

THE RAVEN 7

ANARCHIST QUARTERLY

Scarecrow

A hex was put on you at birth.
Society certified your
Existence and claimed you as
A citizen. Don't let it
Scare you. Learn to cope with a world
Which is built entirely of fake,
And in which, if you find a truth
Instead of a lie, it is due
To somebody's oversight.
These stuffed old rags are harmless,
Unless you show them the fear
Which they can never warrant,
Or reveal the contempt which
Of course is all they deserve.
If you do, they'll come to life,
And do their best to kill you.



CLIFFORD HARPER · KENNETH REXROTH'S BESTIARY
COLIN WARD · A FEW ITALIAN LESSONS
HAROLD BARCLAY · ACEPHALOUS SYSTEMS
HEINER BECKER · KROPOTKIN AS HISTORIAN
NICOLAS WALTER · EMMA GOLDMAN'S DISILLUSIONMENT
JEAN RAISON · SADE AND SADISM
GEORGE WOODCOCK · FELIX FENEON
PETER CADOGAN · BLAKE AND FREEDOM
BRIAN MORRIS · JOHN CLARK
ANARCHISM AND NATURE

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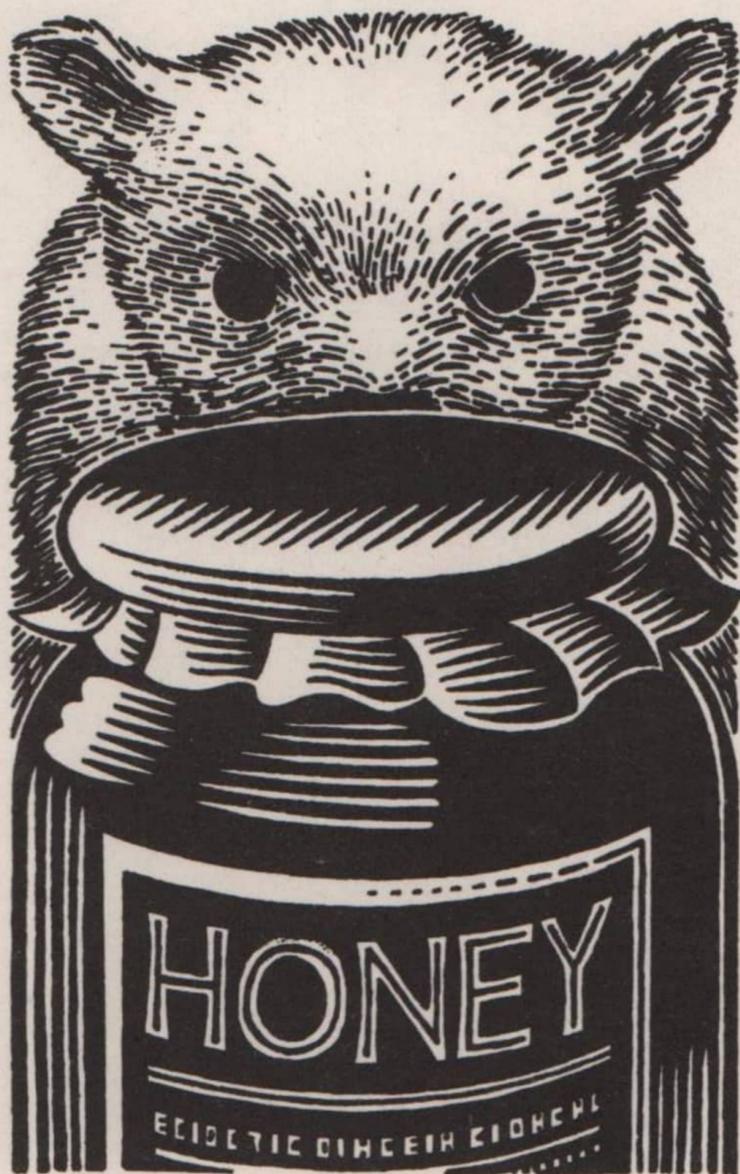
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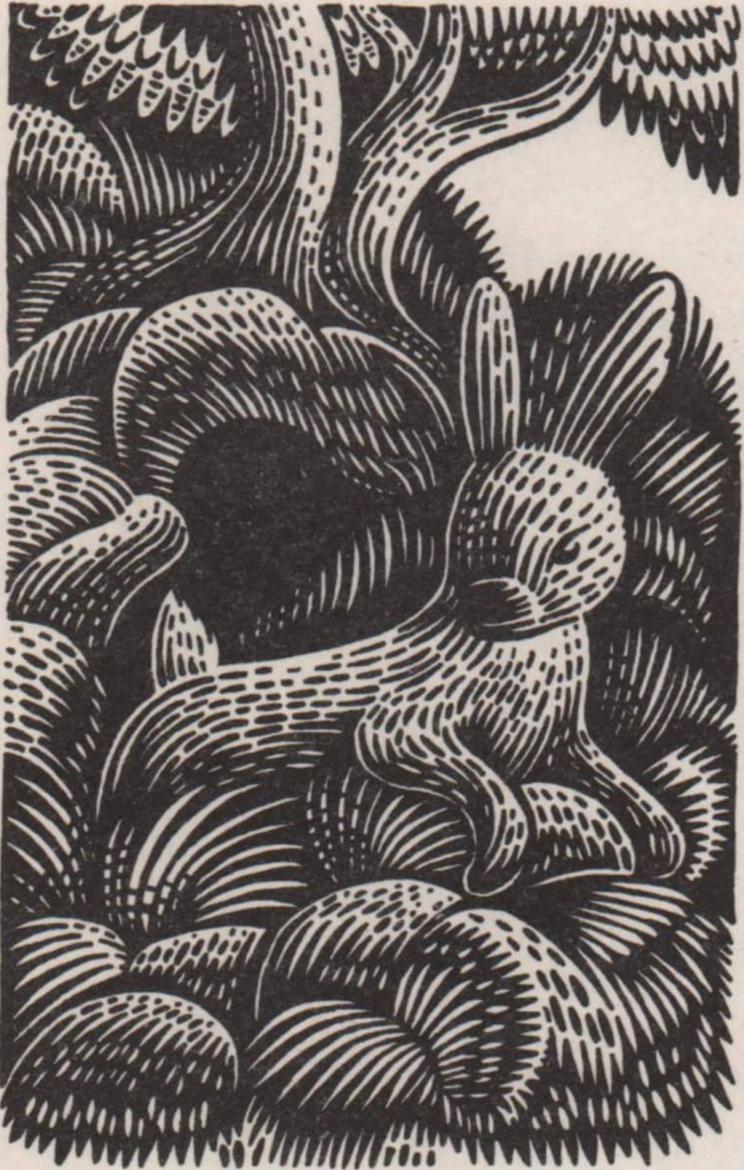
Ant

Achilles, Aesop, Mark Twain,
Stalin, went to the ant.
Your odds are one to three if
You decide to ignore it.
The aardvark, he eats them up,
And frightens all the people.



Bear

When the world is white with snow,
The bear sleeps in his darkness.
When the people are asleep,
The bear comes with glowing eyes
And steals their bacon and eggs.
He can follow the bees from
Point ot point for their honey
The bees sting but he never
Pays them any attention.
Tame bears in zoos beg for buns.
Two philosophies of life:
Honey is better for you
Than buns; but zoo tricks are cute
And make everybody laugh.



Cony

Conies are a feeble folk,
But their home is in the rocks.
If you've only got one rock
There are better things to do
With it than make a home of it.



Deer

Deer are gentle and graceful
And they have beautiful eyes.
They hurt no one but themselves,
The males, and only for love.
Men have invented several
Thousand ways of killing them.



Jackal

The jackal's name is often
Used as a term of contempt.
This is because he follows
The lion around and lives
On the leavings of his kill.
Lions terrify most men
Who buy meat at the butcher's.



Kangaroo

As you know, the kangaroo
Has a pocket, but *all* she
Puts in it is her baby.
Never keep a purse if *all*
You can find to put in it
Is additional expense.
(The reception of these words
Will also serve to warn you:
NEVER MAKE FUN OF BABIES!)



Horse

It is fun to ride the horse.
 If you give him some sugar
 He will love you. But even
 The best horses kick sometimes.
 A rag blowing in the wind
 Can cause him to kill you. These
 Characteristics he shares
 With the body politic.



I

Take care of this. It's all there is.
 You will never get another.

Colin Ward

A Few Italian Lessons

Kropotkin pointed out that it is the task of technical education to make workers in centrally administered factories confident that they can run the show. — Paul Goodman

I met a pleasant young man who at last had found himself a job delivering Egg-o-grams. His friend and employer had the bright idea that better than Kiss-o-grams (where some poor young woman, desperate for work, was hired to deliver a kiss to a stranger on his birthday) would be a message, rolled up small and pushed into a blown egg, so that it could be read only by breaking the shell. The eggs themselves could be instantly decorated with felt-tip pens, following attractive Easter traditions.

This young man was thus a contemporary hero. He had removed himself from the culture of dependency and no longer needed to rely on social benefits, and had joined the Enterprise Culture. Tax-payers were thus relieved of the burden of supporting him. Moralists would find his case to be yet another example of our irrational preference for private affluence over public squalor, for if he had applied to the local authority for a job in cleaning the environment, or attending on the needs of the old or disabled, he would undoubtedly have been told that central government had obliged the council to reduce, rather than increase, its labour force.

The irony of current trends in public employment has been well described by Peter Hall. If there is pressure to cut costs, he says, the inevitable result is the decline of certain services which are among the oldest and most basic functions of local authorities, such as the upkeep of the streets; hence all those potholes and pavement cracks. The paradox thus emerges that these services are now actually worse than they were when we were much poorer and local government was much slimmer. And these happen to be just the ones on which the quality of our common civic life so much depends. (*London 2001*, 1989)

The terrible joke is that, just when the humblest of environmentally useful jobs might have helped people thrown out of work by the collapse of traditional employment in the 1970s and 1980s, they have ceased to exist. This is why it is useful to suggest that the experience of

unemployment in British cities has been the opposite of that in their Italian counterparts. The same world trends have affected both, but the results have been very different. According to Ivan Turok, between 1960 and 1981 major conurbations lost 1.7 million of the 2.1 million manufacturing jobs lost in Britain as a whole. . . . Government policies, together with increasingly competitive external conditions, have led to the closure of capacity and widespread redundancies. At a broader level restrictive macro-economic policies contributed substantially to the collapse of output in the economy in the early 1980s and to the sudden rise in unemployment: 1.2 million jobs were lost in manufacturing between 1980 and 1982 alone. ('Continuity, Change and Contradiction in Urban Policy', in *Regenerating the Inner City* edited by Donnison and Middleton, 1987)

And by 1985, according to David Nicholson-Lord, London itself 'could claim the dubious distinction of having the largest concentration of unemployed people in the advanced industrial world. In relative terms, however, the great Northern cities like Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle were much worse off' (*The Greening of the Cities*, 1987).

Small business was ignored for decades by politicians and economists, in spite of a revealing government report many years ago which saw the small firm sector as 'the traditional breeding-ground for new industries — that is for innovation writ large', and which noted that technical change could make small-scale operation highly economic, but which recorded that 'in manufacturing, the share of small firms in employment and output has fallen substantially and almost continuously since the mid-1920s' (*The Bolton Report — Report of the Committee of Enquiry on Small Firms*, HMSO, 1971). The devastating loss of industrial jobs in the 1970s and 1980s led to a sudden surge of interest and solicitude about the small firm. Authorities on the actual prospects of small business watched the process with a certain sardonic amusement, as expressed by David Watkins, John Stanworth and Ava Westrip:

Both major political parties subscribed through the sixties and into the seventies to a view of industry which, broadly speaking, believed that bigger was better. Economies of scale in production, finance and markets were sought in the belief that only through the creation of organisations of a size to be internationally competitive would British industry continue to thrive in world markets. The key political questions revolved more around the ownership and control of the commanding heights of British industry, which were to bring continued growth and prosperity, than to their creation and development. . . . But it has become clear that the commanding heights look both less formidable and less attractive than they once did. Many have been scaled by foreign climbers; some famous peaks have succumbed to earthquakes. . . . Small wonder that so many vested interests see new challenges in the foothills. (*Stimulating Small Firms*, 1982)

And these authors from the Manchester Business School warned that we would be disappointed if we believed that more than a small percentage of the then three million unemployed could be 'redeployed in the short term, even with extensive retraining. One can at best hope for small miracles from small firms.'

Nevertheless a series of central and local government measures sought to give new encouragement to small business. The most interesting of these have been among the humblest. The Enterprise Allowance scheme was initiated to avoid the absurdity of unemployed people being prosecuted for fraud when they attempted to set up in business for themselves if they continued to draw unemployment pay. Quite often, at a minimal cost to the public purse, it has worked. The difference between social security payments and the year's Enterprise Allowance is so small that even failure costs little, however disheartening it is for the individual. Several people among those who failed as well as those who succeeded have told me of its great value as a learning experience about self-employment, its pitfalls and its potentialities.

The other interesting and suggestive venture is the Community Workshop. This is not part of any employment-creating policy, but a local initiative set up in several cities by people who have perceived that one of the deprivations experienced by the poor is lack of space and of access to tools. Since every city has vacant buildings, they sought a place with access to light and power and where workbenches and machinery could be installed and expertise brought in to enable people to undertake their own motor repairs, furniture construction, toy-making, and so on. Funding has been found from local authorities, charitable sources, or the Government's Community Programme. Such ventures have often been a boon to unemployed people picking up new skills. The rules usually preclude the use of the premises for money-earning ventures. Fortunately, the ruling is often ignored. Everyone concerned with such ventures is convinced of their value and potential. But the Government abruptly announced that, with the introduction of its Employment Training Scheme, the Community Programme funding would end. All Community Programme projects, including some community workshops, were offered the opportunity to convert to Employment Training, but about 45 per cent of them were unable or unwilling to do so, or could not find a way of conforming with the Employment Training rules.

In Britain we have been singularly unsuccessful in finding replacements for those city industrial jobs that have been lost. It is vaguely assumed, just as it has been in the 'revitalisation' of American cities, that the new commercial, financial and tourist developments will

create a trickle-down of service occupations. So it does, but at wages too low to support current urban rents. The secretary of the American Department of Housing and Urban Development displayed a singular lack of familiarity with the catering trade by suggesting that many a great chef had started as a dish-washer — as cited by Howard Ehrlich (*Urban Removal*, Baltimore Great Atlantic Radio Conspiracy, 1978). In the industrial cities of Britain and the United States you see everywhere vast ruined or empty factories and a variety of our current desperate alternatives to industry — garden festivals, conference centres, shopping malls, theme parks and aquaria, or museums of our industrial heritage. Anything, in fact, including Kiss-o-grams, except the opportunity to become involved in either socially useful or productive work.

★ ★ ★

Italy, however, is different, and a visit in 1988 obliged me to think back to Lewis Mumford's eulogy of Kropotkin's examination of *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (in *The City in History*, 1961). Mumford remarked that Kropotkin

foresaw what many big corporations were to discover only during the Second World War; namely, that even when total assemblage was a big one, the farming out of special industrial operations in 'bits and pieces' actually often made the reputed economies of concentrated large-scale organisation, the industrial tendency that justified other forms of metropolitan bigness, dubious. The finer the technology, the greater the need for human initiative and skill conserved in the small workshop. Effective transportation and fine organisation were often superior to the mere physical massing of plant under one roof.

I single out this observation from 1961 on a book first published in 1899 simply because I have searched in vain the literature of British industrial technology or management to find a similar insight. It was probably a surprise in Italy, too, for, as is explained in an American study of Italian industry and its significance for the rest of the world by Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sable,

What happened next caught managers, trade unions, workers and government officials by surprise, although it had been foreshadowed in Prato and elsewhere. . . . The Brescian mini-mills moved at least as fast as their American counterparts in continuous casting; the farm- and construction-equipment industry in Emilia-Romagna got into production of sophisticated hydraulic-control devices. . . . Wage levels in areas such as Emilia-Romagna (where there were virtually no large firms and a proliferation of small shops) drew even with the levels in Piedmont, the most industrialised Italian region. Similarly, unemployment rates fell. . . . A dramatic sign of the prosperity of the new small-firm sector was the rise of Modena — the capital of the decentralised

economy — in the rank list of provincial wealth. (*The Second Industrial Divide*, 1984)

I cite these authoritative findings because I was almost resigned to the British view, shared by the political left and right, that there was something inevitable about the death of British industry, while even for me the Kropotkinian revolution in scale was only to come at some time in the future. Certainly the largest empty factory I have ever seen was in Turin, and the one small occupied part of it had become a conference centre! But there the resemblance to the British industrial graveyard ends. For the taxi-driver (a former FIAT employee, needless to say) who drove me round the old kilometer-long factory at Lingotto, also took me to the area with hundreds of tiny workshops where former employees subcontract on their own accounts, not only for the new FIAT plant where cars are alleged to be 'hand-made by robots', but for several other manufacturers, or simply making products of their own for which they have found a market. Even in the very centre of Turin you come across dozens of small workshops in all the metal trades.

There are several ways of interpreting the transformation of Italian industry. Some observers see the process of dispersal as the ultimate triumph of international finance-capital in breaking up the organised industrial proletariat, as stated by Fergus Murray ('The Decentralisation of Production: The Decline of the Mass-Collective Worker', in R. E. Pahl's symposium *On Work: Historical, Comparative and Theoretical Approaches*, 1988): 'In the late 1960s labour militancy in many Italian industries reached levels that directly threatened firm profitability, and management undertook a series of strategies designed initially to reduce the disruptiveness of militant workers.' This is certainly part of the truth. Since the strike of 1980, 60,000 workers have left FIAT. The regional secretary of the CGIL union, Pietro Marcenaro, told me that 'at that time no one knew who won, but we now know that FIAT won'.

Others see the changes as inevitable and desirable. Richard Hatch, of the Center for Reindustrialisation Studies in New Jersey, sees the process in exactly the same terms as Mumford's account of Kropotkin's vision. He explains:

It is based on a large number of very small, flexible enterprises that depend on broadly skilled workers and multiple-use automated industry. Essentially intermediate producers, they link together in varying combinations and patterns to perform complex manufacturing tasks for widening markets. These firms combine rapid innovation with a high degree of democracy in the workplace. ('Italy's Industrial Renaissance: Are American Cities Ready to Learn?' in *Urban Land*, January 1985)

And he stresses the civic importance of this development:

They tend to congregate in mixed-use neighbourhoods where work and dwelling are integrated. Their growth has been the objective of planning policy, architectural interventions, and municipal investment, with handsome returns in sustained economic growth and lively urban centres.

The late George Benello similarly found in the 'industrial renaissance' of north-eastern and central Italy

a model that worked, creating in less than three decades, not hundreds but literally hundreds of thousands of small-scale firms, out-producing conventionally run factories, and providing work which called forth skill, responsibility, and artistry from its democratically organised workforces.

He was

amazed at the combination of sophisticated design and production technology with human scale work-life, and by the extent and diversity of integrated and collaborative activity within this network. Small cities, such as Modena, had created 'artisan villages' — working neighborhoods where production facilities and living quarters were within walking or bike range, where technical schools for the unemployed fed directly into newly created businesses, and where small firms using computerised techniques, banded together to produce complex products. (Len Krimerman, 'C. George Benello: Architect of Liberating Work', in *Changing Work*, Winter 1988)

These are large claims, but I saw plenty of evidence in Italy to support them. The first thing to surprise me about Ennio Mazzanti's workshop in Bologna was that his equipment must be worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. He told me that he had worked on the bench for ten years in a motor-cycle factory and then bought one lathe and one vertical milling machine to start up on his own. They still stand in a corner of the shop today, useful for one-off jobs. Now, with large long-bed horizontal grinding machines (Swiss, German, and British) he and his son and three employees drill precision holes ('with a mirror finish', he explained) as sub-contractors. The parts are delivered and collected by the manufacturers. 'But suppose they go to another, cheaper specialist?' I asked. 'That doesn't bother me,' he replied. 'I work for five different firms and can always pick up more jobs.' If the flow of long-run orders dried up, there would always be enough small jobs to pay off his bank loan (he expected each machine to be paid for in ten years), and the overheads were low. He works a ten-hour day, his employees decide their own hours. He pays the same wage as any other engineering firm in Emilia-Romagna, and never worries about the paper-work, which is done by computer by a cooperative to which he subscribes.

There are reasons, of course, behind the astonishing flourishing of the small workshop economy. Whatever happens in the central government in Rome, there has always been agreement among the

regional and city governments of northern Italy, and among all political parties from the Communists to the Christian Democrats, to support small enterprise. In the 1950s the Cassa Artigiana was founded to provide credit below normal interest rates (at 1½ - 2 per cent). There has been a continuity in this trend since the 1960s, with the result that a majority of employed workers are now in factories with fewer than fifty employees and an increasing number in really tiny factories. They vary enormously. Some are traditional craft activities which have simply by-passed the industrial revolution and whose products are in great demand everywhere. Others follow the well-known sweatshop pattern where an entrepreneur hands out work to home-workers. They can be trapped in the system, or they might themselves be able to mechanise the process and earn a good living, aided by the availability of credit. Thus the owner of *Essezeta*, a small firm doing applique and speciality sewing for the knitwear industry, says: 'I started with nothing. I used to work in a large firm. Then the business went bad and the factory closed. I had to take care of myself.' This woman in her late forties explained: 'I began with a simple machine, the kind of sewing machine you see at home. Then, step by step, I got real sewing machines and now I have electronic ones. I tell you these electronic machines give me a lot of pleasure.' She is now a fully equipped sub-contractor like *Ennio Mazzanti*, able to perform a particular operation for a variety of assemblers and manufacturers. Finally, there are those with a real degree of autonomy, finding a market and producing finished goods themselves, like those in the textile industry around *Carpi* or the shoe firms of *Rimini*.

Thousands of these 'artisan shops' — defined in Italian legislation as those workshops which have fewer than twenty-two workers and in which the owners themselves are engaged full-time — are jointly organised in cooperatively owned bodies like the *Confederazione Nazionale dell' Artigianato (CNA)*, which in the province of *Emilia-Romagna* alone, apart from its concern with training and management, keeps the books of 60,000 firms and handles 120,000 paylips a month. It also handles export marketing and guarantees credit for members, operating as a loan guarantee consortium.

The economic life of *Emilia-Romagna*, where more than a third of the workforce is self-employed and where per capita incomes are the highest in Italy, has an accumulation of assumptions about capital and labour, and about the skill and autonomy of the individual worker that are scarcely grasped in our patronising British attitudes towards the needs of small business. Our interest in the Italian economy tends to focus, just as it does in Britain, around the giant multi-national corporations with capital which is readily shifted between countries and

indeed to new manufacturing bases continents away. We see Italy as the vast empire of FIAT and the Agnelli family, or as firms like Benetton. Yet economists, faced with the fact that the Italian economy weathered the storms of the 1970s, attribute it to the buoyancy of the intricate network of very small firms, and, in the words of Robert E. Friedman, 'in 1981 the onset of the recession tested whether the system that had done so well in times of general growth could survive in times of hardship. The network not only survived, but prospered' ('Flexible Manufacturing Networks', in *Entrepreneurial Economy*, July/August 1987). In Britain, we have come to take it for granted that prosaic consumer goods like washing-machines or refrigerators, or even motor-cycles (of which there are at least six Italian varieties), can only be produced abroad.

