

Rethinking the Anarchist Canon History, Philosophy, and Interpretation

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ABSTRACT

How we define the anarchist canon—let alone how we decide which thinkers, theories, and texts should count as canonical—depends very much on what we take the purpose of the anarchist canon to be. In this essay, I distinguish between thinkers, theories, or texts that are “anarchist,” by virtue of belonging to actually-existing historical anarchist movements, and those which are “anarchist” in virtue of expressing “anarchistic” (or “anarchic”) ideas. I argue that the anarchist canon is best conceived as a repository of historically-expressed anarchistic ideas and, for this reason, should include both kinds of theories, thinkers, and texts.

KEYWORDS

anarchism, philosophy, history

I.

The word “canon” (from the Greek “κανών”—“measuring rod”) refers to a standard of judgment or measurement. Thus the “Biblical canons” of Judaism and Christianity are “fixed collections of writings that undergird the core beliefs and practices of those communities . . . [and] are authoritative for worship, instruction in core beliefs, mission activity, and religious and practical conduct.”¹ The “Western canon,” in turn, describes a

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standard set of literary, scientific, historical, philosophical, and religious texts that are considered especially significant in the historical development of Western culture. When anarchists speak of a “canon,” we generally have in mind something similar to a Biblical or cultural canon—that is, a standard set of texts (or thinkers, or theories) regarded as authoritative for anarchist thought and practice or especially significant in the historical development of anarchism.

That anarchism should have a canon is not at all surprising. After all, most every political movement, from liberalism to Marxism, has thinkers, theories, and texts that are considered authoritative or historically significant. But how we define the anarchist canon—let alone how we decide which thinkers, theories, and texts should count as canonical—depends very much on what we take the purpose of the anarchist canon to be. Some anarchists would no doubt insist that a thinker, theory, or text must belong to an actually-existing historical anarchist movement in order to qualify, in which case the word “anarchist” is understood as a strictly historical rather than a theoretical or philosophical designation. For others, what matters is that thinkers, theories, or texts express “anarchistic” (or “anarchic”) ideas, not that they belong to an actually-existing historical anarchist movement. In this case, the word “anarchist” indicates an anarchistic theoretical or philosophical orientation (“anarchist *in spiritu*”) that may or may not coincide with a historical anarchist movement (“anarchist *in littera*”).

If the main purpose of the canon is to aid us in defining the parameters of historical anarchist movements, then it should obviously exclude theories, thinkers, and texts that do not belong to such movements. On the other hand, if anarchism is an idea that, as Kropotkin believed, has always existed in humankind,² and so is not temporally bound by any particular historical movement, then the canon is better conceived as a repository of anarchistic thinking—expressed *throughout* history—which can be

(Continuum, 2012), and the co-editor, with Daniel Smith, of *Deleuze and Ethics* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010) and, with Shane Wahl, of *New Perspectives on Anarchism* (Lexington Books, 2009).

¹ Lee Martin MacDonald, “Canon,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, eds. J.W. Rogerson and J. Lieu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 777 [777–808].

² Peter Kropotkin, “Anarchism,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edn. (New York: The Encyclopedia Britannica Co., 1910): 914–919, p. 914.

consulted in the present to deepen and enrich our understanding of anarchism. This is the position I shall defend in this essay.

II.

It is scarcely in dispute among anarchists that there was such a thing as an actually-existing historical anarchist movement in 19th-century Europe, even if we disagree about when and under what conditions this movement emerged. One of the most widely-discussed contributions to this debate in recent times has been Michael Schmidt and Lucien Van der Walt's *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism*,³ which not only claims that anarchism is "a product of the capitalist world and the working class it created," but traces its origins with great specificity to Bakunin and the First International (96, 24). This leads to the controversial implication that earlier figures, such as Proudhon, were not, in fact, anarchists (37–38). According to Schmidt and Van der Walt, the longstanding tendency to place mutualists (such as Proudhon) and individualists (such as Godwin, Tucker, and Stirner) in the same camp as "genuine" anarchists (such as Bakunin and Kropotkin) originates with Paul Eltzbacher's *Anarchism: Exponents of the Anarchist Philosophy* (1900) (35–36). Further, Eltzbacher's "seven sages" approach, which takes anti-statism to be the defining feature of anarchist philosophy, proved extremely influential on several important thinkers, such as Kropotkin, Rocker, and Nettlau, as well as more recent anarchist historians, such as Woodcock and Marshall (39–40).

