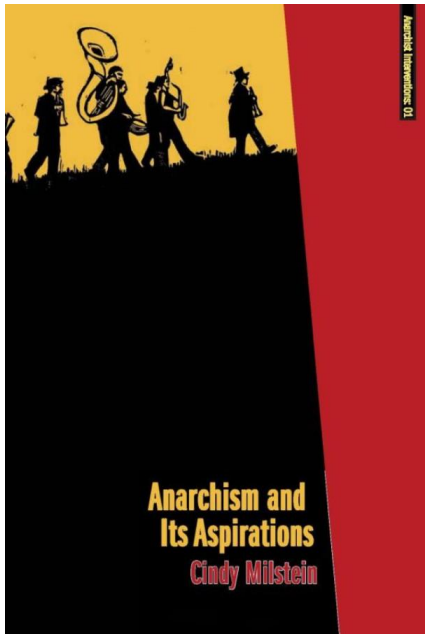
to implement a collective decision. Anarchists may disagree when a voluntary association has outlived its usefulness in particular situations, but they all grapple with the rewarding tension between the two sides of this intertwined equation.

Like all of anarchism's juggling acts, finding the balance between freely associating and sticking by free agreements is much harder in practice, especially beyond the level of small groups. But this balance is crucial. It goes straight to the core problematic of anarchism: how to encourage a world where individuals and society are simultaneously free. Anarchist political organizations test out this dual notion, in part, by composing principles of unity and mission statements. They hash out why they are freely associating. Maybe it's around values such as anticapitalism; perhaps it's because they believe in setting up directly democratic institutions. They also figure out the parameters, if any, of group membership. This could range from simply showing up and pitching in, to having to attend a certain number of meetings before being allowed to participate in decision making. Anarchists also concern themselves with humane ways of breaking their associations, from spelled-out processes of dialogue to clear standards of accountability that one has to meet to stay involved.

This is how anarchists practice what it might mean to "constitute" voluntary association and accountability on a societal level. Of course, an ethic of voluntary association can't be universally applied. Free associations to perpetrate violence against queer-identified people, for example, are completely at odds with other anarchist ethics. The balancing act, then, is not only between voluntary association and accountability. It doesn't simply counter an "anything goes" sensibility with the idea that we're all in this together. It concerns the entirety of anarchism's aspirations.

Anarchism and Its Aspirations

Cindy Milstein



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the human capacity for free choice, or voluntary association, toward various forms of noncoercive, or consensual, relationships and organizations. Voluntary association doesn't mean that individuals will always get their own way, or that people will like each task or every person in a project. They might even feel tired at the end of the day. Yet overall, it does mean joining together with others not due to force or compulsion but because everyone has freely chosen to do so. Free choice, though, involves promises to each other. It entails interconnections and caring, in the same way that friends are bound together—not "until death do us part" but rather until it doesn't make good sense to associate, after careful and honest consideration. It's about doing things because overall it feels satisfying in a variety of ways, because it meets personal and community needs and desires, and because people aren't compelled to engage but want to do so.

This means accountability. Voluntary association only carries weight when intimately linked with forms of responsibility and solidarity. Voluntary association and accountability are, at heart, about freely given promises that people make to each other, with no outside force compelling them to follow through aside from the power of their mutual commitments. These promises aren't lightly broken, on a whim, or when individuals don't get their way; that is the logic of domination, where some have the ability to leave others in the lurch. People may choose to freely disassociate, and will likely do so many times over their lives. Still, anarchists take both association and disassociation seriously, because they take inclusive processes and how people treat each other seriously.

Mutual promises require various agreements, whether unspoken but fully understood, or written down to revisit when needed. Such agreements apply to a host of things, including what will happen when someone doesn't follow through on their tasks and how to handle conflict. Individuals won't leave each other in an unsupported position once they've agreed

chism encourages social relations and forms of organization that take account of a developmental logic, personally and socially, allowing both to flourish; it also fosters critical thinking about how people and the world can and do unfold.

This logic—that humans aren't just fixed beings but are always becoming—underscores anarchism's dynamism. Seeing all life as able to evolve highlights the idea that people and society can change. That people and the world can become more than they are, better than they are. Of course, there's no guarantee. Development isn't necessarily linear or progressive. An emancipatory world isn't assured; an ecological society is just one possibility—but a real one, dependent on people struggling to achieve it.

An ecological perspective within anarchism, then, is not only about the relation of humanity to the nonhuman world, or a harmonizing of both. It sees the world holistically, thinking through phenomena in nuanced ways, attempting to follow the developmental logic of potentialities in the present in order to anticipate how they might unfold, in terms of forms of both freedom and domination. An ecological outlook translates into the very openness that characterizes anarchism. By being able to critically explore possibilities in the here and now, anarchism beckons toward a brighter future, yet only if it remains open to what's outside the given.

Voluntary Association and Accountability

The fact that Kropotkin and others pointed to how cooperation or mutual aid occurs "in nature" doesn't mean that humans act from unthinking instinct or some basically good human nature. Humans are perhaps most distinguished from nonhuman nature by their ability to innovate and imagine. They are set apart from, though not above, other forms of life in their expansive ability to reason, make judgments, and intervene with intentionality. Thus, another shared anarchist ethic highlights

Contents

to "fix" pieces of nonhuman nature without challenging the root causes of ecological devastation. The implication of mutual aid is that humans see themselves as part of nonhuman nature (though distinct from it in certain ways), needing to cooperate as much with the nonhuman natural world as with each other to survive and evolve. The ecological crisis is, in fact, a social crisis: humans believe they can dominate nonhuman nature because they believe it's natural to dominate other human beings.[41] But mutual aid holds that humans, other animals, and plants all thrive best under forms of holistic cooperation—ecosystems. It suggests that people would be much more likely to live in harmony with each other and the nonhuman world—to be ecological—in a nonhierarchical society. This ecological sensibility has been put into practice by contemporary anarchists, as noted briefly above, within the radical ecology movement of the 1970s onward.

Beyond revolutionary ecological activism—from tree sitting to eco-sabotage to humanly scaled eco-technologies—an ecological orientation within anarchism implies a developmental, or dialectical, logic to thought itself. Just as nonhuman nature unfolds over time, with multiple (though not infinite) possibilities for what it could become, toward a richer ecosystem, so humans unfold over their lifetimes. Their physical bodies develop and change; humans literally grow. Humans all exhibit the potentiality to develop themselves in numerous ways, from their abilities to their very ideas, to how they think about the world and all its phenomena. Social control subtly exerts itself through dualistic thinking. Humans are taught to see the world in black and white categories—good or evil, freedom or domination—in short, to think uncritically. At its best, anar-

[41] For more on the relation of humans to the nonhuman world, see works by anarcho-communists Peter Kropotkin (such as *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution* or *The Conquest of Bread*) and Murray Bookchin (such as *The Ecology of Freedom* or *Toward an Ecological Society*) as well as *The Eclipse of Reason* by Max Horkheimer of the Marxist Frankfurt school.

up forms of mutualism as the basis for a noncapitalist economy, where cooperation would link all to all.

Mutual aid is one of the most beautiful of anarchism's ethics. It implies a lavish, boundless sense of generosity, in which people support each other and each other's projects. It expresses an openhanded spirit of abundance, in which kindness is never in short supply. It points to new relations of sharing and helping, mentoring and giving back, as the very basis for social organization. Mutual aid communalizes compassion, thereby translating into greater "social security" for everyone—without need for top-down institutions. It is solidarity in action, writ large, whether on the local or global level.

When felt and lived out as a daily sensibility, in combination with other anarchist ethics, cooperation creates fundamentally different social relations, which offer humanity the best odds of transforming the values of a hierarchical society. In a hierarchical society, charity is a form of "giving" that no matter how benevolent, ends up forging paternalistic relationships. The giver is in a position of authority; the recipient is always at their mercy, even if the giver needs the recipient to feel good about themselves (or as a tax write-off). This leads to an ethics of self-interest: one shouldn't give unless one receives something equal in return, regardless of whether each person has something equal to give. Mutual aid, in contrast, stresses reciprocal relations, regardless of whether the gift is equal in kind. Humans give back to each other in a variety of ways—the inequality of equals. Individuals and societies flourish because the different contributions are not only equally valued but combine to make for a greater whole.

Ecological Orientation

Mutual aid also translates into an ecological outlook. The anarchist perspective, however, is fundamentally at odds with environmentalism as well as green capitalism—both of which seek

Praise for *Anarchism and Its Aspirations*

One of the strongest speakers and writers in North American radical movements and anarchist networks, it's about damn time that Cindy Milstein's amazing thinking and writing is put together in a book. Simultaneously a participant in popular radical movement actions and articulating the theory behind the actions, she paints a clear-headed vision of the free and just world we're fighting for. Uncompromising, practical, and hopeful, this book is essential reading for all who are taking on climate change, war, or corporate capitalism, and know that a better world is both possible and necessary!

—David Solnit, coauthor of *The Battle of the Story of the "Battle of Seattle"*

I've often been asked by people for a book on anarchism that "gives them an idea," and I've often wondered what I could recommend that is all at once concise, profound, highly readable, and up to date. Cindy Milstein has now solved this problem. In these wonderful essays, she brings together anarchist history and current developments with ease, illustrating how the core values, ideas, and principles of anarchism remain the same while their expressions change according to times, places, and circumstances. You will find it hard to put down this book until you're finished, and it will leave you longing for more intelligent and inspiring thoughts on how to make this world a better place for all of us. I expect *Anarchism and Its Aspirations* to become *the* introduction to anarchism of the next decade—and I certainly hope it will be!

—Gabriel Kuhn, editor of Gustav Landauer's *Revolution and Other Writings*

Milstein's work is a clear and passionate account of the anarchism that lives beyond any particular organization, as an expression of humanity's indestructible desire for a world free

from hierarchies and all forms of domination. The book is also a road map to the many social and cultural movements that anarchism has traversed, from the Provos to radical ecology and Zapatismo, and a testimony to its continuing ability to capture the radical imagination. Above all, the book is a call to live the revolution now, making of our daily lives a prefiguration of the egalitarian and cooperative ethics that anarchism aspires to.

—Silvia Federici, author of *Caliban and the Witch*

In a crazy world full of complexity, contradiction, and irony, it's easy to lose your footing. If you are looking for a solid place to root your analysis, this is a fabulous place to land. Cindy Milstein's book is thoughtful, energetic, and visionary, and will give you a ton to chew on. It is a brilliant primer of anarchist politics.

—Matt Hern, author of *Common Ground in a Liquid City*

At a time when anarchism is no longer merely the most revolutionary political theory and praxis but also the only one left, it is even more important to rescue it from the dangers of potential fossilization. A century ago, another "danger- ous woman," Emma Goldman, reminded us that anarchism should not be a theory of the future but rather a "living force in the affairs of our life, constantly creating new conditions." Goldman's voice resonates strongly in this beautiful and inspirational book, which offers the much-needed hope that every individual—here and now—can change this world and create it anew.

—Žiga Vodovnik, author of *Anarchy of Everyday Life*

Anarchist Interventions: An IAS/AK Press Book series

Radical ideas can open up spaces for radical actions, by illuminating hierarchical power relations and drawing out possibili-

or as little as they see fit, with no sense of scarcity. People can borrow what they want, with no judgment (in the ideal) about the quantity or quality of their usage. They can enjoy the library space itself, on their own or with the assistance of a librarian. They can use it without offering anything in return, or if desired, freely give back by donating books or volunteering time to reshelf them. Imagine if everything from energy to education was such a "from each, to each" institution. Many of the best anarchist experiments today—albeit still within the limitations of state and capitalism—are about trying to put this notion into practice, from bike and food coops, to skill shares and free clinics.

Mutual Aid

A related and much-used phrase in the lexicon of anarchist ethics is mutual aid. To some degree this simply restates the two above ideas. But more specifically, it's the expansive notion that humans—and for that matter, as Kropotkin tried to show, the nonhuman world—best evolve through forms of cooperation. All living things also engage in competition, as Kropotkin also noted. Nevertheless, it's when they work together that they fully bloom. Mutual aid necessitates intricate, complex relationships as well as harmonious differentiation to achieve such reciprocal exchange. As Kropotkin argued, when people cooperate, they are able to produce more, materially and otherwise. This benefits both the individual and the group; it is to the mutual benefit of everyone. Competition simplifies. When humans compete, only a few of them win out. This makes sense and can even be fun in the context of games; in the context of a society, where everyone should "win" a better world, competition is thoroughly detrimental. This is particularly true when it becomes naturalized as the key value within the economy, pitting all against all. Anarchists have long held

asserts that everyone is deserving of the material as well as nonmaterial bases to fully thrive.

Without coercion, without the need to have a "job" to get what one needs and wants, many "employments" would disappear—the whole bureaucracy of insurance companies, for instance. People would do almost everything that communities need or want to get done, since people would freely choose what they love to do, such as tidying up, growing food and cooking, writing and painting, fighting fires, and developing software. Individuals and groups would take on multiple tasks. Whatever no one wants to do—say, staff a sewage system—would be shared by everyone, or at least by those who are physically able to do so. This isn't a pipe dream, nor it is just an ethic; it is about applying ethics to social organization. Anyone who has ever been involved in a voluntary collective project knows that people can manage to get things done in ways that account for differences in talents, proclivities, and the common good. They can do this without force, equivalency, unhappiness, or the state. To the contrary, such experiments viscerally point to a sense of personal and social satisfaction that far outstrips systems of "from each according to what they are forced to do, to each according to their financial means, and otherwise people go without."

This ethic also undergirds the idea mentioned above that everyone should be provided and cared for, or rather, that people will provide and care for each other. It asserts that human communities should ensure that everyone has enough to sustain themselves, such as health care, and enrich themselves, such as the arts. If there's a drought or an earthquake, people will do their utmost to distribute limited resources in order to care for everyone. A library is a good present-day instance of this ethic, despite its problematic elements (say, wage work for the staff). Communities see libraries as something necessary and valuable to everyday life, as something that should be freely available to all. Anyone can use the library as much

ties for liberatory social transformations. The Anarchist Intervention series—a collaborative project between the Institute for Anarchist Studies (IAS) and AK Press—strives to contribute to the development of relevant, vital anarchist theory and analysis by intervening in contemporary discussions. Works in this series will look at twenty-first-century social conditions—including social structures and oppression, their historical trajectories, and new forms of domination, to name a few—as well as reveal opportunities for different tomorrows premised on horizontal, egalitarian forms of self-organization.

Given that anarchism has become the dominant tendency within revolutionary milieus and movements today, it is crucial that anarchists explore current phenomena, strategies, and visions in a much more rigorous, serious manner. Each title in this series, then, will feature a present-day anarchist voice, with the aim, over time, of publishing a variety of perspectives. The series' multifaceted goals are to cultivate anarchist thought so as to better inform anarchist practice, encourage a culture of public intellectuals and constructive debate within anarchism, introduce new generations to anarchism, and offer insights into today's world and potentialities for a freer society.

Prologue

A*narchism and Its Aspirations* doubles as a book and a bookend. I finished the manuscript on the tenth anniversary of the "battle of Seattle"—November 30, 2009. A decade ago, that same mass mobilization and the anarchism that it made visible in North America spurred me to write for the new anticapitalist movement of movements as part of my political work. Chapter 3, "Democracy Is Direct," was the first result of that effort. It was penned for the booklet *Bringing Democracy Home*, which an anarchist group of us produced and then distributed for free, by the thousands, on the streets of Washington, DC, at the A16 direct action against the International Monetary Fund and World Bank meetings in spring 2000.

As a book, I hope this small collection of essays contributes to building a better anarchism and encouraging new anarchists. I hope it sparks debate about what anarchism is and could be, first and foremost because I want us to be effective—to win—and that involves critical yet constructive dialogue as integral to our prefigurative practice. And I hope that the ideals expressed here stand the test of time, because I firmly believe in the expansive ethical sensibility that has marked anarchism as a tradition. Like many anarchists, I know that words can indeed be weapons. That's why I write. It is my greatest hope, then, that this book adds to our arsenal as we fight to institute a nonhierarchical society.

As a bookend, though, I worry that the lavish emphases of ten years ago—direct democracy, unity in our diversity, and a cooperative, creative impulse, among others—have been lost. Such loss can certainly be attributed to the numerous histori-

From Each, to Each

Beyond a fundamental belief in the worth of each person, an anarchist egalitarian ethic also follows the communistic notion of "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs." But anarchism gives it a crucial twist: "from each according to their abilities *and passions*, to each according to their needs *and desires*." In this view, people all contribute in various ways to each other and their communities—and not simply in an economic sense. Indeed, this ethic helps to reembed "the economy" into the wholeness of life. No longer would contributions be unequally rewarded by wages or status, or made invisible when they don't fit into an economic matrix. The plethora of human contributions would be based on what people are good at, what they enjoy, and also what they collectively determine is desirable as well as necessary. One person's needs (wool mittens, apples, or books) might be another person's desires. In a good society, people would want to satisfy as much of both as possible.

All contributions have social value, from building houses to taking care of babies to staging a theater piece. Everyone should be able to focus on the things they want to do. Even if some people can't work at different points in their lives—say, as a young child or when sick—everyone would still get what they need and desire. Work itself would have an altogether different meaning, perhaps a different name. Production and distribution would involve neither compulsion nor drudgery, nor be something distinct from "free time." They would be intimate parts of what bring joy and sustenance to people's lives. Time would be freed up to make it one's own. Social contributions thus move beyond the limited notion of what one gets paid (and compelled) to do. Instead, the "from each, to each" sensibility understands that everyone adds to society even when they can't make and distribute tangible goods or services. It

that everyone deserves to shape and share in society—a principle that undergirds a nonhierarchical outlook, if opposition to hierarchy has any meaning at all. But this doesn't mean that people all have equal needs and desires, nor stable ones. People want different things over their lifetimes, just as communities have differing demands over time.

The anarchist ethic of the equality of unequals shatters the dehumanizing notion promulgated under capitalism that everything, including each person, is exchangeable—equally a commodity, and thus without inherent worth—replacing it with the rehumanizing concept of the value of each individual. It gives qualitative meaning to justice. Under representative democracies, justice is blind to the uniqueness of each person and the specificity of their circumstances. Particularities aren't weighed, and "justice" is meted out in vastly unjust ways. Within anarchism, being just entails being clear-eyed about the differences between people and their situations, which in turn makes it at least possible to negotiate personal and social relations, including conflicts, in ways that are substantively fair. Everyone and everything has equal value, and should equally be provided sustenance in order to fully blossom. What that sustenance looks like, however, will differ in quantity and quality, based on differences in needs and desires. For example, ethical health care would not be a cookie-cutter list of services, as if people's bodies are all alike. Nor would it be apportioned in meager, exacting amounts. It would instead be tailored toward each individual's specific wellness as an always-available social good, in as much abundance as possible. But the equality of unequals isn't simply about materials needs. It is a sensibility to guide how humans can justly apply equal worth to the rich nonequivalency of differentiation.

cal events over the past decade that seem to have gone from bad to worse, crushingly so: 9/11, "wars on terror," green and brown scares, Katrina and now Haiti, accelerating ecological and economic devastation. Sadly the list could go on. But I worry that in the face of this morass, anarchists are becoming increasingly nihilistic and far less concerned about ending social suffering. The ever-crueler, more alienating world appears to be doing far more damage to us than we have the capacity, much less stamina, to do to it. It troubles me that as I finish this book, I get the eerie sensation that I might have to shelve my own aspirations for what anarchists can accomplish, just when we are needed more than ever.

This may be my own sorrow speaking, from the standpoint of a bookended period that began with so much potential, so much exuberance, and seems to have ended in such despair. The gap between the ideals advanced by anarchism and the actual social reality today, even within anarchist circles, can be great—dispiritingly so, if one is a self-reflective anarchist. Contemporary anarchism can appear messy. In practice, it manifests all the forms of hierarchy, domination, and oppression that one finds elsewhere. Its subcultural codes of dress, say, or its sometimes-tired protest tactics can make it seem like a parody of itself. Chapter 4, "Reclaim the Cities: From Protest to Popular Power," written midway through this bookended time and revised for this book, was one attempt to address this problem. For newcomers, the gateway to the lived world of anarchism can be rusty and unwelcoming , and many of you will exit all too quickly. As one friend morosely joked recently, the past decade has seen three generations of anarchists come and go.

With this book, I want to extend a compassionate hand, and urge you, those new and old to anarchism, to stay. I want us all to struggle for what's best within anarchism, not just for ourselves, but in order to construct the free society of free individuals that anarchism, as I'll argue below, so generously and

lovingly strives to achieve for everyone. Yes, the world is increasingly messy; rather than retreating, however, it's imperative that we advance toward an egalitarian community of communities. Thus I hope I've adequately imparted enough of the good, the true, and the beautiful of anarchism's aims here to convince you to joyfully yet diligently embrace—or continue doing so with renewed vigor—the spirit of anarchism.

There is much that is promising within present-day anarchism. Chapter 2, also written midway through this bookended period and revised here, captures this possibility. We may not have put a dent in capitalism, and that's something we need to strategize long and hard about, but we have come a long way in a relatively short time. The "Paths toward Utopia" epilogue, excerpted from a recent collaboration with Erik Ruin for *World War Three Illustrated*, gestures at how our cultures of resistance can move toward cultures of reconstruction. On the ground, the first decade of the twenty-first century has provided a remarkable opening for anarchism, thereby swelling the numbers of those who identify as anarchists. This has led to a flowering of anarchist infrastructure, from a dramatic increase worldwide in social centers and infoshops, to an upsurge in collectively run projects meeting needs like legal support, food, and art. We've developed informal though articulated global networks of exchange as well as solidarity, facilitated by everything from savvy uses of communication technologies and indie media to material aid. Along with like-minded others, we've engaged in forms of face-to-face politics that have supplied a new radical imagination through numerous days of action, consultas and convergences, and horizontalist movements.