I sought explanations for these differences. I was told by a British historian, comparing the experience of car workers in Coventry and Birmingham with those of Turin, that in English factories a third generation of skilled industrial workers have been 'moulded in worker-resistance to industrial capitalism', knowing nothing about ways of working except employment for big capitalists; whereas in Turin, with its high 'generation-turnover' of new industrial workers from the South, the artisans and peasants who moved north were not 'crushed by factory capitalism', and have consequently found it easier to become self-employed workers or employees of small-scale, high-technology entrepreneurs, or to drop out of industrial work almost completely and pick up a living from small-scale horticulture. It is certainly impressive to see how so many people in Italy live in a world which is precisely that of pre-industrial society and is predicted as the likely pattern of post-industrial work — a 'belt-and-braces' combination of several sources of employment for the same individual, built around resourcefulness and adaptability and upon the needs of the season. When I was at Ennio Mazzanti's workshop at Trebbo di Reno, two of his employees had taken time off to gather in the maize harvest (Kropotkin's ideal of the combination of agricultural and industrial work!), while in among the houses around us were small firms involved in steel-tube fabrication, thermoplastics, furniture, aerodynamics, leather, enamelling, bottle-making, compressed air, clothing, forge and foundry, precision tools, electronics and ceramics.

Several of the explanations I was given for the differences between Britain and Italy contradict our received wisdom. One was the high degree of autonomy in regional and city governments. Another was that the members of this community of small business and individual initiative were predominantly left-wing voters, supporting a high level of municipal activity. Yet another was the diffusion of entrepreneurial

know-how. I questioned two eminent economists. One was Professor Sebastiano Brusco of Modena, who stressed this:

Everyone in Emilia has a direct experience of what a firm means, of what it means to apply to a business consultant, to meet with marketing difficulties, to deal with banks and credit institutions, and, above all, how to associate with a friend to start some new activity.

The other was Professor Vittorio Rieser, reflecting on those facts about working life that nurture resourcefulness and adaptability. He talked about the wasted creativity involved in assembly-line production, whether in Turin, Detroit, Coventry or Birmingham, which actually found an outlet when people were working for themselves in the post-industrial equivalent of the fine grain city.

The experience of Italian cities has been thoroughly documented — by Sebastiano Brusco in 'The Emilian Model: Productive Decentralisation and Social Integration' (*Cambridge Journal of Economics*, June 1982) and in 'Small Firms and Industrial Districts: The Experience of Italy' (in David Keeble's and Egbert Wever's *New Firms and Regional Development in Europe*, 1988). How does it relate to British efforts to encourage small enterprises? A most significant factor is that of access to credit. It is hard to think of any credit institution that would provide finance for very advanced machinery to shop-floor workers who did not intend to become large-scale operators. Another is the absence of those informal communication networks so evident in Italy. Yet another is the loss of confidence observable on two levels. One, at the top, where after years of fruitless subsidy of large-scale industry, it is assumed that products can no longer be made, only services. The other, at the bottom, is that 'the likes of us' could never run a productive enterprise. The importance of ventures like the Community Workshop is that they could, locally and among friends, make that leap from production for the household and production for the market. Ventures of that kind can help form the link between the pre-industrial domestic economy and the post-industrial local economy. Ray Pahl, looking at the history of work (in the introduction to his symposium *On Work*, 1988), suggests: The emergence of a polarity between employment and unemployment is in marked contrast to the continuum of mixes of different forms of work typical of earlier times. It may be that in the last years of the twentieth century we are witnessing a return to a world where the continuum is more apposite than a polar, dualistic concept. However, those who can do without money to provide goods and services are in a very small minority as ordinary people's alternative means of subsistence have been gradually eroded over the last 200 years.

In the painful transition to the future urban economy, where mass employment gives way to self-directed work, it is worth considering George Benello's conclusion that 'Italy has taught the world perhaps

more than any other nation about urban life and urban form. Once again it is in the forefront, creating a new economic order, based on the needs of the city and on human scale.'

I need to add a word about C. George Benello (1926-1987). He was an Italian-American anarchist whose big interest was in the liberation of work. He established a worker-controlled company, Arrow Design Engineering, at Amherst, Massachusetts, intending to produce a low-cost, highly energy-efficient vehicle for local transport. In the 1960s he sailed into a South Pacific nuclear test zone as part of the general and seldom reported protest, and he developed a cooperatively owned catamaran called Friends of Durruti in the 1980s. Looking for positive trends in the real world, he seized upon the lessons to be learned from the cooperative industries of Mondragon in the Basque province of Spain, and the major interest of his last years was in gathering the implications of the small, worker-owned artisan villages of Northern Italy. The Winter 1988 issue of the journal *Changing Work* is devoted to articles by or about George Benello (\$4 from P O Box 261, New Town Branch, Newton, Massachusetts 02258, USA).

Reared as I am in a slightly different tradition of anarchist propaganda, the lessons for me were slightly altered. I learnt, for example, that the small business entrepreneurs of Piedmont or Emilia-Romagna were very far from any Thatcherite stereotype. For a start, they tended to vote for the Communist Party in regional or city elections. They don't see themselves as captains of industry. The second point related to cooperation. It is well known in Britain that if two people gather together to make rocking-horses for the well-bred English nursery, they are called a workers' cooperative, but that if they do it separately they are a tedious example of the entrepreneurial culture. When I raised the issue of cooperation with Sebastiano Brusco he replied: 'If I may say so without giving offence, you English people on the left have a fixation on cooperative enterprise, which hasn't been all that successful, without noticing that there are areas where it is important, and areas where it is not.' He went on to explain that, where it mattered, bodies like the CNA had arranged bulk-buying, bulk-paperwork, bulk credit guarantees, and bulk marketing. 'People cooperate where it is useful, and they follow their own paths where it is more of a bureaucratic nuisance than a help.'

Chastened, I reflected that we do have a lot to learn.

Colin Ward's book *Welcome, Thinner City* is published by Bedford Square Press in September 1989.

Harold B. Barclay

Segmental Acephalous Network Systems: Alternatives to Centralised Bureaucracy

Centralised, hierarchical organisations, including the state and bureaucracies, are readily prone to tyranny, regimentation, impersonalisation, corruption and incompetence. How to mitigate these problems and create organisations which provide greater freedom and individual expression, while at the same time maintaining social order, have long been matters of major concern. Yet permeating contemporary political 'science' and political sociology is the persistent belief that the state and bureaucracy are necessary and inevitable features of any complex social system. Alternatives to complex hierarchical organisations with coercive authority concentrated at the top are not taken seriously in either discipline. At best, academics in these fields offer only variations on the same theme — varying kinds of states, and varying kinds of bureaucracy. With Max Weber, they may not much like the bureaucratic milieu, but they believe that this is one of the prices one must pay for a complex modern society if there is to be any kind of social order.

A recent major collection of readings intended for university study — *States and Societies*, edited by David Held and others (1983) — is a case in point. In it only the liberal, liberal democratic, Marxist, and 'political sociological' (Weberian) approaches are considered. I would suggest that it is a serious error to ignore anarchist and other radical decentralist theories — theories which argue that decentralist and acephalous (headless) systems can provide order within the context of freedom and individuality and are the best guarantees of these values.

It is invariably argued that everything must have a 'head', and the individual human organism is taken as a natural example, since it is characterised by the centralised control of the brain. At the same time, however, when we come to analyse this extremely complex organ, we find that it has no central control. The billions of brain cells operate in an acephalous context like a fine-meshed network of interrelated and to some extent interdependent parts. The entire social organisation of most cultures throughout the world and through time has also had an acephalous network character rather than the hierarchical centralised structure so prevalent in the modern state. During most of human history human beings as hunters, gatherers and foragers lived in very

small groups. They were bound to one another in a network of kinship, affinal (marriage), trading and other reciprocal relationships. Obviously such tiny entities required nothing more. They certainly needed no bureaucratic hierarchy. However, we may also observe the widespread occurrence of non-hierarchical acephalous network systems as the standard pattern of social organisation in more complex societies with large populations as well, and it is on this that I wish to focus here.

The segmentary lineage model

A common form of network system has been the segmentary lineage. What may be called the 'ideal type' of this model incorporates the following components — as explained in E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer* (1940), and M. G. Smith, 'Segmentary Lineage Systems', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (1956).

1. Membership in the significant groups within the system — the lineages — is based on putative patrilineal descent and relationship to others in the group.

2. The maximally integrative unit — the 'tribe' — is segmented into major branches which are often referred to as 'clans'. These in turn are subdivided into further groupings which in turn are further subdivided. The number of levels of segmentation in any system varies from one culture to another. In some cases each clan is divided into 'maximal' lineages which are further divided into 'major' lineages, while these are divided among 'minor' lineages which are composed of 'minimal' lineages — which are the equivalent of a group of families descended from a common paternal great-grandfather or grandfather. Each individual member of the tribe then belongs to a group within each of the segments. In analogous fashion, each person in a modern state belongs at one and the same time to a household, a municipality or county, a province, and a nation.

3. However, aside from the fact that segmentary lineage systems are not based on territory but on presumed kinship, another way in which they differ from the subdivisions in the modern state is that a person ordinarily becomes fully aware of his membership in any segment only when a given segment is threatened from outside by another segment. Segmentary lineage systems are then characterised by 'complementary opposition'. That is to say, my minimal lineage may be in conflict with a minimal lineage within my minor lineage, in which case it would be expected that all members of the minimal lineage will unite against the members of another minimal lineage. If, however, a member of my minimal lineage is insulted or assaulted by a person from another minor lineage, then the conflict between my minimal lineage and that other

within my minor lineage would be set aside as we unite as a minor lineage opposed to the other minor lineage. If someone from another clan assaults a member of my clan, then again we must temporarily at least forget our internal quarrels within the clan and unite against the opposing clan. Complementary opposition means minimal lineage against minimal lineage, clan against clan, and tribe against tribe. Conflict never entails, for example, an entire clan against a specific minimal lineage, or a tribe against a specific clan. Complementary opposition suggests the corporate nature of the groups involved. The unit is conceived as a single person — an injury to one is an injury to all, just as guilt of a member extends to include the whole body. Finally, complementary opposition suggests the equality of units in terms of size and power — that is, for example, all clans should be approximately the same size and have the same power.

4. Leaders of tribes and their segments are elders who have achieved status as influential men. Any power they have does not rely on a police force. Rather it must be earned and continually validated. The successful leader has a canny ability to assess and then verbalise popular opinion on an issue, to sway others by convincing argument and elegant speech, to demonstrate wisdom and justice, display generosity and skilfully employ his connections with other men of influence. He is first among equals, although often a little more equal than others, and he is a mediator of disputes rather than an arbitrator.

A major criticism of segmentary lineage theory has been that it claims that the segmentary lineage provides an adequate explanation of all the political-social relations in those societies which depend on such structures (see the critiques by Emrys Peters, 'The Proliferation of Segments in the Lineage of the Bedouin of Cyrenaica', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 1960, and 'Some Structural Aspects of the Feud among the Camel Herding Bedouin of Cyrenaica', *Africa*, 1967). And within the past three decades further investigation has suggested that in those societies where this form of organisation prevails, this system alone is inadequate to explain the dynamics of social life and, further, that the system does not operate precisely according to the model. Important discrepancies exist.

In addition to his lineage obligations, an individual builds personal friendships outside of kinship. He acquires ties to neighbours who are unrelated to him. He gains working and trading partners who are not kin to him in any way. From birth he has ties to kinsmen who are related to him through his mother and through his father's mother, and when he marries he acquires affinal kin. Any of these ties may acquire considerable importance, and some can in specific circumstances override those obligations to lineage mates. For example, if my lineage

becomes embroiled in a conflict with a lineage to which my mother belongs, I may very well choose to sit on the side-lines and avoid involvement lest I do harm to my maternal kinsmen. I may even seek to assume a conciliatory role in the affair.

Segmentary lineage structures are commonplace in much of South-West Asia and North Africa among Arabs, Imazighen (commonly and pejoratively referred to as Berbers), and Afghans. Here we frequently find that a network of major importance derived from Islamic belief and practice operates along with the segmentary systems and other relationships. Thus in Morocco there are holy lineages whose members allege descent from a saint. Such lineages are expected to avoid conflict and disputes, and as permanent neutrals with great sanctity selected members act as mediators in those quarrels which arise between the non-saintly lineages (see Ernest Gellner, *The Saints of the Atlas*, 1969). In effect several lineages are tied together through association with a holy lineage.

In Afghanistan, where a tribal-segmentary lineage system has traditionally prevailed in the rural areas, individuals establish special relations with a *pir* or holy man. The *pir* can not only distribute his spiritual blessings, but also is a man of influence and wealth. He is expected to show hospitality to all his clients, and through his connections he can be extremely helpful to them in their everyday pursuits. The ties to a given *pir* tend to reinforce neighbourhood, ethnic, affinal and consanguineal bonds, since relatives and residents of the same locality tend to belong to the same *pir* 'coalition'. In addition, a *pir* and his supporters are informally united with other *pirs* and their followers in a loose association. At the same time, *pirs* of the Isma'ili and Imami Shi'a sects have associations outside Afghanistan with higher religious functionaries (see Robert L. Canfield, 'Islamic Coalitions in Bamyan: A Problem in Translating Afghan Culture', in M. Nazif Shahrani and Robert L. Canfield, editors, *Revolutions and Rebellions in Afghanistan*, 1984).

Such *pir* networks, then, serve to supplement other social relationships, including those of the lineage and tribe. Canfield suggests that these Islamic 'coalitions' are significant in the mobilisation of grassroots resistance to the Russian invaders. I would add, however, that it is more likely to be the combination of this religious network with the segmentary lineage structure which provides a segmented, acephalous form of organisation. Such a form of organisation is especially appropriate in the kind of guerrilla resistance movement involved in the Russian-Afghan conflict, since each segment is a fully self-sufficient entity loosely tied to other segments. Consequently, if one or more segments is eliminated, others persist, whereas if the

resistance were a centralised bureaucracy the elimination of the head would mean the destruction of the organisation.

In rural Egypt and the Sudan, Sufi organisations have been widespread in bringing together numbers of men in mystical brotherhoods. Often membership in such groupings cuts across kinship lines, so that if a lineage obligation pushes a person towards aggressive action, his obligation to his Sufi brothers operates as a restraining force, since members of an opposing lineage may be his Sufi brothers.

Along similar lines in major parts of East Africa, segmentary lineages are supplemented by and in many cases overridden by age and generation grading systems. In age grading, individuals of approximately the same age are initiated as a set, passing through different grades in the course of their lives. Each grade is associated with various duties and responsibilities. Sometimes adjacent age sets composed of members of the same generation are constituted as a generational set as well, while among other peoples there is only a division into generational sets and grades. In all cases, members of the same set are expected to treat each other as brothers and to support one another's causes. A given set includes members of different lineages, as also a given lineage is composed of members of different sets, so that the affiliations to each grouping function as mutual restraining devices.

In sum, segmentary lineage systems set out certain guidelines for individual behaviour, but in everyday life individuals make choices and establish priorities about social obligations, so that they may feel in one case the paramountcy of their ties of affinity or neighbourhood over lineage, or in another case those of lineage over those of religious affiliation. Therefore, even those systems which are called segmentary lineage systems entail a complex web of relations, each piece of the web acting as a restraining or pushing force. The specific dynamics of any particular case requires a detailed analysis which ultimately gets to the individual motivations and personal involvements of the people.

As a final note on the segmentary lineage model, it should be mentioned that, contrary to the classic model, lineages are not usually equal in either size or power. The equality presumably inherent in this system is impeded by the fact that one or two lineages may have large numbers of members, greater wealth, and more men of influence, while others are small in numbers and poor in resources of prominent personalities. The Somalis are one group who have tried to overcome this difficulty by providing for the initiation of alliances between smaller and weaker lineages so that a resultant alliance is approximately equal to the larger lineage (see I. M. Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, 1961).

Another type of segmental network system: the Tonga

Segmentary lineage systems are one type of decentralised network arrangement in which the main threads of the system are those of lineage ties, while numerous other links are normally of secondary importance. Another kind of acephalous social network system varies from the segmentary lineage type in that, while again unilineal kinship groups are of central importance, they do not cast as wide a net as those in the segmentary lineage arrangement. That is, there is little or no continual subdividing of kin units into increasingly smaller segments; and, further, the principle of complementary opposition accordingly can hardly be said to exist. Other kinds of social bonds therefore become important. The Tonga of Africa represent a most interesting example of this kind of system.

The Tonga comprise two regional groups. One has been called the Gwembe or Valley Tonga, and the other the Plateau Tonga. (Interestingly enough, there is another people called Tonga, living on the shores of the north-western part of Lake Malawi who are also of Bantu stock and have a very similar type of social system; yet the two peoples are apparently totally unrelated to each other. See Van Velsen, *The Politics of Kinship*, 1964.) The Gwembe Tonga live along the Zambezi River in the Gwembe Valley on both sides of the Zambia-Zimbabwe border. The Plateau Tonga live on a plateau in Zambia which extends north from the Zambesi; like the Gwembe, they raise corn, millet and sorghum, but they are mainly a cattle-keeping people. Today the Tonga number well over 400,000, the Plateau Tonga being more numerous.

The following description of the Tonga social network derives from the studies of Elizabeth Colson ('Plateau Tonga', in David M. Schneider & Kathleen Gough, editors, *Matrilineal Kinship*, 1960; *The Plateau Tonga of Northern Rhodesia: Social and Religious Studies*, 1962; *Tradition and Contract: The Problem of Order*, 1974); I shall concentrate on the Plateau Tonga. The description will attempt as much as possible to keep to an 'ethnographic present' of the period just before European colonisation. This is important, because with the advent of the British the old acephalous system was for the most part destroyed, as the British imposed the patterns of the centralised bureaucratic state.

The Tonga are organised into four different types of social groups — residential, kinship, age, and voluntary association. First, let us consider the residential groups. Several family households in a cluster of houses comprise a hamlet, ordinarily of less than 100 inhabitants. Because practice permits freedom of settlement, any given hamlet consists of inhabitants with a variety of kinship relationships to one

another, although one and sometimes two matrilineal groups are pre-eminent. Each hamlet has its leading man, who is at best a man of influence, since he has no authority. 'If the headman attempted to enforce his authority, he would soon find himself alone with his people departed to join other relatives or to try their luck with some stranger,' says Colson. 'In this case his village probably vanishes and he is forced to join some neighbouring village with the remnant of his followers.'

Seven or eight of these adjacent hamlets comprise another residence grouping, the neighbourhood. It follows that a neighbourhood consists of members from different matrilineal groups and related to one another in a complex fashion or sometimes not related at all. For both hamlet and neighbourhood, a resident acquires certain duties and rights purely as a consequence of his residence. He may call on a neighbour for aid because he is a neighbour and for that reason alone. All community members are held together through their obligation to support the neighbourhood rain shrine. They are required to participate in the annual rain ritual as well as in the ritual of the eating of the new grain and the harvest festivities. When the soil of the neighbourhood has been polluted by a killing, they join in purification rites. All neighbours are expected to participate in mourning a deceased member, and where a member endangers others in the community he will be sanctioned by the mob action of the others.

A neighbourhood, too, has its headman — the *sikatongo*, or 'owner of the country'. He is either the man who first settled with a following in the area, or he is ordinarily the matrilineal descent of that original settler, yet even he has no special authority to settle cases or enforce his will. He receives no special treatment, has no badge of office, and receives no form of tribute for his position. His leadership is based on his proved reputation, and he is at best a first among equals. When he dies, his matrilineal group members select a successor, and if none is suitable from that group then one is drawn from another group.

Several neighbourhoods cooperate in hunting and fishing activities. Hunting drives every year draw men from four or five neighbourhoods, while at the end of the rainy season those living near fishing grounds join with other neighbourhoods to carry out fish drives in the rivers and pans of the area. These activities represent the maximum of territorially based integrated activity for the Plateau Tonga, as indeed the neighbourhood headman represents the highest 'office' in the society.

Then let us consider kinship. The most important social ties among the Tonga are those of kinship, with the largest kin unit being the matrilineal clan, the members of which are scattered throughout the land. There are twelve of these clans, and all have an amorphous character. They are not corporate groups as in the segmentary lineage

system. Living members never meet as a group, and they have no leaders. From the Tonga point of view, they are held together by a mystical bond with the ancestral spirits. Their functions seem to be few indeed. The most important is that they are exogamous (marrying out of the clan) and so regulate marriage selection. Clans provide some security and hospitality for members. If a person finds himself outside his home district, he can seek refuge with a fellow clan member. It is also considered unethical to enslave a fellow clansman, though a man who is enslaved assumes the clan affiliation of his masters. Clan names are used as terms of address.

A most interesting role of the clan is that it serves as a basis for establishing joking partnerships. A clan may have several other clans with which it maintains a joking relationship. Colson states that if she had collected data 'more systematically . . . all the clans would have emerged as paired with at least half the available number of other clans'. Joking partnerships are believed to be derived from the antagonism between the animals symbolised by the clans. Thus, one clan is identified with bees and another with ants, and it is argued that ants steal the honey of the bees. Consequently a tension occurs between these two clans. The joking involves the use of obscenities and rough words, derision and mockery, as well as the accusation of sorcery. Such clan joking is distinguished from those joking relationships which exist between specific kinsmen such as cross-cousins, grandparents and grandchildren, or affines of the same generation; in the latter joking is limited to teasing.

Clan joking partners have certain obligations aside from that of crude joking. If a person has committed an extreme offence such that he is condemned by the entire community, it is the clan joking partners who bring shame upon him. They chide and mock one who has committed incest or attempted suicide or wasted his kin group's property. Where it is believed that illness or other misfortune is caused by the retribution of the spirits as a consequence of an offence, a ritual peace-making is required in which the offended person and the offender meet and make peace. Joking partners officiate at these rituals where extreme cases are involved.

Joking partners are expected to dispose of the remains of those who have died by suicide or leprosy or are considered to be infected with evil forces. In addition they have certain duties to perform at any funeral. The Tonga believe that all those who have responsibilities in connection with a person during his life should have some role in the rituals surrounding his death. Joking partners are also substitutes or stand-ins for kinsmen of a particular category when that person is not available to

execute his expected task. Thus, if at a funeral one's affinal kin are unable to participate, it is possible to substitute joking partners.

Paired clan joking relationships cast a broad net for a person so as to include a wide variety and a great number of people living far and wide over Tonga territory with whom one is obliged to avoid any conflict or hostility. As Colson notes, the significance of paired clan arrangements 'meant that offence could neither be given nor recognised in dealing with a large number of people with whom he came into contact. . . . The Tonga could move through a wide circle of relationships with security.' In addition, this kind of relationship 'has the effect of mobilising and expressing public opinion through the mouths of joking partners who by definition are not kinsmen and who are protected in the exercise of this function by the outlawing of retaliation against anything they may say.'

The most important social grouping among the Tonga is the matrilineal group, which includes a number of people who claim descent from a common female ancestress through female lines. Often a person may not be sure of his exact relationship to everyone else in the group, although this would be the expected norm. As has already been noted, group members may be concentrated in a general area, but not all are located in one village or neighbourhood, since freedom of movement and a prevalence of virilocal residence scatters members away from the group's residential centre.

The matrilineal group is a segment of a clan. Yet beyond the group's ultimate ancestress ties to other clan members are forgotten. The matrilineal group has a corporate character. That is, ideally each member should feel injured if one of its members is insulted or assaulted by another from a different group. Also each member shares in the guilt of any member who has committed an offence. The matrilineal group is, then, a vengeance group, seeking revenge for injuries inflicted upon any of its members and at the same time sharing responsibility for paying compensation for offences by any of its number. It appears that in vengeance only a matrilineal group acts against another despite clan affiliation. That is, matrilineal groups among the Tonga are different from lineages in the segmentary lineage system in which an offence by a person from another clan would embroil not just the lineages but the two clans as well. The Tonga seem to delimit their feuds to the matrilineal group level, regardless of the clan affiliation of the groups involved.