Although this account is indeed controversial, what is truly contentious about *Black Flame* is its attempt to articulate a unitary definition of anarchism that blurs the distinction between anarchism as a philosophy and anarchism as a historical movement. When the authors claim that, "Class Struggle' anarchism, sometimes called revolutionary or communist anarchism, is . . . the *only* anarchism," and that "the historical record demonstrates that there is a core set of beliefs" (19), they are not just trying to fix the boundaries of the historical anarchist movement of the 19th century. Rather, they are seeking to define anarchism *as such* in terms of the prevalent theoretical and ideological tendencies of that movement. What this means, simply put, is

³ Michael Schmidt and Lucien Van der Walt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009); hereafter cited parenthetically by page number.

that thinkers, theories, and texts only qualify as genuinely “anarchist” if they express “revolutionary or communist” anarchist ideas. Put another way, anarchist thought *as such* is strictly coextensive with the ideas expressed in the mainstream of the 19th century anarchist movement.

According to Schmidt and Van der Walt, the goal of this seemingly radical elision is to save anarchism from incoherence and meaninglessness:

If anarchism can encompass economic liberals, Marxists, radical Christians, Taoism, and more, it is hardly surprising that the standard works on anarchism describe it as “incoherent.” Such an approach is not useful. Given that there are few intellectual traditions that do not have at least some negative comments about the state and some positive views on the individual, it is not easy to specify an upper limit on the traditions that may be assimilated, in some form, to the anarchist category. Eltzbacher only had seven selections, but there is no reason to stop there: once Eltzbacher’s [anti-statist] definition is accepted, it is a short step to [Peter] Marshall’s work, where the “anarchist” gallery includes the Buddha, the Marquis de Sade, Herbert Spencer, Gandhi, Che Guevara, and Margaret Thatcher. And if the notion of anarchism can cover so vast a field—and let us not forget that the case can be made to include Marx and his heirs—then the definition is so loose as to be practically meaningless. (41)

In other words, anarchist theory—and, by extension, the anarchist canon—needs to be historicized in order to bring precision and clarity to an otherwise vague, muddled, and open-ended understanding of “anarchism.” Their argument may be summarized as follows:

- (1) There is such a thing as a historical anarchist movement which began to exist in Europe in the 1860s.
- (2) The mainstream of the historical anarchist movement uniformly understood anarchism as “class-struggle” or “communist” anarchism.
- (3) Anarchism just is whatever the mainstream of the historical anarchist movement understood it to be.
- (4) Therefore, anarchism just is “class-struggle” or “communist” anarchism.

I take it that this argument would exclude from consideration: (a) anyone who lived prior to the advent of capitalism; (b) anyone who does not explicitly identify as a communist, or with “class struggle” ideas; and (c) anyone who does not explicitly identify as an anarchist, or with anarchist ideas.

All four of the claims above are controversial, but as a philosopher I am especially inclined to question (3). Why ought we to believe “anarchism” *just is* (i.e., is strictly identical to) “whatever the mainstream of the historical anarchist movement understood it to be”? Suppose Jones asks Smith to explain what most Christians believed in 13th-century Europe. Smith might reply with a summary of mainstream Western theology from that period. This is a reasonable enough response, so far as it goes, since Jones has asked a question about history, and Smith has answered accordingly. But suppose Jones asks Smith to define Christianity, and Smith replies by claiming, “Christianity is whatever the mainstream of the Western Church in the 13th century understood Christianity to be.” I submit that this is not a reasonable response, as it seems to commit a kind of category mistake. Jones is not asking about the history of Western Christianity—she is asking about the concept of Christianity itself. As such, it seems quite unreasonable for Smith to respond with a claim concerning medieval Catholic history. More damningly, Smith’s response to Jones is circular. She is saying, essentially, “Christianity is defined according to the definition of Christianity that was used by the mainstream of the Western Church in the 13th century.” But *this* definition assumes the very concept (Christianity) whose definition is in dispute.