It isn't enough. Still, the ten-year bookend here isn't only holding up a history of desolation; we have made substantial gains, even if embryonic. Such seemingly minor victories are necessary for social transformation, not just as sustenance along the way, but also because our processes are part and

or not. They also need to be free to do things with their bodies—for instance, to express varied sexualities and genders, which goes well beyond what any state can grant or take away.

If we understand this sense of negative and positive freedom, what appears as a contradictory stance within anarchism makes perfect sense. An anarchist might firmly believe that the Palestinian people deserve to be liberated from occupation, even if that means that they set up their own state. That same anarchist might also firmly believe that a Palestinian state, like all states, should be opposed in favor of nonstatist institutions. A complete sense of freedom would always include both the negative and positive senses—in this case, liberation from occupation and simultaneously the freedom to self-determine. Otherwise, as both actually existing Communist and liberal regimes have demonstrated, "freedom from" on its own will serve merely to enslave human potentiality, and at its most extreme, humans themselves; self-governance is denied in favor of a few governing over others. And "freedom to," on its own, as capitalism has shown, will serve merely to promote egotistic individualism and pit each against each; self-determination trumps notions of collective good. Constantly working to bring both liberation and freedom to the table, within moments of resistance and reconstruction, is part of that same juggling act of approximating an increasingly differentiated yet more harmonious world.

Equality of Unequals

Bound up within positive freedom is the notion that people are not the same, and that's a good thing. Communities, geographic and social, are also distinct from each other. This is why humans must be free to figure out what makes the most sense for each person and situation. Anarchism believes in everyone's ability to take part in thinking through and acting on, in compassionate ways, the world they inhabit. It maintains

philosophy's aspirations: the good, the true, and the beautiful. They are the starting points for anarchism's questions as well as its modeling of answers. In a world that feels—that is—increasingly wrong, anarchism's ethical compass acts as an antidote. That alone is an enormous contribution.

The Ethical Content

Still, serving as an ethical compass, while essential, is only one part of the constellation that embodies anarchism. Another is the directionality, or content, of those ethics. Here again, anarchists share a set of generalized (and generalizable) ethics, and strive to make those values tangible, even if they apply them in different ways. In fact, a plurality of applications is precisely an anarchist value, or what could be called "unity in ethics."[40] Let's look at the parameters, in broad brushstrokes, of this communal anarchist ethic. This isn't meant to be a complete picture—nor should it be, since an ethics of freedom should by definition expand over time. But we can touch on some of the most prominent aspirations that unify anarchists.

Liberation and Freedom

Anarchism promotes a dual notion of freedom. It asserts the idea of liberation, or what could be called negative freedom: "freedom from." But it is equally concerned with what could be called positive freedom: "freedom to." It is not enough that people are free, say, from the state telling them what they can do with their bodies—such as whether they can get an abortion

and the responses, including an addendum of sorts by Harvey (all available at news.infoshop.org), plus a countering piece by Alex Bradley of the Pittsburgh Organizing Group that will appear in issue 4 of the *Steel City Revolt!* (forthcoming at www.organizepittsburgh.org).

[40] Thanks, again, to Chris Dixon for offering this phrase in his commentary on a draft of this chapter.

parcel of revolution, pointing beyond hierarchy. The main essay in this book, chapter 1, written this past year, reflects my optimism that anarchism's constellation of ethics, along with its dynamic practices, can bind us together, inspiring us and many others for the hard work ahead of forging a world from below. That, too, is my hope.

I copyedit university press books for a relatively pleasant "living" (as a friend quipped once, "Even when I love my work, I hate capitalism"), and every prologue reminds the reader that any mistakes belong to the author. The same holds true for *Anarchism and Its Aspirations*. Such prologues also offer a round of appreciation, but primarily to professional colleagues, well-funded foundations, and frequently, wives. I was struck, when thinking about acknowledgments, that my gratitude is for all those acts of mutual aid that anarchists regularly do for each other, and not to build careers, nor for money, power, or due to coercion. I am proud—on most days—to call myself an anarchist, yet as another dear friend has reminded me of late, it isn't what we call ourselves that counts but how we behave. And that has been underscored for me umpteenth times in the writing of this book. It was a collective process, made possible by numerous acts of kindness and cooperation, by dedicated comrades, global ties, voluntary associations and shoestring projects, and chosen friends/family. My name is on the cover, but that masks the fact that anarchist books, like all anarchist endeavors, are intentionally communal works.

In this case, some of that mutual aid is visible. My book marks the first in the Anarchist Interventions series produced collaboratively by the Institute for Anarchist Studies (IAS), AK Press, and Justseeds Artists' Cooperative. My profound respect goes out to everyone involved in those projects, and my profound gratitude likewise goes out to the people in those projects who encouraged and also pushed me to do this book; thanks most especially to the members, past and present, of the IAS board. I want to particularly thank by

name those anarchists who went so far beyond the "call of duty" that in hindsight, I'm almost embarrassed to have asked so much of them: to Zach Blue, David Combs, Chris Dixon, Josh MacPhee, Suzanne Shaffer, and Charles Weigl, for untold hours of critiquing , editing, and copyediting , design and layout, and advice. Much appreciation, too, to Alec Icky Dunn for lending his artwork; I couldn't have asked for a better graphic complement to my words. And thanks to Kate Khatib for proofreading.

Much of this mutual aid is, sadly, invisible, just as, sadly, so much of anarchism and anarchists are frequently invisible to the world. When I think back on it, during this bookended time period, my various essays and now this book have only been improved by the countless anarchists who have either offered rigorous criticism of my writing and ideas, explained their ideas to me or handed me their zine or CD, taught me lessons in collectives, study groups, and conversations, dialogued at conferences or bookfairs and during my public talks, shared exhilarating as well as deflating moments on the streets, and just plain given me moral support. Whenever I needed someone to dig up a quotation, debate a new thought, or publish something I'd written, there was always an anarchist ready to assist. This isn't miraculous, nor should it even seem extraordinary. But in reflecting on what went into this book—aside from the long hours I stared at my computer screen—I am more convinced than ever that there is something special about how most anarchists choose to act, despite all the odds at this historical juncture: with empathy, tangibly giving of ourselves *and* doing it ourselves, toward a form of social organization in which it will be routine to act in mutualistic ways. If you are one of those many thousands of anarchists that I've met over the past ten years through our widening milieu and had a lovely interaction with, or better yet gotten to know as an acquaintance or friend, or are someone I love

to first ask what people want to do and why, from an ethical standpoint, and then get to the pragmatic how-to questions. The very process of asking what's right is how people fill out ethics in praxis, to meet new demands and dilemmas, new social conditions and contexts.

Anarchism, then, brings an egalitarian ethics out into the world, making it transparent, public, and shared. It maintains an ethical orientation, while continually trying to put such notions into practice, as flawed as the effort might be. When other people come into contact with this ethical compass, they will hopefully "get it" and incorporate the same values into their lives, because it works. It offers directionality to political involvement and buttresses people's efforts to remake society. It turns surviving into thriving. That's the crucial difference between a pragmatic versus ethical impulse: people, in cooperative concert, qualitatively transform one another's lives.

Of course, there is an enormous psychological barrier to taking such a leap. Many people, after all, are struggling simply to get by. Anarchism involves the combined project of trying to create the material conditions that "free" people up enough to make this shift. Its ethical orientation also implies an underlying humanism and lived efforts at humaneness. It tries to practice the good society, with others, within the shell of the not-so-good society. The goal of anarchism isn't to turn everyone into anarchists. It's to encourage people to think and act for themselves, but to do both from a set of emancipatory values. Even the process of evaluating values is an ethical one within anarchism. "Ethics" isn't some fixed entity but rather the continual questioning of what it means to be a good person in a good society.[39] It draws from the classical triad of

[39] Anarchists also ask such questions of each other, but unlike most other radical circles, they do this publicly, so as to grapple in the light of day with the dilemmas of our behaviors and actions. One recent example is the debate over strategy and tactics raised just after the G-20 protests in Pittsburgh by Ryan Harvey in his piece "Are We Addicted to Rioting?"

a future revolutionary moment. They subscribe to a politics of expediency, with pragmatism defining the present and ethics awaiting some distant future. Tragically, as history has shown, the end never comes. This isn't an accident, though; if you head in a different direction from your destination, it's unlikely that you'll reach it. This is not to say that other political philosophies don't have their own ethical orientations; but anarchism keeps its ethics at the forefront, as the central question before all else.

Anarchists also want to be effective and efficient. Yet for them, ethics shape how people pragmatically struggle for social change. For instance, rather than asserting that it's not feasible to include everyone within a large region in the decisions that affect their lives, anarchists would argue that because this goal is both desirable and ethical, we must figure out how to move toward and ultimately ensure it. Answering such questions determines the nature of any anarchist project or organizing effort. This doesn't mean jumping from a state-based society to a nonstatist one overnight; but it definitely means that anarchists see inclusive, collective decision-making processes as integral to any project. When anarchists join their neighbors to save a local library branch, they suggest a general assembly, say, as the organizing body and offer the skills to make it work. They will meet to determine the best collective structure for their new infoshop, even if it takes a bit more time, thereby schooling themselves in directly democratic processes on the microlevel in order to hopefully extend such practices to the whole of social organization.

It's never a matter of ethics versus pragmatism; it's a question of which informs the other. Humans have shown themselves capable of almost unlimited imagination and innovation—qualities that could be said to define human beings. People have used this capacity to do both great good and great harm. The point is that when humans set their minds to doing something, it's frequently possible. It makes sense

(or have loved) and are (or have been) fortunate enough to have in my life, the biggest of heartfelt thanks. And a hug.

I wish that I could acknowledge all the anarchist projects that ended during the time frame here, but alas there are too many. I do want to name a few that are no longer around, and that I was intimately involved with and still mourn, especially politically, because they also shaped me and this book: the anarchist summer school known as the Institute for Social Ecology, the Free Society Collective, and the National Conference on Organized Resistance (fortunately, Black Sheep Books is still alive and kicking). I've also lost more friends and comrades, not to mention a partner, who influenced me and this book than I care to recount during the past ten years. It is one of the most painful parts of remaining an anarchist that, at least for now, anarchism seems to be a revolving door; if this book does anything to change that, every hour of writing will have been worth it. Death, too, takes good anarchists, though, and I want to express the deepest of appreciation for one person in that regard: Murray Bookchin. A lifelong, self-educated revolutionary, and arguably one of the most influential anarchists of the second half of the twentieth century, Murray gave tirelessly of himself to mentor and befriend generation after generation of radicals, including me. I remember years ago, at a public meeting in Burlington, Vermont, when some politician was spinelessly equivocating about some economic injustice, Murray stood up and in a booming yet measured voice said, "In my day we called it capitalism." I miss him.

Lastly, the past two years have been the darkest and oddly, as a result, the brightest of my life. Many friends and strangers as well as my biological family have startled me by being there at just the right moment. Yet certain chosen friends/family truly made this book possible, by renewing my faith in trust, love, and home within the uncertainty that is life: Walter, Ace, Arthur, Chloe, Katie, Nutmeg , Karen, Diane, Andrej, Harjit, and especially Joshua.

I want to end this prologue and begin this book with an anecdote. I've heard Ashanti Alston, Anarchist Panther, former IAS board member, and ex-political prisoner, speak in public on many occasions. I am continually amazed by his knack for gifting a positive outlook to others, even when he personally is having a hard time. After one particularly reinvigorating talk, someone asked Ashanti how he had remained so hopeful during his dozen-plus years of incarceration. His eyes lit up, and Ashanti enthusiastically exclaimed, to paraphrase: "That was the most hopeful time of my life, because every day we were scheming about how to escape from prison!" No one should have to live in the cages of capitalism, states, and other forms of social domination, but given that we still do, anarchism's aspirations supply a key to finding our way out.

"served" by various antiauthoritarian projects—the number of people whose needs for food or housing, say, are met on a fairly consistent basis—it might add up to millions globally. Hence the need for more clear lines of interdependence and mutual aid as well as attempts to develop them as dual powers.

The important thing about moving toward a better world is how people go about doing it. Anarchist practices share distinct elements, even if they're implemented in different ways: the lives and communities that they attempt to establish are premised on a shared ethical compass. This is key, given that most social forces presently deny and try to destroy such alternatives. Reconstructive efforts to restructure everyday life imply that people can work to destroy commodified and coercive relations. They also sustain people for the hard work of doing just that.

An Ethical Compass

This comprehensive attempt to self-manage the whole of one's life and activities, to ensure that everyone can do the same, revolves around an ethical compass. Anarchism serves as a touchstone not simply for anarchists but especially for those who encounter anarchism's challenge: "What's the right thing to do?" The classical anarchists called this simply "the Idea." Anarchism stands as a beacon through its history and practices, and perhaps most especially through its ideals.

No other political philosophy keeps this vigilant voice constantly at its center, as its core mission. Other political perspectives temper or altogether dispense with "What is right?" in favor of "What's pragmatic?" They accept the status quo as a given, and then seek to understand what's possible within that predetermined landscape. Even other revolutionary political philosophies ultimately lean toward the pragmatic, setting aside "What's right?" in the supposed short-term, and focusing on the most effective and efficient way to allegedly reach

sures health and safety, solidarity not charity, generosity not hoarding, enabling people to pursue a variety of possibilities to enhance themselves and their communities. In these ways, anarchism aspires toward new understandings of happiness, not to mention human worth, outside the commodity form.

Anarchists design modest experiments with grand goals to allow people to meet their needs and desires, be ecological, craft new social relations, set up spaces and organizations, and make decisions together—all in nonhierarchical ways. These are partial experiments, sometimes short-lived, especially given the force of the current systems of domination. Yet they form a tangible fabric of horizontalist innovation. A single Food Not Bombs project started in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1980, for example, has been borrowed and translated into new contexts around the world.[38] Linked in name and sensibility, but operating autonomously in each location, Food Not Bombs challenges people's relation to the production and consumption of meals. If further interconnected to other such experiments, and with further innovation, such projects could form a dual power to the powers-that-be. The idea is that people establish counterinstitutions as well as lifeways that gain enough force—because they capture the hearts, minds, and participation of enough people—to ultimately exist on a level with, or finally in victorious contestation to, centralized power.

Efforts like Food Not Bombs (or "spin-offs" like Food Not Lawns, Homes Not Jails, and Books through Bars), like many anarchist projects, sometimes operate largely within a subculture, which might be a necessary phase in testing out ideas and developing an infrastructure. Like any alternative, they can fall prey to co-optation or simply comfortable routine. Yet since no one "owns" these projects, anarchists and others can play with and build on them. If one counted the number of people

[38] For more on Food Not Bombs, see www.foodnotbombs.net/.

Anarchism and Its Aspirations

> By anarchist spirit I mean that deeply human sentiment, which aims at the good of all, freedom and justice for all, solidarity and love among the people; which is not an exclusive characteristic only of self-declared anarchists, but inspires all people who have a generous heart and an open mind.
>
> —Errico Malatesta, *Umanita Nova*, April 13, 1922

At its core, anarchism is indeed a spirit—one that cries out against all that's wrong with present-day society, and boldly proclaims all that could be right under alternate forms of social organization. It is also precisely the quality of an airy free-spiritedness that gives anarchism its attraction. Anarchism playfully travels across the mists of time and space to borrow from the best of human innovations, to give body to the most lofty of ideals. It can be hauntingly beautiful. But it involves a difficulty as well: pinning down this ghostly figure, this "inhabitant of an unseen world," with any definition or substance, much less getting other people to believe in the utopian apparition called anarchism.[1]

What is anarchism exactly? People have asked and answered this question since the birth of the word as a distinct political philosophy within the revolutionary tradition. Most definitional tracts on the "ABCs of anarchism" were penned

[1] This definition of "ghost," as a noun, is from Merriam-Webster Collegiate.com.

long ago.[2] I will try to offer an introduction to anarchism from the vantage point of the early twenty-first century.[3] More specifically, I will hone in on anarchism's aspirations, as opposed to its history or current practices. That anarchist projects, and anarchists themselves, fall short of these aims underscores how essential it is to transform society in order to also transform ourselves. "We're only human," the saying goes, but our humanity is profoundly damaged by the alienated world of control that we inhabit. Anarchism contends that people would be much more humane under nonhierarchical social relations and social arrangements. Hence my concentration on the ethics—the values pertaining to how humans conduct themselves—that knit anarchism together as a distinct political sensibility.[4] As will hopefully become clear,

[2] One such work is Alexander Berkman, *The ABC of Anarchism* (1929; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2005), but there are many other primary texts from the early days of anarchism, ranging from Michael Bakunin, *God and the State* (1882; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1970) and Peter Kropotkin, *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002) to Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1969) and Errico Malatesta, *Anarchy* (London: Freedom Press, 1995). Some secondary-source overviews, several of which include much primary material, include: Daniel Guerin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970); Daniel Guerin, *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005); Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2009); Clifford Harper, *Anarchy: A Graphic Guide* (London: Camden Press, 1987); Robert Graham, ed., *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas*, 2 volumes (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2004, 2009). For a contemporary look at anarchism, see Uri Gordon, *Anarchy Alive! Anti-authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory* (London: Pluto Press, 2008).

[3] My vantage point is also shaped, for better or worse, by my geographic location: North America, and the United States in particular.

[4] In principle, anarchism eschews dogmatisms, or viewpoints that are arrived at without carefully examined premises. Ethics within anarchism are not about accepting god-given values, for instance, or any values that are imposed or blindly followed because of tradition. Instead, anarchism advocates a thought-filled ethics, where people voluntarily come to a shared set

instrumental worldview toward one based on each person's intrinsic worth.

This qualitative dimension within anarchism isn't simply a feeling, helping people to overcome the weight of alienation under capitalism. Many anarchist projects are also models of how to meet daily needs, in order to ultimately overcome the material deprivation that capitalism imposes on much of humanity. Both are equally vital elements of revolutionary transformation. Capitalism has indicated that humans might be able to achieve a postscarcity society—a world in which everyone has enough of what they need to sustain life. But despite grocery stores and dumpsters overflowing with food, billions of people go hungry; despite labor-saving technologies, most people work more for less; despite breakthroughs in health care, many die needlessly. Meanwhile, consumption has been transformed into a barometer of one's worth, a never-ending quest for happiness via commodity choices. And it's always premised on what one has to exchange for that abundance, or else it's denied.

Anarchist projects, in contrast, seek to reorient the whole of production. As a direct counter to capitalism, they look to develop self-managed forms of production that allow people to see themselves in what they make and recognize others in what they produce. They transform notions of production and work altogether, so that people can make things based on their proclivities, and so that "work" becomes a joyful way of collectively fulfilling the material bases of life. They aim to ensure plenty as well, based on the belief that everyone deserves material sustenance simply by virtue of being human. Anarchist projects also attempt to reorient consumption. They build on the idea that when people see themselves reflected in what they create, "goods" carry a sense of our "goodness"—the care and individuality that goes into making things. They transform notions of consumption altogether, shifting the focus toward use and reuse, via sharing, gifting, and barter. Consumption en-

your loneliness!), but never fulfills them, so one needs to keep chasing after the next shiny possibility. "All that is solid melts into air."[37] The latest iPhone that will meet all your needs is, alas, now yesterday's inadequate shell, replaced by the next answer to all your desires. Whether one has nothing or everything, "life" under capitalism feels empty.

Anarchist experiments expose the cracks in this edifice. They allow people to personally feel what it could be like if life was of their own making. This qualitative retaking of the every day reveals the mind-numbing quantitative calculations that people are compelled to make under capitalism. Expanding the qualitative could be the key to capitalism's demise, because no matter how much capitalism tries to recuperate all that makes people human, its quantitative outlook will always feel sterile when contrasted to a sense of what it might mean to be truly alive.

This is a subtle shift, of course, especially under constrained and oppressive conditions, but it's how people frequently describe their first encounter with anarchism in practice. It might be the exuberance of forming a study group to reclaim education or viscerally experiencing the power of an affinity group during a protest. It could be the pride in communalizing skills and resources to refurbish a new social center. Or perhaps it's the joy of establishing collective ways to meet material needs. Doing-it-ourselves together, not to amass fortunes or accumulate power but to carve out rich new relations of sharing and kindness, always entails quality over quantity, setting new terms based on how everyone would like to see everything done, cooperatively and through directly democratic means, voluntarily and in solidarity. It's about moving away from an

[37] This phrase is from Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 223. For a related exploration of this phrase, see Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1988).

anarchism serves unflinchingly as a philosophy of freedom, as the nagging conscience that people and their communities can always be better.

There are many different though often complementary ways of looking at anarchism, but in a nutshell, it can be defined as the striving toward a "free society of free individuals."[5] This phrase is deceptively simple. Bound within it is both an implicit multidimensional critique and an expansive, if fragile, reconstructive vision.

To deepen this definition, a further shorthand depiction of anarchism is helpful: the ubiquitous "circle A" image. The *A* is a placeholder for the ancient Greek word *anarkhia*—combining the root *an(a)*, "without," and *arkh(os)*, "ruler, authority"—meaning the absence of authority. More contemporaneously and accurately, it stands for the absence of both domination (mastery or control over another) and hierarchy (ranked power relations of dominance and subordination).[6] The circle could be considered an *O*, a placeholder for "order" or, better yet,

of overarching values, which they also continually (re)evaluate in relation to human practices and behaviors. Ethics within anarchism thus entail actively thinking through and trying to implement notions of goodness and badness, rightness and wrongness—even as people remain open to discovering new forms of goodness and badness.