Especially when a person is murdered and the culprit is known, members of the victim's group embark on retaliation in which any member of the murderer's group could be a victim. There are, however, limits to the amount of fighting between groups. First,

members of a matrilineal group live dispersed over an area among members of other groups. Not only does this make retaliation more difficult, but also those in uninvolved groups who are neighbours of the feuding parties do not care to be in the midst of a conflict in which they have no interest. Secondly, matrilineal groups are tied to one another in various ways, and this also motivates them to seek to defuse violent situations. Finally, the groups involved do not like the violence. Colson states that the Tonga, like other anarchic peoples, 'stress the importance of personal restraint in the interests of avoiding any possibility of raising hackles'. They 'attempt to sidestep issues, are reluctant to allow their fellows to drag them into a dispute, and try to vanish from the scene if those in their vicinity seem intent on pursuing a quarrel. Or close supporters, who inevitably will be identified with the combatants, attempt to restrain them, taking from their hands any weapons or tools which can be used for injury, applying gentle pressure, and murmuring soothing words about the advisability of cooling the combat for the moment. They do not want to take sides' or to draw the wrath of a vengeful person.

In case there is retaliation by a matrilineal group for some major offence, such as a murder, an affinal relative is selected by each side and the two act as go-betweens or mediators. They discuss peace, guilt and compensation, and report back to their respective clients, going back and forth until a solution is reached which is agreeable to all. The attempt in such encounters is not so much to establish guilt and impose punishment as it is to restore group harmony. Yet even after an agreement for compensation has been reached, there can be further supernatural sanctions, especially if that compensation has not been forthcoming. If a person of the offender's party becomes ill or dies, a diviner may say that it is because the spirit of the dead man is angry because no compensation has been paid.

In addition to acting as a corporate defence and vengeance body which is collectively responsible for the behaviour of its members, matrilineal groups provide most of the bridewealth to acquire wives for the sons of the group. Members all have a share in bridewealth received for their daughters. They are expected to help those of their number who are in need, and they select those who are to inherit the positions and spirits of the dead. Members are obliged to visit those who are ill, to mourn the dead, and to purify the spouses of those who have died. The matrilineal group has certain common interests in property, though property including land and livestock is individually owned. If a dead man leaves widows and small children, a substitute is found to marry them and care for the orphans. In sum, the matrilineal group is a

corporate mutual aid unit whose unity is reinforced by the supernatural sanction of the ancestral and other spirits.

A third major kinship tie is to one's father's matrilineal group. Members of this group are expected to provide part of the bridewealth and to receive a share in any acquired. They also contribute to compensations for offences by one of their children, and they likewise share in those received for one who is killed. They participate in the funeral rites and in inheritance. A man is, finally, ritually dependent not only on his own matrilineal group but on his father's as well. Indeed he is more dependent on his father's group, since he cannot approach directly the ancestors of his father who are important to his welfare, though he can of course do so with those of his own matrilineal group.

Marriage establishes affinal ties with one's spouse's matrilineal group and to other kin groups as well — such as the spouse's father's group. Such bonds are less significant, but they do enjoin peace and harmony and so constitute yet another set of links in the Tonga social network.

Then let us consider age. The Tonga are bound together by age groupings which establish rather amorphous sets of men born at about the same time. They have no formal structure, and lack both names and leaders, but boys of about the same age are taught to treat each other in a fraternal fashion and to respect those in older age groups. Members of the same age group are expected to share the responsibility for their fellows' actions. They can be compelled to pay compensation for certain offences by one of their fellows, and any compensation received would in turn be shared by one's age mates. Colson is not quite clear about the extent to which any age group might be able to exact a fine for an offence against one of its members. It appears that only the elder age group could do so. In any case, age groupings provide some cross cutting of kinship ties, and are therefore likely to operate to some extent to improve relations between matrilineal groups. Women also have age groupings, but they are even more tenuous than those of the men.

Finally, among the Plateau Tonga there are three kinds of institutionalised voluntary associations — brotherhood pacts, cattle loans or links, and kraal groupings. In a brotherhood pact, a person who wants to trade in a distant place makes an agreement with a local resident who then guarantees the safety of the person and of his property as well. One might claim hospitality from a fellow clansman or a clan joking partner, but the brotherhood pact is a more secure arrangement, since a clan bond alone is considered insufficient to guarantee a person's security. Even brotherhood pacts are not always effective, since Colson's informants stressed that it is best to remain in one's own district.

In cattle loaning, links are established between men by loaning out cattle to non-kin and often to people living some distance away. This not only establishes friendship ties and obligations with non-kinsmen, but through it one may distribute cattle in several locations. This cuts down the possibility of being wiped out by epidemic disease or robbery; if he has all his stock in one place and is robbed, he will lose his whole herd, whereas if the animals are dispersed among several herders he will lose only part of his herd. His relatives and creditors are likewise never sure how much wealth he has if the herd is not concentrated. Creditors are less likely to steal in and drive off cattle as payment owed if they don't know which ones are owned by the debtor. Moreover, cattle loaning helps to avoid overgrazing and excessive use of waterholes. Men with few cattle can acquire those necessary for their use, and those with too many are able to dispense with their excess. In this system, the man who cares for the animals receives the use of the milk and manure (and in modern times the draft power for ploughing). The original owner keeps his claim to the animals lent out and to their offspring.

Kraal groups are organised within villages in order to arrange for common herding. Several men in the village build a common kraal in which to put their stock. Membership in such groups depends on personal preference and not kinship. So here is yet another strand in the network tying groups of friends together in a collective interest.

Aside from the strands which tie living person to living person, there are also those which bind the living to one another through the tie of supernatural spirits. Ancestral spirits must be remembered by offerings, and if they are forgotten they may cause misfortune to fall on the living descendants. Ghosts, those ancestral spirits who are no longer remembered, are a constant danger. A person is also careful about how he behaves towards others lest they be sorcerers unknown to him.

The integration of Tonga society at the neighbourhood level is provided by rain rituals. For two or three days each year, a district peace is imposed in the name of the shrine. In some areas a breaking of this peace means that the offender must pay a fine to the shrine through the community elders. We have already noted that all neighbourhood members are expected to participate in the rituals, and thus all cooperate with one another to ensure the public good and to prevent drought, famine and epidemics. Occasionally in the course of the year the community can be called together to reaffirm its unity. Disrespect for the shrine even on non-ritual occasions might bring forth disaster for the community unless the offender is punished and a ritual purification is performed.

One may become possessed by spirits and so obtain recognition as a prophet or rain-maker. It is through such individuals that the spirits

announce the evil deeds committed by the populace. Prophets preach the need to initiate new rituals, and they may build new rain shrines. The spirits through the prophet insist on the proper following of the rain rituals and act as a conservative force by advocating the retention of the customs which prevailed when they were living human beings.

The central mechanism of social order in Tonga society is the fact that any given person is a member of a number of different groups, which in turn are a part of a network of further obligations, so that any negative action against an individual or group resulting from one set of relations has its counter-restraining effect resulting from affiliation with other groups and individuals. Order exists in Tonga society, and each individual has personal identity and support from others, because each belongs to a matrilineal group, a clan, a village, and a neighbourhood with its rain shrine. Important religious sanctions bind him further to his matrilineal group and his neighbourhood. He is also associated with his father's matrilineal group, and has ties to affinal kin as well. Moreover, he belongs to an age group and a kraal group, as well as engaging in cattle loaning and sometimes in brotherhood pacts. Such ties bind him with obligations of peace and mutual aid to most other Tonga. This fine mesh of counter-balancing segments serves to integrate and give order to Tonga society, which on the surface at least appears to be a society without form or order.

Yet does this system provide any more freedom and security than a hierarchical state organisation? This, of course is the crucial question, but one which is not easy to answer. Appropriate data on the pre-contact — i.e. nineteenth-century — Tonga are extremely sketchy. Further, any response must be highly interpretative and substantially subjective, especially in dealing with terms such as freedom and security in a cross-cultural context.

Colson believes that the Tonga are happier under contemporary conditions of life in a centralised state — 'when faced with what they thought might be a choice between government and anarchy, they said they wanted government'. In the old days, Colson was told, hunger led to one village raiding another. There were revenge attacks in which captives were enslaved. If a man ventured outside his home neighbourhood he risked being enslaved as well. People accused of witchcraft could be burnt alive. In addition there was extensive fear of sorcery and of attacks from non-Tonga neighbours. Nowadays there is security of travel, relief from a sometimes oppressive conformity to local opinion, and from 'some kinds of dependence upon their fellows'.

It should be noted that most of the problems of 'the old days' do not arise from the operation of the segmental network system itself. One problem was the inadequacy of food production, so that periodic

famines occurred, provoking violence. A second difficulty was periodic epidemics of disease among both the human and animal population. Thirdly, the Tonga were subject to aggression from their warlike neighbours. Fourth, the Tonga practised slavery, an institution which might seem somewhat incongruous with both their egalitarian ethos and their poor economy (and it is difficult to see how slavery could be enforced in such a decentralised, police-less society — it would seem all too easy for a slave to escape). Finally, beliefs in sorcery and witchcraft were important causes of fear and insecurity.

That the Tonga of the 1960s and 1970s have said that they prefer the present social system to the old must surely reflect some degree of acculturation to European values. The informants who have no experience of the pre-colonial period look back on what they have heard about the past with a European (also for many a Christian) bias, and see an undesirable, 'uncivilised' condition. I don't know how much weight can be put on such observations.

It is interesting that Colson does intimate that the Tonga are pleased to be freed of many of the burdens of personal responsibility which obviously go with any segmental acephalous network system. One of the criticisms of such a system is that most people would prefer to abdicate the responsibilities and obligations of socio-political life to a government and a bureaucracy which will make and implement the decisions for community public works and justice. Most people, it is argued, would like to avoid such tasks, leave it to 'the authorities' to tell them what to do, and pay half or two-thirds of their income in hidden and direct taxes for the service. It is clearly true that any segmental network such as traditional Tonga society would entail much more individual participation than a modern bureaucratic state.

But if we are told how the Tonga feel about the contemporary court system, we are not told about how they react to compulsory taxation, or what they might think about compulsory military service, or about any of the countless other restrictions and forms of regimentation which go along with bureaucracy and the state. It is not pointed out that, although the Tonga practised slavery, they lacked the oppressive features of a social class or caste system. They had no military elite, and no rulers. Further, concern for local opinion is a universal feature of any close-knit, face-to-face group, whether it is a neighbourhood in a small community in North America or in Africa.

Clearly there were distinct inadequacies in the Tonga segmental network system, the most glaring of which was the dependence on violence. Yet there is no evidence that Tonga society was any more violent than others, including modern Western states which periodically divest themselves of millions of their citizens in war.

Richard Lee calculated in his study of the San (Bushmen) of Southern Africa that homicide rates in the United States would be greater than those of the San, a hunting-gathering acephalous society; he concluded that the state may be more effective in reducing certain kinds of violence such as individual fights, but that it creates new forms such as war (see *The !Kung San: Men, Women and Work in a Foraging Society*, 1979).

Another inadequacy of the Tonga system was the degree to which it depended on the fear of sorcery and witchcraft as a mechanism of social control. How well Tonga society could have maintained cohesion and integration without powerful supernatural sanctions remains a question. It also seems that bonds of clanship and clan joking partnership were too weak and rudimentary to provide for a viable society-wide network of mutual responsibility.

Despite these inadequacies, however, Tonga society provided an atmosphere of freedom, equality, and personal involvement. No headman or other political figure could order another person around. A Tonga could settle wherever he wished and move whenever he chose. He had freedom to make whatever contracts he wished and with whomever he pleased. The egalitarian situation made it extremely difficult for anyone to exploit anyone else, the egalitarianism being fostered by the fact that the Tonga, whether rich or poor, had substantially equal opportunity to be ruined by crop failure, cattle epidemics, and raids. The Tonga lacked great occupational differentiation and ideological variety, so that there was little opportunity for choice in these areas. Yet, as I pointed out in my book *People Without Government* (1982), freedom entails among other things the ability of everyone to make choices from perceived alternatives. Contemporary Western society, for example, may have great occupational diversity, but the selection of the prestigious occupations is delimited to the privileged few. In Tonga society there were far fewer choices, but each of them was available to every freeman.

The question of contemporary relevance

Another crucial question concerning these data is the relevance of such arrangements as segmentary lineages and the Tonga segmental system to any contemporary society. I have not presented these examples as programmes for adoption in other societies. Rather my intention is that their description might prove suggestive of viable alternatives which might counter the major disadvantages of centralised bureaucratic structures. Parallels to these acephalous social orders already exist in

modern society, and possibilities for yet others have been made on numerous occasions.

Luther Gerlach and Virginia Hine have shown how various social movements in the United States operate in a segmented fashion (*People, Power and Change*, 1970). Later Hine described such organisations more specifically as 'Segmented Polycephalous Idea-based Networks' or SPINs. 'An organisation chart of a SPIN would look like a badly knotted fishnet with a multitude of nodes or cells of varying sizes, each linked to all the others either directly or indirectly' ('The Basic Paradigm of a Future Socio-Cultural System', *World Issues*, 1977). Such organisation is particularly characteristic of contemporary American social movements. Participating cells are often hierarchical and bureaucratic. Presumably the term *polycephalous* is employed rather than *acephalous* because in a network most member groups have a head, although that individual has little authority. Thus in the environmental movement participating members include the Audubon Society and Sierra Club, and the Black movement includes such bureaucratic organisations as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League.

SPINs differ from a bureaucracy in that each member segment is a self-sufficient entity which could persist even if all the others were destroyed. In a bureaucracy the several parts which go to make it up are dependent on the head. Decapitate it, and it is destroyed. SPINs have no single leader, but each segment has leaders who invariably lack any coercive authority. Leadership is based on ability and persuasiveness. What holds the various segments together and prevents disintegration is a wide range of 'horizontal linkages' and, most important of all, an ideological linkage. The horizontal linkages include overlapping of membership so that one person belongs to several groups within the whole movement. There is considerable interaction between leaders of the participating groups, and leaders themselves may lead in one group and be ordinary members in another. Ritual activities such as demonstrations, conferences, rallies and marches provide further linkage. The real glue of the movement is ideological — a deep commitment to a very few key and basic tenets which are shared by all. Hine suggests that the biological analogue of a SPIN is the earthworm. But another, which was suggested above, may be the brain within which there is coordination of a myriad of cells without any 'rulers'.

SPINs are purely instrumental and pragmatic. When the idea which spawns one loses its influence, because it has been either won or lost or made obsolete, the SPIN changes or disappears. SPINs do not emerge as a result of rational planning, but arise out of 'functional necessity'. SPINs maximise the use and participation of individuals and small

groups. They achieve a diffusion of ideas across varying cultural groups while maintaining cultural diversity. They have proved to be highly flexible and adaptable, and in sharp contrast to bureaucratic structure they are egalitarian and emphasise personal interrelationships.

Both Hine and Gerlach have rediscovered the possibility of complex social order in a decentralised acephalous form — a phenomenon discovered earlier by social anthropologists and before them by nineteenth-century anarchists (especially by Kropotkin, in his concept of 'mutual aid').

Aside from the SPINs noted by Hine, there are other forms of similar organisation based on ideology in American society. Thus several religious denominations, chiefly in the Anabaptist tradition, are noteworthy, particularly the Old Order Amish and the Hutterian Brethren. The Old Order Amish include several hundred congregation communities with about 75,000 members scattered chiefly in the North-Eastern and Mid-Western United States. Each congregation is an autonomous entity; there is no central administration, not even a coordinating committee or periodic conference organisation for all Old Order Amish. Yet this group maintains an amazing degree of cultural and ideological conformity by the commitment of all its members to a common tradition of belief and practice, the *Ordnung*, and by personal contact between congregations through visiting, intermarriage and intersettlement.

More standard types of large organisation also have an acephalous network structure. The international postal system as well as continental railway systems are important examples. The postal organisation of each nation has a centralised bureaucratic structure, but the coordination of mail services between the several postal systems throughout the world is achieved without a head, without a centralised administrative governing body. International postal services are a consequence of voluntary agreement by member nations to follow certain rules aimed at the efficient passage of the mail across international frontiers. The only central organisation is an International Bureau which is an information-distributing and consultative body, not an administrative or governing one. The specific regulations by which members are supposed to operate are established by a congress composed of delegates from member nations. Complaints about a specific national postal system are settled through binding mediation. The ultimate sanction against an offending member would appear to be boycott by other members.

The railway systems in North America and Europe at the international level function in a similar fashion. For North America there is an Association of American Railroads, whose members include

the major railways in the United States, Mexico and Canada. It is a voluntary organisation which sets standards for operation, particularly relating to the unencumbered passage of goods and passengers from one line to another. A similar organisation exists for the entire Western hemisphere, and there is another in Europe.

Adam Smith and his followers believed in a free market economy, in which the demands of the market constitute the sole mechanism by which goods are produced and distributed. Presumably there is to be no central administration, and to a great extent this is the way the capitalist system operates at the international level.

Most of these examples entail an acephalous coordination of autonomous units which are themselves centralised bureaucracies. Yet their real significance is that, if coordination can occur at the highest level without bureaucratic centralisation, it should also be capable of occurring at lower levels of organisation. If the overall organisation of the international postal system can be achieved through the voluntary acephalous coordination of autonomous units, then in turn those autonomous units themselves are conceivably manageable as a further voluntary acephalous coordination of small autonomous units, rather than the prevailing centralised bureaucracies. (One of the most convincing explanations for the total incompetence of the Canadian postal system, for example, is that it is being strangled by its centralised bureaucracy and the dedication of its managers to it.)

It is then possible to see a large organisation which is composed of a network of interrelated parts in which there is no central authority, but power is maximally distributed among all participants — in which all points in the network are able to exert approximately the same pressure, and in which each point is restrained by the ties with all the others so that social order is maintained.

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Heiner Becker

Kropotkin as Historian of the French Revolution

If we wish to speak of an anarchist historiography, in the sense that developments and events are selected, assembled and systematically analysed from an anarchist point of view, we shall find very few examples. But the authoritative work in this genre ever since its appearance eighty years ago is Kropotkin's book *The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793*.

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More than that of any of the other great anarchist thinkers, the work of Kropotkin appears as a unity. The Proudhon of the *Memoirs on Property* was a very different person from that of the years after 1848; and the thought of Bakunin even in the last decade of his life was still confusing because of its incoherence. Even in the work of Marx there is a certain disparity which has caused much embarrassment (and at the same time given the opportunity to earn a living) to generations of 'Marxists' and their opponents. With Kropotkin it is different; for he conceived a theory — one might even say with justification a vision — quite early in his career, and he systematically devoted almost the whole of his life to elaborating and illustrating it.

After his death in 1921, Lucien Guérineau, one of his French comrades remembered him as follows:

You must go to Kropotkin to get a coherent and concrete conception of the negation of Property and the State.

With an expert hand he gave us the structure of anarchist communism as part of natural philosophy for life in a society without gods and without masters.

He constructed the model of it, provided all the parts of the edifice; forty years ago he told us: Here are the plans of the work!

From 1872, in Switzerland, with Reclus, he set himself to the task.

I met him in '79 or '80, in the Rue Pascal group. . . . We discussed anarchy at ground level. Fiction was dead, his analysis gave us the real facts. (*Le Libéraire*, 18 February 1921, quoted in *Les Temps Nouveaux*, March 1921).

Kropotkin himself put it thus in 1899:

I gradually came to realise that anarchism represents more than a mere mode of

action and a mere conception of a free society; that it is part of a philosophy, natural and social, which must be developed in a quite different way from the metaphysical or dialectic methods which have been employed in sciences dealing with man. I saw that it must be treated by the same methods as natural sciences; not, however, on the slippery ground of mere analogies such as Herbert Spencer accepts, but on the solid basis of induction applied to human institutions. (*Memoirs of a Revolutionist*)

And a decade later, he gave a more detailed explanation, in the preface to the French edition of *Modern Science and Anarchism* (1913), which may serve as his own commentary on his lifework:

I am trying to show that our conception of Anarchy represents a necessary consequence of the great general awakening of the natural sciences which occurred during the nineteenth century. . . . Brought thus to make a serious study of the remarkable discoveries of these years, I came to a double conclusion. I saw on one hand how — thanks to the inductive method — some new discoveries of immense importance for the interpretation of nature had come to be added to those [previously made] and how a thorough study of these great discoveries . . . while putting new questions of an immense philosophical importance, threw a new light on the previous discoveries, and opened new horizons to science. And where some scholars, too impatient, or too much affected perhaps by their early education, wished to see 'the fallibility of science', I saw only a normal fact, very familiar to mathematicians, the passage *from a preliminary approximation to later ones*.

This means that we are able to demonstrate the existence of certain relationships between various phenomena, relationships which we call a 'law' (physical or otherwise):

After which a mass of workers begin to study in detail the applications of this law. But soon, as facts are accumulated by their research, the workers find that the law which they are studying is only a 'first approximation' — that the facts which are being explained are much more complex than they seemed to be. [Thus it is possible] to reach a *second* and a *third approximation*, which answer [the facts] better than the first one. . . .

By studying the recent progress of the natural sciences and by recognising in each new discovery a new application of the inductive method, I saw at the same time how anarchist ideas, formulated by Godwin and Proudhon and developed by their successors, *also represented the application of this same method to the sciences which concern the life of human societies*. . . . I tried to indicate how and why the philosophy of Anarchism takes its definite place in recent attempts to work out the synthetic philosophy — that is to say, the comprehension of the Universe as a whole.

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What, then, are the main characteristics of the work of Kropotkin — the links between his works of social criticism, his works of a more

constructive character, and his historical works? The task which he set himself at the beginning of his career, even before he became an anarchist, his field of study, was, as he once explained to Max Nettlau, the historian of the anarchist movement, to study 'the factors which encourage the development of living organisms in the world'.

He hoped to have succeeded in studying these factors from two perspectives:

1. the factors which apply to all living things up to the present stage of the human species;

2. the conditions which are beneficial and protective for the present life of humanity and the guarantees of its future progress.

His works in the first class are represented above all by his articles and then his book on *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902), which describe the power and the universal and essential *activity* of this factor alongside and in opposition to that of the 'struggle for existence'.

The *modes* of this activity — its manner of acting adequately according to the impulses of mutual aid — he tried to describe in *Ethics* (1922), which he did not succeed in completing before his death.

His works in the other class, concerning rather the present and future of human life, are represented by a series of studies which Kropotkin at one time called 'the Integration of Labour' and which are mainly to be found collected in three books:

The Conquest of Bread (1892) first appeared in the form of articles in *La Révolte*, which were thoroughly revised and rearranged for the publication of the book, which Kropotkin at one time called 'the Utopia of a City under Siege', and which was his vision of the response of a revolutionary city such as Paris under the Commune of 1871 as it would have to organise itself in order to survive.

A series of articles published at the same time but in the British paper *Freedom*, which was published only recently in book form (*Act For Yourself*, edited by Nicolas Walter and Heiner Becker, 1988), in which Kropotkin tried to resolve the same problem at the level of a country (Britain) in the situation of a possible revolution.

Finally, the studies which were published in book form as *Fields, Factories and Workshops: or Industry Combined with Agriculture and Brain Work with Manual Work* (1899), which considered the situation of a country like Britain, cut off in the case of a revolution from external resources.

These works were preceded and accompanied by writings of social criticism, of which the main example is his *Words of a Rebel* (1885). But indeed there may already be found in most the articles and series of articles by Kropotkin parts of his conceptions sketched in the argument. In the case of *Words of a Rebel* and *The Conquest of Bread*,

the link between the different classes of his works — that of criticism and attack, and that of a more constructive character — is particularly clear: they contain respectively the first and second half of an essay on expropriation, whose publication as articles was interrupted by his arrest and imprisonment in France between 1882 and 1886. (They were published in *Le Révolté* from 25 November to 23 December 1882, and then from 14 February to 10/17 July 1886; and in a shortened and revised form as chapters called 'Expropriation' in both books.)

