Radical ideologies today
Marxism and anarchism

Christoph Lichtenberg, Alex Khasnabish, Chris Parsons, Eva Curry

This spring, The Platypus Affiliated Society hosted a series of panels entitled "Radical ideologies today: Marxism and anarchism" in New York, Frankfurt, Halifax, Thessaloniki, and Chicago.

The panel description reads: "It seems that there are still only two radical ideologies: Marxism and anarchism. They emerged out of the same crucible—the Industrial Revolution, the unsuccessful revolutions of 1848 and 1871, a weak liberalism, the centralization of state power, the rise of the workers movement, and the promise of socialism. They are the revolutionary heritage, and all significant radical upsurges of the last 150 years have returned to mine their meaning for the current situation. In this respect, our moment seems no different.

There are a few different ways these ideologies have been taken up. Recent worldwide square occupations reflect one pattern: a version of Marxist theory—understood as a political-economic critique of capitalism—is used to comprehend the world, while anarchist practice—understood as an anti-hierarchical principle that insists revolution must begin now—is used to organize, in order to change it. Some resist this combination, claiming that Marxism rejects anti-statist adventurism, and call for a strategic reorganization of the working class to resist austerity, and perhaps push forward a "New New Deal". This view remains wedded to a supposedly practical welfarist social democracy, which strengthens the state and manages capital. There is a good deal of hand waving in both these orientations with regard to politics, tactics, and the end goal. Finally, there have been attempts to leave the grounds of these theories entirely—but these often seem either to land right back in one of the camps or to remain marginal.

To act today we seek to draw up the balance sheet of the 20th century. The historical experiences concentrated in these ideas must be unfurled if they are to serve as compass points. In what ways does the return of these ideologies represent an authentic engagement and in what ways the return of a ghost? Where have the battles left us? What forms do we have for meeting, theoretically and practically, the problems of our present?"

What follows is an edited transcript of the conversation that PAS-Halifax hosted on February 1, 2014, at University of King's College.

A full recording of each of the events held in this series can be found at <http://platypus1917.org/marxism-and-anarchism/>.

Christoph Lichtenberg: When I think of Marxism and anarchism, I think of two tendencies within the workers' movement, both of which see themselves as revolutionary, as opposed to the tendency that is known as Social Democracy, which would work through reforms. I think of Marxism as interchangeable with Leninism or Trotsykism. I do not associate it with Maoism or Stalinism. I think of anarchism in its best representation as exemplified by people like Bakunin, Kropotkin, or anacho-syndicalism. There are some commonalities between the two tendencies. I just want to highlight three of them: I think Marxism and anarchism agree on the need for the liberation of humanity through the destruction of capitalism. I also think that we agree on the fact that there is a class struggle going on between the exploiters and the exploited. And finally, I think we agree on the need to destroy the existing, oppressive, capitalist state structure. What happens after that is where we diverge.

The conflict really began with the creation of the alliance with Social Democracy by Bakunin and his followers, and what it meant is that they maintained a somewhat secret organization within the First International and started to publish articles that were critical of Marx. There was a lot of going back and forth over organizational matters, but, as with every organizational dispute, at the heart of it is really politics. The difference in politics between Marxists and anarchists really came to the fore at the 1872 Congress of the First International in The Hague, when there was a big debate between the Bakunin faction and the Marx followers about the role of the state in the transformation towards socialism. The Marxists argued that there was a role of the state in the transformation towards of socialism while followers of Bakunin insisted that the state should immediately be replaced by self-governing workplaces and communes. The Bakunin faction lost that debate and were expelled from the First International for maintaining their secret organization.

Around 1880, Kropotkin and other Russian revolutionaries announced the need for a permanent revolt through word, gun, and dynamite. This set the anarchists, particularly in Russia, on the course of anarchist terrorism, which removed them from the masses and isolated them.

The October Revolution in 1917 is the key event to understanding revolution. The Second International collapsed in 1914 at the outbreak of the First World War because the different sections of the International ended up supporting their own governments' war efforts. So rather than being internationalists, they sided with their own national governments, which Lenin, the Russian revolutionary who led the Bolsheviks, identified as a complete betrayal of the spirit of socialism. The main thing he learned from the collapse of the Second International was the need for revolutionaries to set up a separate organization from the reformists—the need for a vanguard party.

The Bolsheviks built a party that was democratic centralist. That meant there was free discussion within the organization; there was democratic debate and a vote taken. But once a decision was made, it was binding on all members to carry it out whether they originally agreed with it or not. This was for the purpose of bringing about a social revolution.

The Bolsheviks distinguished themselves from other tendencies because they told the masses the truth, whether that was popular at the time or not. They would not waver. They told the truth about the Tsar, bourgeois democracy, and the war. This allowed them to gain the confidence of the workers, which was reflected by their majority in the Soviets in Moscow and Petrograd—the Soviets being workers' assemblies or workers' councils where workers and soldiers would meet and discuss how to proceed. They carried out the October Revolution in 1917 and cleared the weak government with very little resistance.

Anarchists will say it is bad to set up the state as the Soviets did, that it will renew oppression. But the state exists as long as class divisions exist, as long as people are divided into different classes in society. Fundamentally you have the choice of either a bourgeois state—the kind of state you have in Canada today, which serves the interests of the bourgeoisie, the wealthy, the rich and powerful—or you can establish, through a revolution, a workers' state that seeks to advance their interests and protect the new society from counterattacks by the old ruling class. I am a communist, and as such I would like to see the end of the state. But that can only happen when the class divisions have been eliminated and when generalized want is eliminated, and in order to get there we need a substantial development of the means of production. It is not a moral question but one that is grounded in economic realities.

In 1936 a Popular Front government was elected in Spain. This scared the shit out of the bourgeoisie and the land owners. General Franco tried to seize power in order to protect their interests. The workers responded in heroic battles to defend the revolution. The anarcho-syndicalist Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) was powerful and dominated economic life. Here is what I think the tragic lesson was: The CNT *de facto* held power in Spain through the workers' committees, but because they were anarchists they refused to assume power. They did not want to become rulers of society; they didn't want to run the state because that was in conflict with their beliefs. So what happened? The old bourgeoisie continued to run the state when in reality they had nearly been defeated. The CNT, through their anarchist morals, basically handed the power back to the bourgeoisie. That is terrible and a tragedy. The CNT could have pushed forward, but because they tried to adhere to the anarchist principles, they missed a huge opportunity. They then ended up in joint coalitions with the Communist Party of the Stalinists and bourgeois parties. They continued to work with them and wage a war against Franco, which was eventually lost. And again, the reason why it was lost was because the anarchists maintained an alliance with the bourgeoisie in the fight against Franco, and because they didn't want to scare away their partners, they did not advocate a social revolution. But the need for social revolution was there. This lesson was one of the reasons why I moved from being an anarchist to becoming a Marxist. Once I had investigated that issue, I began to understand that there is something wrong with the theory of anarchism as it was then translated into practice.

Alex Khasnabish: I'd like to first start off by saying that the description for today's panel is wonderful, provocative, and, from my perspective, a little bit wrong. I think that the premise that Marxism and anarchism are the only significant radical ideologies today is a false position to occupy, and I think it's steeped in the Western, modern assumption about what the notion of revolution actually means and how it needs to unfold. It's also steeped in a certain notion of who the appropriate subject of revolution is. Although it's certainly unfair to paint many of the people who identify with either of these traditions today as espousing this, it is steeped in this view of a fairly white-supremacist, cis-normative, macho, male, working class subject. This is a problem for all kinds of reasons because oppression and exploitation do not manifest only in the fairly privileged sector of the working class. This doesn't mean, of course, that anarchism and Marxism aren't important globe-spanning ideologies. In fact they are and continue to be important today. But it means that when we focus on them so exclusively we tend to miss many other lights in that constellation too.