[5] There are probably as many ways of defining anarchism as there are anarchists, given the openness of this "ism." Yet that openness—to new ideas, practices, and phenomena—is still bound to a fairly specific set of beliefs, as I hope to show in this chapter. At its best, the openness within anarchism implies both a dynamism and inclusiveness, grounded in a profoundly egalitarian sensibility.

[6] "Authority" can be a good thing at times, in the sense of someone having expertise, yet without the ability to use that expertise to control others. "Ruler" implies more of a dominant-subordinate relation between people, but in a self-governing society, people might all be both rulers and ruled, in a noncoercive and collective sense. Thus, the absence of domination and hierarchy are more precise. Martin Buber suggests in his *Paths in Utopia* (1949; repr., Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996) that classical anarchists like Kropotkin wanted to restructure society in the direction of "more self-government," and as such a better word in Buber's view is "'anoc-

"organization," drawing on Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's seminal definition in *What Is Property?* (1840): "as man [*sic*] seeks justice in equality, so society seeks order in anarchy."[7] The circle A symbolizes anarchism as a dual project: the abolition of domination and hierarchical forms of social organization, or power-over social relations, and their replacement with horizontal versions, or power-together and in common—again, a free society of free individuals.

To fill out this initial definition a bit further, let's look at the two sides of that phrase. Anarchism is a synthesis of the best of liberalism and the best of communism, elevated and transformed by the best of libertarian Left traditions that work toward an egalitarian, voluntarily, and nonhierarchical society.[8] The project of liberalism in the broadest sense is to ensure personal liberty. Communism's overarching project is to ensure the communal good. One could, and should, question the word "free" in both cases, particularly in the actual implementations of liberalism and communism, and their shared emphasis on the state and property as ensuring freedom.[9] Nonetheless, re-

racy' (*αχρατια*); not absence of government but absence of domination" (see *Paths in Utopia*, chapter 5, "Kropotkin").

[7] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *What Is Property?* (1840; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 209.

[8] The libertarian Left includes all those revolutionaries, both Marxist and anarchist, striving toward a variety of bottom-up social organization. For an excellent work, sadly out of print, tracing this history, see Richard Gombin, *The Origins of Modern Leftism* (London: Penguin, 1975), and *The Radical Tradition: A Study in Modern Revolutionary Thought* (London: Methuen, 1978), both available in the online library at libcom.org. Rather than the tired debate about Marxism versus anarchism, which ignores the authoritarian as well as antiauthoritarian strains within each tradition, it's much more accurate to see the divide as being, broadly, between those on the libertarian versus nonlibertarian side of social transformation. This also allows for productive collaborations between libertarian leftists, whereby a diversity of theories as well as strategies can blend into much more relevant and effective forms of social reconstruction, as in the case of the Zapatistas, for instance.

[9] In the case of liberalism, in its most participatory form it advocates a minimal state as mere "protection," so that people can basically be left alone

Anarchists interrogate the whole of life, constantly asking , "What is the right thing to do?" They struggle to apply the answers to everything, from basic needs to complex desires, from instances of oppression to institutionalized inequalities. They don't live pure and ethical lives. Rather, the gap between what anarchists imagine to be fully ethical and the series of bad choices we all make under the present conditions illustrates that hierarchical social relationships will forever preclude our ability to be free. Anarchism's emphasis on the whole of life underscores that the current social order already frames the world for everyone down to the tiniest interactions; "choice" itself is already hobbled. Anarchists critique this framework and construct an ethical one in its place, as opposed to providing a moralistic appraisal of whether each individual is 100 percent ethical now—or even close. Anarchists don't live consistently ethical lives, but the effort to do so is a way of uncovering the possibilities of moving away from this unethical present.

At the same time, being an anarchist isn't about sacrificing oneself to "the revolution." In trying to transform the whole of life to approximate a set of values, anarchists both reveal social contradictions and test out new social relations. They also start to experience how life itself could be qualitatively different in the most intimate of ways: for oneself and among others who are doing likewise. In this manner, anarchists share a sense of living more fully self-determined, articulated lives on the personal and social fronts—the bridge from "what is" to "what could be." This is no small feat. The universally felt alienation from the whole of life at this particular historical moment—the wasteland quality to existence under global capitalism—can make it seem as if the whole of life is closed off to transformation. As Marx insightfully observed, everyone is compelled and destroyed by capitalism, even if some benefit in far greater ways than others. Capitalism holds out shiny possibilities for the future (we can feed the world! your next purchase will make you happy at long last! this social network will lessen

of possibility—at least as a start, within oneself. The first act might be critical thought, a less estranged relationship with oneself and others, or the reappropriation of imagination as a step toward a nonalienated society.[36]

Another shared sensibility among anarchists, then, is their attempt to scrutinize and alter the entirety of life. Anarchism doesn't concentrate on just the economic, political, cultural, psychological, or other spheres. Nor does it separate any single issue from its relation to other issues, even if one personally places emphasis on a particular area. It concerns itself with everything that makes people human, including the nonhuman world. The work of anarchism takes place everywhere, every day, from within the body politic to the body itself.

The anarchist hope to transform life translates into a shared, holistic approach to living life. Embracing anarchism is a process of reevaluating every assumption, everything one thinks about and does, and indeed who one is, and then basically turning one's life upside-down. Upending coercive relations is a journey of remaking oneself, as part of the project of remaking the world. But becoming an anarchist is also a process—without end—of applying an ethical compass to the whole of what one (and everyone) is and could be individually and socially. Anarchists aren't necessarily any better, or worse, than anyone else. They are just as damaged by the intricate web of hierarchies, hatreds, and commodified relationships that malform everybody. Within anarchist circles, though, valiant attempts are at least made to be open and self-reflective about this damage, and from there to develop humane ways of addressing it. Anarchism entails working hard at reshaping oneself as well as one's society.

[36] As Chris Dixon noted in his comments on this chapter, "The efforts of individuals to do this are, of course, always significantly limited by existing social relations and institutions. For this reason, I think it's important to always keep in mind the dynamic relationship between individuals and the larger collectivities in which we are situated."

spectively, and at their most "democratic," one's aim is an individual who can live an emancipated life, and the other seeks a community structured along collectivist lines. Both are worthy notions. Unfortunately, freedom can never be achieved in this lopsided manner: through the self *or* society. The two necessarily come into conflict, almost instantly. Anarchism's great leap was to combine self and society in one political vision; at the same time, it jettisoned the state and property as the pillars of support, relying instead on self-organization and mutual aid.

Anarchism understood that any egalitarian form of social organization, especially one seeking a thoroughgoing eradication of domination, had to be premised on both individual and collective freedom—no one is free unless everyone is free, and everyone can only be free if each person can individuate or actualize themselves in the most expansive of senses. Anarchism also recognized, if only intuitively, that such a task is both a constant balancing act and the stuff of real life. One person's freedom necessarily infringes on another's, or even on the good of all. No common good can meet everyone's needs and desires. This doesn't mean throwing up one's hands and going the route of liberalism or communism, propping up one side of the equation—ultimately artificially—in hopes of resolving this ongoing tension. From the start, anarchism asked the much more difficult though ultimately pragmatic question: Acknowledging this self-society juggling act as

to run their own lives. This is backed up by small-scale property ownership as a means of self-sustenance, thereby providing enough independence that no one can hold the means of life over another person. Here, thinkers like Montesquieu, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Thomas Paine stand out as articulating the best of liberalism's potentiality, at least in theory. In the case of communism, in its most participatory form it advocates workers' councils or a workers' state, which will ultimately be unnecessary, and workplace self-management. The common ownership of the means of production ensures that no one can exploit anyone else. Here, Karl Marx's social theory is key, but as drawn out by Georg Lukács, the Frankfurt school, and the Situationist International, among others of the so-called Western (or dissident) Marxists.

part of the human condition, how can people collectively self-determine their lives to become who they want to be and simultaneously create communities that are all they could be as well?

Anarchism understood that this tension is positive, as a creative and inherent part of human existence. It highlights that people are not all alike, nor do they need, want, or desire the same things. At its best, anarchism's basic aspiration for a free society of free individuals gives transparency to what should be a productive, harmonic dissonance: figuring out ways to coexist and thrive in our differentiation. Anarchists create processes that are humane and substantively participatory. They're honest about the fact that there's always going to be uneasiness between individual and social freedom. They acknowledge that it's going to be an ongoing struggle to find the balance. This struggle is exactly where anarchism takes place. It is where the beauty of life, at its most well-rounded and self-constructed, has the greatest possibility of emerging—and at times, taking hold.

Although it happens at any level of society, one experiences this most personally in small-scale projects—from bike cooperatives to free schools—where people collectively make face-to-face decisions about issues large and mundane. This is not something that people in most parts of the world are encouraged or taught to do, most pointedly because it contains the kernels of destroying the current vertical social arrangements. As such, we're generally neither particularly good nor efficient at directly democratic processes. Council decision-making mechanisms are hard work. They raise tough questions, like how to deal with conflict in nonpunitive ways. But through them, people school themselves in what could be the basis for collective self-governance, for redistributing power to everyone. When it goes well, we have a profound sense of the types of promises, or agreements, we can make with and keep to each other. We recognize what we can

centralized power over others should be reconstituted to enact horizontal and/or decentralized power together. This grand vision serves as a yardstick for attempts to reduce hierarchy and domination while improving the quality of life, materially and otherwise, in the here and now.

Life as a Whole

Implementing anarchism as a lived political project can seem a daunting task. It takes seriously the notion that hierarchy and domination in their many manifestations need to be torn apart, and that society needs to be restructured along fundamentally different lines. It means transforming the whole of life. It means overcoming alienation, countering humanity's estrangement from the world and each other with nonalienated relationships and organizations. This must be an ongoing quest, with better (and worse) approximations of freedom appearing in various times and places, only to seemingly disappear or greatly diminish again. Still, with each approximation, the very idea of freedom expands along with the notion of what it means to be human and humane. Remnants of freedom remain, in fact or in memory. Vestiges of experiments linger. People are transformed and pass their sense of potentiality along to others.

Coming to anarchism, taking up the mantle of imagining a world beyond hierarchy, is like a lightbulb going off inside one's head. It first offers a sense of one's own empowerment and liberation, and then, hopefully, a sense of collective social power and freedom. There is something euphoric in casting off, even if only on the level of personal beliefs initially, the idea that hierarchy is somehow a given, and that one has to abide by its rules. It's a life-altering leap when one truly uproots the belief within oneself that, say, racism or states are normal and necessary. The move toward increasingly nonhierarchical mind-sets, relations, and institutions opens up a whole world

A host of concerns have now been brought into the matrix of anarchism's critique—and hopefully its reconstructive vision—in prominent and meaningful ways. These range from ecology and technology to alienation and cultural production; from sex, sexuality, gender, and kinship to white supremacy and antiracism; and from ableism and ageism to physical and mental health. Anarchism will need to be ever vigilant. There is no laundry list that people can clean up once and for all. Rather than a contest between "isms," contemporary anarchism grapples with the complex internalized and institutionalized ways that people oppress, hurt, and limit each other as well as the intersections between forms of domination and oppression. This is frequently painful work, but anarchists generally share a commitment to facing the challenge, within their own circles and outside them. It doesn't always go well: the fact that anarchism hasn't tackled, say, racism with as much determination as class for much of its history means there is a lot to learn and do, a lot of anger, and a long way to go. But as freedom and hierarchy battle it out, they also expose new aspects of each other.

Hierarchy and domination serve as the prism through which to see various phenomena as both distinct in their own right and deeply interconnected. They can produce, structure, or sustain each other, or operate relatively independently, yet always serve to restrain a consensual, egalitarian world. Anarchists strive to dismantle forms of social relations and social organization that allow some people to exercise mastery over other people and things. They contrast the use of power for gaining something from others, for money or status, or out of privilege or hatred, with the use of power to collectively achieve individual and social development, mutual respect, and the meeting of everyone's needs. Anarchism's generalized critique of hierarchy and domination, even more than its anticapitalism and antistatism, sets it apart from any other political philosophy. It asserts that every instance of vertical and/or

be, in a way that qualitatively points past capitalism, the state, and other all-too-numerous forms of oppression. On the microlevel and much larger ones, anarchism forms "the structure of the new society within the shell of the old," as the preamble to the Industrial Workers of the World's Constitution asserts.[10] More crucially, it self-determines the structure of the new from spaces of possibility within the old.

From the start, anarchism was an open political philosophy, always transforming itself in theory and practice. This, too, might be seen as part of its very definition. Anarchism has to remain dynamic if it truly aims to uncover new forms of domination and replace them with new forms of freedom, precisely because of the ever-present strain between personal and collective freedom. Self-organization necessitates everyone's participation, which requires being always amenable to new concerns and ideas. Yet when people are introduced to anarchism today, that openness, combined with a cultural propensity to forget the past, can make it seem a recent invention—without an elastic tradition, filled with debates, lessons, and experiments, to build on. Even worse, it can seem like a political praxis of "anything goes"—libertine without the libertarian—without regard for how one person's acts impact another person or community.[11] It is critical to understand anarchism's past in order to

[10] See www.iww.org. shtml.

[11] And hence, at its most "antiauthoritarian," having more in common with the values of liberalism than anarchism, in that it privileges individual liberty over all else. Even liberalism advocates something outside the individual—sadly, a state or private property—to (allegedly) protect each of us against the other. An anything goes sensibility is ultimately "authoritarian" in that it privileges one's desires above all else. This is "anarchy," as in chaos, rather than "anarchism," as in forms of social organization that value both individual liberty and collective freedom. Indeed, a libertine outlook can make for unwanted bedfellows, from anarcho-capitalists to anarcho-fascists, at its most extreme, or simply a lack of solidarity or concern for forms of accountability. Either way, it flies in the face of the initial definition here: anarchism as a free society of free individuals.

understand its meaning, but also its problems and shortcomings as well as what we might want to retain and expand on. We study anarchist history to avoid repeating mistakes, but also to know we aren't alone on what has been and will likely be rocky, detour-filled "paths in utopia," to borrow the title of a Martin Buber book. Of course, it's generally helpful to understand historical contexts. Anarchism, for its part, is in large measure filled out and changed by its lived engagement in social struggle and visionary experimentation.

Looking Backward

> Harmony … [is] obtained [through] … free agreements concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilized being.
>
> —Peter Kropotkin, "Anarchism," 1910

To understand anarchism as a political philosophy and specifically its aspirations, we have to go back to the classical anarchism of the mid-nineteenth century—not to romanticize it, because it wasn't "classic" in many ways, but because that is when anarchism emerged as a word describing a particular set of political beliefs and practices. There were certainly innumerable human behaviors and forms of organization going back millennia that could be classified as "anarchistic" in hindsight. Nevertheless, anarchism as a distinctive praxis, a constellation of attributes that we'll explore below, appeared in the 1840s. It began in Europe, a nonmonolithic grouping of countries and cultures that, in turn, spawned a variety of

with all sorts of nonhierarchical relationships and projects, both anarchist and not, from the counterculture, New Left, and autonomist movements of the long 1960s to the present—all of which transformed anarchism's own self-understanding.

This now-pervasive shift means that more than ever, anarchism is interrogating itself and all else for ways in which hierarchy and domination manifest themselves, or develop new forms under new historical conditions. That has translated into a deeper, more sincere acknowledgment that even if capitalism and the state were abolished, many forms of hierarchies could still exist; and that even alongside capitalism and the state, many other egregious phenomena cause grave suffering.

Moreover, the shift within anarchism has involved a more complex understanding of the ways that freedom and domination interrelate. On the one hand, anarchistic efforts to "abolish work" dovetail easily with contemporary capitalism's need for fewer employees.[35] On the other hand, capitalism's own technology can be utilized to thwart state surveillance or encourage nonalienated sharing. These examples point to the importance of anarchism's revolutionary stance, which makes such double-edged interactions visible. Yet it goes deeper. There are possibilities within the present, fissures in domination that point toward freedom. The increasing inability of today's state to protect its citizenry from almost anything—ranging from sickness to violence—undermines the very justification for its existence, while also creating an opening for federated grassroots innovations in how to ensure material plenty and safer communities without the state. And deeper still: as anarchists test out their ideas, newfound freedoms often uncover further layers of domination. Attempts to shatter the gender binary, for instance, reveal new manifestations of hierarchies within varied gender expression.

[35] On the abolition of work, see, for example, the writings of the Zerowork Collective, available at libcom.org.

anarchists maintain that the pair has to go because they each have power over the vast majority of the human and nonhuman world. At its heart, political philosophy is about power: who has it, what they do with it, and toward what ends.[33] Anarchism, more sweepingly than any other political philosophy, responds that power should be made horizontal, should be held in common.

Hierarchy and Domination in General

This concentration on bottom-up power arrangements leads anarchism not only to oppose capitalism and states but also hierarchy and domination in general. This was always implicit, and sometimes explicit, within anarchism from the first, but anarchism increasingly has broadened its lens of critique. Certainly, there were classical anarchists concerned with phenomena besides capitalism and the state, whether that was militarism, sexuality, or organized religion. Early anarchists also utilized categories such as hierarchy, though such voices were fewer and further between. Even when coming from major anarchist figures, however, such articulations were still generally subservient to a focus on capitalism and the state—much as Marxists made, and often still do, all phenomena subservient (or "superstructural") to the economy ("base"). A combination of historical events, theoretical insights, and the "intrusion" of actually existing forms of domination that fall outside capitalism and the state pushed anarchism toward a more all-encompassing horizontal libertarianism. Bookchin's *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982), which explores the emergence of hierarchy over the millennia and its intricate intertwining with the legacy of freedom, is exemplary of this rethinking of anarchism.[34] It also reflected a flowering of experimentation

[33] My thanks to Todd May for illuminating this notion for me.

[34] Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005).

anarchist tendencies. It then quickly traveled to and developed in places around the world.[12]

Anarchism in Europe grew out of, in part, hundreds of years of slave rebellions, peasant uprisings, and heretical religious movements in which people decided that enough was enough, and the related experimentation with various forms of autonomy.[13] It was also partly influenced by Enlightenment thought in the eighteenth century, which—at its best—popularized three pivotal notions, to a large degree theorized from these revolts.[14] The first idea was that individuals have the capacity to reason. This may seem self-evident now, but at the time it was a revolutionary conceptualization. For centuries, people grew up believing , in essence, that reason

[12] Because of the renewed interest in anarchism, slowly but surely anarchist scholarship is focusing on hitherto-ignored histories of anarchism within Europe and as migrating to places ranging from the Asia Pacific region to the Americas to Africa. "Traveling anarchism" was a phenomenon from the start, and indeed was essential to its diasporic unfolding and openness. A few examples here are: Arif Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Frank Fernández, *Cuban Anarchism: A History of the Movement* (Tucson, AZ : See Sharp Press, 2001); Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009); Chaz Bufe and Mitchell Cohen Verter, eds., *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009); James Horrox, *A Living Revolution: Anarchism in the Kibbutz Movement* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009). *in the Kibbutz Movement* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009).

[13] For one example, see *Winstanley*, the "truly stunning and hauntingly beautiful [1975] film, telling the little-known story of Gerrard Winstanley and the Diggers, a short-lived radical movement that emerged during the British Civil Wars/Revolution in the late 1640s" (www.earlymodernweb.org.uk).

[14] The Enlightenment can be critiqued on many levels; the point here is that like all pervasive intellectual traditions that develop out of certain social conditions, it can involve innovations, some of which can be emancipatory—or which at least inadvertently lead to contestations over emancipation. The classical anarchists were also schooled in Enlightenment thought, either through their actual education or simply by virtue of the times in which they lived.

was only to be gleaned from the word of a monarch and/or god. Enlightenment philosophy gave voice to the ideas of on-the-ground social struggles and, in percolating through society, gradually shattered such self-abnegation with the increasingly hegemonic understanding that everyone has the ability to think for themselves. This, in turn, led to a second idea: if humans have the capacity to reason, then they also have the capacity to act on their thoughts. Again, this was an explosive notion, since prior to this, most people were largely acted on by an all-powerful king and/or god, via an all-powerful monarchy and/or church.

Hence, and perhaps most liberating, a third idea arose: if people can think and act on their own initiative, then it literally stands to reason that they can potentially think through and act on notions of the good society. They can innovate; they can create a better world. A host of Enlightenment thinkers offered bold new conceptions of social organization, drawn from practice and yet articulated in theory, ranging from individual rights to self-governance.[15] Technological advancements in printing facilitated the relatively widespread dissemination of this written material for the first time in human history via books, pamphlets, and periodicals. New common social spaces like coffeehouses, public libraries, and speakers' corners in parks further allowed for debate about and the spread of these incendiary ideas. None of this ensured that people would think for themselves, act for themselves, or act out of a

[15] See, for example, Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); J. S. Mills, *On Liberty and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Thomas Paine, *Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Mary Wollestone Craft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); William Godwin, *Enquiry concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Morals and Modern Happiness* (1793; repr., Bel Air, CA: Dodo Press, 2009).

The point here is that anarchists agree on the necessity of a world without capital and states, precisely to allow everyone to make good on their lives, liberties, and happiness—to be able to continually define as well as take part in the quality of these categories. In relation to the state specifically, anarchists contend that everyone is thoroughly capable and deserving of self-determining their lives. Anarchists believe that together, people will likely envision, deliberate over, and settle on more creative, multidimensional social organization. Here again, anarchists offer a revolutionary praxis that both improves current conditions and points past them. A project that involves providing surplus groceries to those in need of food can also include a directly democratic assembly, where everyone involved starts to make collective decisions. When a vacant lot is about to be sold to the highest bidder for luxury development, anarchists put out a call for it to be transformed into a park, then join their neighbors to not only beautify the space but also experience their political power in reclaiming it. Through efforts like Anarchists against the Wall or No One Is Illegal campaigns, anarchists directly contest the state's power to divide and degrade people by setting borders and controlling territories.[32] Even in the reformist-oriented context of a mass demonstration, anarchists infuse a revolutionary perspective—for example, by coordinating a global day of action not via centralized organization but using a confederation of autonomous groups and movements.