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But how is his book on the French Revolution to be placed in this work? History was for Kropotkin a great network of examples, furnishing him with many references, many 'parts of the edifice' of his work; he seldom missed a chance to quote such and such historical example, and by preference he referred to the French Revolution. In his preface to the second edition of the utopia of Emile Pataud and Emile Pouget, *How We Shall Make the Revolution* (1911) — translated into English as *Syndicalism and the Co-operative Commonwealth* (1913) — he himself gave perhaps the clearest explanation of this way of proceeding:

It is necessary to have a clear idea of the actual concrete results that our Communist, Collectivist, or other aspirations, might have on society. For this purpose we must picture to ourselves these various institutions at work.

Where do we want to get to by means of the Revolution? We need to know this. There must therefore be books which will enable the mass of the people to form for themselves a more or less exact idea of what it is that they desire to see realised in a near future.

It has always happened that a concrete idea precedes its realisation. For instance, would the modern progress in aviation have been made if during the last fifty years a certain number of French physicists and engineers had not placed before themselves in a concrete fashion this aim — this 'romance', if you will: The conquest of the air by a machine heavier than air?

It is only necessary to accustom oneself never to attach more importance to a book, to a treatise of any kind, than such a book or treatise — however good it may be — has in reality.

A book is not a gospel to be taken in its entirety or to be left alone. It is a suggestion, a proposal — nothing more. It is for us to reflect, to see what it contains that is good, and to reject whatever we find erroneous in it.

With this reservation then, we need — side by side with statements that tell us what past Revolutions have gained — sketches that will show in their main lines what the coming Revolution proposes to realise. . . .

It is impossible, in fact, for a man to influence in any way the development of his epoch without having a more or less definite idea of what he wishes to see developing in society. . . .

The idea — ‘the General Idea of the Revolution’, as Proudhon said — that is what is needed; and not revolutionary recipes. . . . That which does matter is, that we should try to gain a clear idea of the *general tendency* to be impressed on the Revolution. . . .

Without doubt, life is infinitely more complicated than anything that can be foreseen. . . . But the *general aspect* of the coming society is already taking shape. What is germinating can already be seen; it is only necessary to observe it. The whole force of the desire for equality, for justice, for independence, for free association, which is manifesting itself in society, can already be felt. And these social data enable us to foresee with sufficient accuracy where we are going — provided we study *what is really happening*, instead of discussing about what this or that one would *like to believe is happening*.

It was guided by these ideas that I endeavoured, some thirty years ago, to sketch a Communal Utopia in *The Conquest of Bread*.

From this we may better understand the aim of the principal writings of Kropotkin and also deduce the role, the function of his book on the French Revolution in the whole edifice of his work. As he said in *Modern Science and Anarchism* (1903, 1912):

It is sufficient to say that our conception of the coming social revolution is quite different from that of a Jacobin dictatorship, or the transformation of social institutions effected by a Convention, a Parliament, or a dictator. Never has a revolution been brought about on those lines; and if the present working-class movement takes this form, it will be doomed to have no lasting result.

On the contrary, we believe that if a revolution begins, it must take the form of a widely spread popular movement, during which movement, in every town and village invaded by the insurrectionary spirit, the masses set themselves to the work of reconstructing society on new lines. . . .

Who guessed — who, in fact, could have guessed — before 1789 the role going to be played by the Municipalities and the Commune of Paris in the revolutionary events of 1789-1793? It is impossible to legislate for *the future*. All we can do is to vaguely guess its essential tendencies and clear the road for it.

What Kropotkin wished to demonstrate in *The Great French Revolution* was that *all revolutions have begun in the people*, and to give the historical facts, the materials about a social revolution which would make it possible ‘to vaguely guess its essential tendencies and clear the road for it’. In the same way, he spoke during the years before 1914 of wishing also to write a history of the Paris Commune (which he never succeeded in doing).

This view of revolution was not entirely original. Its roots may be traced to Kropotkin’s background in the tradition of Russian Populism. It had already been developed in his studies of the Russian peasant insurrections of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries — on Stepan Razin (unpublished) and in a pamphlet on Pugachov (*Emelian*

Ivanovich Pugachov, or the Rising of 1773, written with Lev Tikhomirov and dated Moscow 1871 but published in Geneva in 1873).

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Kropotkin began his thorough studies of the French Revolution in 1877-1878 in London, at the British Museum, continued them in France in the Bibliothèque Nationale, and during his exile in Britain from 1886 again at the British Museum. Some early results were published from 1889, at the time of the centenary of the Revolution. But it was in the years after 1900, in the period absorbed with revolutionary feelings in Russia, in discussions with his Russian and other friends and comrades (such as Max Nettlau) about the Russian Revolution of 1905 that the book began to take shape. (These discussions are the context of his famous letter of 5 March 1902 to Max Nettlau on individualism, the role of revolutionary elites and of the people, the original text of which was first published in *Plus Loin* in February-May 1927, and was republished by Derry Novak in the *International Review of Social History* in 1964; it was then translated into English in Martin Miller's anthology of Kropotkin's *Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution* (1970).) He again began to publish articles on the French Revolution (which were reprinted as pamphlets and later included in a revised form in the French edition of *Modern Science and Anarchism*).

This book is therefore not only a general (and anarchist) introduction to the history of the French Revolution — and still valuable, despite a few necessary corrections of detail which don't affect the status of the whole work — but also a necessary complement to the other great books of Kropotkin, a knowledge of which is essential for an understanding of the edifice of anarchist communism which Kropotkin began to construct in 1870.

It is ironical that the book, although widely distributed in anarchist circles, has nevertheless had a better response and a more reflective reception among Marxists, and not so much in France but in Russia and Eastern Europe. For it was Lenin who praised *The Great French Revolution*, and who wanted it to be reprinted in an edition of 100,000 as a classic study, still the first, on the part played by the popular masses in a revolution. And it was in the Soviet Union that there was first published in 1979 a critical edition of the book, with explanations and commentaries (also translated into German and published in East Germany).

What about the anarchists? Their reception of Kropotkin's book, as of his work in general, was perhaps best characterised by a remark of

Alexander Berkman (who was of course the secretary of the Organisation Committee for Kropotkin's funeral) in his Russian Diary, under the date of 3 December 1920:

I, for my part, feel that An. & the An. have failed to work out concrete forms of action, even of thought, to apply to actual revolution & the revolutionary period bound to follow it, as is now the case in R. Many vital problems find no adequate answer in our books & theories. Result — the tragedy of the An. in the midst of the revolution & unable to find their place or activity. A sad, terrible tragedy. (Cited by Nicolas Walter in 'Alexander Berkman's Russian Diary', *The Raven* 3, November 1987).

Note

Kropotkin's first known writing on the French Revolution was an article on Hippolyte Taine's views, written for Pyotr Lavrov in 1878 and not published for more than a century. He wrote a great many other articles on the subject during the next forty years, culminating in the book *La grande révolution, 1789-1793*, which was first published in Paris in 1909. *The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793*, translated by N. F. Dryhurst and Alexandra Kropotkin (the author's daughter), was published in London in 1909. Gustav Landauer published his own German translation in 1909, and Louis Bertoni published Benito Mussolini's Italian translation in Switzerland in 1911. Russian translations were published in 1914 and 1919. The Italian and Russian translations incorporated revisions by the author. A new Russian edition in 1979 took account of all such revisions, and was followed by others in Eastern Europe. This article is based on the introduction to a slightly revised French edition just published in Paris; a sequel will discuss Kropotkin's view of the French Revolution.



Nicolas Walter

Emma Goldman's Disillusionment in Russia

Emma Goldman (1869-1940) was one of the most active and influential leaders of the international anarchist movement — and at the same time one of its best-loved and best-hated members — for more than half a century.

She was born into a middle-class Jewish family in Lithuania — then (and now) part of the Russian Empire — and was brought up there and in Prussia and Russia. She received a good education in both German and Russian, but had an unhappy childhood. Like most of her relations, she soon emigrated to the United States, arriving in 1885. At first she worked in the garment industry, and she was twice married and divorced between the ages of 17 and 19. But she was a rebellious and determined person, and she soon got involved in political activity. She was attracted to anarchism during the Haymarket affair of 1886-1887, and on moving to New York in 1889 she joined Jewish and German groups there. There she also met Alexander Berkman (1870-1936), who had a similar background; they became lovers for a time, and remained good friends and close colleagues for the rest of his life. They were briefly associated with Johann Most, the best-known anarchist in the United States, and then with his rival Josef Peukert. But soon they began to make their own way in the movement, and she became a well-known writer and especially speaker for the anarchist cause, occasionally working for a living as a nurse or beautician.

In 1892 Berkman tried to assassinate Henry Clay Frick, the bosses' leader in a bitter steel dispute at Homestead, Pennsylvania, and was sentenced to 22 years' imprisonment. He served 14 years, about which he wrote *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (1912), one of the classics both of prison literature and of revolutionary autobiography. Meanwhile Goldman moved towards the English-speaking anarchist movement, became a champion of advanced art and literature (especially drama), and also took part in campaigns for workers' and women's rights and for civil liberties and freedom of speech, serving several terms of imprisonment for her bold speaking. In 1906 she founded *Mother Earth*, which was one of the leading radical papers in the United States until 1917, being succeeded by a *Mother Earth Bulletin* in 1917-1918. She visited Europe in 1895-1896 and again in 1899-1900, and she was

one of the American delegates to the International Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam in 1907.

From 1914 Goldman and Berkman opposed the First World War, and from 1917, when the United States entered the war, they opposed conscription, for which they were both imprisoned on and off from 1917 to 1919. From 1917 they supported the Russian Revolution and indeed the Bolshevik seizure of power, putting revolutionary solidarity before anarchist sectarianism.

At the end of 1919, at the height of the post-war Red Scare in the United States, they were among hundreds of American radicals of Russian origin who were deported to their native land. They spent two years there, first gladly working for and then gradually turning against the increasingly repressive Communist regime. They both took some time to develop their opposition, as is shown by their contemporary letters — and stressed in Harold J. Goldberg's article 'Goldman and Berkman View the Bolshevik Regime' (*Slavonic & East European Review*, April 1975) — and Goldman became disillusioned more quickly than Berkman, which caused some trouble between them. They met all sorts of people, from the highest to the lowest, and travelled to all sorts of places, from the far North to the far South of European Russia. They became finally alienated from the system by the brutal suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion in March 1921, and at the end of 1921 they left Russia again. They travelled to Sweden, moved to Germany, and were later based in France, though she spent periods in Britain and North America. In 1925 she secured the security of British citizenship through a marriage of convenience with James Colton, a Welsh anarcho-syndicalist miner.

Goldman and Berkman were now major figures in the world anarchist movement, and were much in demand as writers and speakers. He was asked to produce a general introduction to anarchism, and wrote a book which was simultaneously published as *Now and After: The ABC of Communist Anarchism* and as *What is Communist Anarchism?* (1929); she produced a two-volume autobiography, *Living My Life* (1931): both became classics of anarchist literature. He earned a precarious living as an editor and translator, and when he became seriously ill he killed himself rather than become a burden; she earned an almost equally precarious living as a writer and lecturer, worked for the anarcho-syndicalists during the Spanish Civil War and Revolution (running their publicity campaign in London for two years), and died during a lecture-tour of Canada.

The Russian Revolution was perhaps the most significant event in their lifetimes, and their period in Russia was one of the most important episodes in their lives. In general the experience of the anarchists who were present in Russia between 1917 and 1922 and who witnessed the development of the first Marxist revolution was crucial not only to them personally but to the wider anarchist movement; in particular the observations of Berkman and Goldman were both very vivid and very widespread, and their contribution to the libertarian view of the subject was especially valuable.

Emma Goldman traced in her own attitudes the whole trajectory of anarchist reactions to a socialist revolution. At the time of the February Revolution — the fall of the Tsar and the establishment of a bourgeois Provisional Government in March 1917 — she joined virtually everyone else on the left in enthusiastically welcoming the first stage in the movement she had supported for nearly thirty years. And at first she felt the same about the October Revolution — the fall of the Provisional Government and the seizure of power by the Bolshevik fraction of the Social Democratic Party in November 1917. Indeed, although she was then involved in a desperate struggle against first imprisonment and then deportation for her campaign against the American war effort, she took the trouble to give speeches and write articles in favour of the Bolsheviks and also to produce a 4,000-word pamphlet called *The Truth about the Boylsheviki* (the odd spelling was an attempt at a more phonetic version of the word), which was published in February 1918.

This was a complete vindication of the revolutionary and indeed the libertarian honour of the most extreme Marxist party in Russia, which had already begun constructing the most complete dictatorship in the modern world, in the most extravagant terms. She emphasised, ‘among other extraordinary paradoxes’ of the Russian Revolution, ‘the phenomenon of the Marxian Social Democrats, Lenin and Trotsky, adopting Anarchist Revolutionary tactics’, whereas leading anarchists such as Kropotkin and other leading revolutionaries such as Catherine Breshkovskaya opposed them; she argued that the Bolsheviks ‘have been swept forward upon the waves of the Revolution to the point of view held by the Anarchists since Bakunin’ — ‘that once the masses become conscious of their economic power, they make their own history and need not be bound by the traditions and processes of a dead past’; she added that the Bolsheviks ‘are powerful only because they represent the people’, that they ‘have no imperialistic designs’, that ‘they have libertarian plans’. And she concluded:

The Boylsheviki are translating into reality the very things many people have been dreaming about, hoping for, planning and discussing in private and public. They are building a new social order which is to come out of the chaos

and conflicts now confronting them. . . . Like sudden sunlight Bolshevism is spreading over the entire world, illuminating the great Vision and warming it into being — the New Life of human brotherhood and social well-being.

Although she resisted being deported from the United States, she rejoiced on returning to her homeland — Mother Russia ('Matyushka Rossiya'), as she called it in her writings — though she did confide to her niece Stella Ballantine in a letter written during the voyage that 'I could never in [my] life work within the limited confines of the state — Bolshevik or otherwise' (8 January 1920).

During her two years in Russia, as she later described in repeated detail, she began with great enthusiasm for the revolution but soon became disillusioned with the regime, which reacted to the victorious conclusion of the Civil War by tightening rather than loosening the grip of the dictatorship. It should be remembered that at this time the Communist Party and the Soviet Government were led by Lenin and Trotsky, so that the original libertarian critique of the betrayal of the revolution was directed against the Leninist and Trotskyist forms of Communism, not against the grosser Stalinist form which developed after Lenin's death in 1924.

After their return to exile in the West, Goldman and Berkman took a leading part in this libertarian critique. Their earliest protests from inside Russia during 1921 had an immediate and important effect, for they helped to persuade most organisations in the international anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movement not to affiliate with the Third International or the associated Trade Union International controlled by the Russian Communist Party, but instead to form their own International Working Men's Association at the International Anarchist Congress held in Berlin in December 1921 and January 1922.

Goldman and Berkman themselves tried in vain to attend this Congress, but afterwards they spent four years, first in Stockholm and then in Berlin, speaking and writing about what they had seen themselves and what they could find out from others, whenever and wherever they could get a hearing. They both produced a stream of articles and pamphlets, she lectured widely and frequently, and eventually they each produced a classic book on the subject. They tried to get such material published in the left-wing press, but socialist and liberal papers and publishers generally refused to accept anything which might shake confidence in the left-wing regime in Russia or give comfort to its many right-wing enemies elsewhere, so they were forced to resort to the anarchist press on one side and the capitalist press on the other. Articles by one or both of them appeared, for example, in *Freedom*, the main English-language anarchist paper (which had been published in London since 1886, and still appears), in almost every

issue from January 1922 onwards, and also in many other papers in several languages for many years; and she in particular resorted to orthodox papers and publishers in the United States to get her material read by a wider audience.

While Berkman immediately concentrated on working for the relief of imprisoned and exiled anarchists in Russia, founding an international committee and editing its *Bulletin*, and on producing documentary and polemical pamphlets (of which three were published in Berlin in a 'Russian Revolution Series' during 1922), Goldman began by concentrating on producing a series of popular articles for the American press. The project was offered to various papers by Stella Ballantine and accepted by the *New York World* in February 1922. Goldman wrote ten articles, dated 1 to 10 March, and they were prominently published on the front page every day from 26 March to 4 April. They were widely reported in America and Europe, and were reprinted in *Freedom* as 'The Story of Bolshevik Tyranny' from May to August, and then collected as an 18,000-word pamphlet called *The Crushing of the Russian Revolution*, which the Freedom Press published at Goldman's expense with an introduction by the veteran Anglo-American anarchist William C. Owen in November 1922.

In this first account of her two years in Russia she explained her revolutionary position and described her personal experiences with great passion but with great care. She recognised that the Bolsheviks 'continue to pose as the holy symbol of the Social Revolution', but determined 'to expose this fatal delusion'. She insisted that at the height of the revolutionary movement, during the civil war and foreign intervention in Russia, 'slowly but surely the Bolsheviks were building up a centralised State, which destroyed the Soviets and crushed the revolution, a State that can now easily compare, in regard to bureaucracy and despotism, with any of the great Powers of the world'. And she gave plenty of evidence for this view — especially about the Government subjugation of the Soviets and trade unions, food requisitions and labour conscription, the treatment of children, the activities of the Cheka and the persecution of dissidents (in particular the veteran revolutionary Maria Spiridonova) — and she also described her visits to Peter Kropotkin.

Many anarchists, including Berkman, opposed giving such material to non-revolutionary papers, and it was certainly exploited in embarrassing ways. Thus the *World* published on 20 March 1922 a full-page announcement of Goldman's articles in enormous type:

BOLSHEVISM IN COLLAPSE!

A Series of Ten Brilliant
Articles by Emma Goldman,
the Anarchist, Who,
Entering Russia With High
Hopes, Has Just Emerged,
Disillusioned and Awakened
to the Truth, After Two Years

**IN THE GRIP OF THE IRON HAND
OF THE COMMUNISTIC STATE**

And Who Writes From Her
Refuge in Sweden a Bitter
Expose of the Shames and
Pretense With Which Lenin
and Trotsky Are Tricking
the Russian People. Of All
Visitors to the Dark Land She
Best Can Write of Conditions.

And the first article, which was the lead story in the Sunday edition on 26 March, was headlined as follows:

**EMMA GOLDMAN QUILTS RUSSIA,
BREAKING TWO-YEARS' SILENCE,
TO REVEAL BOLSHEVIK FAILURE.**

After Intimate Study From the
Inside of Soviet Revolution,
She Declares Present System
Worst of Despotisms and Menace
to Mankind — Still an Anarchist
— Completely Disillusioned by
Rule of Lenin and Trotzky.

No wonder there was much opposition to her on the left, including many anarchists. Goldman said in a letter to her American friend Ellen Kennan: 'I can well imagine that I have been put in sackcloth and ashes by many of my former friends' (9 April 1922). And she said in a later letter to the leading anarchist historian Max Nettlau: 'Since my articles were written, I have been quartered, burnt in oil, lynched, and what

not' (7 August 1922). Nevertheless she immediately began expanding the whole story into a full-length book, making use obviously of her own memories but also of the written material collected by Berkman, and indeed of his superior editorial talents.

This put Berkman into a difficult position. He wrote in a long letter to their American friend and benefactor Michael A. Cohn:

. . . You will understand my feeling of friendship and comradeship when I tell you that I have consented, willingly and cheerfully, that E. make use of all the data, material, documents etc. which I had accumulated (and translated) — use for her book. Moreover, E's forte is the platform, not the pen, as she herself knows very well. Therefore my days and weeks are now taken up, really entirely, as editor. It is not only that I get no time for my own work, but my Diary and my book (if I ever get to it) must of necessity contain the very same things, data and documents, in exactly the same wording even, as E's book, for the translations are all mine. As her book will be out first, what interest could my book (or even the Diary) have on the very same subject, covering the same period, speaking of the same events, of the same places, even, since we visited them together in our work for the Museum of Petrograd, and — worst of all — containing the very same documents, etc. etc.? It is a tragic situation. Of course, my writing is different in style, and to some extent even in point of view, but the *meat* I have given away. Yet I could not do otherwise. . . . (10 October 1922)

In December 1922 they finished work on her book, a 90,000-word narrative which she called *My Two Years in Russia*. She commented in a letter to Nettlau:

Russia has robbed me of much of my old faith, & when one has not a burning faith in an ideal or in people one really has no right to be prophetic. It is all very well to have a critical attitude towards the things as we find them, but it is most difficult and in a measure unjust to say how the thing should have been arranged unless one has himself been a factor of the reorganisation of the thing. My misfortune is that I came to Russia at the funeral and not the birth of the Revolution. H[a]d I been there at that time, had I myself been a part of the labour pains, I might have been in a better position to estimate the failure more justly. As it is I had to depend a good deal on the interpretations of others, which is never quite the same as our own. I console myself however that for two years I was myself a witness to the death struggle of the Revolution, and it is more about that than about what had taken place until my arrival that I have written. (22 October 1922)

In January 1923 Berkman began work on his own book, which was largely based on his detailed Russian Diary (see *The Raven* 3), and meanwhile Goldman concentrated on getting her book published. She gave it to literary agents for publication in the United States, and after many difficulties and delays the McClure Syndicate got it accepted in May 1923 by Doubleday, Page. It was published in New York in

November 1923 (and some copies were soon imported into Britain by William Heinemann). However — as what could be seen as an ironical penalty for using such channels — Goldman found that through a typical publisher's decision it appeared with a different title — *My Disillusionment in Russia* — and through an equally typical publisher's confusion it appeared without the last third of the text, the manuscript of which had been separated from the first two-thirds. With the financial help of Cohn, however, the missing part was published by the same publisher in November 1924 as *My Further Disillusionment in Russia*, with an explanatory preface (this book wasn't published in Britain). At this time she sent a circular letter around the international anarchist movement explaining the whole story of her writings about Russia (15 December 1924).

By this time Goldman was in Britain, where she had been admitted by the new Labour Government. She worked hard to organise a campaign against the Bolshevik regime, forming a British Committee for the Defence of Political Prisoners in Russia. At the same time she also worked hard for the publication of her own and Berkman's books. He had finished his at the end of 1923, and called it *The Bolshevik Myth*. She characteristically claimed that she had herself coined the phrase, writing to Nettlau: 'I used "the Bolshevick [sic] Myth" for the first time. I had intended that it should be the title of my book, but for reasons which I cannot explain here I changed the title' (27 February 1925); she had indeed used the phrase in some letters and in lectures with the title, but it seems more likely that it was Berkman's invention. She spent much of 1924 trying to get the book published, and in November 1924 it was finally accepted by Boni & Liveright, who published it in New York in January 1925. It too appeared in a mutilated form, without the final chapter, which Liveright rejected as an 'anti-climax'; Berkman promptly published it in Germany as a pamphlet with the title *The 'Anti-Climax'*, which was sent free to purchasers of the book. (In March 1926 Hutchinson eventually imported some copies of the American edition of *The Bolshevik Myth*, but it sold badly and was soon remaindered.)

Meanwhile Berkman spent much of 1924 gathering material for a documentary collection about the repression of left-wing dissidents in Russia, which was sponsored by an International Committee for Political Prisoners in the United States, nominally edited by its secretary Roger N. Baldwin, and published by Boni in New York in 1925 as a book called *Letters from Russian Prisons*. This remains one of the most valuable sources of primary material for this subject.

Goldman continued to work in other directions, and although she had little success in arousing support for her campaign she did get

much important material published. In April 1925 she produced for her committee *Russia and the British Labour Delegation's Report: A Reply*, a 12,000-word pamphlet challenging the very long and generally favourable report of the delegates of the British Trades Union Congress who had spent five weeks in Russia in November-December 1924. She exposed the ignorance of the British visitors about the true conditions in Russia, and concluded: 'By their Report the British Trade Union Delegation will help to perpetuate the superstition that the Bolsheviki are the symbol of the Russian Revolution. In so doing they are rendering poor service both to the workers of England and to the Russian people.'