As I was preparing for this panel, I was re-reading a piece by Andrew Flood called "The Nostalgic Left".[1] Flood talks about our desire to recuperate a time when things seemed simpler, when there was a pure notion of revolution that we could seize onto, a pure notion of subjects. He is not just talking about Marxists, he is talking about anarchists too. He is talking about high-modernist revolutionary thinking here. This is a response in some ways to the focus on the intersectionality of oppression and exploitation—the complex ways in which systems of power and exploitation work, and how they operate on lines including class, but apart from class too.

I've noticed this nostalgia for a high-modern left, particularly recently in the wake of Occupy, the alter-globalization movement, and the Arab Spring. There is an impatience on the part of a lot of people, understandably, in the face of what they see as failures of those different struggles to seize power or to make revolutionary change. For many of us who observe these situations or are involved in them, we feel at times that political efficacy resides in those powerful, dominating, high-modern institutions like the party or the state, and

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Statement of purpose

Taking stock of the universe of positions and goals that constitutes leftist politics today, we are left with the disquieting suspicion that a deep commonality underlies the apparent variety: What exists today is built upon the desiccated remains of what was once possible.

In order to make sense of the present, we find it necessary to disentangle the vast accumulation of positions on the Left and to evaluate their saliency for the possible reconstitution of emancipatory politics in the present. Doing this implies a reconsideration of what is meant by the Left.

Our task begins from what we see as the general disenchantment with the present state of progressive politics. We feel that this disenchantment cannot be cast off by sheer will, by simply "carrying on the fight," but must be addressed and itself made an object of critique. Thus we begin with what immediately confronts us.

The *Platypus Review* is motivated by its sense that the Left is disoriented. We seek to be a forum among a variety of tendencies and approaches on the Left—not out of a concern with inclusion for its own sake, but rather to provoke disagreement and to open shared goals as sites of contestation. In this way, the recriminations and accusations arising from political disputes of the past may be harnessed to the project of clarifying the object of leftist critique.

The *Platypus Review* hopes to create and sustain a space for interrogating and clarifying positions and orientations currently represented on the Left, a space in which questions may be raised and discussions pursued that would not otherwise take place. As long as submissions exhibit a genuine commitment to this project, all kinds of content will be considered for publication.

Submission guidelines
Articles will typically range in length from 750–4,500 words, but longer pieces will be considered. Please send article submissions and inquiries about this project to: *review_editor@platypus1917.org*. All submissions should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

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In defense of anarchism

A response to Herb Gamberg

Wayne Price

HERB GAMBERG'S ESSAY "Anarchism Through Bakunin; A Marxist Assessment" (*Platypus Review* #64)[1] is not meant to be a balanced discussion of Michael Bakunin's strengths and weaknesses, nor is it a comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of anarchism and Marxism. It is a direct, full-throated attack on anarchism, using Bakunin as his focus in the name of Marxism.

In this, he makes a mistake. Important as Bakunin was in initiating the anarchist movement, it is easy to overstate his significance. Anarchism has a different relationship to its "founding fathers" than does Marxism. Marxists are, well, Marxists—also Leninists, Trotskyists, Maoists, etc. Anarchists are not Bakuninists, Kropotkinists, or Goldmanites. Anarchism is more of a collective product. For example, that Bakunin had a penchant for imagining elitist, secret conspiratorial societies is true enough, but this soon dropped out of the movement. At most today's anarchists are for democratic federations of revolutionary anarchists, which openly participate in broader movements (e.g., "neo-platformism" or "especifismo"). Similarly, Gamberg may criticize Bakunin for his lack of theoretical activity, but this could not be said of Peter Kropotkin or of current anarchists.

To respond to Gamberg, it is necessary to understand what he means by Marxism, his version of Marxism. This is clarified by a tossed-off line: "20th century revolutions that created proletarian states have moved neither to classlessness nor statelessness . . ." Note the plural; he is not just writing about the Soviet Union. He is referring to states that he regards as workers' ("proletarian") states. These were countries in which the working class did not play major parts in their revolutions (excepting the Soviet Union), and in which the workers (and the peasants) had no control over the government. In fact, the workers and peasants in these "proletarian states" were viciously exploited and oppressed, and even murdered by the millions. Such regimes are most accurately regarded as "state capitalist" rather than as any kind of "workers' state" (whatever that would mean in practice). A person who holds such views has a different moral perspective—a different class orientation—from supporters of anarchism or other types of libertarian communism. Whether this was Marx's view is another question. In my opinion, Marx expressed both libertarian-democratic and authoritarian views at different times and in different places.

The question of social values arise when Gamberg states (apparently as a negative) that,

> [A]t the center of Bakunin's anarchism [is] the engagement with underdogs against their more powerful oppressors . . . whenever there was an issue of oppression by one group by another with power . . . .

Yes, anarchists are on the side of the oppressed against oppression, in all cases and on all issues. This does not mean opposition to non-oppressive "authority," in the sense of expertise (e.g., a shoemaker or surgeon), as Gamberg misstates.

Nor does it mean rejecting the importance of the modern industrial working class. Gamberg correctly notes, "[W]ith Marx, Bakunin sometimes emphasized the centrality of class conflict . . . ." However, Gamberg blatantly contradicts himself on this point. He asserts, falsely, that Bakunin rejected workers' unions: "Bakunin . . . saw the very existence of such organizations [working class trade unions] as retrogressive." But a few paragraphs later, he writes, Bakunin " . . . accepted the necessity of trade union organization for the working class . . . He also saw trade unions as the potential building blocks of the future . . . ."

Oddly, Gamberg hardly mentions the one practical and strategic, difference between the anarchists and Marx, which arose at the end of the First International. While both were for labor unions, Marx wanted the International to push for workers' parties in all countries, to run in elections. "Marx hoped to transform the International's organizations in the various countries into political parties . . . ."[2] He stated that it might be possible for the workers to take over the state, peacefully and legally, in some cases (especially Britain). In 1880, Marx wrote an "Introduction to the Program of the French Workers' Party," which stated that with this party, "[U]niversal suffrage . . . will thus be transformed from the instrument of fraud that it has been up till now into an instrument of emancipation."[3] To French anarchists, this seemed to contradict the revolutionary lessons of the Paris Commune. With the benefit of hindsight, the history of the Marxist Social Democratic parties, and even of the recent Eurocommunist and Green parties, we see that the anarchists were right to reject electoralism.

Gamberg is wrong to claim that anarchists believe "the state is the source and origin of all evil," as distinct from the exploitative class system and other forms of oppression. But it is certainly true that anarchists are opposed to the state (as part of the overall system of domination) and reject the Marxist program of a "transitional" or "workers'" state. He correctly quotes Bakunin as predicting that a revolution constructs "a powerfully centralized revolutionary state [that] would inevitably result in military dictatorship and a new master."

This does not mean a rejection of all social coordination or defense against counterrevolutionary forces. As did later anarchists, Bakunin advocated a federation of workplace councils and neighborhood assemblies tied in with an armed people (a popular militia). This would be the self-organization of the workers and their allies. But he opposed a state; that is, he opposed a bureaucratic-military socially-alienated machine over and above the rest of the working population.[4]

Gamberg and others criticize anarchists for being decentralists and advocates of "small" organizations. He asserts, "Socialism…has always been fully committed to the advantages of larger, technically proficient, enterprise." This is to say, state socialists have accepted the capitalist development of technology and business as though it were the "rational" way to industrialize. The way capitalism develops technology and business forms is not for the most efficient way to produce useful products, but to produce and realize surplus value. This has resulted in a massive attack on the ecology and the destruction of human potentialities. A liberating socialist revolution will immediately begin to reorganize the technology to be amenable to worker self-management and ecological balance. This will include re-structuring the flow of work, the roles of order-givers and order-takers, the goals of production in terms of both final goods, by-products, and its effects upon the workers, and the size of units and sub-units of industry.

Gamberg claims the anarchist goal is to organize "a decentralized confederacy of small independent groups." In fact, anarchists accept centralization when necessary, and seek to balance localism and centralization (which is the point about being a "confederacy"). However, they seek to minimize centralization, which means power being in the hands of a few at a "center," while everyone else is out on the "periphery." Anarchists are not against all delegation and representation in big organizations, but seek to root society in directly democratic, face-to-face small groups in the neighborhood and at the socialized workplace.