Anarchism is distinguished as a political philosophy by its clear, uncompromising position against both capitalism and states. There are many ways within anarchism to explain specifically what's wrong with capitalism or states, and even more ways to approach ridding the world of them. But

[32] For more on Anarchists against the Wall, see www.awalls.org/ . For a sampler of No One Is Illegal projects, here are three from Canada: toronto.nooneisillegal.org/; noii-van.resist.ca/; nooneisillegal-montreal.blogspot.com/.

for example, with banner slogans about radical civic sharing ("Everything for everyone, and what's more for free") or literature encouraging people to "occupy everything." They launch more fully developed campaigns such as "Use It or Lose It," tying property takeovers to the notion of usufruct—our ability to use and enjoy housing as a social good, which flies directly in the face of capitalism's exchange value. When the revolutionary edge gets dulled, as it frequently does under capitalism, anarchists try to reorient projects to underscore the irrationality of the current economic system in contrast to various transformative possibilities in the present.

The state, though distinct from capitalism in its form and methods, must also become a thing of the past if freedom has any chance of reigning. It's not a matter of trying to make the state kinder, more multicultural, more benign, or to follow the letter of its own law. The state's very logic asserts that a few people are better suited than everyone else to determine, as the U.S. Constitution says, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." It's not just that the state has (or increasingly doesn't) a monopoly on violence but that regardless of how it compels people to give up their power—with guns, ballots, or pacification through forms of already-circumscribed participation—it is always engaged in a variety of social control and social engineering. Statecraft, at its essence, is about a small body of people legislating, administering, and policing social policy. In this way, it also sustains other types of domination, such as institutionalized racism or heteronormativity. Increasingly, "the state" is doing this as part of a networked structure of states collaborating in blocs or global institutions. Thus, fewer and fewer people get to determine policies ranging from warfare to health care to immigration. Even the notion of representative democracy under this global regime is almost anachronistic, given that layers of nonrepresentative statecraft now work hand in hand with equally undemocratic international NGOs and multinational financial bodies.

concern for the whole of humanity. But what was at least theoretically revolutionary about this Copernican turn was that before then, the vast majority of people largely didn't believe in their own agency or ability to self-organize on such an interconnected, self-conscious, and crucially, widespread basis. They were born, for instance, into an isolated village as a serf with the expectation that they'd live out their whole lives accordingly. In short, that they would accept their lot and the social order as rigidly god-given or natural—with any hopes for a better life placed in the afterlife.

Due to the catalytic relationship between theory and practice, many people gradually embraced these three Enlightenment ideas, leading to a host of libertarian ideologies, from the religious congregationalisms to secular republicanism, liberalism, and socialism. These new radical impulses took many forms of political and economic subjugation to task, contributing to an outbreak of revolutions throughout Europe and elsewhere, such as in Haiti, the United States, and Mexico. This revolutionary period started around 1789 and lasted until about 1871 (reappearing in the early twentieth century). In this approximately eighty-year stretch, the peoples of Europe in particular lived through a time when dramatic upheavals were occurring every ten or twenty years, when bottom-up change seemed possible.

Over these decades, spurred by the daily suffering experienced by millions along with the emancipatory elements within Enlightenment thought, many rebellions were successful, but not always in the way that the revolutionaries intended. Monarchs, aristocrats, and gods were felled by waves of revolutions, and an era of absolutism and arbitrary rule came to an end. In its place, frequently after power struggles between the radicals themselves, a new political zeitgeist took hold: secular varieties of parliamentarianism

or representative democracy.[16] Murray Bookchin's concept of the "third revolution" captures this well: first there's a revolutionary overthrow of a despotic regime, then a directly democratic revolutionary structure emerges, only to be crushed by forces from within the revolutionary milieu that then institute new forms of tyranny.[17] This period saw a profound assertion of individual liberty and revolutionary potentiality. It also witnessed the constitution and rise of the modern state, which brought with it a new hypercentralization and hyperindividualism. All of this was fertile ground for anarchism's development as an antistatist and utopian sensibility.

Capitalism, too, came into its own for a variety of reasons, including the revolutionary undoing of the aristocracy and feudal privileges. The Industrial Revolution was especially transformative. It disturbed rural subsistence economies, essentially compelling mass migration into the growing cities and factories for wage work or indentured servitude. This tectonic shift offered both promise and new forms of mass impoverishment. People were freed from the constraints of often-stifling village traditions, such as proscribed kinship relations and religious beliefs, not to mention traditional power structures emanating from cathedrals and castles. They were exposed to diverse cultures, ideas, and experiences in the urban mix, and what for

[16] Beyond republics, later revolutions ended in other types of new and arguably more deadly political forms: dictatorships, authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, or fascism. But for the purposes of describing anarchism's emergence in the 1840s and onward, the predominant move at that time was from an absolutist church and state, to nations premised on parliamentarianism and capitalism.

[17] Bookchin, of course, hoped to show that in the power vacuum created after the "first revolution," forms of self-organization spring up, and it's up to the libertarian Left to struggle to maintain this "second revolution" against the forces that would attempt to reinstate new forms of top-down governance. Murray Bookchin, *The Third Revolution*, 4 volumes (London: Cassell, 1996–2005).

these entities as only one piece of capitalism, and a piece that if removed, wouldn't destroy capitalism—bad as corporations may be. One can have capitalism without corporations. Capitalism's essence—ensuring that society is forged around compulsory social relations along with inequities in power and material conditions—would remain in place. And given capitalism's grow-or-die logic, small-scale capitalism would by definition unfold into a larger scale again. Or as contemporary networked and informational capitalistic structures indicate, allegedly localized capitalism can be a way to hide an increasing concentration of social control and injustice. Capitalism itself, in its totality, and because it strives toward totality, is the root problem. Anarchists, then, look to wholly undo the hegemony of capitalist economic structures and values, or the many components that mark capitalism as a system—from corporations, banks, and private property, to profit, bosses, and wage labor, to alienation and commodification.

This may boil down to projects that appear to concentrate on single issues, but anarchists attempt to use such campaigns to demonstrate how capitalism, say, can't fulfill its own promise of meeting needs, and how a free society must be premised on a world without it. For instance, capitalism often produces surpluses in things like food and housing. But unless that surplus can be exchanged, it gets thrown away or remains empty. Meanwhile, many people are desperately hungry or sleep on the streets. Making that surplus available for use instead of exchange—reclaiming it as a commons, for those who need and want it—reveals people's ability to self-organize to meet those needs. It also shows that being fully human would involve sharing surplus freely and taking care of everyone, not just those who can afford to feed or house themselves.

This revolutionary stance, though, is not implicit. Anarchists publicly draw it out in multiple ways, illustrating how an improvement can also gesture toward radical reconstruction. They shake up naturalized ways of thinking under capitalism,

tunity."[31] Anarchism is not satisfied with remaining on the surface, merely tinkering to make a damaged world a little less damaging. It is a thoroughgoing critique aimed at a thoroughgoing reimagining and restructuring of society. It views this as essential if everyone is to be free, and if humanity is to harmonize itself with the nonhuman world.

As mentioned earlier, anarchism from the start focused on what appeared as the two biggest stumbling blocks to a libertarian society: capitalism and the state. This pair, sadly, are still the predominant forms of social immiseration and control. Capitalism and statecraft loom large in terms of naturalizing—and thereby being at the root of—this immiseration and control. Their separate yet often-interrelated internal logics consolidate power monopolies for a few, always at the expense of the many. This demands that each system must both continually expand and mask its dominion. To survive, they have to make it seem normal that most people are materially impoverished and disenfranchised as economic actors, and socially impoverished and disenfranchised as political actors. They have to restructure social relations in their own image—as unthinkingly assumed ways of being and acting. The world that most of humanity produces is, as a result, denied to the vast majority, and a relative handful get to make binding decisions over all of life. Anarchism is therefore staunchly anticapitalist and antistatist, which ensures that it is a revolutionary politics, since battling such primary systems necessarily means getting to the root of them. Moving beyond capitalism and states would entail nothing less than turning the world upside down, breaking up all monopolies, and reconstituting everything in common—from institutions to ethics to everyday life.

So, for example, whereas many in the global and now climate justice movements focus on corporations as key, anarchists see

[31] Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice* (1938; repr., Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2004), 73.

many felt like new forms of freedom. Yet life in the rapidly expanding metropolises also involved wretched life conditions for most people, and work generally was exploitative. Under capitalism, the "economy" began to gain importance over all else, including human life and the nonhuman world, increasingly restructuring social relations.

More than anyone, Karl Marx grasped the essential character of what would become a hegemonic social structure—articulated most compellingly in his *Capital* (1867) as well as the earlier *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*.[18] More than "simply" a form of economic exploitation dividing the world into a few haves and many have-nots, or those who owned the means of production and those enslaved by it through wage labor, capitalism's inherent grow-or-die logic would reconstitute the whole of life in its image. It "naturalized" values like competition and the domination of humans over other humans, as if they were normal conditions of life, like breathing, and made such values increasingly hegemonic.

This logic unfolds dialectically, as Marx shows, from the commodity, or "cell-form," of capitalism: an object no longer defined by how useful it is (use value), but by its exchangeability (exchange value).[19] Rather than things having inherent worth in themselves, all of life becomes instrumentalized within a capitalist system. Capitalism is necessarily compelled to commodify more and more things, material and immaterial, affective and ecological—the whole world, if possible. "Value" is determined by how much one has to exchange and accumulate: money, property, or especially power over others. This buy-sell relation, as Marx explained it, ultimately becomes masked in the commodity itself. Things-as-commodities—

[18] See, in particular, Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867; repr., London: Penguin, 1990), and the *Manuscripts* section on alienation in *Early Writings* (London: Penguin, 1992).

[19] Marx, *Capital: Volume 1*, 90.

from goods and human labor, to value systems and social structures—seem to be ever-more independent of human creation. In this way, people become alienated, estranged, or seemingly removed from a world that is actually of their own making, and that could be remade in alternate, humane ways. As the Situationist International would later add, people become spectators of rather than actors in their own lives—lives that are increasingly controlled and deadening, if not deadly, regardless of whether one is "at work" or not.[20]

Such a "great transformation," to borrow Karl Polyani's phrase, was fertile soil for the birth of a revolutionary socialism, with an adamantly anticapitalist and emancipatory sensibility.[21] Mass socialist organizations and movements engaged in a variety of social struggles. Their political contestations, in turn, birthed often-antagonistic strains within revolutionary socialism itself, from communism to anarchism, as revolutionary socialists hashed out their analyses, goals, and strategies. Two battling camps emerged: libertarian versus nonlibertarian (or less generously, authoritarian) socialism. Both looked to transform society through class struggle aimed at abolishing private property and class itself, in favor of communitarian forms of justice and equality. Picking up on Marx's contention that capitalism will only continue to spread and thus will not "negotiate" with any other socioeconomic system, socialists considered the abolition of capitalism as key to human liberation.

Anarchism developed within this milieu as, in Kropotkin's words, the "left wing" of socialism.[22] Like all socialists, anarchists concentrated on the economy, specifically capitalism,

[20] See Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1977). Ken Knabb's translation (2002) is available at www.bopsecrets.org.

[21] Karl Polyani, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (1944; repr., Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

[22] Peter Kropotkin, "Anarchism," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1905), available at dwardmac.pitzer.edu.

Philosophy of Freedom

> Possibility is not a luxury, it is as crucial as bread.
>
> —Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 2004

A Revolutionary stance

First and foremost, anarchism is a revolutionary political philosophy. That is, anarchism is thoroughly radical in the true sense of the word: to get at the root or origin of phenomena, and from there to make dramatic changes in the existing conditions. Anarchism aspires to fundamentally transform society, toward expansive notions of individual and social freedom. Much of the time, in practice, this means engaging in various "reforms" or improvements, but ones that at the same time attempt to explicitly articulate a revolutionary politics. This reform-pointing-to-revolution is certainly hard to navigate, much less implement. Debates within anarchism relating to strategies and tactics hinge on this question, and rightly so, since capitalism, in particular, has an astonishing knack for recuperating anything that seems to stand in its way.

Despite the difficulties, anarchists never advocate a purely reformist attitude. They try their best never to participate in reform as an end in itself, or to bring about improvements that also make the present social order look attractive. Their efforts to move from "here" to "there" intentionally highlight how current social arrangements cannot, by their own raison d'être, meet everyone's needs and desires. Anarchists do not "rest content with the ideal of a future society without overlordship," as anarcho-syndicalist Rudolf Rocker put it long ago; they simultaneously direct their organizing efforts at, for one, "restricting the activities of the state and blocking its influence in every department of social life wherever they see an oppor-

was more a marker of something that had already occurred: a modern anarchism had developed in a direct, however hidden or circuitous, line from its "classical" past. What Seattle did do, though, was spotlight this reinvigorated anarchism, whether via images of "black bloc" anarchists throwing bricks through Starbucks windows, or explanations of how the affinity group and spokescouncil model worked in practice.[30] Mostly, it gave visibility and voice to anarchism in general, helping it recapture the political imagination, in league with a host of other "movements from below" around the world.

The modernization of anarchism is also marked by what at times seems an almost dizzying array of different emphases. This increasing multiplicity is frequently a healthy development, challenging anarchism to remain germane to today's world and draw its reconstructive visions from potentialities within the present. Yet anarchism is not immune from the increasing fragmentation and immediacy, among other conditions, that characterize much of contemporary capitalist society. It is just as damaged by the phenomena it decries. Even as anarchists advocate a community of communities, they are, like most people today, alienated from any sense of place and hence each other. Nonetheless, there remains a profound sense of recognition between anarchists, based on a shared set of distinct values, which in turn structure their lives and projects. So let's return to this amorphous entity called anarchism, in order to add flesh to what still may feel like a vague definition by exploring the constellation of sensibilities that describes all anarchists.

[30] For more on black blocs, see en.wikipedia.org; David van Deusen and Xavier Massot, eds., *The Black Bloc Papers*, 2nd ed. (Shawnee Mission, KS: Breaking Glass Press, 2010), available at www.infoshop.org. For more on affinity groups and spokescouncils, see www.rantcollective.net.

and saw the laboring classes in the factories and fields, as well as artisans, as the main agents of revolution. They also felt that many socialists were to the "right" or nonlibertarian side of anarchism, soft on their critique of the state, to say the least. These early anarchists, like all anarchists after them, saw the state as equally complicit in structuring social domination; the state complemented and worked with capitalism, but was its own distinct entity. Like capitalism, the state will not "negotiate" with any other sociopolitical system. It attempts to take up more and more governance space. It is neither neutral nor can it be "checked and balanced." The state has its own logic of command and control, of monopolizing political power. Anarchists held that the state cannot be used to dismantle capitalism, nor as a transitional strategy toward a noncapitalist, nonstatist society. They advocated an expansive "no gods, no masters" perspective, centered around the three great concerns of their day—capital, state, and church—in contrast to, for example, *The Communist Manifesto*'s assertion that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."[23] It's not that anarchists didn't take this history seriously; there were other histories, though, and other struggles—something that anarchism would continue to fill out over the decades.

As many are rediscovering today, anarchism from the first explored something that Marxism has long needed to grapple with: domination and hierarchy, and their replacement in all cases with greater degrees of freedom. That said, the classical period of anarchism exhibited numerous blind spots and even a certain naïveté. Areas such as gender and race, in which domination occurs beyond capitalism, the state, and the church, were often given short shrift or ignored altogether. Nineteenth-century anarchism was not necessarily always ahead of its day in identifying various forms of oppression. Nor did it con-

[23] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848; repr., London: Penguin, 2002), 219.

cern itself much with ecological degradation. When it came to questions of human nature, quite a few anarchists held that without capitalism or the state, everyone would get along fine, and people would have little or no need for formal nonhierarchical institutions, much less agreements. Of course, comparing classical anarchism to today's much more sophisticated understanding of forms of organization and the myriad types of domination is also a bit unfair—both to anarchism and other socialisms. Anarchism developed over time, theoretically and through practice. Its dynamism, an essential principle, played a large part in allowing anarchism to serve as its own challenge. Its openness to other social movements and radical ideas contributed to its further unfolding. Like any new political philosophy, it would take many minds and many experiments over many years to develop anarchism into a more full-bodied, nuanced worldview—a process, if one takes anarchism's initial impulse seriously, of always expanding that worldview to account for additional blind spots. Anarchism was, is, and continually sees itself as "only a beginning ," to cite the title of a recent anthology.[24]

From its beginnings, anarchism's core aspiration was to root out and eradicate all coercive, hierarchical social relations, and dream up and establish consensual, egalitarian ones in every instance. In a time of revolutionary possibility, and during a period when older ways of life were so obviously being destroyed by enormous transitions, the early anarchists were frequently extravagant in their visions for a better world. They drew on what was being lost (from small-scale agrarian communities to the commons) and what was being gained (from potentially liberatory technologies to potentially more democratic political structures) to craft a set of uncompromising, reconstructive ethics.

[24] Allan Antliff, ed., *Only a Beginning: An Anarchist Anthology* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004).

tury. It gained insight from other overlapping or like-minded movements, such as radical feminism and queer liberation, or the Autonomen in Germany and Zapatistas in Mexico. It inspired, both explicitly and in less obvious ways, everything from the playful urban politics of Amsterdam's Provos to new forms of radical ecology like the antinuclear movement and Earth First! to the British poll tax rebellion.[28] While anarchism seemed behind the curve on some issues—the collapse of Communism and the subsequent rise of unipolar neoliberalism, for instance—it continued to grow and develop.

By the close of the twentieth century, the "battle of Seattle" in 1999 was, for anarchism, just one manifestation of a whole chain of reinventions within its own tradition.[29] Often seen as the birth of a "new" anarchism, the now-famous role of anarchists in Seattle's mass mobilization against—and successful shutdown of—the World Trade Organization meetings

[28] A sampler of some histories of these movements includes Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967–1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Andy Cornell, "Anarchism and the Movement for a New Society: Direct Action and Prefigurative Community in the 1970s and 1980s," *Perspectives* (2009), available at http://anarchiststudies. org/node/292; Tommi Avicolli Mecca, ed., *Smash the Church, Smash the State! The Early Years of Gay Liberation* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2009); George Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2006); Žiga Vodovnik, ed., *YA BASTA! Ten Years of the Zapatista Uprising: Writings of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2004); Richard Kempton, *Provo: Amsterdam's Anarchist Revolt* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2007); Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); *Earth First! Journal*, available at www.earthfirstjournal.org ; Danny Burns, *Poll Tax Rebellion* (Scotland: AK Press, 1992).

[29] While there are numerous books, articles, films, and news accounts about this mobilization, many written soon after Seattle 1999, the most recent one is David Solnit and Rebecca Solnit, *The Battle of the Story of the "Battle of Seattle"* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009), timed for the tenth anniversary.

—Sam Dolgoff, *The Relevance of Anarchism to Modern Society*, 1970

Classical anarchism's aims were no bulwark against the brutal transformations that swept the globe with the rise of actually existing communism and fascism. Historical forces drove society in a murderous direction. Anarchism did not disappear during this time. Yet its ranks were decimated. Touchstone figures were killed, including Gustav Landauer by protofascists following the Bavarian Revolution in 1919 and Erich Mühsam by Nazis in the Oranienburg concentration camp in 1934. Others died in prison, like Ricardo Flores Magón in 1922, and some committed suicide, such as Alexander Berkman in 1936. Anarchists were increasingly isolated. Kropotkin's death in 1921 marked the last mass gathering of anarchists—for his funeral procession, and then only with Vladimir Lenin's permission—in Russia until 1987. Thousands of anarchists worldwide were incarcerated, exiled, or slaughtered. They were victims of repressions like the Red Scare in the United States and purges of radical opposition by numerous Communist parties. As a result, anarchism became far less vibrant, a ghost of itself. This made it difficult for people to discover the politics, further reducing the number of anarchists and anarchistic efforts. It was as if the antiauthoritarian Left skipped a generation or two.

At the same time, the world itself was transformed—but in a polar opposite way from anything that anarchists had advocated. Fascism, Bolshevism, and Maoism; the rise of the United States as a world superpower; the birth of multinational financial institutions along with the "advancement" of capitalism; the cold war with its nuclear threat: these and other emergent phenomena dramatically expanded the forms of domination that any liberatory politics needed to address. Attempts to rebuild anarchism were slow going, but never truly disappeared. In the postwar era, through the 1960s and beyond, anarchism struggled to tailor itself for the late twentieth cen-

These ethics still animate anarchism, supplying what's most compelling about it in praxis. Its values serve as a challenge to continually approach the dazzling horizon of freedom by actually improving the quality of life for all in the present. Anarchism always "demands the impossible" even as it tries to also "realize the impossible." Its idealism is thoroughly pragmatic. Hierarchical forms of social organization can never fulfill most peoples' needs or desires, but time and again, nonhierarchical forms have demonstrated their capacity to come closer to that aim. It makes eminent and ethical sense to experiment with utopian notions. No other political philosophy does this as consistently and generously, as doggedly, and with as much overall honesty about the many dead-ends in the journey itself.

These ethics will continually need to be fleshed out. They will need to adjust themselves to particular historical conditions if they are to remain relevant and vibrant. Nevertheless, from the outset, anarchism grounded itself in a set of shared values. These revolved around interconnected notions such as liberty and freedom, solidarity and internationalism, voluntary association and federation, education, spontaneity and harmony, and mutual aid. Anarchist principles affirmed humanity's potential to meet everyone's needs and desires, via forms of nonhierarchical cooperative and collective arrangements. As we'll see below, adding the prefix "self-" to words that other socialists generally fail to interrogate embodies the grounding ethical project of creating fully articulated social selves, who strive with others for a society of, for, and by everyone. The early anarchists thus began our ongoing efforts to bring forth self-determination and self-organization, self-management and self-governance, as the basis for a new society.

