism. To affirm difference and contingency would be to become a philosophy of the strong, rather than the weak. Nietzsche exhorts us to 'live dangerously,' to do away with certainties, to break with essences and structures, and to embrace uncertainty. "Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into unchartered seas!" he says.[60] The politics of resistance against domination must take place in a world without guarantees. To remain open to difference and contingency, to affirm the eternal return of power, would be to become what Nietzsche calls the Superman or Overman. The Overman is man 'overcome'—the overcoming of man: "God has died: now we desire—that the Superman shall live."[61] For Nietzsche the Superman replaces God and Man—it comes to redeem a humanity crippled by nihilism, joyously affirming power and eternal return.

However I would like to propose a somewhat gentler, more ironic version of the Superman for radical politics. Ernesto Laclau speaks of "a hero of a new type who still has not been created by our culture, but one whose creation is absolutely necessary if our time is going to live up to its most radical and exhilarating possibilities."[62]

38. Perhaps anarchism could become a new 'heroic' philosophy, which is no longer reactive but, rather, creates values. For instance, the ethic of mutual care and assistance propounded by Kropotkin could perhaps be utilized in the construction of new forms of collective action and identities. Kropotkin looked at the development of collective groups based on cooperation—trade unions, associations of all kinds, friendly societies and clubs, etc.[63] As we have seen, he believed this to be the unfolding of an essential natural principle. However, perhaps one could develop this collectivist impulse without circumscribing it in essentialist ideas about human nature. Collective action does not need a principle of human essence to justify it. Rather it is the contingency of identity—its openness to difference, to singularity, to individuality and collectivity—that is itself ethical. So the anarchist ethics of mutual aid may be taken from its essentialist foundations and applied to a non-essentialist, constitutively open idea of collective political identity.

action without at least posing the question of community. For Nietzsche, most modern radical aspirations towards community were a manifestation of the 'herd' mentality. However it may be possible to construct a ressen- timent—free notion of community from Nietzsche's own concept of power. For Nietzsche, active power is the individual's instinc- tive dis- charge of his forces and capacities which produc- es in him an enhanced sensation of power, while reactive power as we have seen, needs an external object to act on and define itself in opposition to.66 Perhaps one could imag- ine a form of community based on active power. For Nietzsche this enhanced feeling of power may be derived from assistance and benevolence towards others, from enhancing the feeling of power of others.67 Like the ethics of mutual aid, a commu- nity based on will to power may be composed of a series of inter-subjective relations that involve helping and caring for people without dominating them and denying difference. This openness to difference and self-transformation, and the ethic of care, may be the defining characteristics of the post-anarchist demo- cratic community. This would be a community of active power—a community of 'masters' rather than 'slaves.'[68] It would be a community that sought to overcome itself—continually transforming itself and reveling in the knowledge of its power to do so.

42. Post-anarchism may be seen, then, as a series of politico-ethical strategies against domination, without essentialist guarantees and Manichean structures that condition and restrict classical anarchism. It would affirm the contingency of values and identities, including its own, and affirm, rather than deny, power. It would be, in other words, an anarchism without ressentiment.

39. An alternative conception of collective action may for instance, be developed from a re-articulation of the relationship between equality and freedom. To anarchism's great credit it rejected the liberal conviction that equality and freedom act as limits upon each other and are ultimately irreconcilable concepts. For anarchists, equality and freedom are inextricably related impulses, and one cannot conceive of one without the other. For Bakunin:

I am free only when all human beings surrounding me—men and women alike—are equally free. The freedom of others, far from limiting or negating my liberty, is on the contrary its necessary condition and confirmation. I become free in the true sense only by virtue of the liberty of others, so much so that the greater the number of free people surrounding me the deeper and greater and more extensive their liberty, the deeper and larger becomes my liberty.[64]

40. The interrelatedness of equality and liberty may form the basis of a new collective ethos, which refuses to see individual freedom and collective equality as limits on each other—which refuses to sacrifice difference in the name of universality, and universality in the name of difference. Foucault's anti-strategic ethics may be seen as an example of this idea. In his defense of collective movements like the Iranian revolution, Foucault said that the anti-strategic ethics he adopts is "to be respectful when something singular arises, to be intransigent when power offends against the universal."[65] This anti-strategic approach condemns universalism when it is disdainful of the particular, and condemns particularism when it is at the expense of the universal. Similarly, a new ethics of collective action would condemn collectivity when it is at the expense of difference and singularity, and condemn difference when it is at the expense of collectivity. It is an approach that allows one to combine individual difference and collective equality in a way which is not dialectical but which retains a certain positive and life-affirming antagonism between them. It would imply a notion of respect for difference, without encroaching on the freedom of others to be different—an equality of freedom of difference. Post-anarchist collective action would, in other words, be based on a commitment to respect and recognize autonomy, difference and openness within collectivity.

41. Furthermore, perhaps one could envisage a form of political community or collective identity that did not restrict difference. The question of community is central to radical politics, including anarchism. One cannot talk about collective

Structuralism and Hermeneutics (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), p. 221.

47 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality,* p. 28.

48 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. I*: Introduction (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), p. 93.

49 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 27.

50 Foucault, "Power and Strategies," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* 1972-77, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Harvester Press, 1980), p. 141.

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Thanks to LB for
layout and design