Gamberg quotes Bakunin as warning that Marx's supposed "scientific socialist [State] will be the reign of scientific intelligence, the most aristocratic, despotic, arrogant, and elitist of all regimes." Gamberg misinterprets this to mean that Bakunin had a "profound suspicion for a scientific approach." Actually Bakunin greatly admired Marx's theoretical achievements in historical materialism and his critique of the political economy. Many anarchists have felt similarly. (I myself have written a book presenting Marx's economic theory from an anarchist perspective.[5]) But what the quotation from Bakunin really means is that if a party of intellectuals who think they have all the "scientific" answers should take over a state, it will become a new, collective, ruling class!

Bakunin and other anarchists repeatedly warned that if Marx's program was carried out, if a centralized state of self-confident theorists (whether advanced workers or "scientific" intellectuals) took over and nationalized and centralized the economy, the result would be state capitalism, with a new, collectivized, ruling class. Gamberg has such quotations scattered through his essay. And that is why, as he says, "the 20th century revolutions that created proletarian states have moved neither to classlessness nor to statelessness…." That is, for the extended periods that they existed before collapsing back into traditional capitalism.

It is interesting to contrast Gamberg's wholly negative view of Bakunin with that of the Marxist David Fernbach, in his "Introduction" to *Karl Marx, Political Writings*:

> "Bakunin, for all his errors, was a socialist revolutionary who aimed, like Marx…at the overthrow of the bourgeois state and the abolition of private property. Bakunin's abstentionism [from elections], however mistaken, reflected his almost instinctive fear of reformist diversion from the revolutionary goal, and of bureaucratic authority in the post-revolutionary society . . . But however correct Marx was…Bakunin's rejection of working class participation in the bourgeois political system, and his warning of the dangers involved in the proletarian seizure of political power, raise questions that Marx did not solve altogether satisfactorily. The former leads on to the question of reformism . . . ."[6]

Fernbach is a Marxist and not an anarchist, yet he sees positive aspects in the legacy of Bakunin. He implies that Marxists may even learn something from anarchism (as, I believe, anarchists can learn from aspects of Marxism). This is especially true when we consider that the "first wave" of Marxism ended in reformist, counterrevolutionary, and pro-imperialist social democracy and that the "second (Leninist) wave" of Marxism ended in totalitarian state capitalism—and then its collapse. I have yet to read a Marxist with a clear explana-

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the ideologies that accompany them. I'd like to problematize that—and that's what I am going to do going forward.

I think that the desire to return to great moments of history—and particularly the great men and great ideologies that are associated with those moments—is understandable but largely futile, and I think it obscures important pasts that lead us beyond that. Again, I would come back to this question: How do we conceptualize this thing we practice called revolution? What does that really mean in the realities of the people in their day-to-day existence? Does it mean, in the classic political science definition, a rapid, total change of a society's political and economic structures? Well, what does that mean practically? How do we envision that and how can it be realized?

That doesn't take us away from what I think is the absolute centrality of Marxism as a form of analysis that has ruthlessly unpacked capitalism as a form of exploitation. I don't think there is a better set of ideas and theories around capitalism. As somebody who would identify as a libertarian socialist, or as some variety of anarchist perhaps, I would also say that the lessons taught by anarchism in terms of its commitments to grassroots organizing, to radical democracy, and to the values of letting a revolutionary process be led by the people themselves rather than by elites who govern them, are also very central. I wouldn't reduce this debate to either of those camps because I think we have seen in the last thirty years or so a much more interesting turn, which some commentators, Richard Day for instance, have called a more "anarchistic ethic" in many social movements around the globe.This anarchistic ethic doesn't espouse any particular variety of anarchist thinking; it doesn't lay claim to any great men and their great ideas. Rather it is interested in this idea of "horizontality" —of egalitarian practice, radical democracy—binding into it as well a critique of capitalism that is clearly beholden to a Marxist analysis. The rise of this anarchistic ethic, to do terrible injustice to a very diverse history of struggles here, emerges in the 70s and 80s out of a palpable frustration on the part of many activists and would-be revolutionaries with the failures of those very forms of organization—with the party, the state, the call of discipline, and the call to solidarity that is often the call to the erasure of difference and marginalization of oppressed voices, the marginalization of non-privileged positions within that discourse. So it's not just an ideological move. Many of these activists and revolutionaries in the 70s and 80s turn to this because they see a greater reflection of their own lived existence and their desire to build complex relations of solidarity with other people in the struggle who are not quantifiable, who don't fall into simple categories.

So, where does this take us? It takes us through the rise of all kinds of anti-authoritarian movements, whether it's anti-racist organizing, or emerging attempts to build settler-indigenous solidarity, or in the often terribly ignored contributions that feminism—particularly radical and socialist feminism—has made to the fabric of social justice struggle around the world. We have the rise of the alter-globalization movement. Out of this, we have the understandable frustrations, expressed in a high-modernist language, with the inability of that movement to seize on its tactical successes in some moments. We hear it in the admonishments of the World Social Forum, which I am also sometimes critical of, that it become more like a party. We hear it in the voices of self-avowed Leftists here in Canada, the US, and elsewhere, who, in the wake of Occupy and other anti-austerity struggles, try to reduce this complex set of desires for liberation to a ten-point plan on the part of people practicing it: to be clear, to have leaders, to be understandable, to be renderable in the idiom of the time, and to speak the language of power. But isn't that part of the problem? Isn't it a problem that in seeking revolution we return to the very forms of domination and the exercise of power that are familiar to us? It's no accident coming out of the 60s that we heard the voices of radical feminists demanding that their leaders be held accountable for the perpetuation of things like patriarchy and sexism. Those movements, speaking the language of sexual liberation, didn't free their members from patriarchy.

Chris Parsons: I came of age politically during a time that coincides with the general decline in the power and popularity of the alter- and anti-globalization movements, but before the emergence of Occupy. One of the reasons why I think it's important to situate what I want to say in that context is because in some ways I am from a generation that thought that Marxism was not an option, or that the version of Marxism we received and experienced was certainly one that had at least internalized many of the organizational structures of anarchism. That is to say that even before Occupy, if you were twenty-something around 2008 and were involved in community or campus organizing, the default was a sort of "horizontalist" mode of organizing, which primarily did not imagine the possibility of seizing state power. So anarchism is the default, at least politically, for the people of my generation.

The result of that is that I definitely have the very desires that Alex warns you against. I have the high-modernist desire to seize state power because I think we've seen time and time again that alternatives over the last decades—at least in the context I have organized in—have been counter-productive. And not just in failing to get us closer to global revolution—they have also done a very poor job of trying to generate reforms. So I think that the realization that many Marxists are coming to now is not to pit reforms against revolutions, but maybe turning to someone like Luxemburg, who suggests that reforms are a way towards revolution. I think in many ways the sort of anarchism that I have experienced has been one that says we want neither reforms nor revolutions, we want something else, and that something else doesn't get us closer to the sort of widespread liberation on a mass-scale.

The points where Marxism and anarchism diverge are points that need to be interrogated, and we haven't necessarily done a good job of that. We have often called ourselves Marxists when what we are doing is organizing in ways which are, at least in form, anarchistic; or sometimes we refer to ourselves as anarchists when really the impulse we have is to work towards something that vaguely represents Marxist forms of organizing and Marxist goals. But one thing that we don't do well is to articulate what our goals are or why it is that we are choosing specific organizational forms.

One of the other things that is important here is that in the last 15 years there's been a wild swing back-and-forth on what the role and existence of the state is. In the early 2000s, specifically in the work surrounding the alter-globalization movement and particularly with Hardt and Negri, the state had become irrelevant, or at least individual state sovereignty had become irrelevant. Most people would say now that that was an overstatement, and that the reality is that we have to grapple with the question of the state regardless of when we want to do away with it. I think everyone here would agree that the ideal goal is eventually eliminating the state. And in the short term, I think we all agree that eliminating the bourgeois, liberal-democratic state is an immediate goal. The question is what to replace it with and when?

