

= From Bakunin to Lacan =

From Bakunin to Lacan : Anti @-@ Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power is a book on political philosophy by Saul Newman , published in 2001 . It investigates the essential characteristics of anarchist theory , which holds that government and hierarchy are undesirable forms of social organisation . Newman seeks to move beyond the limitations these characteristics impose on classical anarchism by using concepts from post @-@ structuralist thought .

By applying post @-@ structuralist theory to anarchism , Newman presents an account of post @-@ anarchism . His post @-@ anarchism is more substantive than that of earlier thinkers , and has influenced later approaches to the philosophy . Released in a climate of an anarchist movement hostile to postmodern philosophy , From Bakunin to Lacan was criticised for its poor understanding of and engagement with contemporary anarchism .

= = Background = =

The book was released in the context of the dispute in the newly resurgent anarchist movement between critics of civilisation (primarily anarcho @-@ primitivists exemplified by John Zerzan) and its supporters (notably Murray Bookchin) . Although sharply disagreeing on the merits of civilisation , technology and language , both Zerzan and Bookchin derided postmodernism as disempowering the individual and reinforcing the existing order . Another significant factor in the intellectual climate of the book 's release was the rediscovery in the 1990s of anarchist theory within academia .

Although foundational work had been done on the philosophy of postanarchism by radical theorists such as Andrew Koch and Todd May , From Bakunin to Lacan introduced a slightly different and more substantive formulation of the theory .

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Philosophy professor Todd May asserts that the overall purpose of the book is " to offer a critique of the way power , and specifically political power , is commonly conceived " . Newman persistently questions how anarchism can refrain from reproducing the forms of oppression that it strives to overcome .

Newman incorporates concepts from post @-@ structuralist thought such as post @-@ humanism and anti @-@ essentialism into classical anarchism . Unlike May , whose post @-@ anarchism is a combination of the two , Newman attempts to move beyond both anarchism and post @-@ structuralism . He proposes that " by using the poststructuralist critique one can theorize the possibility of political resistance without essentialist guarantees : a politics of postanarchism ? by incorporating the moral principles of anarchism with the postructuralist critique of essentialism , it may be possible to arrive at an ethically workable , politically valid , and genuinely democratic notion of resistance to domination " .

The book uses the work of French philosophers Michel Foucault , Gilles Deleuze , Félix Guattari , and Jacques Derrida as well as classical anarchist thinkers such as Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin , recognizing " proto @-@ poststructuralist " Max Stirner as an important forerunner of postanarchist thought . Newman focuses particularly on the work of Deleuze , Derrida , and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan .

= = Reception = =

Aimed at an academic rather than anarchist audience , the book was criticised in Anarchy : A Journal of Desire Armed # 57 for its unsophisticated , cursory understanding of and engagement with anarchist theory . While praising that section of the book on post @-@ structuralist philosophers , reviewer sasha k claimed that " Newman uses Kropotkin and Bakunin as his stand @-@ ins for anarchism in general , and , in turn , only a few quotes from each to make his case " . He questioned whether Newman 's attribution of an essentialist conception of human nature to

modern anarchists was accurate , concluding that had the book taken " a less one @-@ dimensional view of anarchism " , it would have to give up " most of what makes postanarchism post @-@ anarchism .

New Formulation reviewer Michael Glavin cited Newman 's ignorance of the initiative of anarchists to decentralize power and of anarchist forms of organisation such as trade unions , federations and affinity groups as evidence that he failed to understand power and wrongly conflated it with domination .

Since the publication of From Bakunin to Lacan in 2001 , there have been several attempts to develop an account of postanarchism that , while retaining many of Newman 's specific conceptions of the anarchistic qualities of radical post @-@ structuralist thought , would take postanarchist theory beyond academic discourse and into broader and more diverse environments , as the originator of postanarchism , Hakim Bey , had intended .