In May 1925 the libertarian publisher C. W. Daniel agreed to produce both her Russian books in a single volume if she could cover some of the cost (she managed to raise £50 from her friends). Berkman continued his support by editing the text and reading the proofs; it was published in London in October 1925 as *My Disillusionment in Russia*, with her prefaces to the two American volumes and with the addition of a new introduction by Rebecca West, her main British supporter at that time, which was written in June 1925. This is the authoritative edition of the book.

In a letter to Berkman, Goldman commented that Daniel 'is one of the finest type of men I have met among publishers, in fact the finest human being outside of Sweetlove [the treasurer of her committee] I have met in this country' (7 July 1925), and she remained on good terms with him for several years. She persuaded him to import copies of *Letters from Russian Prisons* in February 1926, and also to publish a British edition of *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* with a new preface by Edward Carpenter in September 1926 (though he declined to publish Berkman's *Now and After* in 1929).

★ ★ ★

My Disillusionment in Russia was universally recognised as a major work on the Russian Revolution. At one end of the political spectrum, Communist and other socialist commentators greeted it generally with silence and occasionally with abuse, but never with answers. At the other end, the *Times Literary Supplement* ended its short review of the two American volumes: 'No more scathing attack upon the Soviet tyranny and its leaders has been written than this sincere and authoritative study' (5 March 1925); a note later drew attention to the single British volume (8 October 1925). In the anarchist press, William C. Owen wrote an enthusiastic review in *Freedom* of the two American volumes, summarising the contents and concluding: 'The Russian

Revolution is an epoch-making event, and even in its earliest stages we see already the conflict of opposing principles on one or other of which every honest man and woman will have eventually to take a definite stand. That necessary development Emma Goldman's book will hasten' (February 1925). A note later drew attention to the appearance of the British edition, describing it as 'a handy and compact volume' and hoping it would 'have a wide circulation', which indeed it did (October/November 1925).

Goldman returned to the subject of Russia from time to time during the rest of her life. In 1926 Pyotr Arshinov and other leading Russian anarchists in exile launched the Organisational Platform, a campaign to learn the lesson of the failure of the Russian Revolution by reorganising the anarchist movement as a political party; she became one of its main critics in 1927. In 1931 she retraced the same ground as *My Disillusionment in Russia* in *Living My Life* (which again was edited by Berkman), at about the same length though in less political and more personal terms. A few years later she wrote a long article called 'The Two Communisms', which was published in the *American Mercury* in a mutilated form as 'There is no Communism in Russia' (April 1935). 'There is no socialization either of land or of production and distribution. Everything is nationalized; it belongs to the government. . . . There is nothing of Communism about it.' The 'alleged Communism of the Bolsheviki' is 'compulsory state Communism'. 'Soviet Russia . . . is an absolute despotism politically and the crassest form of state capitalism economically.' And a few years later still, when the Trotskyists were arguing that the Revolution which had been created by Lenin and Trotsky had been betrayed by Stalin, and when Trotsky himself defended his conduct in leading the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion, she wrote a long article in the New York anarcho-syndicalist *Vanguard* (July 1938), and immediately expanded it into a 6,000-word pamphlet, *Trotsky Protests Too Much*, which was published by the Anarchist Communist Federation in Glasgow a few months later. She agreed that 'the dictatorship under Stalin's rule had become monstrous', but added that 'that does not, however, lessen the guilt of Leon Trotsky as one of the actors in the revolutionary drama of which Kronstadt was one of the bloodiest scenes', and she exposed Trotsky's version of events to ridicule and contempt.

When Emma Goldman died, just after the beginning of the Second World War, she was the best-known anarchist in the world, and she received wider recognition than any other except Peter Kropotkin — thus she is the only anarchist (apart from Johann Most) who was included both in the *Dictionary of American Biography* and the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*! She made many important contributions both to

anarchist thought and action and to wider libertarian and feminist concerns, and she has been remembered especially as a rare example of a leading and lively woman on the revolutionary left. But one of her greatest achievements was her courageous and cogent critique of the Communist regime in Russia, and *My Disillusionment in Russia* remains as valuable as ever or even more so in the new age of glasnost and perestroika. Emma Goldman is indeed one of the key witnesses of that crucial age.

Notes and Acknowledgements

There have been several biographies of Emma Goldman — Richard Drinnon *Rebel in Paradise* (1961), Candace Falk *Love, Anarchy, and Emma Goldman* (1984), Alice Wexler *Emma Goldman: An Intimate Life* (1984). Her own autobiography *Living My Life*, which was published in the United States in 1931 and in Britain in 1932, has been reprinted several times since 1970, sometimes with new introductions. Richard Drinnon and Anna Maria Drinnon edited *Nowhere at Home: Letters from Exile of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman* (1975), which covers the last twenty years of her life. The complete run of *Mother Earth* and *Mother Earth Bulletin* was reprinted in 1968. The British version of *My Disillusionment in Russia* was reprinted in 1970, with the addition of Frank Harris's profile of Emma Goldman from his *Contemporary Portraits: Fourth Series* (1924). Her own collection of her shorter writings, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, which was published in the United States in 1910 and in Britain in 1911, has been reprinted several times since 1969. Later collections are Alix Kates Shulman's *Red Emma Speaks* (1972), which contains some items on Russia, and David Porter's *Vision on Fire* (1983), which concentrates on Spain. Many of her shorter writings or extracts from her longer writings have been reprinted in various forms.

There is a very large collection of letters and other documents in the Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman collections at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam. Thanks are due for the use of its archives and for permission to publish material in its possession. Thanks are also due to Paul Avrich, Heiner Becker, Rudolf de Jong, David Goodway, and Christine Walter.

Jean Raison

Sade and Sadism

Louis Aldonse Donatien de Sade, who was mistakenly christened Donatien Alphonse François, and who is generally known as the Marquis de Sade, was born in Paris in 1740. He belonged to a family of Italian origin and noble rank, which was based in Provence but attached to the French Court at Versailles. He was neglected by his parents, brought up by relations, and educated by Jesuits. In 1755 he became an officer in the French army, in 1763 he married Rénee de Launay (a woman of lower rank but with a large fortune), in 1767 he succeeded to the family title and estate at Lacoste, and in 1771 he resigned his commission.

Sade soon became a notorious libertine. Like many other members of his class, he aroused the attention of police informers and the enmity of members of his family (especially his domineering mother-in-law). From 1763 he acquired a growing reputation for perverted sexual (and sacrilegious) behaviour with young women, which got him into increasing trouble with the authorities and his family (though his wife remained loyal to him). He was occasionally imprisoned following complaints about his activities — for a few weeks in 1763 and a few months in 1768 — and in 1772 he was condemned to death in Aix in his absence for committing sodomy and administering aphrodisiacs during a particularly scandalous orgy in Marseille. He evaded arrest for several years by living under assumed names with various people (including his sister-in-law) in various places in France and Italy, though he was imprisoned in Savoy for a few months in 1772-1773 until he managed to escape. In 1777 he was arrested in Paris, and in 1778 he was taken to Aix, where the death sentence was commuted; he managed to escape again, but was finally arrested at Lacoste in August 1778.

For nearly twelve years Sade was imprisoned without trial under a *Lettre de cachet* — a warrant issued by the King at the request of the family of an offending person (in this case Sade's mother-in-law). He was held first at Vincennes and then from 1784 in the Bastille. When he realised that he wasn't going to be released, he set out to become a serious writer. He read voraciously and, as well as diaries and letters, he began to produce all sorts of formal writings — dialogues, essays, plays, stories, novels, and above all pornographic fantasies. Following

the eventual publication of some of the latter, of course, he became so famous (or infamous) as both a minor practitioner and a major theoretician of extreme forms of sexuality that a century later his name was given to the term 'Sadism' to describe his particular sexual orientation.

* * *

Whatever Sade's beliefs and behaviour in private life, however, he was no Sadist in public life, as appears from his conduct during the French Revolution. Because of his own experiences he was inevitably an enemy of royal absolutism, and when the old regime began to collapse into chaos in the late 1780s he not only sympathised with but actually played a significant if small part in the course of events. During the spring and summer of 1789 there were frequent riots around the Bastille, which was a fortress as well as a prison, as the Government planned to suppress the increasingly radical National Assembly. On 2 July Sade used a metal drain-pipe in his cell as a megaphone to address the crowds, appealing for help and inciting them to attack the prison. As a result, a couple of days later he was transferred to the Charenton asylum outside Paris. He was therefore not in the Bastille when it was at last attacked on 14 July, and when it was sacked the contents of his cell were removed (most of his manuscripts were lost but a few survived and were eventually published).

Prisoners held by *Lettres de cachet* were slowly released by the National Assembly, and Sade was freed in April 1790. He was separated from his wife, and lived happily with another separated woman, Marie Constance Quesnet, for most of the rest of his life. Apart from scraping a living from his estate and various jobs, he was mainly concerned with his drama and his pornography, though he had little success with either. Some of his plays were produced, always unsuccessfully, and some of his fantasies were published, sometimes successfully — the best-known being *Justine: or the Misfortunes of Virtue* (written in 1787, rewritten and published in 1791), a sort of parody of Richardson, which at once became an underground classic of erotic fiction.

But Sade was also personally involved in politics, as a minor but active participant in revolutionary affairs. He was involved in some of the demonstrations during the early period, and from the summer of 1790 he was a leading member of his local Section in Paris (called first Place Vendôme and then Piques). Despite his aristocratic origins, he became its secretary in September 1792 and its chairman in July 1793, resigning to become vice-chairman in August 1793. He was in charge of reforming health administration and exercised real influence in

improving hospital conditions. He was also in charge of organising cavalry and of examining abandoned houses, and in 1793 he was appointed a member of a commission investigating forged promissory notes and then a court assessor to judge the cases. His position was such that he could easily have denounced his wife's family, but instead he did everything he could to save them and others from almost certain death. In November 1793 he intervened in the short-lived De-Christianisation campaign, speaking on behalf of his Section in the National Convention in favour of replacing worship of God with worship of the Virtues.

But Sade's position was increasingly precarious as the Reign of Terror intensified. During 1793 he was nearly denounced by the revolutionary leader Jean Paul Marat for his previous libertine career, but he escaped death by pure chance on two occasions; on the first, in June, another aristocrat with a similar name (La Salle) was arrested and guillotined, and on the second, in July, Marat was assassinated by Charlotte Corday before he could correct his mistake. In December 1793 Sade was at last arrested after being denounced as an aristocrat and royalist. In fact he seems to have been a genuine republican, though he certainly disliked the ruling Jacobins and opposed the Terror, and he was well known as a moderate in his Section. Once again he escaped death through pure chance. He was moved so many times from prison to prison that he couldn't be found for his trial in July 1794. A few days later Robespierre himself was guillotined, and the Terror came to an end. Sade was released in October 1794.

He went back to scraping a living, writing, and trying to publish his writings. In 1795 he produced his most remarkable dialogue, *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, a sort of parody of Voltaire and Diderot which combined pornography, atheism and republicanism. In 1797 he published a longer and more explicit version of his best-known book, *The New Justine: or the Misfortunes of Virtue* in four volumes, together with the much longer and even more explicit sequel, *The Story of Juliette, Her Sister* (also known as *Juliette: or the Fortunes of Vice*) in six volumes. These proved more successful than all his other writings, but they led to his final downfall. In March 1801 he was arrested for the last time for producing the 'infamous novel' *Justine* and the 'still more frightful work' *Juliette*. He was never tried or released, but was detained as a lunatic at the expense of his family for the rest of his life, his position being confirmed by the Emperor Napoléon. In 1804 he was transferred to the Charenton asylum, where he gradually reconciled himself to his fate and even produced plays for the inmates. He died there in 1814, after spending more than half his adult life in confinement.



As a writer Sade is of course best known for his sexual works, but they are interesting not so much in themselves — indeed most readers find them very unpleasant and virtually all readers find them very tedious — as for other reasons. Psychologically, they are archetypal examples of the extreme obsession with ‘sadistic’ behaviour, with a very strong anal bias. Philosophically, they are examples of the extreme expression of hedonism, amoralism, individualism and egoism, with a very strong nihilist bias.

Sade is significant not just because he was so extreme, but because he was so well known that the German sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing gave his name to one of the main sexual ‘perversions’, defining ‘Sadism’ as ‘sexual emotion associated with the wish to inflict pain and use violence’ (*Psychopathia Sexualis*, 1886). This generalisation has been frequently criticised and modified, especially to incorporate the wish to exert power, but it is still widely used, especially because it was adopted by the Freudians. Sigmund Freud himself defined Sadism as ‘the desire to inflict pain upon the sexual object’ (*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 1905), and sadism was fitted into the mechanistic structure of psychoanalytic theory as a fixation in or regression to infantile sexuality (though Freud later complicated the issue by adding the concept of the death instinct). Sadism was seen by the political post-Freudians as the basis of the ‘authoritarian personality’ which was claimed to be the psychological basis of Fascism, though not of Communism (since most post-Freudians were socialists themselves).

Sade himself was certainly ‘sadistic’ in the technical sense; but he was both more and less than a Sadist in the broader sense. He enjoyed playing (or imagining) a passive as well as an active part in sexual activity, so he was also ‘masochistic’ in the technical sense; indeed the combined term ‘Sado-Masochism’ was soon found more useful than the two separate terms. But Sade wasn’t just a Sado-Masochist either, and his significance is more complex than is conveyed by juggling with jargon. For one thing, he was remarkable for being so well aware of his sexual nature. He knew exactly what he desired and enjoyed, and he was not shocked or afraid to say so openly. In Freudian terms, his Ego seems to have been virtually identical with his Id, so there was no conflict between his Unconscious and his Conscious mind; his activities (and fantasies) expressed his deepest feelings, so he had no need to resist, repress, displace, transfer or project them.

What may be called this private Sadism has always been recognised as significant; what is also significant but is seldom recognised is that Sade seems to have had no interest in what could be called public

Sadism — the transposition of such sexual fantasies into other forms of human activity, such as politics, which the post-Freudians emphasised so strongly. Sade actually seems to have been more libertarian than authoritarian. He was genuinely appalled by the ritual slaughter committed by both revolutionaries and reactionaries which he witnessed and nearly suffered, and he sincerely opposed the atrocities of both Christianity and Jacobinism of his day; he would no doubt have just as sincerely opposed the atrocities of both Fascism and Communism of our day. It is a bitter irony that such phenomena are often often described as 'sadistic'. What is important, apparently, is not what kind of sexual feelings one has, but what one does with them. Libertines who accept their feelings do less harm in practice than puritans who deny them; pleasure causes less pain than principle; Sadists are less dangerous than Statists.

Sade's particular contribution to sexology was not so much that other people later used his name in misleading ways, as that he was one of the first who recognised the true power of human sexuality in all its forms, and also one of the first who described the various forms of sexual fantasy and behaviour in great detail. (Incidentally he was also one of the first to advocate the equality of women and to recognise the sexuality of children.) A minor irony of Sade's work in this area is that, while most of his accounts of sexual aberrations are literally fantastic, many of his accounts of various other atrocities are all too realistic. His vision of social life as an everlasting gang-bang may be just a crazy dream; his view of political life as a never-ending gang-war is an ever-present nightmare.

★ ★ ★

Sade's religious — or rather, anti-religious — writings are less well known, but are interesting examples of extreme devotion to rationalism and opposition to theism, of a kind which was produced a little earlier in France by Jean Meslier and Baron d'Holbach and a little later in Britain by Matthew Turner and Percy Shelley, and which helped to lay the foundations of the freethought ideology. Sade took Enlightenment thought to its logical conclusion, replacing God with Nature, which he saw first as a benevolent and then as a neutral or even malevolent force, and accepting complete materialism and determinism.

The *Dialogue between a Priest and a Dying Man*, a sort of parody of Diderot or Voltaire, which was written in 1782, was one of his earliest writings and one of the first modern statements of open atheism (though it wasn't published until 1926). Similar statements appeared in

several of his writings published during the 1790s, especially in *Philosophy in the Boudoir* and in *Justine* and *Juliette*; in the first volume of the latter an Abbess (!) delivers a particularly powerful denunciation of theism, and in the fourth volume a Cardinal (!) recites a blasphemous ode about the sex-life of God and Jesus (foreshadowing James Kirkup's poem which got *Gay News* prosecuted in 1977).

Sade's particular contribution to freethought was that of an honest *Philosophe*, one of the few who said publicly about religion what many still only thought privately. But he has been almost completely ignored by historians of freethought, who are generally concerned to show how respectable it is. In his lifetime he wasn't even mentioned in Sylvain Maréchal's *Dictionary of Atheists* (1800), and in 1805 the French astronomer Jerome Lalande wrote in the second supplement to this pioneering work: 'I should much like to quote M de Sade; he has so much power of wit, reasoning and learning; but his infamous novels about *Justine* and *Juliette* cause him to be rejected by a sect where only virtue is spoken of.'

* * *

Sade's political writings are even less well known, but some of them are actually well worth knowing. His half-dozen political pamphlets are simply published versions of official speeches he made for his Section and have only topical interest, but much more interesting material appears in his other writings. His drama and fiction contain repeated criticisms of the class system and the institution of property (which is explicitly defined in *Juliette* as 'theft'), of the state as well as the church, of law as well as religion, of the use of violence in both punishment and war, of the power of the family and the danger of over-population, and so on; and they also offer serious solutions to these problems.

Philosophy in the Boudoir includes the text of an imaginary pamphlet — *Frenchmen, One More Effort If You Wish to Be Republicans!* — which pushes republicanism in a radical and libertarian direction and which was indeed published as a serious pamphlet during the 1848 revolution. (Extracts from it appeared in the anarcho-surrealist paper *Free Unions/Unions Libres* in 1946, and it is discussed in Marie Louise Berneri's *Journey Through Utopia* in 1950.) The 'Philosophical Novel' *Aline and Valcour* (written in 1788, published in 1795) includes a sort of parody of Swift in contrasted accounts of a dystopia in the West African country of Butua, which is a miserable parody of a European state, and a utopia in the South Sea Island of Tamoe, which is a happy liberal communist paradise. (These aren't mentioned in Berneri.) And the pornographic fantasies contain many quasi-libertarian passages in

which the various characters attempt to justify their defiance of conventional manners and morality.

Sade's political ideas can't be easily extracted from his fictional work or from his actual behaviour, but have to be inferred from both. He has been invoked by many subversive movements in France for a century, from the Symbolists to the Situationists, but his true significance is ambiguous. Exactly 150 years after Sade's death, the German playwright Peter Weiss wrote *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*, one of the most influential plays of the 1960s, which posed Marat and Sade as opposite poles of the conflict between social revolution and individual liberation. The result was not only an extraordinary dramatic experience but an exciting dialectical examination of this crucial issue (and the subject of a stimulating essay by Murray Bookchin in 1967). Yet, as we have seen and as Weiss showed, while Marat was indeed an extreme revolutionist, Sade was an extremist in theory but a moderate in practice, a fantasist but not a fanatic, for whom the personal was the political.

Sade may have been more of a libertarian than an authoritarian, but he was not an anarchist, or was at most a philosophical anarchist, because he believed that most people are not yet fit for freedom. Yet anarchist ideas are implicit in many of his writings, and in the fourth volume of *Juliette* there is a remarkable exchange in which a Police Chief (!) gives what may be the first explicit defence in literature of 'anarchy'. A long argument against law and religion and in favour of passion and Nature contains the following passages:

In the history of any country compare the periods of anarchy with those during which order was most vigorously maintained by the most vigorously enforced laws, and recognise that only at moments when the laws were held in contempt do stupendous actions occur. . . .

But anarchy is necessarily the cruel reflection of despotism —

Another error; it is the abuse of law that leads to despotism; it is the despot who creates law. . . . Tyrants are never born in anarchy, you see them flourish only behind the screen of law or winning supremacy from it, basing their authority on law. . . . The rule of law is therefore vicious and inferior to anarchy. . . .

So should we consider the Marquis de Sade as a precursor of anarchism, by the side of and at the same time as William Godwin? The idea may not be as strange as it seems, though historians of anarchism (as of freethought) have been reluctant to take Sade seriously, and it would mean searching through a lot of rubbish to find much of value. But it is possible to see *Justine* and *Juliette* as extreme versions of *Caleb*

Williams, and many of Sade's political arguments as extreme versions of *Political Justice*. In conclusion, he was certainly not just a pornographer, as he is dismissed by his opponents, nor yet a genius, as he is claimed by his supporters; but in his strange way he was possibly not just 'the freest spirit who ever lived', as Guillaume Apollinaire called him, but a pioneering exponent of philosophical libertarianism.

Note

The works of Sade were not published in full and in the open even in France until the 1960s, and the clumsy American translations of most of them, which appeared a little later, are still difficult to get in Britain. The standard biography is by Gilbert Lely (1952-1957, 1965). There is a large literature on Sade in French, some of which has been translated, but little in English, though there are useful pioneering accounts of his life by C. R. Dawes (1927) and of his ideas by Geoffrey Gorer (1934, 1953, 1963). There are two recent biographies by Donald Thomas (1977) and Ronald Hayman (1978).



George Woodcock

The Anarchist as Dandy

Félix Fénéon: Aesthete and Anarchist in Fin-de-Siècle Paris

By Joan Ungersma Halperin

Yale University Press, £19.95

Felix Fénéon was among the greyest of grey eminences; an austere and altruistic dandy, an impeccable critic of literature and the visual arts, a man of live and generative wisdom, he moved with immense and quiet influence through the world of the arts in Paris from the 1880s to the 1920s. He fostered Symbolism in poetry, editing a series of influential reviews from *La Revue Indépendante* in 1884, and first publishing, among other masterpieces, Rimbaud's *Les Illuminations* (years later he would bring André Gide forward by publishing his *Paludes*). The only book bearing his own name which he published in his lifetime, barely more than an ambitious brochure entitled *Les Impressionistes en 1886*, introduced Seurat, Signac and other Neo-Impressionists whom he virtually discovered; later he played a great part in securing the recognition of Matisse as a major artist.

Moving quietly, and impeccably garbed, between his desk at the War Office and the magazine offices and art galleries where he did his real work, Fénéon seemed to be known and valued by everyone of interest in the avant-garde circles of turn-of-the-century Paris, from Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec to Alfred Jarry and the exiled Oscar Wilde, from Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine to André Gide, from Degas and Camille Pissarro to Gauguin and Matisse; intellectually fierce but personally gentle and generous, he was a man with remarkably few enemies.

With Camille Pissarro he shared a particularly important role; he represented in a very intimate way the close connection between anarchism and French literary and artistic avantgardism that was woven during the 1880s and 1890s. It was time of great drama in anarchist history, the heyday of propaganda by deed and of the individual assassin, and the Symbolist poets and novelists were fascinated by the high symbolism of anarchist action. Anarchist-Symbolist reviews flourished, and painters like Camille and Lucien

Pissarro, Georges Seurat, Maximilien Luce, and Paul Signac were dedicated anarchists.

Some of the *anarchisant* writers and painters of the time were really fellow-travellers who remained aloof from anarchist activism, but others collaborated with the rich variety of anarchist propaganda journals which flourished at the time, in Paris and Brussels especially. The Pissarros, Luce and Signac, and also Valloton and Steinlen, regularly contributed drawings and caricatures to such papers, and among the writers who wrote for them most assiduously, as well as for the more literary journals of the left, was Fénéon; he contributed regularly to Zo d'Axa's flamboyant *L'Endehors*, the most extreme anarchist literary review, but he also adapted himself to writing in the Paris argot that was obligatory in Emile Pouget's fiery working-class sheet, *Le Père Peinard*, helping also in the editorial offices of both journals.