If these overarching ethics are the thread that stitched anarchism together as something recognizable, not to mention compelling, then the specific ways that anarchists put these

values into practice are the patchwork pieces. All political philosophies contain various tendencies, divergent views within a shared whole. Anarchism understood this, even if only implicitly, as precisely its politics, as the creative impulse allowing unity within diversity to have qualitative meaning. Clearly this is easier said than done. As with the balancing act between self and society, anarchists also need to juggle unity and diversity toward a happy equilibrium. Classical anarchists self-identified their differences in a publicly transparent way, even if not necessarily out of the most comradely motives. Rather than a sign of factionalism or antagonism, this "anarchism of adjectives" is the means of developing a rich variety of emphases and passions. When interlinked under the banner of anarchism, these many adjectival descriptors increasingly capture the concerns and ideals of an ever-more egalitarian society—or at least that is the hope.

The early years of anarchism saw the emergence of various "schools" of thought. These tendencies spanned a wide range. They captured the tension within anarchism of trying to balance individualist strains with communist, mutualist, and collectivist notions. They ran the gamut from philosophical and evolutionary perspectives to insurrection and direct action. They emphasized everything from the economic to the psychological to the spiritual, and influenced a large number of social movements and struggles around the world.[25] Beyond the ethics noted earlier, all these tendencies held that the state was artificial, alien, and coercive; that it always represented the interests of the few and powerful at the expense of the many; and that it relied on a monopoly of violence to maintain itself. Nearly all of these anarchist strains looked to forms of libertarian worker-oriented socialism.[26] And all of them recognized

[25] For more on these various tendencies, see the anthologies by Guerin, Marshall, Harper, and Graham cited above in the notes section.

[26] Save for smaller milieus such as the one around Gustav Landauer and his more community-oriented socialism. See Gustav Landauer, *Revolution*

that fundamental social transformation—whether gradual or sudden—was necessary to move beyond state, capital, church, and other hindrances to the full fruition of self and society.

The classical anarchists were engaged revolutionaries as well as propagandists in the best sense of the word, actively putting their theories into innovative practice. They initiated all sorts of projects—some of which look distinctly familiar to present-day anarchists. They created collective living situations and community social spaces such as labor halls, and met material needs through everything from local currencies to mutual aid societies to schools. Anarchists set up federated organizations and convened conferences; they threw themselves into ambitious campaigns, agitational speaking tours, and numerous publishing activities. They also organized diligently among the working classes, and brought council forms of organization to everyday life. One of the grandest of these "projects," heartbreakingly beautiful and ending in a heartbreaking defeat, was the large-scale, self-managed collectivist experiment in Spain during the revolution in the 1930s.[27] But despite the best efforts of anarchists and other social revolutionaries, history did not favor a turn toward freedom in the early to mid-twentieth century.

Moving Forward

> The aim of anarchism is to stimulate forces that propel society in a libertarian direction.

and Other Writings: A Political Reader, ed. Gabriel Kuhn (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010).

[27] There are probably more books on the Spanish Revolution than any other single event in anarchist history, but one of the loveliest and saddest, by a sympathetic libertarian socialist, is George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1938; repr., Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 1980), loosely depicted in the equally lovely and sad film *Land and Freedom*, by Ken Loach.

Cindy Milstein
Anarchism and Its Aspirations
2010

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Joy and spontaneity

Voluntarily association and accountability aren't dreary obligations to get things done. Part of the revolutionary project, for anarchism, is to institute manifold beauty and strive toward substantive happiness, and encourage the spontaneity necessary to realize both. Pleasure and love are what motivate people to aspire toward a better world. These and other feelings aren't luxuries separate from people's material needs. They are part and parcel of the need for a full, individuated, and genuinely social life. We need enough food to eat *and* we need food we like to eat. We need pleasurable ways to grow food and cook meals for each other, to do the dishes, and if needed, figure out accountability mechanisms when the dirty dishes pile up. There's joy in the process too. Or there would be joy in it, if the processes that routinely shape the world belonged to everyone.

It may sound naive to struggle for revolutionary social transformation so that people can find exhilaration in their lives, so they can create and take satisfaction in all that's lovely. But this is the essence of a good society: that people are able to feel goodness in themselves and each other as much as possible; that even when things are difficult or life is painful, people have the support of others; that the ways we get things done are also the ways we carve out spaces to fully see and appreciate each other. And have fun.

Like all anarchist ethics, this isn't something to put off until "the revolution," meanwhile allowing most of humanity to live miserably or wallow in depression. It means bringing pleasure and play, kindness and compassion, into all that people do. It doesn't mean pretending that everything is OK. Even in a better society, people will still experience sorrow. Anarchists vigilantly resist the world that is, while simultaneously engaging in those hopeful behaviors that point toward new social relations. They practice the beauty that human beings

are striving to achieve in the world that could be. Anarchist activities emphasize the aesthetic and the joyful. Contemporary protests combine street parties and puppets with direct action; potlucks are regular parts of many anarchist meetings; gorgeous posters usually announce anarchist bookfairs, which often include soccer matches alongside workshops. Savoring play is just as much part of a revolutionary impulse within anarchism as is struggle—and both are essential to qualitative freedom.

Unity in Diversity

Another anarchist ethic is the commitment to balancing the seemingly incompatible. Anarchists attempt to find harmony in dissonance, like instruments in an orchestra. They do it in all contexts; it is the stuff of real life, or as noted above, the recognition that things unfold in complex, interconnected ways. Whether it's contradictions between the local and the global, independence and interdependence, autonomy or direct democracy, anarchists honestly and transparently struggle to find unities that don't deny differences. This ethical commitment is essential to anarchist experiments, since it intimately relates to anarchism's definition. Much of what anarchists do in practice involves crafting relationships, processes, and agreements, personally and within self-organized institutions, that are precisely about finding the balance of a unity in diversity.

One prominent example is the "diversity of tactics" approach to mass mobilizations, developed by anarchists in Canada during the heyday of the anticapitalist movement at the turn of this century. The notion was to devise a set of agreements for a specific demonstration—based on its context—that would allow for different tactics, strategies, and even specific geographic zones of engagement, all under the shared banner of an opposition to capitalism and advocacy of directly democratic, non-

statist forms of organization. This didn't mean "anything goes," nor did it mean "consensus." Those who lived in the city and had done months of organizing work before the mobilization settled on the diversity of tactics agreements, through a process of debate and consultas. Spokescouncils during the mobilization were both informational and made minor, last-minute decisions, through a process that sought consensus but resorted to voting when necessary. At the height of this movement, the diversity of tactics approach really did open up space for a powerfully felt interconnected pluralism.[42] This is but one example of a much broader ethic that encompasses a range of efforts to ensure that shared commitments respect and concretely make room for people with divergent ideas and tactics.

Gesturing toward Utopia

> Revolutionary change does not come as one cataclysmic moment … but as an endless succession of surprises, moving zigzag toward a more decent society. We don't have to engage in grand, heroic actions to participate in the process of change. Small

[42] See my essay "Something Did Start in Quebec City: North America's Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Movement," in *Only a Beginning*, ed. Allan Antliff (Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004), 138–40; also available at http://theanarchistlibrary. org/something-did-start-quebec-city-north-americas-revolutionary-anti-capitalist-movement. Since Quebec, and especially when this notion migrated to the U.S. anarchist milieu, a diversity of tactics has been used by some to signal the end of voluntary agreements. That is, everyone can do what they want, regardless of how that impacts others. While this is true in some cases, I'd argue that overall it has still opened up more space for nonradicals or those newly politicized to join in anarchist-initiated actions while maintaining a unified, revolutionary message. Still, anarchists need to be vigilant about forms of domination wherever they occur, even within their own circles. When a diversity of tactics notion lacks the anarchist ethic of voluntary association and accountability, and sets some people's desires above the good of others, it should be contested.

> acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world.
>
> —Howard Zinn, "The Optimism of Uncertainty," 2004

There are three other crucial things that anarchists have in common. They emerge from anarchism's cry against all that's unjust in society and evolve out of its anger toward everything that hinders substantive freedom. They also embody its exuberance for all that's possible in the world, its joyous advocacy of the ethics that shape its variegated praxes. These three are anarchism's reconstructive visions, prefigurative politics, and forms of self-organization.

Anarchists are used to loss. The history of struggle for nonhierarchical values is a tragic and bloody one. Yet, to quote Moxie Marlinspike, anarchists "know there are moments in time, even preceding defeat, where people learn more about themselves, and feel a greater sense of inspiration from what they're experiencing, than from all the George Washingtons victoriously sailing across all the Delaware rivers of the world."[43] The uneven process of building a better world means remembering that anarchism is a beautiful tradition—one that embraces other beautiful traditions. It's about remembering what anarchists and other like-minded people have created throughout history. Yes, the goal is to win, but in various ways, large and small, we have already won a lot. Anarchism asks the right questions about social transformation, and then explores multiple ways to approach answering them, even if it never finds "the answer."

[43] Moxie Marlinspike, "The Promise of Defeat," available at www.thoughtcrime.org.

Reconstructive Visions

Important as such things are, anarchism is more than a vibrant and ethical social conscience, and it's more than a social critique and vision.[44] Anarchists don't just talk about better forms of social organization. They throw themselves into modeling new worlds, even when that means building castles—or collectives, communes, and cooperatives—in the sands of contemporary society. Anarchists believe that people will "get" anarchism viscerally and intellectually in the process of seeing it in action, or better yet, experimenting with its values themselves.[45] This necessitates praxis. People won't give up the comfort (or discomfort) of the status quo without some idea(s) of why they should.

In various ways, anarchists present reconstructive visions that map the way toward a society beyond hierarchy. Envisioning such a world is, of course, part of prefiguration and self-organization. I want to highlight the notion of reconstructive visions, though, to underscore the fact that anarchism, unlike other political philosophies, retains a utopian impulse. The concept of utopia within anarchism isn't some faraway, never-neverland; nor is it a way to ignore material needs or desires. Rather, it's precisely a means of taking full account of material as well as nonmaterial needs and desires—not simply bread and butter, but bread, butter, and also roses—and imagining

[44] For more on the idea of anarchism as social critique and social vision, see my essay "Reappropriate the Imagination!" in *Realizing the Impossible: Art against Authority*, ed. Josh MacPhee and Erik Reuland (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007), 296–307, or available at www.zmag.org.

[45] This does not negate the need for politically engaged theoretical work. Anarchists create everything from books, zines, and periodicals, to Web sites, archives, and libraries, to popular education, free schools, and study groups as well as films, artwork, and storytelling. Of course, more needs to be done to develop social theory and political philosophy, for instance, from an anarchist perspective; and more needs to be done by anarchists to document and analyze their history and projects—areas that are beginning to gain more attention within anarchist circles.

ways that everyone can fully satisfy them. Anarchism looks to the past, when people lived out communal and self-governed forms of organization; it sees potentialities in the present; and it sustains the clear-eyed trust that humans can always do better in the future. The utopian sensibility in anarchism is this curious faith that humanity can not only demand the impossible but also realize it. It is a leap of faith, but grounded in and indeed gleaned from actual experiences, large and small, when people gift egalitarian lifeways to each other by creating them collectively.

Anarchism is not just an ideal; it is not merely a thought experiment. Nor is it a blueprint or rigid plan. Its reconstructive stance dreams up ways to embody its ethics, and then tries to implement them. Many actually existing practices, anarchist or not, illustrate that horizontal social relations are already possible—and work better than vertical ones. Such experiments are partial, circumscribed by everything from capitalism to internalized forms of oppression. But they also create the breathing room to play with new social relations and social organization; they provide examples to borrow and expand on, perhaps eventually developing into more literal and institutionalized forms of dual power, which can, in turn, serve as further examples.

There are many ways to put reconstructive visions into place. Anarchists devise do-it-yourself and "open-source" cultural production to depict imaginative ideas that inspire others to act. They document peoples' histories on posters; they stencil windows into other worlds on public walls or record them in zines; they use indie music and media to disseminate liberatory aspirations. Anarchists create spaces to celebrate alternate ways of being and organizing, from carnivals against capitalism to "really, really free markets" to anarchist bookfairs and infoshops. They develop counterinstitutions like self-directed schools and self-managed workplaces. In these and other ways, anarchists try out and

make them widely available to help you make positive (or hell, revolutionary) changes in the world. For more information on AK Press, or to place an order, see www.akpress.org.

Justseeds Artists' Cooperative

Justseeds Artists' Cooperative is a decentralized community of twenty-two artists who have banded together to both sell their work, and collaborate with and support each other and social movements. Our Web site is not just a place to shop but also a destination to find out about current events in radical art and culture. We regularly collaborate on exhibitions and group projects as well as produce graphics and culture for social justice movements. We believe in the power of personal expression in concert with collective action to transform society. For more information on Justseeds Artists' Cooperative or to order work, see www.justseeds.org.

social domination and reconstructive visions of a free society. All IAS projects strive to encourage public intellectuals and collective self-reflection within revolutionary and/or movement contexts. To this end, the IAS awards grants twice a year to radical writers and translators worldwide, and has funded some seventy projects over the years by authors from numerous countries, including Argentina, Lebanon, Canada, Chile, Ireland, Nigeria, Germany, South Africa, and the United States. It also publishes the online and print journal *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*, organizes the Renewing the Anarchist Tradition conference, offers the Mutual Aid Speakers List, and collaborates on this book series, among other projects. The IAS is part of a larger movement seeking to create a nonhierarchical society. It is internally democratic and works in solidarity with people around the globe who share its values. The IAS is completely supported by donations from anarchists and other antiauthoritarians—like you—and/or their projects, with any contributions exclusively funding grants and IAS operating expenses; for more information or to contribute to the work of the IAS, see www.anarchist-studies.org.

AK Press

AK Press is a worker-run collective that publishes and distributes radical books, visual and audio media, and other material. We're small: a dozen people who work long hours for short money, because we believe in what we do. We're anarchists, which is reflected both in the books we provide and the way we organize our business. Decisions at AK Press are made collectively, from what we publish, to what we distribute and how we structure our labor. All the work, from sweeping floors to answering phones, is shared. When the telemarketers call and ask, "who's in charge?" the answer is: everyone. Our goal isn't profit (although we do have to pay the rent). Our goal is supplying radical words and images to as many people as possible. The books and other media we distribute are published by independent presses, not the corporate giants. We

link up innovations that indicate the potentialities for wider social transformation.

Prefigurative Politics

For anarchists, this boils down to engaging in prefigurative politics: the idea that there should be an ethically consistent relationship between the means and ends. Means and ends aren't the same, but anarchists utilize means that point in the direction of their ends. They choose actions or projects based on how these fit into longer-term aims. Anarchists participate in the present in the ways that they would like to participate, much more fully and with much more self-determination, in the future—and encourage others to do so as well. Prefigurative politics thus aligns one's values to one's practice and practices the new society before it is fully in place.

Still, the "end" of anarchism is not a final destination. It's neither predetermined nor singular, nor a revolution after which all becomes and remains perfect. Ends for anarchists are instead the constellation of ethics, tested time and again, that offer greater amounts of lived freedom, even as people continue to fill out what freedom looks like in praxis. The means involve the journey itself, which is also an intimate, interconnected part of the ends. The ethically consistent relationship between the means and ends is, quite simply, embodied in the process itself, and the continually improving ways of getting from "here" to "there" is what's revolutionary. In the best-case scenario, people can look back over their shoulders to realize there's been enough of a widespread transformation to constitute a revolution, which will again need to be challenged through new processes of expansive transformations.

Revolution becomes both a grandiose notion—that leap of faith to a fundamentally remade world—and something imminently graspable that we can also attempt now. Anarchism

asks that people "build the road as they travel."[46] Even if people have an idea of where they want that road to go—and they must have some sense of this to figure out which path(s) to take—they may be surprised when they "arrive." They will need to adjust their course and venture forward again. It is in the process of constructing new worlds that transformation happens, in how people set about making their way toward something appreciably better.

Revolution entails evolution. Anarchists, like everyone else, need to become people capable of sustaining a new society. The organization and institutions of a new society need to develop into forms that are likewise capable of structuring new social relations. Anarchists infuse all they do with gestures, sometimes flamboyant, at what would replace, among other things, capitalism and the state, heteronormativity and ableism. Such acts prefigure, or show likenesses of "in advance," egalitarian social relations and social organization. As such, they demonstrate and embody the power of the imagination, substantive participation, and the worth of all living things—all of which, at their most collectively self-generated, might truly break the spell of top-down power arrangements.

Forms of self-Organization

Here's where we put the icing on the cake: prefigurative forms of self-organization, in all their innovative variety. Fortunately, though, everyone gets to eat the cake. Anarchism's reconstructive visions practice how to reorganize society. They put direct action into, well, action.

[46] This is the motto of the Mondragon Cooperative system, founded by José María Arizmendiarrieta in the Basque Country in the 1950s—a system interesting both for its experimentation at contesting capitalism and inability, sadly, to do so. For a somewhat rosy history, see Roy Morrison, *We Build the Road as We Travel* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1991).

Credits for Anarchist Interventions

Cindy Milstein

Cindy is an IAS board member and a co-organizer of the Renewing the Anarchist Tradition conference. She has been an active collective member in anarchist projects in her longtime home base, Vermont, ranging from Black Sheep Books and the Free Society Collective, to the Last Elm Café and the Old North End Community Food Project; and has been involved in continental and global efforts, like the Left Greens, the Don't Just (Not) Vote and Hope from People, Not Presidents initiatives, and the anticapitalist movement. For many years, she taught at the anarchist summer school known as the Institute for Social Ecology, and has long engaged in community organizing campaigns and study groups where she lives, and popular education—talks and panels—in places she doesn't. Her writings have appeared in various periodicals, some long dead and others still thriving, and several anthologies: *Confronting Capitalism* (Soft Skull, 2005), *Globalize Liberation* (City Lights, 2005), *Only a Beginning* (Arsenal Pulp, 2005), and *Realizing the Impossible: Art against Authority* (AK Press, 2007). Cindy dreams of revolution, and in the meantime, copyedits books for money while working to end capitalism. She can be reached at cbmilstein@yahoo.com.

Institute for Anarchist studies

The IAS, a nonprofit foundation established in 1996, aims to support the development of anarchism by creating spaces for independent, politically engaged scholarship that explores

Epilogue: Paths toward Utopia

Paths are never straight lines. They zigzag, journey uphill & down. They reach dead-ends. But when we put our best foot forward, we just might venture in utopia's direction, toward a world from below, by & for all.

We gingerly find stepping-stones to more marvelous destinations. Then strive to cobble together whole landscapes out of nonhierarchical practices. We kick broken glass from our way. Sometimes get lost. But the precarious passage itself is our road map to a liberatory society.

We hold hands, desiring to traverse anew. When darkness descends, we build campfires from the embers of possibility, & see other flames in the distance.[1]

[1] The text here is an excerpt from the collaborative project "Paths toward Utopia," a six-panel piece with illustrations by Erik Ruin and words by Cindy Milstein, for the winter 2010 issue of the periodical *World War Three Illustrated*.

Direct action takes two forms. Its "positive" or proactive form is the power to create. People do things now the way that they want to see them done, increasingly, in the future, without representative and vertical forms of power. They ignore the "higher" powers, and flex their own collective muscles to make and implement decisions over their lives. The "negative" or reactive form of direct action, the power to resist, uses direct means to challenge the bad stuff—for example, a general strike to stop a war. Both types of direct action are useful, of course. They also go hand in hand. Students, faculty, and support staff at a university, for instance, can occupy an administration building to protest budget cuts and at the same time utilize directly democratic processes to self-determine their course of action (which may then embolden the occupiers to want an altogether different form of education). A Cop Watch project can use free and open-source communication technologies, such as pirate radio, as a way for people to directly report on and hinder police abuses, and at the same time develop neighborhood-run media.[47] But it's when people increasingly take charge, instituting and participating in nonhierarchical organization, that they begin to have the power to reshape society, rather than simply the "power" to react against those forces that ultimately have power over them.

We've come full circle to the conception of anarchism as aspiring toward free individuals within a free society. We're fully in the realm of self-determination, self-management, and self-governance, as living realities, even if in embryonic forms. The only way to build such new social relationships and institutions is to birth and nurture them ourselves. Anarchists are always involved in all manner of self-organized projects, both at the subterranean level, operating beneath the surface to craft new bases for social and ecological life, and with a powerfully relevant visibility that reflects commonsense notions of how

[47] See, for example, www.copwatchla.org/.

everyone could live their lives together, and the many inchoate ways we already do.[48]

Many anarchist projects happen within anarchist circles or are geared toward other anarchists. This allows anarchists to experiment with forms of organizations among relatively like-minded people who are already committed to them. It also facilitates the development of a much-needed self-managed infrastructure to develop ideas, build skills, and mentor future generations of anarchists. For example, the resource listing in the annual Slingshot Organizer—a self-organized project in its own right—reveals the informal global confederation of collectively run anarchist bookstores and infoshops.[49] The three groups involved in publishing this book—the Institute for Anarchist Studies, AK Press, and Justseeds Artists' Cooperative—run on internally egalitarian models and are practicing forms of mutual aid in this collaborative book series.[50] Anarchist political organizations, ranging here in North America from the city-based Pittsburgh Organizing

[48] I'd like to thank an anonymous anarchist from the ten-year-old-strong Long Haul anarchist discussion group in Berkeley for reminding me that anarchistic values are, in fact, commonsensical, or how most people would want to probably live their lives, if not compelled, coerced, and oppressed by forces outside their personal and social control. Anarchism, in short, makes sense to many people; it's thus our "job" as anarchists to show that it's also possible, including by interconnecting and radicalizing those many bits of practices that already emulate the ethics espoused within anarchism.