What is the actual target of our political work? Are we aiming at transforming the broad, mass, social movements around us? Are we aiming at targeting the state? Are we aiming at targeting some vague object we might call civil society? Or, is the target of our political work ourselves, in some sort of personal transformation?

In 2014 we might not need the party of the proletariat to lead to the revolution. But we also need to decide that maybe we do need that, and maybe we don't need collectives or affinity groups, or maybe we need something else. Maybe we need a collective, disciplined organization that cuts somewhere in the middle. But one of the problems is that many of us, who have never experienced the party, have already decided that it is something we need to avoid. We are in a situation where we close ourselves off and organize simply amongst those who share our beliefs. Do we sit and wait for the objective conditions to magically radicalize the masses or do we go out as people who are more radical than our peers and provide something akin to leadership? We've become so scared of any concept of leadership. Sometimes we are scared of having an administrative leadership that can simply make sure we know who is photocopying the pamphlets because we are so afraid of appearing as a hierarchical organization. The problem is also that, if we don't recognize the tendency towards leadership, we all fall into actual political leadership that we don't want. I think there's also fear because we don't know what it would mean to seize or hold power anymore, but I think that's a bigger issue than I can address.

Finally, what do we do about social movements? This is similar to the question of leadership. In some ways, there has been a refusal to engage in large unions beyond the local level because we haven't asked what to do, about leadership, when we are more radical than the general union membership. Instead we look at setting up completely alternative structures. The problem with that is that I can't comprehend revolution without the masses, and in some ways I still hold out a perhaps archaic, perhaps high-modern belief that unions can be transformed to serve as a vehicle for the will of the working class—and not the working class as conceived of in 1917, but a working class that we need to reconceive in 2014.

Eva Curry: Anarchism is commonly understood to be a non-hierarchical, anti-authoritarian philosophy. If one only pays attention to what anarchism has to say about individual autonomy, I think it is easy to falsely believe that anarchism and Marxism are non-overlapping. But a central idea in anarchism is that there is a dynamic balance between individual autonomy and the communal good that can be attained. In fact, I would argue that these two principles exist not in competition but necessarily reinforce each other through solidarity, mutual aid, and compassionate social interactions. One thing that has come up in the other speakers' preliminary remarks is that we don't talk much about what we mean by terms such as authority and power. Following Hannah Arendt somewhat, I would define authority as an entity to which personal autonomy has been ceded. Autonomy is the ability to make decisions about your own thoughts and emotions, and about the integrity of your own body. It entails "freedom from"—freedom from violence, from coercion. It also involves "freedom to"—freedom to individual expression that doesn't harm others, rights to speech, education, healthcare, a safe place to live, and nutrition. The feminist movement represents one of the strongest examples that respect for individual autonomy and concern for the common good can reinforce and support one another—from models around enthusiastic consent for sexual and romantic relationships. If I am respecting your autonomy as an individual, then not only is that an ethical imperative, but it makes our relationship together stronger, more fulfilling, and more supportive for myself as well. That's one sort of small-scale example of where we can see that the idea of respecting individual autonomy and what's best for the communal good are not competing at all. Instead they intimately reinforce each other.

Humans are social animals and most of us yearn for some sort of community. In the popular conception of what we think of as anarchism, people are drawn to anarchism first because they are interested in this anti-authoritarian idea and the idea of maintaining their individual autonomy—they're interested in that side of the equation. This may be after many negative experiences with communities that are based on exclusion and hierarchical structures. For those of us who have experienced various forms of oppression—whether they be gender-based oppression, class-based oppression, racial oppression, sexism, hetero-normativism, ableism, or any other class hierarchies that get set up in our society—the idea that I only need to worry about expressing myself can be very compelling. Experiences with oppression can make you very wary of the idea of the common good and of engaging with a group in general because the group in general, in our experience, might be universally negative towards us.

In some ways this is a central tension that defines anarchism: how do we reconcile our need for maintaining our own individual autonomy with that impulse towards community? An anarchist vision of community, unlike the one that many of us grew up on, is built on inclusion rather than exclusion. Trust, in some form, underlies all forms of human relations, so in an anarchist vision of community, ideally, trust is extended to everyone unless they prove themselves to be untrustworthy.

In an anarchist vision of community, I would say that not only is autonomy respected, but care for others is encouraged, supported, and prioritized. So an anarchist vision of community entails loving interactions between romantic partners, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, and strangers. In Cindy Milstein's work and in a lot of contem-

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porary writings about anarchism, the word love comes up a lot, and love as bell hooks or Fred Rogers would define the word, as a verb—not an emotion, but as a practice.

Anarchism is a model for modeling social relations, and to practice it well we can't focus solely on the relations between individuals, which I have been talking a lot about because I come from a feminist background where we talk about "the personal is the political." But we can't ignore our current model of social relations that imposes class systems and hierarchies on all aspects of our lives. So I would say that a Marxist, class-based analysis of economic structures is fundamental to having a solid anarchist practice and understanding of the world, as is a feminist, class-based analysis of patriarchal social and institutional structures, and a class-based analysis of racial and colonial interactions, hierarchies, and structures. But anarchism is also an ethic. It's an ethic that says that we respect our individual autonomy and that working for the common good grows out of that respect. So anarchism is far more than a collection of tools as the introduction to this panel posits. It's this ethic, this model for ordering social relations.

Anarchists do focus on the means to achieve social revolutions, not just on the end result. But partly this is out of an idea of what's effective for organizing and partly it's out of a conviction, borne by much experience: that our means fundamentally and inextricably shape our ends. So if the end we seek is a society in which ethics are based on this mutual respect vision, then we have to work towards that end rather than running on a tangent or in an opposite direction from it.

CL: I am going to speak to the points of power, forms of organizing, and Occupy. Occupy was a powerful, popular outburst against the excesses of capitalist rule. It was very refreshing, and it bypassed traditional left organizations to a large extent, which is probably a reflection of their failure, I have to add, being a member of one of them. During my involvement in Occupy I encountered the consensus model of decision-making. What I learned was that it didn't work. While the original idea was that everybody had to agree on what we're going to do, in many places it was very rapidly modified to something more like an 80/20 or 90/10 consensus. So this great idea of consensus, even among people who seemingly agree on so many things, didn't work. I think that's an established fact. That's an important lesson, and I think it is true that leaders are sometimes needed. Leaders will always emerge, but the important thing is that leaders are accountable to the rest of the group. When it comes to political leadership there seems to be a distrust, partly because we have such a bad political system, and I understand that. But it's important to understand that political leadership is a form of technical competence or art. You can be a good a political leader in radical politics or you can be a bad one. Some of it depends on your ideas and some of it depends on what style of leadership you have, but it is always fundamental that there are processes in place which allow the broader membership to control the leaders, to elect them, and to recall them when necessary. That allows true democratic control over leaders and if that is not in place—and I believe that bourgeois democracy does not do that very well—then you have the rule of effectively unelected leaders, and that is the worst type of setup.

AK: No good anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist, radically transformative organizing that I've seen disavows leadership. I think the question is absolutely how you make that leadership accountable in a radical way to those who constitute an organization, whatever that organization or community is. So to posit anarchism as this kind of desire to disavow structure or disavow any kind of leadership is wrong. Good examples of resistance movements show you that they are necessary. But it isn't necessarily one step from acknowledging the fact that radical struggles for social justice need some sort of leadership that we must have a party, we must have a state. So the question is what do we do with the need to organize ourselves?

CP: A further question is whether or not we are comfortable with the groups we form providing leadership outside of them. That is something even groups that are comfortable appointing some sort of coordinating or logistics committee are still really uncomfortable with. There comes a moment when one encounters people outside of our groups, and we may find ourselves in a position of leadership. And I don't mean the position of telling them what to do but perhaps of trying to draw people towards a more radical position or trying to organize people in a moment of defense. One of my most vivid memories of Occupy was that when I was there with other people who were on the periphery of it and defending the encampment, the question of defense becomes really difficult without a question of leadership. The reality was that what would have made defense of the camp better would be if the people who were in that encampment told people like me to follow their leadership rather than holding to this firm idea that we are uncomfortable providing leadership to a mass of people who show up, many of whom were probably willing to get themselves arrested if someone said that that was the plan going forward.