But Fénéon became more deeply involved than that, for he worked with groups of militant companions, composing and distributing inflammatory leaflets and dodging the police to put up posters at night, and he was the friend of Emile Henry, that implacable young assassin who in February 1894 put a bomb in the Café Terminus, wounding many people and killing one, with the remark that in the French society of la Belle Epoque there were no innocents. Fénéon never publicly condemned his friend's act, as did other anarchist writers, like Octave Mirbeau.

Given such involvements, it was perhaps inevitable, when the French government staged the Trial of the Thirty in 1894, that Fénéon should be involved. It was a show trial in which a number of robbers who styled themselves anarchists were brought together with genuine anarchist militants, in an attempt to get a general condemnation for conspiracy. The plan — an official conspiracy in itself — failed; the jury acquitted everyone except the robbers. Fénéon was in fact accused of two charges, for detonators of the type used in anarchist bombs were found in his possession. With a brilliant display of wit and argument he managed to deflect the evidence and win over the jury, and the intervention of Mallarmé, who testified movingly to his honour and personal gentleness, was perhaps decisive in securing his acquittal.

Fénéon was set free, but he had lost the War Office post on which he depended for a basic existence, and he was never reinstated. Moreover, the direction of French anarchism tended to change after the Trial of the Thirty, veering away from individual activism towards industrial action and revolutionary syndicalism, and the intimate links between it and the arts quickly loosened, though Fénéon remained an anarchist

until after the First World War, when he and his painter friend Signac for a time accepted the revolutionary pretensions of the Communists.

So, to earn a living and keep himself occupied, Fénéon intensified his involvement in the literary and artistic worlds, editing, criticising, arranging art exhibitions, and eventually working in the gallery of Bernheim-Jeune, the most important Parisian art-dealer of the time.

The laconicism that had always been characteristic of his writing became steadily more pronounced; his comments tended to be aphorisms rather than reviews, as if he were developing a kind of writing so terse that it verged on silence. For several years he wrote three-liner faits divers for *Le Matin*, and seemed to gain great satisfaction from these dense little arrangements of topical facts that took on the quality of the briefest of short stories. He wrote everything for the day, and steadily refused to give his work the pretensions of permanence that publication in volume form would imply.

Finally, one day in 1924, he said to the Bernheims, 'I'm ready for the idle life.' And he almost ceased to communicate with the world: 'I aspire only to silence.' He dropped willingly into obscurity, into living for and within himself, surrounded by that splendid collection of paintings bought or received as gifts when his artist friends were young, which took four days to sell at the Hotel Drouot, three years after his death in 1944.

So unwilling was Fénéon to court posterity, so unconcerned to give permanence to any of his works, that his whole career might have slipped away into oblivion if it had not been for two people who recognised his central importance as an interpreter of the avant garde at the turn of the century, and who also perceived the strange insistent individuality as a critic and a person that had emerged from his unwillingness to build himself up into a literary personage. One of these was the French critic, Jean Paulhan, who in 1945 published a brief study, *F. F. ou le critique*, and three years later a first collection of Fénéon's *Oeuvres*. Another was Joan Ungersma Halperin, who in 1970 published a much more complete collection, *Oeuvres plus que complètes*, and who now, in *Félix Fénéon: Aesthete and Anarchist in Fin-de-Siècle Paris*, presents the first full-length biography.

Félix Fénéon is really two interlocking books. It is the record, as personal as so allusive a personality would allow, of a life dedicated to the arts and to concepts of justice and human brotherhood whose appeal was essentially aesthetic rather than moral. At the same time, it is a rich study of art and politics at the vital height of la Belle Epoque. A symbiosis of this kind was doubtless necessary, given the fact that essentially Fénéon lived not by acting but by reacting and by giving reasons for and encouragement to the new trends and new artists of a

creative era; he was a discoverer, not an originator. With its abundant illustrations (20 colour and more than 160 black-and-white), *Félix Fénéon* views the turn of the century from a somewhat unaccustomed angle, that of the critic whose own contradictions mirror the confusions of his time. As a definitive biography of Fénéon it is unlikely to be superseded in the foreseeable future. Clearly Halperin is of the opinion that it was the period of the symbiosis between the man and his age that counted in his life. Of the last twenty years of that life, when the symbiosis no longer worked, and of his death, she has little to say, respecting his silence. A few photographs and a death sketch suffice to hint at the course of those final years.

At one point in her book, Halperin allows herself to diverge into an interesting conjecture. She puts forward the theory that Fénéon was not merely the friend of terrorist bombers, but was himself the dynamitard who in April 1894 planted the bomb in the Restaurant Foyot (a crime still unsolved) by which his friend and fellow anarchisant writer, Laurent Tailhade, was wounded and lost an eye. It would fit so well with the enigmatic side of Fénéon's character that one is tempted to acceptance. But the evidence is slight and not even secondhand. Kaya Cohen told André Salmon that Fénéon had confessed to her his role in the bombing, and Salmon, many years later, passed on the tale to Halperin. It is a thin cord, and it does not fit in well with one's image of Fénéon as a man of exemplary honour. How could he sit quietly in court listening to Mallarmé's praises of his gentleness with the thought of Tailhade's wound in his mind? I grant that Fénéon could have planted a bomb, but he could not have kept Mallarmé in the dark when he went to give evidence. The Foyot bomber has still to be identified.



Peter Cadogan
Blake and Freedom

William Blake: Visionary Anarchist

By Peter Marshall

Freedom Press, paper £2

I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's. I will not reason or compare; my business is to create.

Thus William Blake in his climactic epic poem *Jerusalem* (I have not used his capital letters). The philosopher/psychologist John Shotter, in *Images of Man in Psychological Research* (1975), indicated part of the problem:

The explosion in our knowledge has resulted in an ever-expanding array of disconnected and fragmented data lacking all conceptual unity — it has provided material appropriate perhaps for the building of a great edifice, but no hint of a plan for its construction. Unless we can find a way of connecting all these scattered fragments together, we shall be buried under the debris of our own investigations.

But Blake went further than that. He saw that this fragmentation was not the cause of our trouble, but the consequence of it. Somewhere down below there is a serious fault in human dynamics, certainly in Western society. It is familiar enough today, and we call it dualism. Its origins are to be found in classical Greece from the sixth to the fourth century BC — from Thales and Pythagoras to Plato and Aristotle. Man must measure, and knowledge of measurement and calculation is virtue. The head is separated from the heart (hence dualism), science from art, the elite who know from the folk who don't, and Leviathan is born to sustain the inherently unstable.

The Barbarians who laid the Roman Empire low undid all this, and out of their eventual settlement came an age of faith that was non-dualistic but underwritten by superstition, dogma, servitude, and the sword. Christendom eventually collapsed amid the birth of nation states, empires, the Renaissance and the Reformation; and dualism was reborn of Bacon, Descartes, Leibniz, and Newton. Western civilisation was plunged into three and a half centuries of materialism, then into imperialism, industrialism, and war. The disintegration of society followed from the disintegration of the human psyche. We can, therefore, reconstitute ourselves only by a shared revolution in

personal/social dynamics. The heart of the matter lies in our own creativity and its denial by the very nature of an upside-down culture. There is very little that we can do about it politically or economically — in the end the system will bring itself down — but what we can do is to live differently, multiplying and connecting islands of humanity, sanity, and invention in a sea that is sick.

Blake was a poet, a draughtsman, an engraver, and a painter — an artist and craftsman. He was also a prophet, essentially a prophet. Prophets don't write discursively. They use the language of mythology — the most powerful language there is (as both Lenin and Hitler showed) — a use of words, pictures, images and rhythms that cuts through to the heights and depths of the human spirit with results that can vary from the utterly catastrophic to the sublime. Prophets are dangerous people, liable to get themselves crucified. Blake wasn't crucified, as Thomas Paine nearly was in London and Paris — he was simply labelled mad and quietly curtailed off.

Blake's psychology

In the first half of the nineteenth century it was usually taken for granted that the founder of the discipline of psychology in Britain was David Hartley, whose *Observations on Man* appeared in 1749. He was a successful, eminent physician and the founder of associationist psychology. Until the final quarter of the nineteenth century, psychology was held to be a department of philosophy. It was the arrival of the clinician that separated the two.

For some reason it pleased people to ignore Thomas Hobbes, whose *Leviathan* (1651) is divided into four parts, of which the first part, 'Of Man', consists of an elaborate theory of psychology in sixteen chapters; it is worth reading. He identifies the four parts of the human psyche as the senses, reason, emotions (called 'motions'), and the imagination. It is only to be expected that Hobbes, the apologist of absolutism (regal or parliamentary), would demolish imagination lest its libertarian substance demolish him. Thus, if we look at an object, and 'the object is removed, or the eye shut, we still retain an image of the thing seen, though more obscure than when we see it. Imagination therefore is nothing but decaying sense.' Thus imagination, in the sense of the faculty making for invention, is safely incarcerated in *Leviathan*. No innovator shall rock the State.

Enter Blake. Arising out of what has been said about dualism, Blake saw the same fourfold parts of the human psyche, which he called Zoas, in dire and destructive conflict with each other. They were of titanic power, and he saw them as titans. Because he did not accept the linear

myth (one more Newtonian progeny), he ranged them in a circle. In the West was Tharmas, primordial energy, instinct, the senses, sex. In the South was Urizen, intellect, memory, calculation, projection. In the East was Luvah, all the emotions, especially erotic love. In the North was Los, the imagination, intuition, vision, poetic genius.

All these ought to be essentially healthy, balanced, interactive qualities, in their totality making the whole person. The human tragedy is that it is not so, because in the beginning was the Fall. But we can forget about Original Sin, Divine Grace, and the Church's gloss on the story of the Garden of Eden. Blake, as a Gnostic, scrapped all that. Spirit precedes matter. Minerals, natural forces, plants, animals, and humans are all embodiments of spirit at rising levels. Humans are the highest embodiment of spirit and their right living can only be at the level of the spirit, when the four Zoas (all of which are bisexual, each with a female side, a wife and emanation) come together to reconstitute Albion, hitherto shattered and divided by the Fall.

The Fall is when the human spirit (that of the original Albion) divides into its fourfold parts, falls to the levels of plants, animals, and debased humans typified by the nature-worshipping, blood-sacrificing Druids who hold humanity back. In Blake's picture of the Crucifixion, Jesus is impaled upon an apple-tree, not a cross, which he regarded as a disgusting and contemptible instrument of Roman torture. Jesus should have kept out of politics and not got himself put to death.

Blake loved nature, but he loved nurture more; and the Fall is the collapse of the latter into the former. It is this that we now have to climb out of. And in the climbing, as John Dewey has put it — quoted in Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1980) — 'Imagination is the chief instrument of the good. Art is more moral than morality.' Blake, like Nietzsche, has no use for the morality that is an impost levied and due to priest and potentate. Ultimately the human spirit is beyond good and evil, all religions are one in the poetic genius. And 'brotherhood is religion':

Still the breath divine does move
And the breath divine is love.

And:

Thou are a man, God is no more,
Thine own humanity learn to adore.

(*The Everlasting Gospel*)

Decoding Blake's mythology

E. M. Forster once said that the books he most liked were the ones he would most like to have written himself. Peter Marshall's book,

William Blake: Visionary Anarchist, is a case in point. We seem to have been waiting for it for years. There are any number of brilliant studies of Blake, from both sides of the Atlantic, but they do tend to be on the massive side. With Blake, it is the first hurdle that is the trouble. He has a huge individualistic following, but it tends to be on the strength of the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and *Auguries of Innocence*, and the hymn (which is not a hymn) 'Jerusalem' from *Milton* (not to be confused with the epic poem *Jerusalem*). But mention the epic poems, and people get tight-lipped. And there's the rub.

Peter Marshall, in 67 pages, breaks the code to Blake's mythology and thus to his philosophy and vision. It is documented in detail. The reader who is new to the subject can get started where others get foiled. It is impossible to get into Blake without help. He had to be nearly a century dead before the penny dropped in England with Geoffrey Keynes' bibliography of 1921 — and even that was published in New York.

Just consider the kind of problem the reader faces. Turn to Chapter I of *Jerusalem* and there read the opening lines:

Of the sleep of Ulro! and of the passage through
Eternal Death! and of the awakening to Eternal Life.

Search as you may, you will never find any reference to Ulro anywhere else. Blake invented the word to describe the lowest, the material level of being where dwell 'the spectres of the dead'. The next level is that of Generation, of the biological struggle for existence. The third of Beulah, the realm of the unconscious — the Daughters of Beulah are Blake's muses. The highest, the ultimate level, is Eden, the dwelling-place for those who have attained the brotherhood of man. Golgonooza, the city of art and manufacture, is being built by Los from London and will cover the whole of Britain — its gates open directly into Ulro, Generation, Beulah, and Eden. The nihilism we have known for the past ten years is Ulro, the passage through eternal death is the Fall into materialism and naturalism, and the awakening to eternal life is the promise of Jerusalem. Thus these two great lines are an excellent guide to essentials of Blake's philosophy — *provided that the code can be read*.

Blake invented hundreds of new names and labels, and used countless other more familiar words in new ways. He had an extraordinary memory. He departed from the existing world, which politically he detested, and created a new world in his imagination. Its detail is such that even the sophisticated Blakean still needs S. Foster Damon's *Blake Dictionary*, all 500 pages of it, in order to keep up.

Blake was also master of the update — he took Job, Elijah, Plato, Jesus, Dante, Chaucer, Milton, Boehme, Swedenborg, and so on, adopting, adapting, and discarding as he thought best. He took Jesus to be synonymous with the spirit of forgiveness and, as such, made him central to his mythology, but took issue with him even on this. Since it takes two to forgive, he condemned the notion of turning the other cheek:

Mutual forgiveness of each vice,
Such are the gates of paradise.

Mutuality is as fundamental to Blake as to Kropotkin, up to and including the annihilation of selfhood, a familiar enough anarchist idea — that the meaning of individuality is to be found only through the transcending of individualism. Again it goes back to the Gnostics, and to the new insights now made possible by the discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices in the Egyptian desert in 1945 — see Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (1980). For some, it will be a droll thought that the new post-Roman (and pre-Roman) Christianity, in both its Gnostic and Liberation Theology guises, might vindicate Kropotkin more successfully than any subsequent anarchist has done! The theologian Don Cupitt, who wrote *Taking Leave of God* (and meant exactly that), has now produced *The New Christian Ethics* (1988), in the very last paragraph of which he concludes: 'We should be libertarian to the point of anarchy, not because we are seeking to develop a unique extrasocial self, but because just now a hundred flowers must bloom.' Peter Marshall's concluding words, likewise, read: 'The machine still dominates human beings who are divided within, from each other, and from nature. The agents of Urizen are still at large. For this reason, Blake's message remains as potent and relevant as ever. He offers the prophetic vision of a free community of fully realised individuals who act from impulse and who are artists, kings and priests in their own right.'

Blake's missing link

Since Blake updated everybody else, he would expect us in our turn to update him. And he lends himself to updating, as Marx does not, because there is no dogma involved, only a passionate faith in the power of the creative genius shared by all human kind, but vouchsafed in particular to the few upon whose strength it is imperative to draw if we would be free. His 'genius' and Thomas Carlyle's 'hero' are very different animals.

Blake had a blind-spot that he shared with all the other artists and

philosophers of the eighteenth century. He knew about the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688, but nothing apparently about the real revolution of 1648-1649, of which 1688 was only an echo. The great struggle against the divine right of kings, the Long Parliament, the two civil wars, the abolition of the Episcopacy and the House of Lords, the historic activity of the Levellers and the Diggers, the trial and execution of the King — all this was an almost closed book until after Blake's death in 1827. The English landed classes had closed ranks over their own erstwhile lethal division. It was a non-subject. But 'until you know this, you are to yourselves unknown', as Bunyan said, and it has been left to our own time (Christopher Hill's first book appeared in 1940) to restore us to ourselves, to reveal the dark secret. We have been glad to accept the title of the Mother of Parliaments, provided we didn't ask how the sovereignty of that Parliament was established in the first place — at the cost of 100,000 lives. But now the story is out, the remedy is in our hands and we can fill in the blank in Blake, who made so much of Bacon and Milton but left out the bit in between; and interestingly enough, ignored Hobbes in the process. To remedy this now is only to strengthen his case. He would appreciate it.

For some 380 years (the Plantation of Ulster in 1609 is as good a starting-point as any), the Church, the universities and the Inns of Court have conspired, consciously or unconsciously, on behalf of the governing classes to which they belong, to see that the English past is not known to the English. Thus the English Revolution and associated upheaval between 1640 and 1660, the appalling destruction of the English peasantry and the village between 1750 and 1850, the dreadful fate of Ireland (with Scotland and Wales not far behind as victims of perfidy), Tasmanian genocide, the slave trade (we hear only about the end of it), the scrapping of all Town Charters in 1835, and countless other matters are all played down or cut out entirely. And it is not only the bad things; it is the same at the other end of the scale — the good people got lost too, with Paine, Godwin and Blake as cases in point. Happily the feminist historians are digging up the endless pace-makers of their own sex and even among the Establishment there have been honourable exceptions to the rule of silence. It was Carlyle who rescued Cromwell, S. R. Gardiner's sixteen volumes that opened up the English Revolution, and W. B. Yeats and Geoffrey Keynes who restored Blake. But the essential remedy has to lie in our own hands. 'Do it yourself,' said Blake; and he did.

History re-cast

The Victorians got on to the theory of history as the story of progress and freedom, but they were thinking mostly in religious, political and

eventually economic terms within a set of assumptions that took the nation state, empire, war, property and the prevailing form of capitalism for granted. In the First World War all this ground to a halt. Since then we have suffered a counter-revolution in historiography — and a counter-assault on that in turn. Nothing is resolved — the battlefield is all around us and the going is still tough.

The restoration of the English Revolution, of Paine, Blake, Godwin, the Owenites and Chartists, Morris, Carpenter, Geddes, and D. H. Lawrence is proceeding. On the Continent Nietzsche and Gramsci have overtaken Marx. We are a long way from the winning-post, but the race is in hand. The restart was typified by R. H. Tawney in the 1920s.

It might do some good to rehearse where we have got to date, or at least to present one version of that rehearsal and invite others to correct or rewrite it.

Historians and philosophers divide the past up into periods — a dangerous but apparently inevitable exercise. Dangerous, because people can then remember the periods and forget the history; and inevitable, because otherwise the picture is just too vast and shapeless to be comprehensible. It also involves criteria by which identities can be recognised and progress or regress charted. Heading the list of libertarian criteria are freedom and justice. And it is important to know about roots. They give substance to self-respect, insight into ourselves, a knowledge of process and a source of inspiration. Given that, we should be able to say useful things about the present period and what, reasonably, we might expect next, the better to be prepared for it.

The gestation of modern ideas began in the twelfth century, but it was not until the period from the fifteen to the seventeenth centuries that they became established with the aid of the compass needle, gunpowder, and printing. When did freedom break out? George H. Williams, in his monumental history of *The Radical Reformation* (1961), has this to say:

Over against magisterial Protestants [i.e. Luther, Calvin, Henry VIII, &c.] and its provisionally 'sectarian' outposts in Catholic lands, stood the Anabaptists, who, with their determination to clear away the old abuses root and branch and at the same time to dispense with earthly magistrates and prelates, were only the first major threat of what proved to be a three-pronged movement constituting the Radical Reformation.

The three-pronged movement was made up of: Anabaptists of the Mennonite tradition; the Spirituals like the Hutterites who renounced war, violence and private property and had all things in common, and who thrive today with some 200 colonies (Bruderhofs) in North America, one in England at Robertsbridge, and a new one recently founded in Japan; and the Evangelical Rationalists, known to us today

as Unitarians. In that tradition, some years subsequently, came the Family of Love that was, in England, to merge a century later with the Quakers. In 1640 it was part of the genesis of the Seekers, the Levellers, and the True Levellers or Diggers, its political prophets Lilburne, Overton and Walwyn, and its anarcho-religious genius Gerrard Winstanley.

If tragedy is as Nietzsche defined it — the defeat of nobility — then the authentic radical tradition is of the tragic order, made up of men and women of noble intent impossibly ahead of their time. All victories had to be marginal, pending the collapse of the centre and still, after 500 years, that collapse is not yet. The sheer viability of the money mechanism and of the State in its defence constitute a political life-cycle that has to run its course — and it is still running. But for how much longer? With the last two empires, the United States and the Soviet Union, in dire straits, with the Law of Surplus threatening the Law of Scarcity, and direct democracy breaking out everywhere, maybe the dreams of half a millennium are closer to realisation than we know. When it happens, it will happen suddenly.

When Fairfax and Cromwell smashed the Levellers at Burford and the Diggers at St George's Hill, both in 1649, the political dimension of the Good Old Cause went underground. The religious dimension stayed, somewhat precariously, on the surface. Both were exported to the American colonies and Jefferson, writing the Declaration of Independence in 1776, was doing little more than restating Overton's *Remonstrance of Many Thousand Citizens* of 1646, the first Leveller manifesto.

The third eruption of freedom in England was in response to the American and French Revolutions — Lord George Gordon, the 'American' Burke, Paine, Blake, Godwin, Wordsworth, Coleridge, the London Corresponding Society, Mary Wollstonecraft, Shelley and Mary Shelley, Byron, Cobbett, Hetherington, and all the unsung who were with them. But Napoleon turned the light of liberty into *la Gloire* of Empire, and the sun went out.

There followed the momentous years 1830-1852 — the great campaign for the Reform Bill that became law in 1832, conducted by the Political Unions of the Middle and Working Classes, the betrayal of the workers by the middle classes in the form of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 setting up a hell on earth, the work house system, to replace the discredited Hell down below. The movement then split, the middle classes devised the Anti-Corn Law League in the cause of free trade, while the workers launched the Six Points of the Charter. The Two Nations had arrived.

The sheer success of the steam and railway age swamped everything

else, and it was not until after the great agricultural slump of 1875, induced by cheap wheat and meat from the Americas, that the 1880s witnessed the next radical renaissance around the new Marxists, Fabians, anarchists, Morris, the Matchgirls and the Dockers. They turned out to be their own executioners — they invented statism and rejected the ideas of autonomous non-state socialism that had come down through Owen and Mill. The anarchists were unable to stop the tide, and had no thorough alternative to propose. Came the nemesis of the First World War. There were redeeming features like the Suffragettes, some remarkable pre-war trade union militancy, J. A. Hobson's original analysis of imperialism, and the personal examples of Edward Carpenter and Patrick Geddes. But, having no received theory of the State and empire, there was no answer to war. Even Kropotkin fell in behind the flag.

We are all too aware of the great betrayal of 1917, of how the supposed revolution in Russia kept a great empire, built a centralised state that beggared even that of the Tsars, invented the gulag, and perverted the idea of freedom everywhere. From 1917 to 1968 the questions was not, 'Where do you stand on freedom and justice?', but, 'Where do you stand on the Soviet state?' Happily this nightmare is now over, although some lethal residues are still about.

Forms of freedom

We have to go backwards before we can go forwards — to pick up the story where it should never have stopped, to get into a harness that works. No two people will pick the same exemplars, and the Welsh, the Scots and the Irish have their own distinct sagas, heroes, villains and tragedies made worse by double servitude, to their own masters and to their English conquerors. The English will never be free until those three internal colonies have their liberty; then doubtless we shall constitute a Britannic Confederation of free peoples organised in sovereign provinces.

The agents of freedom, like the agents of tyranny, are everywhere. They do not necessarily work through prescribed forms, they will emerge from the woodwork in their own good time.