[49] For more information on the Slingshot Organizer and the related *Slingshot* newspaper, see slingshot.tao.ca.

[50] Additional anarchist and antiauthoritarian publishing projects include Autonomedia, PM Press, Eberhardt Press, Microcosm Publishing, Freedom Press, Ardent Press, Black and Red, Charles H. Kerr, South End Press, and Black Cat Press, among numerous others. These, in turn, along with bookstores, infoshops, periodical and zine publishers, anarchist artists, and others combine their collective efforts to table at the increasing number of anarchist bookfairs globally, which are also collectively developed spaces that serve as infrastructure, education, and alternate modes of social relations and exchange, albeit still within capitalism.

for a new politics of self-legislation, self-management, and self-adjudication, forever shattering the bleak world of states, capital, and prisons.

Any vision of a free society, if it is to be truly democratic, must of course be worked out by all of us—first in movements, and later, in our communities and federations. Even so, we will probably discover that newly defined understandings of what it means to be a politically engaged person are needed in place of affinity groups; hybrid consensus-seeking and majoritarian methods of decision making that strive to retain diversity are preferable to simple consensus and informal models; written compacts articulating rights and duties are crucial to fill out the unspoken culture of protests; and institutionalized spaces for policymaking are key to guaranteeing that our freedom to make decisions doesn't disappear with a line of riot police.

It is time to push beyond the oppositional character of the direct action movement by infusing it with a reconstructive vision. That means beginning, right now, to translate movement structures into institutions that embody the good society; in short, cultivating direct democracy in the places we call home. This will involve the harder work of reinvigorating or initiating civic gatherings, town meetings, neighborhood assemblies, community mediation boards, any and all forums where we can come together to decide our lives, even if only in extralegal institutions at first. Then, too, it will mean reclaiming globalization, not as a new phase of capitalism, but as its replacement by confederated, directly democratic communities coordinated for mutual benefit.

It is time to move from protest to politics, from shutting down streets to opening up public space, from demanding scraps from those few in power to holding power firmly in all our hands. Ultimately, this means moving beyond the question of "Whose Streets?" We should ask instead "Whose Cities?" Then, and only then, will we be able to remake them as our own.

Such instantiations of self-governance don't appear out of thin air. They take, among other things, patience, deliberation, self-reflection, and imagination. They take courage. The Zapatistas spent ten years "talking with and listening to other people like us," joining "forces in silence," learning and getting "organized in order to defend ourselves and to fight for justice." Then, "when the rich were throwing their New Year's Eve parties, we fell upon their cities and just took them over" on December 31, 1993. "And then the people from the cities went out into the streets and began shouting for an end to the war. And then we stopped our war, and we listened to those brothers and sisters… And so we set aside the fire and took up the word." Still, it would take another seven years, until 2001, before the EZLN would begin "encouraging the autonomous rebel zapatista municipalities—which is how the peoples are organized in order to govern and to govern themselves—in order to make themselves stronger."[5]

At worst, such fragile yet exceedingly beautiful experiments will forever change those people who participate in them, for the better, by "self-mentoring" a new generation of rebels through the lived practice of freely constituting one's community collectively. They will provide material and moral support, and serve as the continuity between other similar efforts, in other parts of the world. And they will also supply messages in bottles to future generations that directly democratic, confederated ways of making social, economic, political, and cultural decisions are a tangible alternative. This is a pretty good "worst-case scenario," as the horizontal movement of movements of the past couple decades attests to—from Chiapas to Buenos Aires to Oaxaca, from Greece to North America. At best, though, such forms of freedom will widen into dual powers that can contest and ultimately replace forms of domination. They will become the basis

[5] *Sixth Declaration*, "I. — What We Are" and "II. — Where We Are Now."

Group to the regionally based North Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists, practice face-to-face decision making even as they cooperate with other groups on everything from mass mobilizations to organizing campaigns. There are loose networks of individuals, such as Anarchist People of Color, that strive to craft decentralist yet interdependent structures, as well as experiments in the self-management of cultural production by groups like Riotfolk, an antiprofit mutual aid collective of radical artists and musicians.[51] Every anarchist project is marked by this cooperativist spirit. Even so-called antiorganization anarchists engage in self-organization, operating collectively as an affinity group or self-managing a micropublishing project.

Equally, many anarchists find commonality and work with all manner of nonanarchist projects that experiment with directly democratic forms. These run the gamut from the Zapatistas and Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca in Mexico to occupied factories in Argentina and the Balkans, from Brazil's Landless Workers and Florida's Take Back the Land movements to the anticapitalist wing of the global justice movement, from the International Solidarity Movement in Palestine to the Revolutionary Autonomous Communities in Los Angeles.[52] Most anarchists would agree that the goal isn't

[51] For more information, see www.organizepittsburgh.org/ (Pittsburgh Organizing Group); wiki.infoshop.org (North Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists); en.wikipedia.org (Anarchist People of Color); www.riotfolk.org/ (Riotfolk).

[52] See, for example, Gloria Muñoz Ramírez, *The Fire and the Word: A History of the Zapatista Movement* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2008); Diana Denham and the C.A.S.A. Collective, eds., *Teaching Rebellion: Stories from the Grassroots Mobilization in Oaxaca* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2008); *The Take*, a film by Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein on Argentina's occupied factories, with more information available at www.thetake.org/; "Anti-Privatization Protests in Serbia; Global Balkans Interviews Milenko Sreckovic (Freedom Fight), available at www.globalbalkans.org; www.mstbrazil.org/ (Brazil's Landless Workers

to build an anarchist world but rather an egalitarian one in which everyone learns to—and wants to—think and act for themselves collectively. Anarchists bring this sensibility along with their skills at self-governance to struggles around the world, ranging from tent cities for those who are homeless to cooperatives set up by community land trusts for those who want to control their housing.

As mentioned above, anarchism is a compelling political philosophy because it is a way of asking the right questions without seeking a monopoly on the right answers. The point is to destroy monopolies, along with all other singular choke holds on people's collective ability to be free. Self-organization is the key to ensuring the nonexclusive ownership—or rather, the ownership in common—of freedom. As anarchism thoroughly grasps, freedom is only possible when people all share the ability to determine and shape social relations and social organization. The only way to create such far-reaching forms of justice is to ensure that everyone has an equal portion of power, that we not only discuss, debate, and dialogue about what kind of society and everyday life we want but also problem solve, implement, evaluate, and revisit those decisions over the whole of life. How such forms of self-organization would look and work in practice is precisely the stuff of anarchism; it's what we do—in essence, voluntary research and development, drawing from good ideas both within and outside anarchist milieus. Anarchism borrows from the seemingly impossible possibilities of the past and present. It then gifts such potentialities to

movement); takebacktheland.org/ (Take Back the Land); Daniel Burton-Rose, Eddie Yuen, and George Katsiaficas, eds., *Confronting Capitalism: Dispatches from a Global Movement* (Brooklyn: Soft Skull Press, 2004); Notes from Nowhere, ed., *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2003); palsolidarity.org/ (International Solidarity Movement); revolutionaryautonomouscommunities.blogspot.com/ (Revolutionary Autonomous Communities).

Indeed, such innovative efforts, even when they fall short of social transformation, end up inspiring other attempts. The current series of building occupations on college campuses across the state of California, sparked by dramatic tuition increases and budget cuts to public education in fall 2009, draws on the recent Oaxacan rebellion of 2006. As La Ventana Collective, made up of students at San Francisco State University, writes, "The APPO (the Popular People's Assembly of Oaxaca) organized large general assemblies held in the midst of the occupation of the zocalo of the capital city of the state of Oaxaca. The 'planton'—or occupation—was a space where meetings took up to 3 days in many cases due to the horizontal nature and directly democratic principles of the APPO, which functioned as guidelines and principles of the movement." These students assert in relation to their own ongoing resistance that "a general assembly is, for us, a large gathering of people willing to talk about the issues through discussion in order to formulate plans for moving forward." Looking ahead as students, faculty, staff, workers, and community supporters around California gear up for further contestation, including a "Strike and Day of Action in Defense of Public Education" called for March 4, 2010, La Ventana points to the significance of "the communization of the struggle… This is a philosophy that was stressed during the 2001 horizontalist movement in Argentina after the collapse of the economy. Once again, during the actions that followed the collapse of the government, the people self-organized."[4] For the San Francisco State University students, the lived reality of directly democratic processes during their own struggle is just as important as winning that struggle; it is, in fact, part and parcel of winning.

[4] La Ventana Collective, "On the Actions of December 10th and in Defense of the SFSU Occupation" (December 12, 2009), available at ventanacollective.blogspot.com/.

"much improvement in the projects in the communities. Health and education have improved, although there is still a good deal lacking for it to be what it should be. The same is true for housing and food."[2]

Another recent example was the neighborhood assembly movement that sprang up in Argentina in 2001–2, in response to an economic crisis that simultaneously delegitimized parliamentary politics. In late December 2001, a spiraling sense of desperation and powerless combined to force people not only out onto the streets to loudly protest by banging on pots and pans (and destroying ATMs) but also into an empowering dialogue with their neighbors about what to do next—on the local, national, and global levels. Some fifty neighborhoods in Buenos Aires began holding weekly meetings and sending delegates every Sunday to an interneighborhood general coordinating gathering. The anarchist Argentine Libertarian Federation Local Council explains that the assemblies were "formed by the unemployed, the underemployed, and people marginalized and excluded from capitalist society: including professionals, workers, small retailers, artists, craftspeople, all of them also neighbors." As the Libertarian Federation notes, "The meetings are open and anyone who wishes can participate," and common to all assemblies was the "non-delegation of power, self-management, [and a] horizontal structure." While these assemblies didn't end up replacing the state structure, they did supply Argentineans with a glimpse of their own ability to make public policy together. "The fear in our society has turned into courage," the Libertarian Federation reports. "There is reason to hope that all Argentineans now know for certain who has been blocking our freedoms."[3]

[2] *Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona* (June 2005), introduction and "II. Where We Are Now," available at www.eco.utexas.edu.

[3] Argentine Libertarian Federation Local Council, "Argentina: Between Poverty and Protest," translated from the Spanish original by Robby Barnes and Sylvie Kashdan, available at news.infoshop.org.

everyone, supplying hope by pointing toward an increasingly liberatory future.

Anarchism's laboratory is the whole of life. It explores what self-determination would look like in relation to sex, sexuality, and gender; it articulates strategies and countervisions for oppressed, colonized, or occupied peoples around the world. It tests new forms of workplace self-management, while reimagining the idea of "work" itself in terms of how people materially produce and distribute everything from food and clothing to energy and communication technologies. Anarchists self-organize what are now seen as "services," from education and mental/physical health, to cafes and libraries, to rescue operations. They devise new mechanisms of self-governance, from collectives and affinity groups, to neighborhood assemblies, councils, and confederations—all premised on experimentation with consensual and directly democratic decision-making methods. In these ways and untold others, anarchists give tangible meaning to a form of social organization premised on freedom.

Fleshing Out Freedom

> We might not see the outcomes
> Though we might see the clues
> But when you plant a seed
> It's gotta grow before it blooms
>
> —Ryan Harvey, "Ain't Gonna Come Today," 2006

The past forty-plus years have ushered in a new era, variously labeled the network society, the information age, or simply globalization. The sweeping transformations in capitalism, nation-states, technology, and culture open up new possibilities. But they are also cause for grave concern. Capitalism is suddenly "green"; social networking and communication technologies further reduce actual human ties;

representative democracies offer public relations campaigns instead of "safety nets," alongside ubiquitous surveillance and neo-torture. For better *and* for worse, globalization is qualitatively altering social relations, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Perhaps nowhere is this coupling of promise and peril best captured than by two defining moments in North America at the millennium's turn, as distant as they now seem: the hope reawakened in 1999 by the anarchistic actions in Seattle, and the fear inculcated in 2001 by the terroristic attacks on the World Trade Centers in New York.

The exacerbation of insecurity is now the prime means by which relatively small networks of global elites and/or thugs attempt to consolidate differing versions of social control. For many outside these networks, this involves living in the crossfire of occupations, civil wars, and suicide bombings, and/or suffering greater hardship due to economic and ecological crises. The notion of citizens protected by a state, as flawed as that is, almost seems antiquated, as billions of refugees exist in the precarious space of illegality. For most people, daily life itself is a source of anxiety—not only materially but also in terms of sheer dehumanization. It's almost as if the world is letting out a dispirited sigh of collective depression.

In contrast, anarchism has reemerged as one of the most potent currents within today's radical milieus. A variety of antiauthoritarian movements have sprung up worldwide over the past two decades, but anarchism appears to be the only form of libertarian socialism that speaks to the times and people's dreams. Indeed, anarchism may well have been ahead of its nineteenth-century day in advocating a world of transnational and multidimensional identities, in struggling for a substantive humanism based on mutualism and differentiation. Anarchist values are oddly similar to many of the structural changes occurring under globalization—such as decentralization and cooperation—making them both more

and international regulatory bodies, where trade is top-down and profit-oriented, confederations could coordinate distribution between regions in ecological and humane ways, while allowing policy in regard to production, say, to remain at the grassroots.

This more expansive understanding of a prefigurative politics would necessarily involve creating institutions that could potentially replace capitalism and nation-states. Such directly democratic institutions are compatible with, and could certainly grow out of, the ones we use during demonstrations, but they very likely won't be mirror images once we reach the level of society. This does not mean abandoning the principles and ideals underpinning direct action mobilizations (such as freedom, cooperation, decentralism, solidarity, diversity, and face-to-face participation); it merely means recognizing the limits of direct democracy as it is practiced in the context of an anticapitalist convergence.

The Zapatistas, along with other revolutionaries before them, have already shown that declarations of freedom "touch the hearts of humble and simple people like ourselves, but people who are also, like ourselves, dignified and rebel." Yet starting in 2001, they have proved as well that municipalities can strive to become autonomous from statecraft and capital, to put human and ecological concerns first, while retaining regional and global links of solidarity and mutual aid. "This method of autonomous government was not simply invented by the EZLN [Zapatista Army of National Liberation], but rather it comes from several centuries of indigenous resistance and from the Zapatistas' own experience. It is the self-governance of the communities. In other words, no one from outside comes to govern, but the peoples themselves decide, among themselves, who governs and how… And, also through the Good Government Juntas, coordination has been improved between the Autonomous Municipalities." Among other achievements, these self-governments also facilitated

there is frequently no fixed place or face to decision making, nor any regularity, nor much of a record of who decided what and how. Moreover, affinity groups are not open to everyone but only those who share a specific identity or attachment. As such, although an affinity group can certainly choose to shut down a street, there is ultimately something slightly authoritarian in small groups taking matters into their own hands, no matter what their political persuasion.

Deciding what to do with streets in general—say, how to organize transportation, encourage street life, or provide green space—should be a matter open to everyone interested if it is to be truly participatory and nonhierarchical. This implies ongoing and open institutions of direct democracy, for everything from decision making to conflict resolution. We need to be able to know when and where popular assemblies are meeting; we need to meet regularly and make use of nonarbitrary procedures; we need to keep track of what decisions have been made. But more important, if we so choose, we all need to have access to the power to discuss, deliberate, and make decisions about matters that affect our communities and beyond.

Indeed, many decisions have a much wider impact than on just one city; transforming streets, for example, would probably entail coordination on a regional, continental, or even global level. Radicals have long understood such mutualistic self-reliance as a "commune of communes," or confederation. The spokescouncil model used during direct actions hints at such an alternative view of globalization. During a spokescouncil meeting, mandated delegates from our affinity groups gather for the purpose of coordination, the sharing of resources/skills, the building of solidarity, and so forth, always returning to the grassroots level as the ultimate arbiter. If popular assemblies were our basic unit of decision making, confederations of communities could serve as a way to both transcend parochialism and create interdependence where desirable. For instance, rather than global capitalism

practical and potentially more appealing than ever. The state, long anarchism's prime concern alongside capitalism, is also being forever altered, if not undermined. It may not hold a monopoly on violence anymore, nor can it likely provide enough social welfare to ensure passivity on the part of its electorate, and this offers new openings for mutualism and self-governance. As globalization increasingly allows homogeneity and heterogeneity to coexist, albeit often for instrumental ends, anarchism's ongoing efforts to craft a unity in our diversity more than ever suggest a revolutionary praxis.

This may in fact be remembered as "the anarchist century," as David Graeber and Andrej Grubacic claim.[53] The number of people identifying with anarchism has grown exponentially over the recent past. Like their comrades of days gone by, these nouveau anarchists have been busily trying to prefigure their ideals. The better society is hinted at in do-it-yourself cultural productions, inclusive organizational forms, autonomous yet webbed infrastructures, and the numerous attempts to de-commodify needs and desires. Twenty-first-century anarchism has shown itself to be increasingly dynamic and expansive. Additional schools have joined the beautiful adjectival anarchism to further bring out the fullness of self and society—from anarchist people of color to techie anarchists, from poststructuralist to queer-identified anarchists and those concentrating on concerns previously ignored within anarchism such as mental health. People are coming into anarchism from other traditions, like postcolonial struggles, and other scenes, like straight-edge punk. They are also bringing anarchism into their own traditions, reshaping it in the process. Anarchists are open to, allies for, and in critical solidarity with—and attempt to learn from—all sorts of grassroots movements around the world. They are, more than

[53] David Graeber and Andrej Grubacic, "Anarchism, or the Revolutionary Movement of the 21st Century," available at zinelibrary.info.

ever, practicing forms of self-organization on micro, continental, and global levels. Most important perhaps, anarchistic forms of organization and social relations have become the "soft" position, the implicit and usually unacknowledged logic, within radical and progressive movements globally.

I've concentrated here on what anarchism strives for in its most lofty visions, asserting that such beautiful aspirations serve as an increasingly necessary conscience in an increasingly unconscionable world. I've argued that even if anarchism were only an ethical sensibility, the idea of an expansive freedom can sometimes be enough to push the envelope of how people, anarchist or not, try to constitute freedom in practice. Happily, when all is said and done, anarchism is the grand yet modest belief, embraced by people throughout human history, that we can imagine and also implement a wholly marvelous and materially abundant society. That is the spirit of anarchism, the ghost that haunts humanity: that our lives and communities really can be appreciably better. And better, and then better still.

maintaining a single-issue identity with that many individuals. But we can share a feeling of community and a striving toward some common good that allows each of us to flourish. In turn, when greater numbers of people come together on a face-to-face basis to reshape their neighborhoods and towns, the issues as well as the viewpoints will multiply, and alliances will no doubt change depending on the specific topic under discussion. Thus the need for a place where we can meet as human beings at the most face-to-face level—that is, an assembly of active political beings—to share our many identities and interests in hopes of balancing both the individual and community in all we do.

As well, trust and accountability function differently at the affinity group versus civic level. We generally reveal more of ourselves to friends; and such unwritten bonds of love and affection hold us more closely together, or at least give us added impetus to work things out. Underlying this is a higher-than-average degree of trust, which serves to make us accountable to each other.

On a community-wide level, the reverse is more often true: accountability allows us to trust each other. Hopefully, we share bonds of solidarity and respect; yet since we can't all know each other well, such bonds only make sense if we first determine them together, and then record them, write them down, for all to refer back to in the future, and even revisit if need be. Accountable, democratic structures of our own making, in short, provide the foundation for trust, since the power to decide is both transparent and ever-amenable to scrutiny.

There are also issues of time and space. Affinity groups, in the scheme of things, are generally temporary configurations—they may last a few months, or a few years, but often not much longer. Once the particular reasons why we've come together have less of an immediate imperative, or as our friendships falter, such groups frequently fall by the wayside. And even during a group's life span, in the interim between direct actions,

begin to shift the strategy, structure, and values of direct action in the streets to the most grassroots level of public policy making?

The most fundamental level of decision making in a demonstration is the affinity group. Here, we come together as friends or because of a common identity, or a combination of the two. We share something in particular; indeed, this common identity is often reflected in the name we choose for our groups. We may not always agree with each other, but there is a fair amount of *homogeneity* precisely because we've consciously chosen to come together for a specific reason—usually having little to do with mere geography. This sense of a shared identity allows for the smooth functioning of a consensus decision-making process, since we start from a place of commonality. In an affinity group, almost by definition, our unity needs to take precedence over our diversity, or our supposed affinity breaks down altogether.

Compare this to what could be the most fundamental level of decision making in a society: a neighborhood or town. Now, geography plays a much larger role. Out of historic, economic, cultural, religious, and other reasons, we may find ourselves living side by side with a wide range of individuals and their various identities. Most of these people are not our friends per se. Still, the very diversity we encounter is the life of a vibrant city itself. The accidents and/or numerous personal decisions that have brought us together frequently create a fair amount of *heterogeneity* precisely because we haven't all chosen to come together for a specific reason. In this context, where we start from a place of difference, decision-making mechanisms need to be much more capable of allowing for dissent; that is, diversity needs to be clearly retained within any notions of unity. As such, majoritarian decision-making processes begin to make more sense.

Then, too, there is the question of scale. It is hard to imagine being friends with hundreds, or even thousands, of people, nor

Anarchism's Promise for Anticapitalist Resistance

For many, a "new anarchism" seemed to have been birthed amid the cold rain and toxic fog that greeted the November 1999 World Trade Organization protest. Yet rather than the bastard child of an emergent social movement, this radical politics of resistance and reconstruction had been transforming itself for decades. Seattle's direct action only succeeded in making it visible again. Anarchism, for its part, supplied a compelling praxis for this historical moment. And in so doing, it not only helped shape the present anticapitalist movement; it also illuminated principles of freedom that could potentially displace the hegemony of representative democracy and capitalism.