EC: When we talk about leadership many different ideas can come in. There are people that we look to and trust, such as social leaders who influence other people's opinions, and that is tied in with strength of character in some ways. That's distinct from a person who has a particular job or responsibility, someone we have put in a leadership position for that task because they have a particular skill. That is also distinct from somebody who is in a position of authority. That is somebody who we take orders from, who we have ceded our own autonomy to. When they tell us to go get arrested we follow them because we have set them up as an authority, but we haven't necessarily thought through our actions ourselves. I think it is really important to make distinctions between these concepts, because conflating them gets us confused. One of the things about anarchism as I understand it is that it really does try to break down these different concepts. Anarchism is anti-authoritarian, it's anti-hierarchical. That's not the same thing as being opposed to leadership in the sense of accountability. If you say somebody has taken on a task, they have a responsibility for doing that specific job. It goes against respect for other's autonomy if that person then fails to do their job and is not responsible for it.

Q & A

I thought the lesson of Occupy on the idea of consensus was really interesting, but the problem I saw is that the central body took up all these questions that were often ridiculous minutiae. I think this fixation with process is the same problem that we see manifesting very differently in closed organizations that don't operate on consensus—looking, for example, to the recent collapse of the Socialist Workers Party in Britain. I wonder if this is less about consensus or democratic centralism than about fetishization of certain processes and the need for forced unity where perhaps no unity exists. How do we understand the problem of unity in places where unity is not actually there?

I like this distinction between leadership and authority, and I particularly appreciate what Alex was saying about traditional, centralized, communist movements still maintaining certain oppressive forms within their organization, even if they were trying to articulate a resistance to them. How do we allow leadership for oppressed groups and classes without then giving them authority in areas which they don't necessarily need to have it? How do we distribute power in a way in which leadership and authority do not become conflated?

AK: Both of these questions are related; they're very interesting. On the point of the perpetuation of oppressions within supposedly revolutionary organizations, the autonomous Marxist John Holloway has written about how love has come out as this sort of political ethic. Holloway loves to talk about dignity, and he talks about the failure of so many high-modernist revolutionary movements. He particularly blames an orthodox reading of Marxism embodied in some communist parties that treats people as a means to an end, doing violence to their dignity and autonomy. Maria Mies, a Marxist-feminist, has done a lot of great writing on the so-called "women's issue" within many communist parties and how it was always going to be a question of, "Oh, once we have seized the state, once we are the ones in control, we will fix all these other issues." And that applies to racism and settler-indigenous issues too. After a while it seems like the only issue that really matters is this supposed axis of class in a narrowly economistic way. The knee-jerk reaction to it has been to adopt this notion that we have to open up spaces for marginalized groups to take leadership, and that's a very problematic way to think about. First of all, it recapitulates this liberal notion of tolerance, where tolerance implies that I have the right to not tolerate you! So it is still an exercise of power. I was involved in CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) for a long time and there was this question of representation—do we have quotas? Do we have a formal position on the executive for these disadvantaged groups? It wasn't that they were entirely bad questions to ask, it was that the approach to it was always a technocratic one. In the Radical Imagination project here in Halifax, we have been doing a lot of thinking and working around this issue, not just of making space, but of making time for the effective practice of a really deep, anti-oppressive practice within the movement's spaces. But there are no easy answers. We don't want to go down the road where imagining movements is nothing more than a therapy group, because we are all damaged people, and particularly activists and organizers can be very damaged people. We've defected from a status quo that we find deplorable for all kinds of reasons and that has maybe damaged us in all kinds of profound ways, some less so than others given our relative privilege. So what do we do with those spaces? I don't have the answer to that, but I wish I did. We have to begin there; we have to begin with that acknowledgement. I still hear, "But we are not effective, we are not seizing power," and I agree. I believe that is a tremendous challenge. But at the same time it's not enough to adopt a much more rigid discipline, more authoritarian forms of organizing that allow people to speak in a voice that seems unified when in fact that unity has come at the cost of dispossessing people of their dignity and their power to act, and has just created another violent order on top of the existing one.

CL: People tend to affiliate with those who share their political ideas. That's how people group together naturally. Nobody wants an organization that recreates repressive structures when in reality that organization should be dedicated to working for the liberation of humanity. I'm not advocating for a model like the SWP. I don't think that is a good model to follow. But what I am advocating for is to have an organization where ideas are debated and then, through a democratic process of voting on those proposals, a decision is made. Why? Because you can't talk forever, even though it does seem possible when there is a non-urgent issue and everybody has time and it's cool. But when something fundamentally shifts in society—when there is a struggle going on and the enemy is literally knocking at your door—people usually realize really quickly that they need to come to a decision. In those situations you need to come to a decision because you need to act, and I believe you need to act in unity. I voluntarily submit to decisions made by people I elect in an organization that I trust, and I will carry out those decisions because it will be better that we all act together on what was agreed rather than discussing and agreeing, and then those who disagree go off and do their own thing. What's the point of discussing in the first place if we are all going to go off in different directions?

That's the kind of internal decision making I am thinking of, but of course in reality we have different groups with somewhat different programs, beliefs, and functioning. So how can we work together? I believe it's possible on clearly agreed and defined terms. I call it "united front work," and you can call it "coalition work," but those opportunities arise. I think we all agree that fascists need to be dealt with; I hope you all agree that we need to stop them from organizing and marching down the street. We don't necessarily agree on what the Soviet Union represented, but we can agree on the need to stop the fascists, and that's the kind of unity I advocate whenever I have the opportunity.

CP: With Occupy there were a bunch of people who got together who couldn't imagine organizing in any way except by these general anarchistic principles. There was no conversation at Occupy Halifax about if this model of consensus-based decision making was the right one. It was just like people were drinking coffee and decided, "We're going make decisions based on consensus, and everyone else is occupying in two weeks and so are we." That's essentially a part of the problem. We have internalized the idea that a version of anarchism is the only way forward. Too often it has become a default in the way that really the default for many people in the 1950s was a brutal, authoritarian, Stalinized way of organizing. So in some ways Occupy represents a problem.

The self-reinforcement that Eva talked about—that's also how democratic centralism works too. The agreement is not enforced by anybody else but you. When I talk about discipline, I'm talking about self-discipline. I'm not talking about the idea that people should be flogged if they don't follow the main agreement. There's a self-enforcing agreement, and asking why we failed here and taking collective responsibility for why an organizing effort failed is something that I don't think can only happen in consensus-based model.

I was reading an article about the vocabulary of the New Left versus the post–New Left of today, and the language has really shifted from "liberation" and "overthrowing the state" to "creating safer spaces." Or instead of "the people," to "intersectionality." Given the events of Occupy and all that's happened, few will argue that these horizontal pushes are actually rethinking our relations or creating alternative communities. I want to ask: How and when we do engage with the State? How do you challenge power or authority? Examples like the Zapatistas also raise that question. Right now the government of Mexico just thinks, "Alright, we don't have to worry or provide services to the poorer estate there." But when we get to the point where they're so big in size and number that you have to engage, how does that happen?

All of you have some sort of orientation towards Marxism or some sort of affinity to it. What is Marxism to you? Because it seems one way it is coming out is tactical. What is Marxism in relation to the broader Left? How do you understand it?