At the end of the day the power of Westminster, the sovereignty of Parliament, is a cover for the power of the Army. That is how it was originally, and in substance there has been no change. To the Army there now has to be added elements of the Police — in Northern Ireland, especially. The Stalker case told the whole story. The key decisions there were not taken by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland or the Home Secretary or even the Prime Minister; they were

taken by the Chief Constables of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Manchester, by the two chiefs of the Police Inspectorate (both retired senior policemen), and by the Army. And since Northern Ireland is an end-of-the-road case, where all the chips are down, it is the ultimate test of the British constitution itself. The mask of 1648 fits exactly. The Army is the State. This means that some of the eventual answer has to come from within the Army and the Police, a cue we cannot afford to neglect. One of the best things about the Stalker affair was the support he got from fellow policemen. We are not up against a monolith. In Greece the Colonels made a counter-revolution and were eventually defeated by the Generals. In Spain and Portugal the Army which made the Fascist regimes also destroyed them. We have to look to 'minute particulars' under all the hatred and helmets.

Admiral Eberle (retired), who currently directs the affairs of the Royal Institute for International Affairs, said in a broadcast last December that the question was, 'Do Governments control people, or do people control Governments?' That puts him on the side of the angels — it also suggests that people *can* control Governments, or might do so in future. There is no present evidence for that. People can control city-state or provincial Governments. 'Micro-power' — to use Don Cupitt's expression — can work; but to date it has commonly been crushed by imperial power — consider the sad history of Italy. But there is regionalist vindication in Switzerland. So our problem is how to reduce the power of the State here and elsewhere so that it is of a scale in which democracy can work and where the power of arms, internal or external, is ruled out. For this to happen the armies of the Soviet Union and the United States have to be dissolved, and the North Atlantic Treaty and the Warsaw Pact wound up. Under conditions of demilitarisation it would be possible to reduce the scale and ensure the accountability of city, regional and provincial 'states'. Some would call this starry-eyed, but it was Immanuel Kant, no less, who in *Perpetual Peace* (1794) said that wars would end only when they ceased to be feasible and became too expensive. Both these conditions have now been met, even with conventional wars. Iran and Iraq eventually came to terms, and Russia gave up in Afghanistan just as America gave up in Vietnam.

A fitting injunction, then, is to regard all soldiers, policemen, politicians, tycoons and trade unionists as individuals with minds of their own, not just labels speaking. All the worthwhile ones will respond. The process is already well advanced. In the Conservative Party in the House of Commons there are 120 'Lollards' led by 14 'Shepherds'. (They take their name from the room where they first met, in the Lollard Tower in Lambeth.) They are all against the

Government. They are opposed by the 90-strong '92 Committee', loyalist to a person. There are and will be other factions, all grist to the mill. Labour Party factions are too legion to list, and the Social and Liberal Democrats will soon be out of their salad days. Then there is the ultimate drollery — the Communist Party, committed to 'democratic centralism', is the most divided of all.

Lenin, like Blake, was born out of his time — perhaps that is one definition of genius. Such people can get things amazingly right or catastrophically wrong. In 1920 Lenin was asked to comment on the situation in Britain and the Communist Party, where there was a split between Sylvia Pankhurst, who was for keeping the Party pure and independent, and those who were for working with the Labour Party to defeat 'the combined Lloyd Georges and Churchills'. Lenin came down against Pankhurst and she departed. But the argument drew from Lenin his definition of 'the fundamental law of revolution':

Only when the 'lower classes' do not want the old and when the 'upper classes' cannot continue in the old way, then only can the revolution be victorious. This truth may be expressed in other words: revolution is impossible without a national crisis affecting both the exploited and the exploiters.

Those words, as they stand, beg the question of violence or non-violence; but then, as the context makes clear, he saw no case for violence in Britain, at least for the time being — following Marx in this respect. And indeed, if the Establishment 'cannot continue in the old way' (which has to mean that their authority has collapsed), why should violence be necessary? Without so intending, he had also written the law of non-violent revolution. The question then is: Might it apply to the United Kingdom in the 1990s, given that the meanings of the 'upper' and 'lower' have changed so drastically since 1920?

Confidence in the British Government is already breaking down in Northern Ireland and in Scotland — and it was those two places which occasioned the English Revolution of the 1640s. One must not press precedents too far, nothing can ever repeat itself in the same place. But, if it takes four sides to make a picture, and Scotland and Ireland together are one of them, what might the other two be? The first and most obvious one is the situation in the United States. The Anglo-American political and financial link is a close one, and it is now beyond reasonable doubt that the United States is heading into big trouble, with implications for the United Kingdom which have long had the City of London more fearful than ever before in its history. The viability of the dollar involves the viability of the pound.

But even that trinity of troubles is not enough to meet Lenin's criteria. There has to be something that devastates the British middle classes. It could be housing — not the million homeless (what power do

they have?)), but the two-thirds of the population who are house and flat buyers. If tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of home-castles are in jeopardy from rising interest rates which 'owners' cannot pay — what then? This may be the wrong tack, it could be something else. What of the poll tax? Of rising disaffection in matters of health and education? Of freedom of speech? Or Factor X — the unknown? One would like to think that the underclass might move, but that is most unlikely unless the professionals and volunteers get among them and provide confidence-building leadership. There is no sight of this yet, but it may come.

So what is the Blakean message? Ignore party politics, but treat politicians as people with problems — if they can help us, we can certainly help them. But we start from ground level, where the politicians will have to meet us on our terms: and that, experience shows, they will gladly do if something important is moving.

Ends and means

The biologists tell us that all organisms are defined by their goals. The humble amoeba needs to feed and practise binary fission. Every plant and animals can be seen in the same way. What of *Homo sapiens*?

It has to be Jerusalem or a third Armageddon — there is no middle way. A nuclear war would be a totally irrational, totally inhuman absurdity — and totally unnecessary — but it cannot be wholly ruled out. At the same time there are countless millions who will lose if peace breaks out — the men and women in uniform, the millions in the military supply industry, the biggest single section of the civil service, and half our research and development strength. Somehow they have got to keep the prospect of war going like horse-drawn coaches after the arrival of the railways and the motor car. Not far ahead of us there is an impossible breakpoint, and it would be foolish to breathe too easily before we have passed it. Theoretically, a rational transition to a demilitarised society is possible — we have to make it happen, and if we don't we stand to be wiped off the face of the earth.

At least the situation is moving. 1988 was an *Annus Mirabilis*, like 1956, 1961 and 1968. The events of the past year are too recent to need listing — an extraordinary outbreak of peace or impending peace all over the globe, the precipitate fall of the super-powers and the rise of Europe and the Pacific, the rise of green consciousness everywhere, and militarism under the public scrutiny for the first time.

Existing movements have become a drag upon us — the left (with its absurd Westminster preoccupations), the trade unions (still stuck with confrontation and likely to die with it), the Green Party (biocentric to

the end), CND (grimly hanging on to the Bomb and only the Bomb), END (afraid to touch Afghanistan, Central America, or Northern Ireland), all seemingly afraid of their own shadows, hanging on to their past and afraid of the future. The thing has to be opened up — new ideas, new values, new aims and objects, new methods, and above all new people. And below and beyond, a re-evaluation of the past and an evocation of vision for the future.

What of Jerusalem? Indeed! It has to be *now*. Blake said: 'I wish to do nothing for profit. I wish to live for art.' That is surely the essential clue. We have to find ways, individually and in groups, to back out of the market, while still taking it seriously enough to keep body and soul together. The gift economy (which Marx failed to discover) lives in parallel with the market economy. Work is the net expenditure of nervous energy — if we are paid for it, we are in the market economy; if we are not paid for it, and do it for need or love, we are in the gift economy. The accumulation of millions of tiny switches from one to the other, made self-consciously by individuals and groups, can move our society painlessly (economically, at least) out of one system and into the other. The word 'socialism' can be dropped — the statisticians have killed it. As Blake said, 'Give us this eternal day our own right bread by taking away money or debtor tax and value and price, as we have all things common among us.'

What we really have to spend is time. We have only so much of it. Most people have talents they have never dreamed of. Why? Because they have never had the time and encouragement to discover and develop them. And bad circumstances are in turn the product of poorly spent time. The greater part of our culture is grounded in spiritual poverty, because so many people are forced into merely coping or into defensive individualism, denied both the arts and community.

It is a good sign that architecture is news — it is the one art we all have to live with all day long. To make our whole environment beautiful — what a tremendous object! And how much of it can be undertaken at every level, down to the most modest. And to see carnivals back on our streets after a lapse of 450 years! And the new rhythms — Africa's gift to Europe! The competitive individualism of our society tends to make loners of us — millions fail to be tycoons so that a few can succeed, the same value system obtains throughout. Every successful act against lonerdom is an act for Jerusalem. We all need our share of solitude, of course, but that is something else.

Above all, we need the inspiration that genius provides — it feeds the genius there is in all of us. It suggests the human stature that might be and is not — yet. Time spent with the great, the living and the dead, is

time so well spent that it is short only of one other exercise — the expression of our own creativity. And that it inspires and fortifies.

Blake recognised the holocaust's option:

The Rhine was red with human blood,
The Danube roll'd a purple tide,
On the Euphrates Satan stood,
And over Asia stretched his pride.

And its opposite:

In my exchanges every land
Shall walk, and mine in every land
Mutual shall build Jerusalem,
Both heart in heart and hand in hand.

We are not in the hand of God or Fate — we are in our own hands — the future shall be as we make it, or allow others to make it in our despite.

The time-scale

How much time have we got? Having goals means thinking ahead. And if it is true that it is by goals that we are known to ourselves and each other, then the time factor is part of those goals.

The record seems to suggest that major social and cultural changes take some sixty to ninety years to establish themselves. The process can be thrown by an alien intrusion — Blake, Owen and Coleridge were thrown by the effect of steam power and the market. When individuals can make fortunes overnight, what price cooperatives? Likewise the radical tradition of the twentieth century was put out of joint for fifty years by the Russian Revolution. The great question-marks against war were written into the record on the Somme in 1916 and Hiroshima in 1945. That gives us 2005, plus or minus a few years.

Mass production and the consumer society crossed the Atlantic with the hire-purchase agreement in 1920 — and now electronics have escalated the process. If agriculture is an appropriate measure, we may already be into the Law of Surplus, but the system has so far fought it off, contained it. But for how long? The evidence suggests that supply and demand will be in deep trouble before the year 2010. Only a surplus and the gradual phasing-out of money and the market will end capitalism and 'socialism'.

The speed of movement and development, changes of head and heart, turns upon the crisis factor. In 1940 Britain went from indolence to hyper-activity in a matter of days. It was much the same over Suez in 1956. So what it also comes down to is the gestation of crisis. How long

before matters come to a head in Scotland and Northern Ireland? Scotland awoke on Clydeside during the First World War. In Ireland it was the Rebellion of 1916 and the Partition of 1921 — seventy or eighty years on gives us the 1990s. This can be no more than informed guess-work, but if it is preparation and action that we are into, then estimates, even mistaken ones, are better than being footloose in time. It is a secondary matter — the key matters of timing concern the short-term and getting it right on the day. Those who are not on top of a situation are liable to be buried by it. History is on no one's side — it is what we make of our reading of it that counts. And this is where Blake helps.



Brian Morris

The Wreck of Anarchism & the Critique of Marx

The Anarchist Moment

By John Clark

Black Rose, Montreal (Freedom Press, £7.95 paper)

David Miller suggested in his recent study *Anarchism* (1984) that, in presenting merely a cultural critique of capitalism, contemporary anarchism has lost both its distinctive identity and its revolutionary impetus. In spite of its theoretical flaws and utopian proposals, however, it is a 'wreck' that needs to be salvaged. Anarchism, suggests this Oxford scholar and 'market socialist', is something that has to be rescued from the 'historical dustbin' — mainly, it would seem, to provide a corrective to all those who might 'abuse' power, and as a reminder to us that non-coercive relationships are both possible and worthwhile. It is significant, however, that Miller does not bother to examine, by way of comparison, the other two reigning world ideologies — liberal capitalism, and state socialism — and the social realities they reflect, but rather rests his analysis firmly on the contention that whatever exists, or has existed, is both viable and valid. Indeed he seems quite unable to envisage any complex society that does not entail a capitalist mode of production and some form of authoritarian control. He is singularly unaware of the current world crisis and seemingly oblivious to the patent inadequacies of the two contemporary systems of domination — in terms of economic efficiency, distributive justice, and social well-being, the very criteria by which he passes adverse judgement on anarchism. Nor does Miller ever allow himself to become critically involved with the writings of contemporary anarchists like Noam Chomsky and Murray Bookchin.

In many ways, therefore, the publication in Canada of John Clark's book of collected essays, *The Anarchist Moment* (1984), which is now available in this country, came at an opportune 'moment', for they provide a useful counter to Miller's study. They show that, although anarchism has indeed changed and developed over the past fifty or more years, it is still none the less a vibrant and on-going political tradition. It offers, as this American scholar (whose useful study of Max Stirner's egoism is well known) argues, the only viable alternative

to democratic liberalism and Marxism, both of which are now bankrupt. There is now, he writes, a growing disillusionment with both of them, for these two world systems 'no longer offer us a hopeful prospect of resolving the vast social and ecological crises that now confront humanity'. An alternative vision of society is therefore necessary, and this vision, he argues, is anarchism. In presenting this vision Clark explicitly adopts the kind of ecological, organicist world view that has been cogently and impressively outlined by Murray Bookchin in *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982), a philosophy that takes its inspiration from Hegel. In one of his essays Clark in fact offers a critical outline of Bookchin's social ecology, and in doing so delineates a number of themes which, in turn, can be seen to be reflected in Clark's own writings. It is worth discussing some of these, and the critique of Marxism which Clark develops, following Bookchin, particularly as I think that they present a rather one-sided interpretation of Marx, and thus negate the progressive elements in his writings.

★ ★ ★

There are within the Marxist tradition, as many writers have stressed, two distinctive interpretations of Marx. On the one hand, there are those who are usually described as 'critical' or Hegelian Marxists, such as Antonio Gramsci, Jean-Paul Sartre, Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm. They stress the continuity of Marx with Hegel, and view Marxism as a critique rather than as a science. They thus take a more 'historicist' and 'humanistic' interpretation of Marx's writings and situate themselves in the more literary and philosophical tradition of European culture. Often they are highly critical of modern science and technology. On the other hand, there are the 'scientific' Marxists who stress that Marxism is a science of history and suggest that Marx made a clear break with Hegelian philosophy. They thus present a more deterministic and positivistic interpretation of Marx's writings. Among the early writers, Engels, Plekhanov and Trotsky stand in this tradition — writers who were more mechanistic than Marx himself in their approach. This tendency is orientated towards modern technology and science, accepts the great value placed upon them, and therefore tends to stress the authoritarian rather than the libertarian aspect of Marx.

At extremes the first tendency degenerates into romanticism, hermeneutics and cultural idealism, while the second slides into positivism, mechanistic materialism, and what Jean Baudrillard and Clark refer to as 'productivist' ideology. But the truth about Marx, as C. Wright Mills suggested long ago, is that there is an 'unresolved tension' in his work, and in history itself — the tension of humanism

and determinism, of human freedom and historical necessity. Marx clearly expressed an ambiguous attitude towards natural science, for its abstract materialism excluded what he called 'the historical process', and like his mentor Hegel he was clearly trying to go beyond the mechanistic paradigm bequeathed to him from the Enlightenment (and adopted by the political scientists), without in the process renouncing either reason or the empirical methods of science. Like Hegel, Marx was trying to articulate a dialectical mode of thought that attempted to transcend the dualisms that he had inherited from the Enlightenment — subjectivity and objectivity, humanity and nature, freedom and necessity — while remaining faithful to its insights. This meant holding fast not only to empirical science but also to the Kantian stress on the radical freedom of human subjectivity. In essence, therefore, Marx, like Hegel before him and Freud in a later generation, was consistently trying to unify two opposing tendencies, advocating an approach that was both materialist and dialectical, deterministic and subjectivist, scientific and humanistic. As Lucien Goldman (*The Human Sciences and Philosophy*, 1969), George Novack (*Polemics in Marxist Philosophy*, 1978), and Alfred Schmidt (*History and Structure*, 1983) have all stressed, Marx was a scientific humanist.

None of this tension or problematic is evident in Clark's interpretation of Marx, for in common with the scientific Marxists he consistently overstates Marx's tendency towards economic determinism and a 'productivist' view of human nature. Clark argues that Marx's social theory is based on a conception of humanity that denies their culture, and thus presents a crude form of techno-economic determinism, and that in his stress on human labour Marx follows a mechanistic paradigm advocating a Baconian 'man against nature' ethic.

Clark is aware of the humanistic 'side' to Marx, and that there are those aspects of his thought which depict humanity as creative, active and self-transcending. He seems willing to admit that Marx had a vision of people as social beings, pursuing their common destiny through the creation of culture and the transformation of the social and material environment through collective activity. But this 'side' of Marx is never explored; it is simply mentioned and then forgotten about. The only difference between Clark and the followers of Trotsky and Louis Althusser — who share a common viewpoint in their interpretation of Marx — is that whereas Clark sees the 'productivist' and 'scientific' aspects of Marx as wholly negative (he writes almost as if he wished the Enlightenment had never happened), the latter Marxists view this side of Marx as wholly progressive and positive. However, as Clark lucidly indicates, in the hands of Lenin and Trotsky this aspect of

Marxism becomes and degenerates into a legitimating ideology of domination. But the truth of the Enlightenment and of Marx's attitude to it has to be seen in a dialectical fashion as a mixed blessing. Significantly, of course, in criticising this aspect of Marx's work Clark employs the insights of and the ideas developed by the 'critical' Marxists. He draws out and emphasises the 'productivist' side of Marx, thus showing the undoubted affinities between Marxism and bourgeois ideology, and then criticises this perspective from the viewpoint of Marx's other, more Hegelian side. One side of Marx is used against the other — with good effect. I want to say something, however, to balance this portrait of Marx, without in any way wishing to deny the substance of Clark's critique.

The important thing about Hegel, Marx suggested, was that he was the first to conceive that culture, the self-genesis of humanity, was a process, and that mankind as a species-being was the outcome of people's interaction with nature. Taking over the concept of 'species-being' from Feuerbach, Marx thus gave it an entirely new content. Human beings, for Marx, were neither the creation of some spirit (whether this was seen in a religious or a cultural form), nor could they be defined only in terms of their self-consciousness, nor in terms of a passive relationship with the world, nor in terms of their ethical attributes. Rather what constituted the essential nature of humans for Marx was that they were not only natural beings, passionate and corporeal, but also human species-beings — creatures that confirm and manifest themselves both in their being and in their knowing. Clark's suggestion, therefore, that this implies, on the part of Marx, a purely 'naturalistic' or 'productivist' conception of humanity seems to me misleading. Indeed it is interesting that almost a hundred years before cultural anthropology, Marx was suggesting that culture could not be looked upon as something 'natural' or given, nor is the natural world itself directly given to human sensibility. For Marx, as for Hegel, the mutual interdependence of man as a historical being and nature was what was essential. Humans are both natural and social beings — in essence — and culture could not be divorced from nature. But Marx, again like Hegel, puts a focal emphasis on the interactional aspect, on human labour as a social activity, mediating between consciousness and nature.

In putting an emphasis on 'productive' relationships there is certainly the implication that Marx is offering a 'Promethean' ethic, the notion that humans create themselves in opposition to and through the control and domination of nature. There is thus the suggestion that it expresses the 'arrogance' of humanism and the Baconian 'man against nature' perspective. Baudrillard has indeed argued that Marx never in fact

disengaged himself from the dialectic and moral philosophy of the Enlightenment. Clark persuasively argues this perspective, suggesting that Marx remained largely uncritical of the industrial system, of technology and the project of the human domination of nature. This is to some degree true, and it is a criticism that could be equally levelled at anarchists like Bakunin and Kropotkin. But such an approach tends to ignore entirely the fact that Marx, following Hegel, attempted to integrate into his theory the perceptions and values articulated by the romantics like Schiller and Goethe. Marx's whole critique of 'capitalism', along with the early concept of 'alienation', is based on the notion that 'productivity' should be the free and creative activity of the human subject. Marx's model of human activity was artistic as well as economic, and the human relationship with nature that he posited was symbiotic and aesthetic as well as instrumental. In stressing the need to overcome the alienation between spirit (human culture) and nature, both Hegel and Marx anticipated the main premises of the ecological movement that emerged a century later (about which I wrote on 'Changing Views of Nature' in *The Ecologist* in November 1981).

As to whether Marx was a crude materialist advocating a form of techno-economic determinism — as Clark suggests — this too I think is problematic. Marx had a dialectical and realist conception of science, and though he certainly believed in the methodological unity of the sciences he was highly critical of the idea that social life was explicable in terms of natural or mechanical laws, as the Social Darwinists were inclined to hold. He certainly believed that 'the way people live conditions the way they think' (as Claude Levi-Strauss described the basic Marxist premise), but the relationship between consciousness and being for Marx was dialectical and complex. It is of interest that Clark follows the kind of cultural idealism suggested by Marshall Sahlins in his critique of Marxism, but like Clark himself Sahlins misleadingly interprets Marx as a crude materialist — the kind of materialism suggested by eighteenth-century philosophers and such anthropologists as Malinowski and Marvin Harris. But as Maurice Bloch argued in *Marxism and Anthropology* (1983), this is not Marxism; for Marx above all was aware of the historical nature of such concepts as property and labour. Moreover, it is important to stress that Marx, unlike some of his critics, did not conflate consciousness and ideology, nor did he see 'ideas' and 'communication' as simply 'derivatives'. As G. D. H. Cole suggested long ago (in his preface to the Everyman edition of *Capital*), 'ideas' and 'mind' are a part of what Marx conceived of as the 'material' conditions of life. Following Hegel, Marx was suggesting a kind of approach that was both historical and structural, and implied a dialectical form of materialism that simply dissolved the old antithesis

between consciousness and nature, mind and matter. Marx had learnt his lessons well from 'good old Hegel'.

In realising this, and in his advocacy of a neo-Hegelian perspective, Bookchin is a good deal more sympathetic to the progressive elements that are inherent in the Hegelian Marxist tradition than Clark appears to be. Moreover, this kind of ecological or processual analysis is not quite as 'new' as Clark, along with such writers as Henryk Skolimowski and Frijthof Capra, appear to think it is; for criticisms of mechanistic philosophy and the Promethean ethic have a long history. It begins with the young Hegel's harsh critique of the Judaeo-Christian tradition (written when he was in his twenties) and is lucidly outlined in the 'holistic' philosophies of A. N. Whitehead and Jan Smuts. What is important about Bookchin is not that he presents a new 'breakthrough' in social theory, but that he explicitly links a 'naturalistic' version of the ecological and holistic framework derived from Hegel with anarchist political theory. And he does so with an acute awareness that this 'naturalistic' monism — the view that nature is an organic totality in the process of self-development — is qualitatively different from the organic or cosmological world-view of pre-literate communities. For this reason, Bookchin never lapses into a romantic idealisation of tribal peoples, though sympathetic to the integrity of their world-view and communal life. Like Bookchin, however, Clark usefully incorporates anthropological knowledge into his work, and presents many interesting insights in developing his own version of a social ecological perspective. It is interesting to note in this context the contrasting attitudes of anarchists and Marxists towards anthropology, for whereas anarchists follow Marx himself and Kropotkin in freely using the data and insights of anthropology, Marxists have generally taken a dismissive attitude towards the discipline, and Hindness and Hirst actually wrote a text on *Pre-capitalist Modes of Production* that is significant in by-passing most of its subject-matter.