From its nineteenth-century beginnings on, anarchism has always held out a set of ethical notions that it contends best approximates a free society. In the parlance of his period, Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta (1853–1932) long ago described anarchism as "a form of social life in which men live as brothers, where nobody is in a position to oppress or exploit anyone else, and in which all the means to achieve maximum moral and material development are available to everyone."[1] This pithy definition still captures anarchism's overarching aims. Nevertheless, this libertarian form of socialism may well have been ahead of its day in advocating a world of transnational and multidimensional identities, in struggling for a qualitative hu-

[1] Errico Malatesta, *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas*, ed. Vernon Richards (London: Freedom Press, 1974); originally appeared in *Pensiero e Volontà*, September 1, 1925.

manism based on cooperation and differentiation. It is only in the context of globalization that anarchism may finally be able to speak to the times and thus peoples' hopes. Whether it can fulfill its own aspirations remains to be seen.

The Vision Made Invisible

While the forms of organization and values advanced by anarchists can be found in embryo around the world in many different eras, anarchism's debut as a distinct philosophy was in mid-nineteenth-century Europe. The English "philosopher of freedom" William Godwin (1756–1836) was the first Enlightenment thinker to scribe a sustained theory of a society without states in his *An Inquiry concerning Political Justice* in 1793, but it wasn't until Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–65) wrote "society seeks order in anarchy" in his *What Is Property?* in 1840, that the term "anarchism" slowly began to congeal over the next several decades around a recognizable core of principles.[2] Godwin's political theory didn't live up to the liberatory character of his cultural sentiments; and Proudhon should be roundly condemned on many fronts, from his failure to contend with capitalism's inherent logic to his patriarchal and anti-Semitic beliefs. It would in fact take others, from the Russian aristocrat Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921) to the German Jewish intellectual Gustav Landauer (1870–1919) and many prominent as well as lesser-known radicals, to fill out a more pleasing portrait of classical anarchism: a utopian political philosophy decrying all forms of imposed authority or coercion.

[2] William Godwin, *Enquiry concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Morals and Modern Happiness* (1793; repr., Bel Air, CA: Dodo Press, 2009); Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *What Is Property?* (1840; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 209.

transform and ultimately control our lives and that of our communities?

This is, in essence, a question of power—who has it, how it is used, and to what ends. To varying degrees, we all know the answer in relation to current institutions and systems. We can generally explain what we are *against*. That is exactly why we are protesting, whether it is against capitalism or climate change, summits or war. What we have largely failed to articulate, however, is any sort of response in relation to liberatory institutions and systems. We often can't express, especially in any coherent and utopian manner, what we are *for*. Even as we prefigure a way of making power horizontal, equitable, and hence, hopefully an essential part of a free society, we ignore the reconstructive vision that a directly democratic process holds up right in front of our noses.

For all intents and purposes, direct action protests remain trapped. On the one hand, they reveal and confront domination and exploitation. The political pressure exerted by such widespread agitation may even be able to influence current power structures to amend some of the worst excesses of their ways; the powers that be have to listen, and respond to some extent, when the voices become too numerous and too loud. Nevertheless, most people are still shut out of the decision-making process itself, and consequently, have little tangible power over their lives at all. Without this ability to self-govern, street actions translate into nothing more than a countercultural version of interest group lobbying, albeit far more radical than most and generally unpaid.

What gets forgotten in relation to direct action mobilizations is the promise implicit in their own structure: that power not only needs to be contested; it must also be constituted anew in liberatory and egalitarian forms. This entails taking directly democratic processes seriously—not simply as a tactic to organize protests but as the very way we organize society, specifically the political realm. The issue then becomes: How do we

itics is, in fact, the very strength and vision of direct action, where the means themselves are understood to intimately relate to the ends. We're not putting off the good society until some distant future but attempting to carve out room for it in the here and now, however tentative and contorted under the given social order. In turn, this consistency of means and ends implies an ethical approach to politics. How we act now is how we want others to begin to act, too. We try to model a notion of goodness even as we fight for it.

This can implicitly be seen in the affinity group and spokescouncil structures for decision making at direct actions. Both supply much needed spaces in which to school ourselves in direct democracy. Here, in the best of cases, we can proactively set the agenda, carefully deliberate together over questions, and come to decisions that strive to take everyone's needs and desires into account. Substantive discussion replaces checking boxes on a ballot; face-to-face participation replaces handing over our lives to so-called representatives; nuanced and reasoned solutions replace lesser-of-two-(or-three-)evils thinking. The democratic process utilized during demonstrations decentralizes power even as it offers tangible solidarity; for example, affinity groups afford greater and more diverse numbers of people a real share in decision making, while spokescouncils allow for intricate coordination—even on a global level. This is, as 1960s' activists put it, the power to create rather than to destroy.

The beauty of the direct action movement, it could be said, is that it strives to take its own ideals to heart. In doing so, it has perhaps unwittingly created the demand for such directly democratic practices on a permanent basis. Yet the perplexing question underlying episodic "street democracy" remains unaddressed: How can *everyone* come together to make decisions that affect *society as a whole* in participatory, mutualistic, and ethical ways? In other words, how can each and every one of us—not just a counterculture or a protest movement—really

As socialists, anarchists were particularly concerned with capitalism, which during the Industrial Revolution was causing suffering on a hitherto-unimaginable scale. Anarchists primarily pinned their hopes for transforming social relations on workers, utilizing economic categories ranging from class struggle to an end to private property. All those on the revolutionary Left agreed that capitalism couldn't be reformed; it must instead be abolished. But unlike other socialists, anarchists felt that the state was just as complicit in enslaving humanity, and so one couldn't employ statecraft—even in a transitional manner—to move from capitalism to socialism. A classless yet still statist society, anarchists argued, would still constitute a world marked for most by domination. As anarcho-syndicalist Rudolf Rocker (1873–1958) proclaimed in 1938, "Socialism will be free, or it will not be at all."[3] For this reason and others, anarchism evolved out of socialism to indicate an opposition not just to capitalism but also to states and other compulsory, interlinked institutions, such as organized religion, mandatory schooling, militarism, and marriage. Thus it is said of anarchism in the most general sense that "all anarchists are socialists, but not all socialists are anarchists." Or as Joseph A. Labadie put it, "Anarchism is voluntary Socialism. There are two kinds of Socialism … authoritarian and libertarian, state and free."[4]

This sentiment could also be seen as relating to questions of strategy. Many socialists, at least the radical ones, were not adverse to the "withering away" of the state, it was just a matter of when and how. For anarchists, a "dictatorship of the proletariat" steering the state until it withered couldn't be counted on to actually push that process along. Instead of top-down social organization, anarchists championed various

[3] Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice* (1937; repr., Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2004), 14.

[4] Joseph A. Labadie, "Anarchism: What It Is and What It Is Not," *dandelion* 3, no 12 (Winter 1979).

types of horizontal models that could prefigure the good society in the present. That is, anarchists maintained that people could attempt to build the new world in the shell of the old through self-organization rather than passively waiting until some postrevolutionary period. Hence anarchism's emphasis on praxis. Anarchist alternatives were grounded in such key concepts as voluntary association, personal and social freedom, confederated yet decentralized communities, equality of conditions, human solidarity, and spontaneity. As the European invention known as anarchism traveled via intellectual and agitator circuits to everywhere from the United States and China to Latin America and Africa, anarchists experimented with everything from communal living, federations, and free schools to workers' councils, local currencies, and mutual aid societies.

Anarchism was part of a fairly large internationalist Left from the 1880s through the Red Scare of the 1920s and the Spanish Revolution of the 1930s. Then, discredited, disenchanted, or killed, anarchists seemed to disappear, and with them, the philosophy itself. After World War II and the defeat of Nazism, it appeared the two political choices were "democracy" (free market capitalism) or "communism" (state capitalism). Lost in this equation, among other things, was the questioning of authority and concurrent assertion of utopia posed by anarchism.

Reemergence as Convergence

The distant nineteenth-century is, of course, formative for anarchism's reinvention. But the dilemmas and openings of that time—for instance, the rise of liberalism, colonialism, and industrial production—are far removed from those of the twenty-first century. Beyond this, classical anarchism leaves a lot to be desired: its naïveté concerning human nature as basically good, say, or its aversion to any political replacement for statist governments. When anarchism began to be rediscovered in

favor of privatization, forcing people into harsh factories and crowded cities.

Advanced capitalism, as it pushes past the fetters of even nation-states in its insatiable quest for growth, encloses life in a much more expansive yet generally invisible way: fences are replaced by consumer culture. We are raised in an almost totally commodified world where nothing comes for free, even futile attempts to remove oneself from the market economy. This commodification seeps into not only what we eat, wear, or do for fun but also into our language, relationships, and even our very biology and minds. We have lost not only our communities and public spaces but control over our own lives; we have lost the ability to define ourselves outside capitalism's grip, and thus genuine meaning itself begins to dissolve.

"Whose Streets? Our Streets!" then, is a legitimate emotional response to the feeling that even the most minimal of public, noncommodified spheres has been taken from us. Yet in the end, it is simply a frantic cry from our cage. We have become so confined, so thoroughly damaged, by capitalism as well as state control that crumbs appear to make a nourishing meal.

Temporarily closing off the streets during direct actions does provide momentary spaces in which to practice democratic process, and even offers a sense of empowerment, but such events leave power for power's sake, like the very pavement beneath our feet, unchanged. Only when the serial protest mode is escalated into a struggle for popular or horizontal power can we create cracks in the figurative concrete, thereby opening up ways to challenge capitalism, nation-states, and other systems of domination.

This is not to denigrate the contemporary direct action movement in the United States and elsewhere; just the opposite. Besides a long overdue and necessary critique of numerous institutions of command and obedience, it is quietly yet crucially supplying the outlines of a freer society. This prefigurative pol-

Reclaim the Cities: From Protest to Popular Power

"**D**irect action gets the goods,"proclaimed the Industrial Workers of the World nearly a century ago. And in the relatively short time since Seattle, this has certainly proven to be the case. Indeed, "the goods" reaped by the direct action movement here in North America have included creating doubt as to the nature of globalization, shedding light on the nearly unknown workings of international trade and supranational governance bodies, and making anarchism and anticapitalism almost household words.[1] As if that weren't enough, we find ourselves on the streets of twenty-first-century metropolises demonstrating our power to resist in a way that models the good society we envision: a truly democratic one.

But is this *really* what democracy looks like?

The impulse to "reclaim the streets" is an understandable one. When industrial capitalism first started to emerge in the early nineteenth century, its machinations were relatively visible. Take, for instance, the enclosures. Pasturelands that had been used in common for centuries to provide villages with their very sustenance were systematically fenced off—enclosed—in order to graze sheep, whose wool was needed for the burgeoning textile industry. Communal life was briskly thrust aside in

[1] Throughout this chapter, the "direct action movement" refers to the time period ranging, approximately, from the Zapatista uprising in January 1994 and the subsequent global anticapitalist movement of movements, to today's climate justice movement, Greek rebellion, and wave of occupations.

the 1950s by leftists searching for an alternative to orthodox Marxism, it therefore tried hard to remake itself. Anarchist thinkers grappled with new concerns from conspicuous consumption to urbanization; new possibilities such as feminism and cultural liberation; and old ghosts of its own from a workerist orientation to authoritarian, even terroristic tactics. The renewed anarchism that finally emerged was, in fact, a convergence of various postwar antiauthoritarian impulses. Though the libertarian sensibility of the 1960s and New Left is foundational, five phenomena are especially crucial to the praxis made (in)famous in Seattle.

First, there is the Situationist International (1962–72), a small group of intellectuals and avant-garde artists that attempted to describe a changing capitalism. According to the Situationists, the alienation basic to capitalist production that Karl Marx had observed now filled every crevice; people were alienated not only from the goods they produced but also their own lives, their own desires. The commodity form had colonized the previously separate sphere of daily life. As Guy Debord (1931–94) of the Situationist International quipped, modern capitalism forged "a society of the spectacle" or consumer society that promised satisfaction yet never delivered, with us as passive spectators.[5] The Situationists advocated playful disruptions of the everyday, from media to cityscapes, in order to shatter the spectacle via imagination and replace drudgery with pleasure. During the May 1968 near-revolution in Paris, Situationist International slogans were ubiquitous as graffiti such as "Live without dead time! Enjoy without restraint." Ironically, even though the Situationists were critical of anarchists, anarchists lifted from the Situationists' critique, especially the preoccupation with cultural alterations.

[5] Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (1967; repr., Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2006). For another key Situationist International text, see Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (1967; repr., London: Rebel Press, 2001).

From the 1970s on, the interdisciplinary works of theorist Murray Bookchin (1921–2006) also helped transform anarchism into a modern political philosophy. Bridging the Old and New Left, Bookchin did more than anyone to widen anarchism's anticapitalism/antistatism to a critique of hierarchy per se. He also brought ecology as a concern to anarchism by connecting it to domination. In a nutshell, to paraphrase him, the ecological crisis is a social crisis. Bookchin emphasized the possibility nascent in the present of an ecological and postscarcity society, in which the "rational" use of technology, to use his language, could free humanity to fulfill its potentiality in harmony with the natural world. Most significantly, he drew out the institutional replacement for the state hinted at in nineteenth-century anarchism: directly democratic self-government, or as he phrased it, "libertarian municipalism." Bookchin's writings pointed to the city or neighborhood as the site of struggle, radicalization, dual power, and finally revolution, with confederations of free citizens' assemblies replacing state and capital. They also inspired a radical ecology movement, experiments in anarchist federations such as the Youth Greens, and a new generation of anarchist intellectuals.

Bookchin's unearthing of the affinity group model in his research on the Spanish anarchists, sketched in his *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, was influential to the antinuclear movement of the 1970s and 1980s in the United States.[6] Emerging from the rural counterculture in New England and then on the West Coast—a counterculture that included radical pacifists of both anarchist and religious persuasions—the antinuke movement used civil disobedience, but infused it with an anarchist and feminist sensibility: a rejection of all hierarchy, a preference for directly democratic process, a stress on spontaneity and cre-

[6] Murray Bookchin, "Note on Affinity Groups," in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (1970; repr., Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2004), 144–46.

magically overnight. It will instead emerge little by little out of struggles to, as Murray Bookchin phrased it, "democratize our republic and radicalize our democracy."[12]

We must infuse all our political activities with politics. It is time to call for a second "American Revolution," but this time, one that breaks the bonds of nation-states, one that knows no borders or masters, and one that draws the potentiality of libertarian self-governance to its limits, fully enfranchising all with the power to act democratically. This begins with reclaiming the word democracy itself—not as a better version of representation but as a radical process to directly remake our world.

[12] Murray Bookchin, "The Greening of Politics: Toward a New Kind of Political Practice," *Green Perspectives* 1 (January 1986), available at dwardmac.pitzer.edu.

aggrandizement of itself; on the new, a delegation of power for the common benefit of society."[11]

If freedom is the social aim, power must be held horizontally. We must all be both rulers and ruled simultaneously, or a system of rulers and subjects is the only alternative. We must all hold power equally in our hands if freedom is to coexist with power. Freedom, in other words, can only be maintained through a sharing of political power, and this sharing happens through political institutions. Rather than being made a monopoly, power should be distributed to us all, thereby allowing all our varied "powers" (of reason, persuasion, decision making, and so on) to blossom. This is the power to create rather than dominate.

Of course, institutionalizing direct democracy assures only the barest bones of a free society. Freedom is never a done deal, nor is it a fixed notion. New forms of domination will probably always rear their ugly heads. Yet minimally, directly democratic institutions open a public space in which everyone, if they so choose, can come together in a deliberative and decision-making body; a space where everyone has the opportunity to persuade and be persuaded; a space where no discussion or decision is ever hidden, and where it can always be returned to for scrutiny, accountability, or rethinking. Embryonic within direct democracy, if only to function as a truly open policymaking mechanism, are values such as equality, diversity, cooperation, and respect for human worth—hopefully, the building blocks of a liberatory ethics as we begin to self-manage our communities, the economy, and society in an ever-widening circle of confederated assemblies.

As a practice, direct democracy will have to be learned. As a principle, it will have to undergird all decision making. As an institution, it will have to be fought for. It will not appear

[11] Thomas Paine, *Political Writings*, ed. Bruce Kuklick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 161.

ativity. Varying levels of nonviolent confrontation at nuclear power plants, from blockades to occupations, along with the use of pageantry, puppets, and jail solidarity, were decided on in affinity groups and spokescouncils. Quaker activists, not anarchists, added consensus to the blend, with mixed results (false unity, for instance). Notwithstanding the difficulty of moving beyond a single issue and what had become an insular community, the tactics and organizational form of the U.S. as well as international antinuclear movement were soon picked up by the peace, women's, gay and lesbian, radical ecology, and anti-intervention movements.

Beginning in the 1980s, the West German Autonomen made a mark on anarchism too. Viewing European New Leftists as discredited, though affected by their critique of authoritarianism on the Left (Soviet-style "communism") and the Right ("democratic" capitalism), the Autonomen rejected everything from the existing system to ideological labels, including that of anarchism. As a spontaneous, decentralized network of antiauthoritarian revolutionaries, they were autonomous from political parties and trade unions; they also attempted to be autonomous from structures and attitudes imposed from "outside." This entailed a twofold strategy. First, to create liberated, communal free spaces such as squats in which to make their own lives. And second, to utilize militant confrontation both to defend their counterculture and take the offensive against what they saw as repressive, even fascistic elements. The deployment of a masked black bloc—for one, at a demonstration in Berlin in 1988 during an International Monetary Fund/World Bank meeting—autonomous neighborhoods and "info-stores," and street battles with police and neo-Nazis became emblematic of the Autonomen. Anarchists felt an affinity and imported the trappings of autonomous politics into their own, thereby linking and modifying the two in the process.

Last but not least, the dramatic January 1, 1994, appearance of the Zapatistas on the world stage to contest the North American Free Trade Agreement keyed anarchists into the importance of globalization as a contemporary concern of often life-and-death proportions. A decade in the making through the grassroots efforts of some thirty indigenous communities in southern Mexico, and intentionally tied to struggles elsewhere, the uprising illustrated the power of solidarity. The Zapatistas' bold takeover of villages in Chiapas also reignited the notion that resistance was possible, in poor and rich regions alike. "If you ask us what we want, we will unashamedly answer: 'To open a crack in history, '" Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos declared. "We'll build another world… Democracy! Freedom! Justice!"[7] For anarchists, the Zapatistas' inventive, blended usage of high-tech such as the Internet and low-tech such as jungle encuentros, principled communiqués and practical gains, and the attempt to reclaim popular power through autonomous municipalities was especially electrifying—the concurrent appeals to the Mexican state less so. Still, anarchists flocked to Chiapas to support this rebellion, carrying home lessons to apply to a global anticapitalist movement that a refashioned anarchism would shortly help initiate.

More Than the sum of Its Parts

Such strands of resistance, themselves pulling from earlier moments, interwove into the fabric of contemporary anarchism. From the Situationists, anarchism embraced the critique of alienation and consumer society, and faith in imagination; from Bookchin, the connection between anticapitalism, direct democracy, ecology, and postscarcity; from the antinuke

[7] Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, *Our Word Is Our Weapon: Selected Writings*, ed. Juana Ponce de Leon (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), 216, 190–91.

added, "[Liberation] is incapable of even grasping, let alone realizing, the central idea of revolution, which is the foundation of freedom."[7]

The revolutionary question becomes: Where do decisions that affect society as a whole get made? For this is where power resides. It is time that we rediscover the "lost treasure" that arises spontaneously during all revolutions—the council, in all its imaginative varieties—as the basis for constituting places of power for everyone.[8] For only when we all have equal and ongoing access to participate in the space where public policy is made—the political sphere—will freedom have a fighting chance to gain a footing.

Montesquieu, one of the most influential theorists for the American revolutionists, tried to wrestle with "the constitution of political freedom" in his monumental *The Spirit of the Laws*.[9] He came to the conclusion that "power must check power."[10] In the postrevolutionary United States, this idea eventually made its way into the Constitution as a system of checks and balances. Yet Montesquieu's notion was much more expansive, touching on the very essence of power itself. The problem is not power per se but rather power without limits. Or to press Montesquieu's concept, the problem is power as an end in itself. Power needs to be forever linked to freedom; freedom needs to be the limit placed on power. Tom Paine, for one, brought this home to the American Revolution in *The Rights of Man*: "Government on the old system is an assumption of power for the

[7] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 22, 121–22.

[8] Ibid., 284.

[9] Ibid., 148.

[10] Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Anne Cohler, Basia Miller, and Harold Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 155.

demands for a participatory democracy in the 1960s; to the anarchist-inspired affinity group and spokescouncil organizing of the 1970s' antinuke movement; and then again with the anticapitalist movement's mass direct actions in the 1990s and early 2000s. In both its principles and practices, antiauthoritarian leftists in the United States have been inventive and dynamic, particularly in the postwar era. We've challenged multiple "isms," calling into question old privileges and dangerous exclusions. We've created a culture within our own organizations that nearly mandates, even if it doesn't always work, an internally democratic process. We're pretty good at organizing everything from demonstrations to counterinstitutions.

This is not to romanticize the past or present work of the libertarian Left; rather, it is to point out that we, too, haven't lacked a striving for the values underpinning this country's birth. Then and now, however, one of our biggest mistakes has been to ignore politics per se—that is, the need for a guaranteed place for freedom to emerge.

The Clash sang years ago of "rebels dancing on air," and it seems we have modeled our political struggles on this. We may feel free or powerful in the streets or during building occupations, at our infoshops, and within our collective meetings, but this is a momentary and often private sensation. It allows us to be political, as in reacting to, opposing, countering, or even trying to work outside public policy. But it does not let us do politics, as in making public policy itself. It is only "freedom from" those things we don't like, or more accurately, liberation.