AK: I identify with the theoretical trend known as Autonomous Marxism, a very rich analytical strand that emerges out of people's concrete struggles and frustrations with some more doctrinaire forms of Marxism. For me, Marxism is the most robust and relentless way of rigorously understanding the science of exploitation that is capitalism. It is not primarily an organizing strategy for me. Anarchism is perhaps closer to actual organizing but lacks the ideological robustness of Marxism. And anarchist analysis, especially of capitalism, comes from Marxism—unless it is some horrible form of anarcho-capitalism, which most anarchists reject as a form of anarchism at all. The question of engagement, in some ways, is the crux of it all. Depending on the day that you catch me, this question will be relevant because maybe we're all hurtling towards destruction, and the people that survive will reconstitute themselves outside of states that are no longer able to function as such. In some sense this is what I meant when we talked about revolution. We presume that the status quo is almost indefinite in terms of where our ideological touchstones come from—they come from the Industrial Revolution and this modernity borne out of the Enlightenment. They may reject liberalism but they're in the same bed with liberalism. People seem to presume that we will face challenges, but nothing dramatic is going to happen in terms of the balance of forces internationally or the ability of states to continue to do what they do on the basis of an industrial, petroleum-based process. Whether that is true or not, our notions of revolutions are very much wrapped up in that. What the Zapatistas have done, though they wouldn't say it this way, is to displace the state in areas where they exercise control. They have not descended into this fuzzy, middle-class notion of, "Let's get together and make sure we all feel really good and live in a house that is quirky and alternative, and we won't have any of the normal rules of society." What they have done is take seriously the question of social transformation. They have elaborated institutions where they have leaders subject to recall, and they take positions when it is a matter of urgency; they take votes and decide to go to war, and the people who didn't vote for it have to leave the community. What the Zapatistas have done is to elaborate institutions along an anarchist ethic of parallel power where they have displaced the state, and government supporters are now literally coming to Zapatistas and saying, "We have a land dispute. Something is going on. Can we use your systems of justice to adjudicate it?" That to me is revolutionary. The control of territory is revolutionary. The ability to displace dehumanizing exploitative and oppressive systems is revolutionary. Does that mean the Zapatistas have solved all those problems within their own structures? Not at all. Does it mean they have all the solutions for the rest of us? Of course not. The limit to learning from other revolutionary processes is that they belong to their own time and place. That doesn't mean we don't need to learn from them, but it's an excellent question. Along the lines of what I think everyone here has said, there is a question of pragmatism. And I think that intentionality has to be part of it. Otherwise let's just go around and throw paintballs at banks. But that's just frustration. That's not serious.

CL: You asked how do we engage with the state? I'm not sure that is the best way of phrasing the question because I find myself being engaged by the state whether I want to or not. I think that's the reality—the state exists and will tell me and you what the student fees are and what offense will send you to prison, how long the sentence will be, and under what conditions you will serve your sentence. All of those things are ways the state engages with its dear citizens. So I engage the state as my opponent in current society, because the current function of the state is to oppress and to maintain the rule of capital. That brings me to the Marxist state. We cannot reform the oppressive nature of the current state. Some people advocate police reform, you know, make cops a little bit nicer. I think that's bullshit. Marxists believe that the existing state cannot be taken over; we need to replace it with a new type of state based on workers' rule and workers' councils. It will still be a state, which will disappoint the anarchists, but it's the best way to defend the interests of the majority of the people. The revolution needs to be defended once it is successful, and the best tool that the working class will have will be proletarian state. We will no longer be spectators but will be active participants in running society. **| P**

1. Available online at <http://anarchism.pageabode.com/andrewnflood/nostalgic-left>.

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Books, 1997), 100.
9. Raoul Vaneigem, "Basic Banalities," *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 8 (1963). Available online at: http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/raoul-vaneigem-basic-banalities
10. Herb Gamberg, "Anarchism through Bakunin."
11. Vladimir Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (1917). See Chapter 6, "The Vulgarisation of Marxism by Opportunists," available online at http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch06.htm
12. Slavoj Žižek, "Can Lenin Tell Us About Freedom Today?" Available online at http://www.lacan.com/freedom.htm
13. Herb Gamberg, "Anarchism through Bakunin."
14. See Alfredo M. Bonanno, "Why a Vanguard?," *Movimento e progetto rivoluzionaria* (1977). Available online at http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/alfredo-m-bonanno-why-a-vanguard
15. Alain Badiou, "The Idea of Communism," and Judith Balso, "To Present Oneself to the Present," in *The Idea of Communism* (New York: Verso Books, 2010).
16. Bob Black, "The Libertarian as Conservative" (1984). Available online at http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/bob-black-the-libertarian-as-conservative
17. Vsevolod Vishnevsky, "An Optimistic Tragedy", in *Classic Soviet Plays* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979).
18. Bini Adamczak, "Gender and the new man: Emancipation and the Russian Revolution?," *Platypus Review* 62 (December-January 2013). Available online at http://platypus1917.org/2013/12/01/gender-and-the-new-man/
19. E.H. Carr, *Michael Bakunin* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1937), as referred to in Herb Gamberg, "Anarchism through Bakunin".
20. Ibid.
21. David Graeber, "Occupy Wall Street's anarchist roots," Al Jazeera, November 30, 2011. Available online at http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/11/201111282835904508.html
22. Chris Hedges, "The Cancer in Occupy," Truthdig, February 6, 2012. Available online at http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/the_cancer_of_occupy_20120206
23. Alan Woods, "Marxism and Anarchism–Part Two ," In Defence of Marxism, January 2012. Available online at http://www.marxist.com/marxism-and-anarchism-2.htm
24. For further reading, and in reference to Gamberg's positioning of anarchism as a tendency within the New Left, see Bruno Bosteels, "The Leftist Hypothesis" in The Idea of Communism (New York: Verso Books, 2010). (New York: Verso Books, 2010).

In defense of anarchism, continued from page 3

tion of this history—yet anarchists predicted it as the "first wave" was just beginning!

I am not going to review Gamberg's lengthy philosophical background to Bakunin's thought, as he thinks he understands it. He essentially insists on treating Bakunin as an individualist and egotist, when Bakunin (and Kropotkin and other anarchist-communists) rejected individualist anarchism. They did not agree with Godwin or Stirner (who had no influence on the anarchist movement). But this is a background issue.

The key point is that, like Marx and Engels, Bakunin and those who came after him believed in a social revolution by the working class and all the oppressed. Yet they rejected Marx's program of seizing a state and centralizing the economy. The (correct) prediction that this would result in a new exploitative tyranny. Instead they advocated the self-organization of the working people, through committees, councils, associations, and militias, to democratically self-manage society. This goal has not yet been achieved, but it one worth fighting for.**| P**

1. See Herb Gamberg, "Anarchism Through Bakunin: A Marxist Assesment," *Platypus Review* #64 (March 2014), available online at <http://platypus1917.org/2014/03/02/anarchism-bakunin-marxist-assessment/>.
2. David Fernbach, ed., "Introduction," in *Karl Marx: The First International and After Political Writings; Vol. 3* (New York: Penguin/New Left Review, 1992).
3. Ibid, 376-377.
4. See Wayne Price, *The Value of Radical Theory; An Anarchist Introduction to Marx's Critique of Political Economy* (Oakland: AK Press, 2013).
5. Ibid.
6. David Fernbach, "Introduction," 50-51.

The Leninist protests too much

A response to Herb Gamberg

Liam Swenson

HERB GAMBERG'S ARTICLE "Anarchism through Bakunin: A Marxist Assessment" opens by claiming that anarchist theory has had little to no historical development since the 19th century, and that, apparently, "anarchism possesses no really developed theory in the first place".[1] So what is anarchism, then? Gamberg differentiates between the conservative view, which sees anarchism as "pathological violence and arbitrary terrorism" and the Marxist view, which is... the same as the conservative view. "Since anarchism lacks any unifying body of principles, perhaps it is best summed up as a particular mood or temperamental predisposition," in other words: pathology. This reductionist bumble is fortunately complicated by the argument that anarchism is actually a run-away type of liberalism.

Indeed, Gamberg asserts that anarchism comes from somewhere or, rather, that "psychological predispositions like anarchism have social roots and definite socio-political consequences." Thus, anarchists are in a state of permanent revolt against authority caused by a holdover from the bourgeois revolution. We anarchists want liberalism to be more liberal, it seems. Somehow "anarchism carries the liberal project to its logical conclusion by rejecting authority in all its forms."