The problem of Marxism therefore has less to do with Marx's dialectical philosophy, even though this does have a 'productivist' or instrumental strain within it, than with his authoritarian politics. In his interesting discussion of the relationship between Marx and Bakunin, Clark himself seems to accept this distinction, for he rightly argues that Bakunin himself accepted the basic elements of Marx's social theory — his method of dialectical analysis and his critique of ideology. Indeed in his own critique of Foucault's concept of power, Clark largely follows the analysis of the 'critical' Marxists in seeing instrumental reason — the Promethean ethic — as a form of ideology, and an 'expression' of bourgeois society. His analysis of power seems to me to be eminently Marxist, for Marx, as his analysis of 'capital' indicated, never saw

power — theoretically — as overt or transparent, even though the political strategies he proclaimed may well give the impression that he was oblivious to the cultural and psychological dimension of power. Clark's critique of Marx's political theory therefore has more substance, for he cogently outlines the major problems of Marx's revolutionary strategy, all of which he sees as intrinsically linked to his Promethean philosophy. Clark makes three essential criticisms, clearly reinstating the anarchist critique of Marxism.

First, Marx shared with the capitalists a deep commitment to the technological values of industrialism, and thus put a focal emphasis on high technology, industrial development, centralised planning and management. Clark rightly argues that both on ecological grounds and in terms of human freedom and well-being, this pattern of development needs to be challenged and replaced by one which points 'to the necessity of decentralisation, diversity in natural and social systems, human-scale technology, and an end to the exploitation of nature'.

Second, Clark suggests that Marx made a 'fetishism of the working class', both in restricting the notion of domination and exploitation to the economic sphere, and in seeing the industrial proletariat as the only agency of social transformation. This again is not implied in the Hegelian perspective that Marx imbibed, for he specifically defines communism not as a form of human society, the 'goal' as it were of human development (otherwise the dialectic would stop), but rather as the 'necessary form and dynamic principle of the immediate future'. But he went on to make the unnecessary assumption that the proletariat alone was the revolutionary subject, the representative of this principle. Clark argues against this, suggesting that liberation must involve a multi-dimensional programme, at once economic, political, psycho-social and cultural. It involves the 'struggle of the community against class society'. He notes, too, that in the many revolutionary upheavals of the present century it has been the peasantry who have taken an active political role, notwithstanding Marx's famous pronouncements on their alleged reactionary intent.

Third, consonant with his acceptance of the proletariat as the sole agent of social transformation, Marx saw the latter as not only involving a continuing degree of high technology and centralisation, but the transformation itself was seen as being initially generated by a 'seizure of power'. Following a long anarchist tradition, Clark argues to the contrary that the necessary transformation of society can only come about not by a 'seizure of power' but through its dissolution. As Bakunin had long ago suggested in his polemic with Marx — which Clark summarises in an excellent discussion — the revolutionary movement itself must be a microcosm of the new society, for 'liberty

can only be created by liberty'. Clark therefore argues in these essays that the transition to an anarchist society will come about not through some cataclysmic change involving either the 'capture' of the state or through the immediate destruction of complex social institutions, but rather through the conscious development of a kind of libertarian proto-culture and of patterns of social life that emphasise participation, decentralisation, self-management and cooperative modes of social interaction. Clark indicates that this kind of communitarian anarchism has a long history, and his suggestions discredit Miller's notion that anarchism has somehow lost its revolutionary impetus. Of course the world has changed since Bakunin's time, and the experiences of two world wars, the rise of Fascism and the nuclear state, and the 'Russian tragedy' have made anarchists realise only too well the terrifying nature of the social reality they confront. They certainly do not have the benign optimism of an immediate social revolution that sustained nineteenth-century revolutionaries; but then neither have contemporary anarchists like Bookchin, Chomsky and Clark collapsed into nihilism, millennialism, cynicism or resignation. They have rather pointed to a future that is not only possible but, given the present crisis (as Clark stresses), an absolute imperative for the continued well-being of humankind.

In his brief discussions of anarchist movements, Clark suggests that the most revolutionary 'moments' have always happened 'during accidental interludes in which a power vacuum occurred'. This view seems to be echoed by Miller, who also (rather reluctantly) writes of anarchists that 'on those few occasions when they have been given a chance to apply their ideas constructively, they have had some unexpected successes'. But whereas Clark sees these 'moments' as achievements in voluntary organisation and indicators of what is possible, Miller sees them as failures — yet paradoxically, while noting that these experiments (in Spain and Ukraine) were defeated by state repression, he somehow has the idea that their failure is due to a lack of state institutions! Anarchist cooperatives are bound to fail, Miller seems to suggest, because of lack of popular support and state intervention; but they couldn't exist anyway without centralised institutions. We just can't win. Miller seems oblivious of the fact that long distant trading networks have existed throughout history, even among nomadic hunter-gatherers, without the intervention of state controls. But interestingly, in his critique of anarcho-capitalism Miller rightly argues that capitalism (as we know it) could not exist without the support of the state — and, as we know from history, capitalism originated only because it was accompanied by a degree of military violence, repression and the dislocation of tribal and peasant communities that is without

parallel. Clark hints at a similar perspective, but he nowhere develops a sustained critique of anarcho-capitalism — which is a pity.

★ ★ ★

So *The Anarchist Moment* is an important attempt to unify anarchism with a social ecological perspective — a synthesis initiated by Bookchin and seemingly suggested long ago by the Chinese sage Lao-tse (for, as Clark indicates in another interesting essay, Lao-tse was indeed the first anarchist theorist — as I argued myself in *Freedom* in 1981). Rather than being merely (as Miller contends) an aspect of the 'new left', a 'gesture of protest' that simply advocates alternative life-styles, contemporary anarchism is (as Clark shows) a part of a living tradition, a tradition that offers both a critique of all forms of domination and a political programme that links it in an authentic fashion to other social movements like feminism and ecology. Anarchism provides, as he writes, 'both a strategy for human liberation and a plan for avoiding global ecological catastrophe'.

The book will no doubt be read with profit by many people who are sympathetic to anarchism. Whether it will ever touch the hearts and minds of the many disciples of Marx remains to be seen. For Marxists have never taken the anarchist critique of their productivist and authoritarian tendencies seriously. Their response has ever been abrupt and dismissive. 'Petit bourgeois' and 'utopian' are their main epithets. Miller's *Anarchism*, in spite of its limitations, at least takes a serious look at anarchism as a political theory, and argues a case. But Marxists? Paul Thomas' study *Karl Marx and the Anarchists* (1980), as Miller notes, never addresses itself to the anarchist critique of Marx; and Perry Anderson's seminal books on contemporary Marxism — *Considerations on Western Marxism* (1976) and *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (1983) — while reviewing a plethora of influences on Marxist theory, show a cavalier disregard for anarchism; it is never mentioned. Wallerstein follows the same tendency in his discussion of anti-systemic movements. It is as if they are 'kidding' themselves, by omission, that as a serious critique of Marxism anarchism doesn't exist. But it does, and John Clark presents this critique with cogency and insight.

Michael Duane

Anarchism and Nature: 1

An anarchist is, in essence, one who follows his own inclinations as much as possible. Whether he will find this easy will depend on circumstances and the extent that he wants to live a social life. Most of us are anarchists in this direct sense. For much of the time we do what we like; perhaps only in the operant-conditioned world of B. F. Skinner's *Walden Two* can control be exercised over most people most of the time. It is when our anarchism moves from satisfying our personal desires and into the area of political action or persuasion that we begin to find more serious opposition or even physical violence from agents of the state.

The question that I have not seen addressed in the many articles written in the anarchist press is the one that lies at the centre. Why does anarchism, in the basic sense defined above, seem to be part of our nature? Why does it appear in every culture, however strenuous the efforts made to suppress it? Freud's formulation of the Id, the Ego and the Superego is the nearest we have got so far to accepting that the organism — the Id — will satisfy its needs against the restraints placed on it by society and by the psychological conditioning imposed in infancy and childhood. The whole of Freud's work is an exploration of the multitudinous ways in which the individual seeks to satisfy his needs, even when his own 'deepest convictions' assure him that they are impracticable or 'wicked'.

Proudhon spoke of an 'instinct' of sociality, Kropotkin saw anarchism as part of 'natural man', and Bakunin spoke of the 'law of sociability'. All three, therefore, assumed that anarchism was part of the very nature of man. More recently L. Susan Brown (*The Raven* 5) has challenged the assumption of a 'human nature' and the assumption 'that that nature is social'. In agreeing with her that to posit a 'human nature' as a fixed system that will inevitably result in consistently social behaviour is unrealistic in the face of history, I will, nevertheless, attempt to demonstrate that there are certain structures and potentialities in the physical make-up of human beings that, unless there are demonstrable countervailing factors, will result in their behaving in a social manner, and so consistently that the attribution of a 'human nature' is not unreasonable in normal discourse, though it may

not stand up to the requirements of either scientific or philosophical definition. In this sense I think that the intuition of Proudhon, Kropotkin and Bakunin was correct — even if we do not accept the absurdity of Proudhon's exclusion of women from society.

The concept 'human nature' makes sense only if it is seen as distinct from 'non-human natures', but Brown proposes that we 'abandon the notion of human nature entirely'. This leads her on to a discussion that gets lost in undefined abstractions such as 'existentialism', 'humanism', 'the significance of human destiny', and so on. I will assert, first, that because man has developed the capacity for speech he has a 'nature' that is quite different from that of even the highest apes; and, second, that because he is born without any of the features that make for individual survival in other species — camouflage, poison fangs, wings, armour, or agility — and would die within days, if not hours, unless fed and cherished by other humans, he is born with a 'need' to live socially and to cherish his fellows. Other species, of course, display 'altruistic' behaviour which serves to help their survival, but the altruism does not extend much beyond the nest, the ant-hill or the herd.

All mammals' brains have an associative cortex as an outgrowth of the sensorimotor cortex. Donald Hebb formulated the 'A/S ratio' — the proportion of the associative to the sensorimotor cortex — as an index of the position of the mammal on the evolutionary scale. Man has a higher A/S ratio than any other mammal, even the higher apes. It is the peculiar function of the associative cortex to generate, in the words of Susanne Langer, 'a fountain of symbols' for the sensory activity available to consciousness and so to form the basis of language. Other mammals may be taught to respond to language but, despite the work of the Gardiners and others in teaching the use of American Sign Language for the Deaf to chimpanzees, little evidence has yet appeared that they can use language as humans do. It is tempting to suggest that other creatures do not develop the capacity for language because they do not need it to survive.

Further, not only do humans possess a capacity for language, but they are conditioned for at least two months before birth to the sound of the mother's voice, so that, when they have undergone the potentially traumatic experience of birth or the change from being a parasite to living as an independent breather, the voice of the mother enables the new-born to enter what William James called 'the buzzing, blooming confusion' of a different form of life. Without this prenatal experience of language, as in children of dumb mothers or in children born congenitally deaf, these children remain severely handicapped throughout life unless special measures are taken to teach them by other — visual or tactile — forms of language.

'The gift of speech and a well-ordered language are characteristic of every known group of human beings.' So wrote Edward Sapir in the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (1933); and he went on to elaborate the multiple and subtle ways in which speech is not only an index of the individual personality but is the most powerful bond between members of the same family, village, or country. A human being without speech (whatever form that takes) is inconceivable. The complex variability of tone, pitch, vocabulary, structure and emphasis make it possible for us to identify an unseen friend or acquaintance in an instant. Without speech and language we could not live beyond the sensory input and somatic function. Without speech there could be no long-term memory and no culture: no concept that could be communicated to others or to succeeding generations.

These two features of humanity — its unusual vulnerability and its power to communicate — provide the basis for sociality. Because the infant is totally helpless, it survives only through the care it receives, and because it receives that care for a long time and from a small group, it builds and is built into bonds of affection and concern that centre first in the family and then gradually extend to the village and outwards. Human love and community are created by the need to survive. In that sense it is part of our human nature, and to that extent inescapable.

Anarchism is the expression of human love and community that does not seek to confine the behaviour of the individual to forms laid down by others acting without his consent. It is not helpful to use the word 'instinct', since we now see that forms of behaviour result from a complex of innate elements, maturational factors, and learned skills. What we do recognise is the astonishing similarity of behaviour in the relations between the new-born and the parents in all cultures, and the extremes to which the parents and others will go in order to ensure the survival and welfare of the young. On the other hand, where the power of government is far removed from the impact of its dictates on particular parents and children, as in modern industrial societies, then it may be more difficult to perceive the operation of love and community. Modern sociology, from Durkheim onwards, is full of examples of the effects of the assumption that human beings are only more complicated pieces of machinery or animals that with suitable training will work uncomplainingly for as long as is required.

The almost infinite variability of personality that gives rise to the desire for freedom to express that individuality to the full arises, first, because the human brain has something like ten to the power of twelve cells, with an unimaginably larger number of interconnections; second, because no two humans occupy the same spot in space and therefore hear, see and feel in ways that are different from one another, however

slight the differences; third, because many experiences, especially in childhood, are undergone in different emotional contexts that give important differences to the meanings of those experiences for the child; and fourth, because social intercourse with people of different personalities, culture, values and skills leads to constant reinterpretation and reevaluation of past experience, so that each of us is frequently having to reintegrate our life experience up to that point.

We are all anarchists, but whether we leave it at the simple level of following our inclinations and making life more comfortable for ourselves, or whether we press our thinking to the point of actively seeking to change our environment will depend partly on the image of self that we have constructed and partly on the level of tolerance we experience from those around us.

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David Morland

Anarchism and Nature: 2

L. Susan Brown (*The Raven* 5) attempts to provide an ethical basis for anarchism that doesn't rely on 'outmoded notions about human nature'. Does she mean that modern conceptions of human nature are necessarily better than nineteenth-century ones? I suggest that a proper explanation involves a rather longer excursion through twentieth-century existentialism.

First, we should remember that Sartre's existentialism has its roots in earlier Hegelianism — a characteristic which Bakunin also shares, but which Brown chooses to ignore. However, I want not so much to take Brown to task for the interpretations in her anarchist case studies, as to contend that it is not by abandoning 'outmoded notions' of human nature, but by returning to and developing past conceptions of human nature that we may discover an ethical foundation for anarchism.

The error of Brown's argument is made clear in her account of what she takes to be Proudhon's self-contradiction. She begins her analysis of Proudhon by praising his recognition of 'the historical socialness of human beings', of the fact that man is 'inherently social', a consequence of the social nature of production. She alleges that there is a contradiction when Proudhon introduces a 'social instinct that for ever binds humanity together'. Whatever the merits or demerits of Proudhon's position, it is not at all obvious that it necessarily involves a contradiction. The imagined contradiction is reinforced by the use of a rigid terminology. Of course Proudhon would contradict himself if he used such terms as 'fixed' and 'variable' in a rigid way, but he does not. Brown regards the so-called 'fixed' and 'variable' elements of human nature as absolutely opposed and clearly incompatible. But those traits of human nature which are considered to be 'fixed' are those which any society has to be able to satisfy and provide for, and which in the process of satisfaction supply the conditions that make man malleable.

Brown argues that in positing a theory of human nature anarchists display an internal inconsistency; for in delineating the aspects of human societies which 'act against' or 'negate' the essential nature of human beings, so anarchists contradict their very theory of human nature. There is indeed a problem here which anarchists must face. For if mankind is taken to be naturally social, then why does it permit its

own nature to be negated or subdued by such repressive institutions as the church and the state? This dilemma has been used to good effect by David Miller in *Anarchism* (1984). Anarchists, he says, 'are caught in a trap: the assumptions that they need to make their ideals plausible at the same time make it impossible to understand what has happened already and what is now happening'. Yet, rather than developing an account of historical progress as a means of escape, as anarchists have often done, they should be denying that the trap exists at all. This can be achieved by advancing a theory of human nature which is not 'negated' by events from either the past or the present. By pursuing this line anarchists can obviate many difficult questions concerning the revolutionary role that anarchists wish to play. As Miller points out, if anarchists portray mankind as involved in a process of historical progression, if mankind is regarded as moving towards a true fulfilment of human nature, then to what role are revolutionaries relegated — that of midwife? I don't suggest that these questions or problems are insurmountable, but rather than they may be avoided in a way that will allow us to deny the negation of human nature.

Instead of falling victim to such traps, Brown wishes to 'argue against any inherent nature to humanity at all, and propose that we are that which we make of ourselves'. I contend that it is perfectly possible to offer the argument that we are what we make ourselves to be, yet still work from a theory of human nature. There is no need to reject human nature, no need to expose ourselves to the dangers which accompany such a position. For if social, political and economic thought floats free of any conception of human nature, many critics will not only deliver an attack on anarchism all the more severe for the absence of this feature, but will also support such an attack with the most readily available theory of human nature that they can find.

Unlike Brown, I believe that it is necessary and possible to reconcile human nature with anarchism. I hold that free will and the nature of humanity are not incompatible concepts, and that it is because of human nature that free will is to be regarded as highly as it is. But I agree with Brown that anarchism is to do with choice and is possible because human beings have a capacity known as free will, and that existentialism is therefore capable of providing an ethical foundation for anarchism. Indeed anarchism and human nature may be quite comfortably reconciled within an existentialist framework. Human nature is about the capacity for choice, for interpretation and for judgement, and hence for the need for freedom. It is here that existentialism may provide anarchism with an ethical basis. If there is one great truth of existentialism, it is that human beings have to choose.

Yet if we don't have a notion of human nature to make that choice, we will fall into the hands of our enemies.

I want not to offer a comprehensive critique of existentialism, but rather to allude to the problems one might face in simply adopting existentialism at the cost of a theory of human nature. If we merely repudiate any theory of human nature, as existentialism purportedly does and as Brown suggests we should, then the problem remains of how to ensure that humanity chooses anarchism in preference to any alternative system.

The difficulties stem from the kind of argument used by Sartre. The general message of existentialism in his doctrine is that, in establishing which projects and enterprises are possible, man comes to realise precisely because of his possibilities that nothing can compel him to adopt a specific project or particular line of conduct. Man is not subject to external determination; on the contrary, his conduct will emanate from a self which he is not yet. Consciousness, being empty of all content, says Sartre, 'confronts its past and future as facing a self which it is in the mode of not being'. The lineament of freedom is the recurrent obligation to remake the self.

Since there is no determination from the objective world forcing man to pursue a particular line of conduct, so there are no stimuli that act on man's mind; there is no psychological determinism, for that would deny the transcendence of human reality which emerges 'in anguish beyond its own essence'. A man's judgement is nothing other than the transcendent act of man as a free being; man is able to apprehend himself as the original source of his possibility, and has consciousness of his freedom. Thus, for the existentialist, a man's choices are his own free product; and hence the individual creates a self as a consequence of his or her choices. Man's character, personality and nature (how others see us) are dependent on the choices he makes. The individual's character is not given, but arises out of the means by which he chooses to relate to the world. Man's essence and nature, which exist only in the past — for man is separated from his essence by nothingness — has no influence over his present, for man is obliged constantly to remake himself.

The problematic result of all this is the proposition that man makes himself by his choice of morality, that man is the being by whom values exist. Everything is up for grabs — morality, society, perhaps even human life itself. That this is impossible may be seen by looking at what existentialism does not do: it fails to take account of two of the most important influences on human nature — evolution, and culture.

That existentialism tends to ignore evolution is no doubt largely due to the fact that evolutionary theory makes a mockery of the first

principle of existentialism — that existence precedes essence. The importance of evolutionary theory lies in its emphasis that the human species may not be considered as being separate from other species and that human nature cannot be divorced from animal nature. As Kant noted, man is a being affected by sensibility, unable to avoid the feelings of his needs and inclinations. Man is not a being without determination, for he carries with him an evolutionary baggage that is part and parcel of his very nature. Neither man nor society can make man from scratch. Unlike existentialism, evolutionism pays heed to the fact that man is only one species among many, that he is not born as a fully rational educated adult, and that he has limited needs and possibilities.

Against both Kant and existentialism, I hold that morality should be based on human nature. Morality is not about a system of formal rules, nor is it merely to do with choice. Sartre is right to criticise Kant's idea that there can be an ethical formula or equation to which individuals may appeal; but Sartre is wrong to claim that there is nothing within us to serve as a guide for action.

The problem is that, if we wish to avoid the free-for-all of existentialism, we have to ground morality on something solid. How solid is human nature? In the light of evolution, surely, it is more solid than it might at first seem. But morality will only make sense within an evolutionary perspective if emotion and reason work together. They both play a part in our motivation, and emotional stability is as essential to our survival as physical health. Rational intelligence is not something neutral and divorced from our aims, but something which has arisen in our evolutionary development as an adaptation both to the external objective world and to our internal emotional world. Reason is involved in the process by which we choose our desires, which follow what we value most. Both reason and emotion are involved in our search for values, both thought and feeling contribute to the construction of morality.

But this line of argument raises two possibilities. The first is that, if human reason and human emotion, our thought and our feeling, are both involved in our make-up, then human nature is indeed the foundation for human morality. The second is that, since each of us participates in this process, then each of us is the receptacle of this evolutionary process, that the individual (*homo sapiens*, or thinking human) is the representative of the human species (*Homo sapiens*). Every person has the capacity to arrive at a set of preferences, which may — indeed must — differ between people. If man were situated within a context of anarchy, the result might be either the institution of a society which can embody a plurality of values without a breakdown

of social relations, or a permeative culture within which individuals come to accept that freedom has paramount importance.

Human nature is by its very nature malleable, but malleability is not its only feature. There are a certain number of inherent needs which must be satisfied for the proper development of physical and emotional well-being. Man can be moulded into many shapes, but not into an infinite variety of shapes. The capacity for language, which seems to be uniquely human (although there are obvious origins in our animal background), involves an enormous number of different languages, yet they all have a common structure. The same is true at all levels of human culture, which is the way human nature is mediated in various human societies. There is no contradiction between human nature and human culture, any more than between the human individual and the human species. It is impossible to imagine a human individual outside society, or a human nature outside culture.

So man is part of nature and has his own nature; but he has the capacity to rise above nature and his nature, to think and even to act freely. Man develops norms of culture and morality, but is free to conform to or to dissent from them. Once society has satisfied the inherent needs of the individual, he can begin to live freely. But if society fails to satisfy the needs of its members, if a culture prevents the rational or emotional development of our natural talents, then individuals may either conform in a way which threatens their health or dissent in a way which threatens the health of the group.

Man can make himself, but only according to the nature which he has inherited from the past and the culture which surrounds him in the present. If anarchy is to work, it must recognise both the minimum and the maximum limits of our essence and our existence, and take account of what we really are.



Guess who?

. . . England remains hopeless. Certainly those who call themselves Anarchists here are beyond redemption. Nothing but petty quarrels & gossip, nothing but small personal vanities, no general revolutionary feeling or understanding. Even the younger ones who came to us are miserable material. One of them, whom incidentally I induced to join the Anarchist Syndicalist Union, a poor still-born child at best, has already developed into the worst kind of mischief maker you can imagine. He actually wrote a pasquill against me to the National Committee charging me with having appropriated the funds I collected in my campaign, charging the few of us, Sonia Edelman, Barr & one or two others with dictatorship. Imagine writing such rubbish!

From a letter of Emma Goldman to Rudolf Rocker, 19 November 1937

(International Institute of Social History,
Rudolf Rocker Collection, 107)



Editorial note

We much regret the late appearance of this issue, which has been caused by a number of problems. The next issue, which is being produced by another collective, will appear very soon. We hope that regular publication will then be resumed and maintained.

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7

PETER MARSHALL
William Blake: Visionary Anarchist

William Blake (1757-1827) was a poet, painter, engraver and visionary. Considered eccentric, if not mad, in his own day, he now appears as a key figure in English Romanticism. He listened to 'Messengers from Heaven' but he has his feet firmly on the ground and was involved in the central issues of his revolutionary age. Throughout his life he remained a 'Liberty Boy', looking forward to a time when everyone would become priest and king in their own home, exercise the 'Divine Arts of Imagination', and see that 'everything that lives is Holy'.

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