"Liberation and freedom are not the same," contended Hannah Arendt in *On Revolution*. Certainly, liberation is a basic necessity: people need to be free from harm, hunger, and hatred. But liberation falls far short of freedom. If we are ever to fulfill both our needs and desires, if we are ever to take control of our lives, each and every one of us needs the "freedom to" self-develop—individually, socially, and politically. As Arendt

movement, the stress on affinity groups and spokescouncils as well as nonviolent direct action; from the Autonomen, militant confrontation, the black bloc strategy, and an expansive do-it-yourself emphasis; and from the Zapatistas, the power of the Internet, cross-cultural solidarity, and "globalization" for transnational resistance. But the anarchism that received notoriety in November 1999 is more than the sum of these parts. It is the only political philosophy today aspiring to balance a variety of social change agents and strategies—or ultimately, a diversity of tactics, visions, and people—with universalistic notions of participatory freedom outside all imposed institutions and behaviors.

For months before Seattle, anarchists worked diligently behind the scenes to set the tenor of the direct action that would stun the world. As the key initiators and organizers, even if not recognized as such, anarchists had been able to structure the demonstration along libertarian principles. Like numerous other direct actions shaped largely by anarchists, such as the antinuke protests of the 1970s and the Wall Street action of 1990, Seattle's too would have gone unremarked if not for its success in shutting down the World Trade Organization in tandem with a vicious police response. Anarchists and anarchism were suddenly thrust into the limelight. What had always been a minoritarian voice of conscience within the Left suddenly got a majoritarian public hearing. In turn, anarchism's philosophy became both cutting edge and normative for a powerful new global social movement.

This is not to say that anarchism or anarchists alone are responsible for the movement(s) contesting globalization's brutal side, that such a movement(s) started in Seattle, or even that the goal is to turn everyone into anarchists. Like the Zapatistas, anarchists humbly understand themselves (at least in theory) as acting in concert with the multiple struggles for freedom waged over time by a variety of antiauthoritarians. Nonetheless, perhaps because they did it on the dominant superpower's

own turf, anarchists were able to firmly establish a form of resistance that actually prefigures a joyful politics of, by, and for all the people of a globalizing humanity. And as such, to lay down the flexible contours of an empowering movement, while unexpectedly elevating anarchism to its avant-garde.

This means that anarchism's principles along with its culture and forms of organization are, for the first time, at the forefront rather than the margins of a transnational social movement. In the broadest sense, anarchism has brought a unique, inseparable bundle of qualities to this movement: an openly revolutionary stance, colored by an eminently ethical orientation, made out-of-the-ordinary by a playful though directly democratic utopianism.

The Anarchist Moment

But still, why anarchism?

Because anarchism has set the terms of the debate. Its emphasis on social revolution coupled with transparency has meant that anarchists haven't been afraid to name the concrete reality masked by the term globalization: that is, capitalist society. Once Seattle's type of direct action became a benchmark, though, anarchists received a tacit green light from most other activists to design similar protests, and so carnivals against capitalism became commonplace. For example, when people converged together at mass actions, they now did so under an anticapitalist banner—one held up by anarchists, who compellingly carried it to the symbolic heart of each contestation.[8] Since this made tangible what was most disturbing to many about globalization, numerous people were radicalized by or at least became sympathetic

[8] The same was true at the recent G-20 protests in Pittsburgh in September 2009, where anarchists displayed such banners as "No Hope in Capitalism" and "No Bailout, No Capitalism."

caught on, and many New England villages drafted their own charters and institutionalized direct democracy through town meetings, where citizens met regularly to determine their community's public policy and needs.

Participating in the debates, deliberations, and decisions of one's community became part of a full and vibrant life; it not only gave colonists (albeit mostly men, and albeit as settlers) the experience and institutions that would later support their revolution but also a tangible form of freedom worth fighting for. Hence, they struggled to preserve control over their daily lives: first with the British over independence, and later, among themselves over competing forms of governance. The final constitution, of course, set up a federal republic not a direct democracy. But before, during, and after the revolution, time and again, town meetings, confederated assemblies, and militias either exerted their established powers of self-management or created new ones when they were blocked—in both legal and extralegal institutions—becoming ever more radical in the process.

Those of us living in the United States have inherited this self-schooling in direct democracy, even if only in vague echoes like New Hampshire's "live free or die" motto or Vermont's yearly Town Meeting Day. Such institutional and cultural fragments, however, bespeak deep-seated values that many still hold dear: independence, initiative, liberty, equality. They continue to create a very real tension between grassroots self-governance and top-down representation—a tension that we, as modern-day revolutionaries, need to build on.

Such values resonate through the history of the U.S. libertarian Left: ranging from late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century experiments in utopian communities and labor organizing; to the civil rights movement starting in the mid-1950s; to the Black Power, American Indian, radical feminist, and queer liberation movements' struggles for social freedom as well as the Students for a Democratic Society's

his book of the same name—if we have any hope of contesting domination itself.[5]

This does not mean that the numerous injustices tied to the founding of the United States should be ignored or, to use a particularly appropriate word, whitewashed. The fact that native peoples, blacks, women, and others were (and often continue to be) exploited, brutalized, and/or murdered wasn't just a sideshow to the historic event that created this country. Any movement for direct democracy has to grapple with the relation between this oppression and the liberatory moments of the American Revolution.

At the same time, one needs to view the revolution in the context of its times and ask, In what ways was it an advance? Did it offer glimpses of new freedoms, ones that we should ultimately extend to everyone? Like all the great modern revolutions, the American Revolution spawned a politics based on face-to-face assemblies confederated within and between cities.

"American democratic polity was developed out of genuine community life… The township or some not much larger area was the political unit, the town meeting the political medium, and roads, schools, the peace of the community, were the political objectives," according to John Dewey in *The Public and Its Problems*.[6] This outline of self-governance did not suddenly appear in 1776. It literally arrived with the first settlers, who in being freed from the bonds of Old World authority, decided to constitute the rules of their society anew in the Mayflower Compact. This and a host of other subsequent compacts were considered mutual promises—of both rights and duties—on the part of each person to their community—a promise initially emanating out of newfound egalitarian religious values. The idea

[5] Peter Kropotkin, *The State: Its Historic Role*, trans. Vernon Richards (London: Freedom Press, 1987), 31.

[6] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1954), 111.

to a focus on the market economy. While still considered subversive, it has thus become more acceptable to speak of capitalism and even explicitly identify as an anticapitalist.[9] Anticapitalism, however, now frequently implies an antiauthoritarian perspective. And vice versa, an anarchistic outlook now permeates anticapitalist work.

But still, why now?

Because globalization makes anarchism's aspirations increasingly apropos. Far from being anti-globalization per se, anarchists have long dreamed of the world without borders made potentially feasible by the transformations now under way. Indeed, the means utilized by globalization are quite amenable to anarchist values, such as decentralization and interconnectedness, elastic identities and the shattering of binaries, creative borrowings, cooperation, and openness. Most strikingly, globalization is structurally undermining the centrality of states.

In his day, Karl Marx (1818–83) foresaw the rising hegemony of capitalism and its cancerous ability to (re)structure all social relations in its own contorted image. Yet for Marx, this also hailed a certain promise. Freedom and domination were

[9] After the economic upheaval of the late 2000s, there is now an ever-greater suspicion of capitalism—as those in power use this "crisis" to further consolidate wealth at the expense of impoverishing more and more people. At the same time, social democratic and progressive types are increasingly attempting to dampen the revolutionary potential of this suspicion, basically arguing that capitalism can be made less corrupt; witness Michael Moore's recent documentary *Capitalism: A Love Story*. More than ever, it's up to anarchists and like-minded radical others to explain that capitalism can't be reformed while also offering alternatives to it. A glimmer of hope in this regard is the current contestation around access to education and knowledge—crucial in this information age. Around the globe, through university occupations but also the establishment of counterinstitutions of learning, there is a push to de-commodify education, to make it free for everyone as well as self-managed and cooperative. See the EduFactory listserv, reporting on "conflicts and transformations of the university" around the world, available at listcultures.org.

both bound up in the developmental logic that was and unfortunately still is capitalism. It was up to the right social actors, given the right conditions, to "make history"—that is, to make revolution and achieve communism in its best, most general sense. Much of what Marx unmasked holds true to the present; much more has become evident, sadly so, to the point where there is almost no outside anymore to the capitalism that manufactures society as well as self. The heroic project of Marx and multiple socialistic others to abolish capitalism remains more poignant than ever, as does the need for a revolutionary movement to do so. Hence, the power of "anticapitalism."

Anarchism has traditionally foreseen another potentially hegemonic development that Marx ignored: statecraft. But unlike capitalism, it took statism many more decades to gain the same naturalistic status as the market economy, and so anarchism's critique, while correct, held less of an imperative for most radicals. In an ironic twist for statists and anarchists alike, just as U.S.-style representative democracy has finally achieved hegemony as the singular "legitimate" form of governance, globalization has begun its work of lessening the power of states in certain ways—ways that may afford openings for horizontal forms of politics instead.[10] Thinking outside the statist box now both makes increasing sense to many people and is fast becoming a reality, potentially offering anarchism the relevance it has long desired. As national economies give way to global ones, for example, states are less able to (allegedly) provide their citizenry any sort of social safety net; as

[10] Of course, as states lose some of their powers, other actors besides anarchists and grassroots social movements will step into the breach as well—unsavory ones, from neoconservatives and neofascists to various politicized religious fundamentalists. Nation-states, too, will struggle to gain different powers as they lose old ones—say, rather than being able to supply economic protectionism and social welfare as part of their justification for existence, they seem to be increasingly turning toward policing writ large as one of their raisons d'être.

trol. Plainly, in this quest to monopolize power, there will always have to be dominated subjects.

As institutionalized systems of domination, then, neither state nor capital are controllable. Nor can they be mended or made benign. Thus, the rallying cry of any kind of leftist or progressive activism that accepts the terms of the nation-state and/or capitalism is ultimately only this: "No exploitation without representation! No domination without representation!"

Direct democracy, on the other hand, is completely at odds with both the state and capitalism. For as "rule of the people" (the etymological root of democracy), democracy's underlying logic is essentially the unceasing movement of freedom making. And freedom, as we have seen, must be jettisoned in even the best of representative systems.

Not coincidentally, direct democracy's opponents have generally been those in power. Whenever the people spoke—as in the majority of those who were disenfranchised, disempowered, or even starved—it usually took a revolution to work through a "dialogue" about democracy's value. As a direct form of governance, therefore, democracy can be nothing but a threat to those small groups who wish to rule over others: whether they be monarchs, aristocrats, dictators, or even federal administrations as in the United States.

Indeed, we forget that democracy finds its radical edge in the great revolutions of the past, the American Revolution included. Given that the United States is held up as the pinnacle of democracy, it seems particularly appropriate to hark back to those strains of a radicalized democracy that fought so valiantly and lost so crushingly in the American Revolution. We need to take up that unfinished project—of struggling for "a free life in the free city," in contrast to accepting "the state" as the only form of government, as Peter Kropotkin argued in

imperative is built into the state's very structure. As Karl Marx explained in *Capital*, capitalism's aim is—in fact, has to be—"the unceasing movement of profit-making."[3] So, too, is there such an aim underlying the state: the unceasing movement of power making. The drive for profit and the drive for power, respectively, must become ends in themselves. For without these drives, we have neither capitalism nor the state; these "goals" are part of their inherent makeup. Hence, the two frequently interlinked systems of exploitation and domination must do whatever is necessary to sustain themselves, otherwise they are unable to fulfill their unceasing momentum.

Whatever a state does, then, has to be in its own interests. Sometimes, of course, the state's interests coincide with those of various groups or people; they may even overlap with concepts such as justice or compassion. But these convergences are in no way central or even essential to its smooth functioning. They are merely instrumental stepping-stones as the state continually moves to maintain, solidify, and consolidate its power.

Because, like it or not, all states are forced to strive for a monopoly on power. "The same competition," wrote Mikhail Bakunin in *Statism and Anarchism*, "which in the economic field annihilates and swallows up small and even medium-sized capital … in favor of vast capital … is also operative in the lives of the States, leading to the destruction and absorption of small and medium-sized States for the benefit of empires." States must, as Bakunin noted, "devour others in order not to be devoured."[4] Such a power-taking game will almost invariably tend toward centralization, hegemony, and increasingly sophisticated methods of command, coercion, and con-

[3] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 254.

[4] Michael Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, cited in G. P. Maximoff, ed., *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism* (New York: Free Press, 1953), 211, 138.

more of humanity is forced into refugee status, states are less able to (allegedly) supply legal protections and human rights. Of necessity, people are compelled to turn elsewhere—often to a variety of "self-help" approaches. The relatively widespread embrace, in and outside antiauthoritarian Left circles, of anarchistic experiments in directly democratic organization, confederation, and mutual aid, among others, evidences how fitting such forms are to today's decreasingly statist, increasingly interdependent world. They tentatively prefigure the self-governance institutions that anarchism envisions under a humane version of the present social transformation.

In this globalizing world, though, "nonstatist" can mean everything from supranational institutions governed by business elites and international nongovernmental organizations to world courts and regional trade zones to networks of free-floating individuals willing to employ terror tactics. Globalization within a capitalistic framework is just as likely to birth new hierarchies and deepen alienation, shaping all in its own image—the state, but also anarchism included. If anything, the changing social landscape and its many new dangers compel anarchists to take themselves and their ideas more seriously, particularly given anarchism's avant-garde role in the anticapitalist movement of movements. So, on the one hand, as state-based geopolitics loses ground to a more diffuse though cruel nonstatist one, anarchism's critique of the state could quickly become irrelevant. On the other hand, just as Marxism had to be rethought in the mid-twentieth century in light of state socialism's failure to achieve human emancipation—resulting, for one, in the Frankfurt school's uncovering of new forms of domination[11]—anarchism needs to be retheorized in response to the shift toward nonstatism

[11] See, for example, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944; repr., Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

that bodes both scary and multicultural reconfigurations of political monopolies as well as possible fissures for an ethical alternative. The highly participatory practices of today's anarchism have to be continually reimagined both to keep three steps ahead of those that would contain or co-opt it, and to be up to the task of remaking society. This entails understanding the specific forms that contemporary governance is taking, in order to ensure that anarchism is reaching the right mark in its ongoing effort to dismantle the state. Both theory and practice thus need to catch up to the present if an anarchist politics is to become more than a historical footnote about a missed moment.

Still, as the only political tradition that has consistently grappled with the tension between the individual and society, contemporary anarchism has valiantly tried to meld the universalistic aims of the Left and its expansive understanding of freedom with the particularistic goals of the new social movements in areas such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and ableism. The extraordinary human mix that appeared on the streets of Seattle could find unity in diversity precisely because anarchists attempted to put this theoretical merger into practice. The affinity group and spokescouncil model, for instance, allowed hundreds of disparate concerns to also find an intimate connectivity. Globalization has facilitated this by making the world smaller every day, bringing the macro and micro into closer contact. Under capitalism, homogeneity and heterogenity will always be linked at the expensive of both the community and self. The substantive inclusiveness tenuously achieved by anarchistic organizing suggests a structural framework that could serve first as a revolutionary dual power, then later as the basis for "a world where many worlds fit," as the Zapatistas demand.[12] Hence, the power of "anarchism" for anticapitalist resistance.

[12] Marcos, *Our Word Is Our Weapon*, 169.

global South or a Barack Obama in the global North; or the rectification and greening of the wrongs of capitalism. These and other such demands are bare minimums within the current system. Still, they are a far cry from any sort of liberatory response. They work with a circumscribed and neutralized notion of democracy, where democracy is neither of the people, by the people, nor for the people, but rather, only in the supposed name of the people. What gets dubbed democracy, then, is mere representation, and the best that progressives and leftists can advocate for within the confines of this prepackaged definition are improved versions of a fundamentally flawed system.

"The instant a People gives itself Representatives, it ceases to be free," famously proclaimed Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *On the Social Contract*.[2] Freedom, particularly social freedom, is indeed utterly antithetical to a state, even a representative one. At the most basic level, representation "asks" that we give our freedom away to another; it assumes, in essence, that some should have power and many others shouldn't. Without power, equally distributed to all, we renounce our very capacity to join with everyone else in meaningfully shaping our society. We renounce our ability to self-determine, and thus our liberty. And so, no matter how enlightened leaders may be, they are governing as tyrants nonetheless, since we—"the people"—are servile to their decisions.

This is not to say that representative government is comparable with more authoritarian forms of rule. A representative system that fails in its promise of, say, universal human rights is clearly preferable to a government that makes no such pretensions at all. Yet even the kindest of representative systems necessarily entails a loss of liberty. Like capitalism, a grow-or-die

[2] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 115.

gle against seemingly invisible systems of oppression. A longing for community—a place where we can take hold of our own life, share it with others, and build something together of our own choosing—is being distorted around the globe into nationalisms, fundamentalisms, separatisms, and the resultant hate crimes, suicide bombings, and genocides. Community no longer implies a rich recognition of the self and society; it translates into a battle unto death between one tiny "us" against another small "them," as the wheels of domination roll over us all. The powerless trample the powerless, while the powerful go largely unscathed.

We are left with a few bad choices, framed for us by the powers that be. Slavoj Žižek termed this "the double blackmail." He used this concept in relation to Yugoslavia in the late 1990s: "if you are against NATO strikes, you are for [Slobodan] Milosevic's proto-fascist régime of ethnic cleansing, and if you are against Milosevic, you support the global capitalist New World Order."[1] But this choiceless choice all too easily applies to many other contemporary crises. Global economic recession seems to necessitate nation-state interventions; human rights violations seem to call for international regulatory bodies. If the right answer, from an ethical point of view, lies outside this picture altogether, what of it? It's all talk when people are dying or the climate is being irreversibly destroyed. At least that's what common wisdom purports, from government officials to news commentators to the person on the street.

Even much of the Left can see no other "realistic" choices to control an out-of-control world than those that are presented to us from on high. Given this, the leftist horizon narrows to what's allegedly achievable: nongovernmental organization or global South participation in international decision-making bodies, or for that matter, Left-leaning heads of state in the

[1] Slavoj Žižek, "Against the Double Blackmail," *New Left Review* I/234 (March-April 1999): 76–82, available at libcom.org.

We may not win this time around; everything from the rise of a politicized fundamentalism and the post- September 11 "war on terrorism" to seemingly insolvable tragedies like the Middle East to the increased suffering caused by the "crisis" of capitalism all indicate the gravity and near impossibility of our task. Everyone from global policing agencies to the authoritarian Left to those who pin their hopes on a Barack Obama will try to thwart our efforts. But the project of the present anticapitalist movement, and anarchism's strong suit in general, is to provide a guiding light, even if we aren't the ones to finally bask in it.

In 1919, anarchists held power in Munich for one week during the course of the German Revolution and hurriedly initiated all sorts of imaginative projects to empower society at large. Yet Landauer knew that the best they could do was to construct a model for future generations: "Though it is possible that the council republic will only be short, I have the desire—and so do all my comrades—that we leave behind lasting effects in Bavaria, so that we may hope, when an idle government returns (which has to be expected), wise circles will say that we did not make a bad beginning, and that it would not have been a bad thing if we had been permitted to continue our work."[13]

[13] Gustav Landauer, in a meeting of the Bavarian Council's Republic Central Revolutionary Council on April 12, 1919, according to the report "Die politische, militärische und wirtschaftliche Lage der Räterepublik / Sitzung des Revolutionären Zentralrats am 12. April 1919" [The Political, Military, and Economic Situation of the Council Republic / Meeting of the Central Revolutionary Council, April 12, 1919], in Ulrich Linse, ed., *Gustav Landauer und die Revolutionszeit 1918/19. Die politischen Reden, Schriften, Erlasse und Briefe Landauers aus der Novemberrevolution 1918/19* [Gustav Landauer and the German Revolution, 1918–19: Gustav Landauer's Political Speeches, Writings, Proclamations, and Letters in the November Revolution, 1918–19] (Berlin: Karin Kramer Verlag , 1974), 230. My heartfelt thanks to Sven-Oliver Buchwald, of Berlin's Library of the Free, who diligently searched for this quote in its original German, and Gabriel Kuhn, who then meticulously translated the quotation into English. Gabriel notes that "an idle government" could also be translated literally as "a government that doesn't do anything."

Landauer was trampled to death in a wave of right-wing reaction soon after this, and fourteen years later the Nazis came to power. Still, the grand experiments of the past aimed at a free and self-governing society have not been extinguished—they have reemerged in the anarchistic strains charted here and, most promisingly, the current contest against capitalism fought along antiauthoritarian lines.

Not a bad beginning to the twenty-first century.

Democracy Is Direct

These days, words seem to be thrown around like so much loose change.

"Democracy" is no exception.

We hear demands to democraticize everything from international or supranational organizations to certain countries to technology. Many contend that democracy is the standard for good government. Still others allege that "more," "better," or even "participatory" democracy is the needed antidote to our woes. At the heart of these well-intentioned but misguided sentiments beats a genuine desire: to gain control over our lives.

This is certainly understandable given the world in which we live. Anonymous, often-distant events and institutions—nearly impossible to describe, much less confront—determine whether we work, drink clean water, or have a roof over our heads. Most people feel that life isn't what it should be; many go so far as to complain about "the government" or "corporations." But beyond that, the sources of social misery are so masked they may even look friendly: starting with the Ben & Jerry's ice cream cone of "caring" capitalism to today's "green" version, from the "humanitarian" interventions of Western superpowers to a "change we can believe in" presidency.

Since the real causes appear untouchable and incomprehensible, people tend to displace blame onto imaginary targets with a face: individuals rather than institutions, people rather than power. The list of scapegoats is long: from Muslims and blacks and Jews, to immigrants and queers, and so on. It's much easier to lash out at those who, like us, have little or no power. Hatred of the visible "other" replaces social strug-