> If I negate powdered pigtails, I am still left with unpowdered pigtails.—Karl Marx[2]

Even if anarchism rejects all authority, this does not make it liberal. The liberal revolution was revolution against only a specific type of authority—that of the misuse of state power by kings. The king, who at first secured law and sovereignty from the despotism of the feudal lords, became the symbol of law's degeneracy; anarchists, of course, stand against law, and not just against kings. Anarchists might take the psychoanalytic route and speak of the omnipresence of law and transgression (and therefore the necessity of overcoming both), or we can take the Foucaultian route and say that we are not finished beheading the king. Either way points towards anarchy as revolution and not, therefore, as the deepening of the liberal project, which is the formation of the individual as a bio-political agent, or the deepening of control through individuation/subjectivization.

Gamberg's obfuscation is not new. Leninists often accuse anarchists of being petit-bourgeois. It should suffice to recall that anarchists do not want a community of small capitalists, small governments, domestic relations of production, etc. Perhaps the only thing more heinous than massive factories and states populated by the liberal individual is the petit-bourgeois domination of life—"small property ideology," as Gamberg calls it. Admittedly, the anarchist milieu has contributed to this confusion with such texts as Laure Akai's "Individualism vs. Individualism".[3] Akai tries to draw a line between anarchist or revolutionary individualism and bourgeois or hedonist individualism, but ends in the right libertarian camp, describing the state as a cancerous growth on society proper, placed there to maintain order, repress natural drives, etc. This type of "monarchist" individualism links nicely with the decided non-revolution of communalism. Let us be clear: individualism is only anarchist when it uses the individual, a category at first proper to the state and the bourgeois, against the Existent (as in Stirner's confederation of egos, for example). Individualism is anarchist when it turns the ruling order on its head, using individualism to destroy the individual. As such, anarchists in every sense (either communist or individualist) are revolutionists; we are for the agitation and explosion of class tension.

> It [anarchist leaderless-ness] is like trying to maintain a child in a state of childishness, so that it is forever unable to talk, walk, and think for itself.—Alan Woods, "Marxism and Anarchism–Part One".[4]

Gamberg writes,

> Lenin saw the growth and influence of anarchism as due to the immaturity of the working class movement; according to Lenin, anarchism was a passing thing which would disappear with the growing strength and political maturity of the working class.[5]

Woods and Lenin throw about trite and well-worn metaphors in an attempt to cover up a lack of actual critique, which should take on the issue of the state, of its machinery and its power (as Lenin, and later Althusser, put it). The charge of anarchism as childishness parallels closely the charge of left-wing communism as infantilism. It would be enough to turn the charge around to show how useless such formulations are: "Bolshevism is a passing fad, a sign of infancy in the working class movement. The workers are hardly affected now but they will soon turn to anarchism once they mature past authoritarian obscurantism and into actual revolutionism." `What, then, is the heart of the matter? The hierarchy of master-student hidden in this infancy-pedagogical symbolism, and the confusion between the Bolshevik formulation "socialism first, and then communism" and this formula's hidden supplement "communism first, and then socialism," are the issues at stake in this denunciation of anarchism.

If either anarchism or Leninism is to be useful, they both ought to reject the symbolization of political immaturity. Let us instead draw our battle lines along the more firm and respectable divisions: the dictatorship of the proletariat versus the dictatorship of the Party, the tension between the pathological Act and the rational Will when it comes to revolt, who shot at whom first in Kronstadt, what the anarchists could have done to prevent the Stalinist derailment of the Spanish Revolution, etc.

> I well remember Lenin telling me with great satisfaction, "Your Grand Old Man, Enrico Malatesta, is for our soviets." I hastened to say, "You mean free soviets, Comrade Lenin. I, too, am for them."—Emma Goldman[6]

Why Bakunin?

Bakunin is the easiest target for Leninists because he stands with his ass in his clothing; it wouldn't be interesting to laugh at the emperor with no clothes. Proudhon and Godwin, and also more modern anarchists Kropotkin, the Platformists, and even our current pseudo-anarchist Murray Bookchin, all stand naked before their eventual collapse into communalism, a sort of watered-down prescriptive utopian socialism, which smashes the state and capital and replaces it with, as Gamberg rightly contends, smaller government and smaller capitalism. Bakunin, on the other hand, is close enough to actual anarchist thought to be a worthy target, while being ridiculous enough to fall under sustained Marxist analysis, unlike some of the more sturdy thinkers like Stirner, our renegade Hegelian, or Malatesta, our Grand Old Man.

Anarchists (read: "Bakunin") reject the materialist and dialectical being of revolution; for them, it is only about a spontaneous uprising of naturally free man against the unnatural shackles of the state apparatus and capital, those "complete negation[s] of humanity".[7] Inherent in this is a misreading of fetishism. The fetish transmits relation through things/people not as a debasement of the thing or the meaning of the relation, but as a mechanism that both closes a gap between otherwise unrelated people ("primitive fetishism") and between otherwise unrelated things ("commodity fetishism"). As Žižek argues in *The Plague of Fantasies*, the symbolic order created through fetishism (in this case, imperialist humanism and its fight for freedom/democracy) contributes to dead Iraqis as much as the actual or transparent relation between people and things (Bush signing the orders, the bombers reaching their targets, etc.).[8] For reality to exist at all, there must be a symbolic supplement to the empty horror of the "actual or transparent." This rehashing of the old Marxian critique of utopian socialists can be extended to communalists like Bookchin or to the Parecon folks, but not to actual anarchists.

> There are ways of abolishing the death penalty that can make one miss it—Raoul Vaneigem[9]

Gamberg's critique of anarchists is twofold: first, the critique of anarchist utopian-communalism, whereby anarchists look for transparent human relations at the end of capital and the fetish, and second, the critique of anarchism's hyper-valuation of spontaneity. Anarchists (read: Bakunin) are consistently accused of valuing spontaneity over organization. Gamberg goes further, placing this valuation at the center of anarchism.

The whole thrust of his theorizing is to be anti-theory; he expresses the anarchist credo as an aggregate of spontaneous passions. E.H. Carr seems to suggest that this confusion and incoherence is simply a matter of Bakunin's personality or circumstance, but this is not the case. These characteristics appear intrinsic to the outlook for which Bakunin so clearly stands. This outlook is defined by this most representative practitioner, by his particular spirit and emotional texture; this texture then is undergirded by specific ideological components by which anarchism may be defined.[10]

Because anarchism is pathology, it is only a politics of freedom if this pathology arises spontaneously. But, the very question of spontaneity versus organization is a false and misleading one. The priests who support either side ought to be condemned. At its worst, the defense of spontaneity means a total reliance on material or historical determinism, whereby objective processes lead to revolutionary acts. As one side of the debates of the Soviet Constructivists shows, revolution as spontaneity is like volcanic eruption—the tectonic, geological processes writhe under the surface until the moment of the dialectical explosion. Lenin convincingly argues in State and Revolution that this sort of spontaneous leftism is actually a vulgar opportunism, where objective conditions, while seemingly calling for revolt at the right moment, actually postpone it infinitely. The point, as both Lenin and the insurrectionary anarchists will tell you, is to act. Thus, spontaneity is the realm of Kautskyites and various other vulgarizers of Marxism, and anarchism is actually less about spontaneity than it is about organization.[11]

However, further complicating matters, Lenin confuses objectivism and subjectivism when he declares workers' liberalism to be pathological, therefore positing his own (subjective) determination of conditions as the objective truth above or beyond pathology. As Slavoj Žižek says in "Can Lenin Tell Us About Freedom Today?" Lenin's obfuscation of subjectivism and objectivism,

> ...reduces a historical constellation to a closed, fully contextualized situation in which the "objective" consequences of one's acts are fully determined ("independently of your intentions, what you are doing now objectively serves..."); secondly, the position of enunciation of such statements usurp the right to decide what your acts "objectively mean," so that their apparent "objectivism" (the focus on "objective meaning") is the form of appearance of its opposite...
>
> Against this full contextualization, one should emphasize that freedom is "actual" precisely and only as the capacity to "transcend" the coordinates of a given situation, to "posit the presuppositions" of one's activity (as Hegel would have put it), i.e. to redefine the very situation within which one is active.[12]

This takes us back to one of the real issues at stake in the division between anarchism and Marxism: the tension between Lenin as objective holder of revolutionary truth and Lenin as subjective wielder of proletarian power.

Gamberg tells us Bakunin, as his quintessential anarchist, sought to resolve this tension through the secret society of revolutionaries that "influences rather than commands the already revolutionary ideas of the populace".[13] Gamberg argues this is cheating; in effect, Bakunin wishes anarchists to become an anonymous vanguard party, one that disappears after the revolution. In other words, he formulates a state that withers away once it is no longer needed. Bakunin's failed attempt to divine a path through the tension of the dictatorship of the proletariat versus the dictatorship of the Party is thus held up as a failure of anarchism. If so, it is simultaneously Leninism's failure, a gap shared by our two traditions.[14]

Protesters at the G8 meeting in Hamburg, Germany in 2007 marched for "Total Freedom" and against globalization.

Perhaps, though, the gap is the answer in itself. What if spontaneity comes from nowhere, is some sort of void thrown into the realm of the positive? The working class itself is a sort of void, deprived of content through various mechanisms—wage labor, the ideological state apparatus—but these mechanisms also give it positive content. So, this simplified Hegelian formula for revolution, with worker as void, breaks down under a Foucaultian analysis—the state is a positive institution (creating identities, social codes and relations) as well as a negative one (blocking and re-directing life flows). The boundaries between these two sides of the state cannot readily be drawn, just as the boundaries between the two sides of revolution, spontaneity and organization cannot be easily separated. Attempts to combine the two into a single revolutionary practice—though commendable in their own ways—have been disastrous: the Cultural Revolution attempted to extinguish the bourgeois society immanent to the Chinese Communist Party (see Badiou and Balso in *The Idea of Communism*), while Stalin's revolution from above sought to empower peasants and workers against bureaucrats.[15] The Cultural Revolution failed precisely in its goal and the Stalinist revolution degenerated into bureaucrats murdering bureaucrats while everyone else suffered.

In terms of clearly delineating an actual revolutionary anarchism, perhaps the only good thing the right libertarians have done is to remind us of what we are not. They reveal their identities with their Guy Fawkes masks at protests—a man who tried to blow up Parliament because he wanted different people to run it, an excellent confirmation of Bob Black's thesis on libertarians (see "The Libertarian as Conservative").[16]

This brings us to the tension between communism and anarchy. The Stalin-era play *An Optimistic Tragedy* tells the story of a group of anarchist sailor-soldiers in the Civil War, ill-disciplined and unconcerned with the outcome of war, placed under the command of a female Bolshevik commissar.[17] The rowdy bunch approach her with sexual, hairy aggression, only to be turned by her civilized, maternal side. From this position, the men can fight for soviet power. The commissar is eventually killed and ascends to the heavens, her work done, apparently, since the anarchist men have journeyed through the Bolshevik woman and therefore found the un-sexed position of the revolutionary (this is perhaps played out better in art than in life, since as Bini Adamczak argues in *Platypus Review* 62, the Soviet New Man was a drag king, woman becoming man, but the revolution could not stand man becoming woman).[18]

Revolution, then, is the interplay between explosion and systematization, an anarchist communism or a communist anarchism. It is both the rampant assassinations of Czarist officials, landlords, etc. and the formation of soviet power. Excess and integration: these are the revolutionary problems. Bolsheviks admit this to a point, but they fail precisely in that their systematization creates a hierarchy—spontaneous revolt first, and then this is captured, put to actual use by Leninist practice. This is why Bolsheviks accept anarchists only on the condition that they join the correct, objective course of history, and sooner rather than later. This flips the usual formula to first communist anarchy, then the dialectical shift to (state) socialism. In this sense, we can see the depth of Andrei Platonov's despair when he perceived the nature of the so-called tactical retreat of the New Economic Policy era.

Indeed, it is not enough to focus on the objective conditions of revolution, just as it is not enough to focus on the subjective conditions. Taken crudely, a purely objective approach to revolution would reduce revolution to a series of events with some wishy-washy causal links between them. Such a thing would reduce revolution out of existence or possibility. Further, a purely subjective approach to revolution would, as Gamberg rightly asserts, reduce revolution even further to a sort of "wandering spirit" motif, wherein humankind must fight forever to achieve what it already has in the form of spectral freedom. Leninism, by positing anarchism as the latter mistake, sets itself up as the former.

In anarchist discourse, Leninists are frequently cast as "movement-ists" and reformists who ally themselves with the police against the working class. This is perhaps true of the ANSWER coalition, certain Revolutionary Communist Party fronts, etc., but many Leninists are true communists. Anarchists are frequently cast as childish, randomly violent "manarchists" (the equivalent to "brocialists") and liberal-left rejects who are scared of revolution. This is certainly true of Bookchin and other bores within the anarchist milieu, but serious anarchists are left untouched by such simple critique—Bob Black's entertaining and fascinating combination of law, anthropology of non-state peoples, and anti-work politics, Alfredo Bonanno's analyses of the Italian Years of Lead, with his unique position against the reformists but also against the fetishization of armed resistance presented by the Red Brigades, Malatesta's clear anarchist pronouncements, Zo D'Axa's poetry and biting critique of morality under capitalism, Raoul Vaneigem's lovely blend of anarchist and situationist thought... Anarchism is not born and does not die with Bakunin (or Godwin and Kropotkin); Leninists would do well to remember this the next time they try to draw battle lines.

I end, as Gamberg does, with a discussion of freedom. Gamberg writes that whenever anarchism "finds itself in the socialist camp, it carefully delineates itself from other socialism by declaring itself libertarian socialist".[19] This libertarianism is not the practical or material freedom of Marxism which sees its roots in the overcoming of scarcity (or, more precisely, the overcoming of the traumatic kernel—class society—covered up by the story of scarcity); instead, it is the "disembodied mystique of pure voluntary will".[20] Apparently, this libertarian mystique leads the anarchist to reject the freedom gained through social organization (the basis of communism-as-freedom), since anarchist freedom is the freedom to give in to "individual want, need, or whim." This is consistent with Gamberg's charge of anarchism as pathology, but it is precisely in that whims, wants, and needs are pathologies that they must be overthrown as restrictive to freedom.

This is one of the great additions made to radical politics by the political party in the 20th century—a move away from the dictatorship of whim/pathology as the referent for freedom and towards the horizon of communist/social freedom by submitting the individual party members' wills to the will of the "big Other," the radical party. The anarchist solution to party, as "big Other" (the big Other does not exist, yet without it the symbolic order collapses) is affinity-based politics and consensus. The Occupy movements brought these mid/late 20th century anarchist ideas into contemporary popular discourse, meeting with sympathetic articles about anarchist influence on Occupy in Al Jazeera, followed by Chris Hedges' not-so-sympathetic liberal-left whining over black blocs and articles by Leninist parties on the pitfalls of consensus.[21, 22, 23]

Much confusion has resulted from this sloppy transfer of anarchist politics into the realm of 21st century "post-politics'" social movements. Indeed, Gamberg has confused anarchists with our profoundly annoying New Age obscurantists, those anti-revolutionists who have embraced anarchist-sounding things like the general assembly and consensus-based decision making.[24]

Occupy, like the right libertarians, shows us what we are not. For anarchists, organizing around affinity and consensus does not give us freedom through everyone agreeing with all, or because acts only take place under strict unity of will. In Occupy, the fact that nobody did anything if consensus could not be reached should be enough to show how this was not anarchism, but a form of shackling ultra-democracy where everyone bends their will to the ultimate majority of all (or nothing). Anarchist consensus, on the other hand, requires splintering and regrouping around points of affinity. The rupture is key; rather than simply chaining everyone to the inertia of all, anarchist consensus acts as a sort of rhizomatic or horizontal take on Leninist party discipline. In rupture and reformation, anarchist affinity groups reappraise praxis in light of shifting material conditions. The mistake was transposing this to movement activism when anarchism is properly a revolutionary politics. Getting what everyone wants for all is not revolution. Changing the field entirely, changing what can be wanted, that is revolution. **| P**

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"The Leninist protests too much" continues on page 4