Now suppose Jones asks Smith to define “anarchism,” and Smith replies by claiming that “anarchism just is whatever the mainstream of the 19th century anarchist movement understood anarchism to be” (premise 3 above). As in the previous example, Smith seems to have committed a kind of category mistake by answering a question about a concept (“anarchism”) with a claim about history. Furthermore, Smith’s response is circular insofar as it assumes the very concept whose definition is in dispute. This inevitably runs afoul the “No True Scotsman” fallacy. When examples are cited of anarchists (from the 19th century or otherwise) who diverge from the mainstream of the historical anarchist movement, they can be dismissed as “false anarchists,” since, *ex hypothesi*, “no true anarchist” would diverge from the mainstream of the historical anarchist movement. Of course, such a conclusion assumes a definition of “true anarchist,” and what

constitutes an anarchist (let alone a “true anarchist”) is the very issue in question.

In short, I do not think it makes sense to define anarchism *as such* strictly in terms of the dominant attitudes, beliefs, opinions, etc. of historical anarchist movement. Yes, “anarchism” refers to a distinct historical tendency within international socialism, and when we talk about “anarchism” in this sense, we are referring very specifically to a bounded historical phenomenon whose origins can be traced to 19th-century Europe. It is the task of historians to set the temporal parameters of this phenomenon and analyze its distinctive characteristics with accuracy and precision. I contend, however, that “anarchism” also refers to a theoretical or philosophical orientation—a term I use deliberately (rather than, e.g., “position”) because I believe anarchism represents a range of intersecting attitudes, beliefs, and opinions rather than a comprehensive doctrine or “fixed, self-enclosed social system.”⁴ When we talk about “anarchism” in this sense, we are not solely, or even mainly, referring to what a particular group of people in a particular historical context happened to think, believe, or feel.

In taking this position, I am ironically of a piece with many of the most notable members of the historical anarchist movement who insisted that anarchism “recognizes only the relative significance of ideas, institutions, and social forms,”⁵ that it rejects “acceptance of or rigorous adherence to any one overarching philosophical system,”⁶ and that it “leaves posterity free to develop its own particular systems in harmony with its needs.”⁷ These “classical” anarchists clearly would not have endorsed a conflation of anarchist theory and anarchist history. Although they liked to think of themselves as children of the *Enragés*,⁸ none of them would have contended that the socialist movement to which they belonged existed prior to the 19th century. When Kropotkin, Nettlau, Rocker, and others describe anarchist *ideas* as timeless and immortal, they take for granted an

⁴ Rudolf Rocker, *Anarchosyndicalism: Theory and Practice* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1938), 31.

⁵ Rocker, *Anarchosyndicalism*, 31.

⁶ *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas*, comp. and ed. Vernon Richards (London: Freedom Press, 1965), 19, 29.

⁷ Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Mother Earth, 1910), 49.

⁸ See C. Alexander McKinley, *Illegitimate Children of the Enlightenment: Anarchists and the French Revolution, 1880-1914* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2008).

obvious distinction between anarchism as a social and political movement and anarchism as a philosophy. To their minds at least, this allows them to refer to earlier thinkers, theories, or texts as “anarchist” without anachronism.

For the reasons just outlined, anarchist philosophy is better understood as a matter of degree rather than kind; it embodies a spectrum of thought which has manifested itself—in various ways, and to greater or lesser degree—throughout human history. In the next section, I will discuss what I take to be distinctive about anarchism as a philosophical and theoretical orientation. I submit that any theories, thinkers, and texts that reflect this orientation are properly called *anarchistic* (or *anarchic*) and, as I shall argue, that it is profoundly wrongheaded to exclude from the canon those anarchistic or anarchic theories, thinkers, and theories which fall outside of the mainstream of the historical anarchist movement.

III.

Schmidt and Van der Walt are surely right to criticize Eltzbacher’s definition of anarchism since, as the classical anarchists themselves repeatedly insisted, anarchism is not reducible to anti-statism. But how exactly should we define anarchism as a general theoretical or philosophical orientation? To provide a detailed answer to this question would far exceed the scope of this essay but, for present purposes, I would suggest that anarchism may be understood as a synergistic fusion of radical antiauthoritarianism and radical egalitarianism. I would further suggest that theories, thinkers, or texts may be judged more or less anarchistic (or anarchic) in orientation depending upon the extent of their commitment to antiauthoritarianism, on the one hand, and egalitarianism, on the other. Let us clarify each of these concepts in turn.

By radical antiauthoritarianism, I mean: (1) unqualified moral opposition to relationships and institutions based on coercion, domination, oppression, and other forms of arbitrary and unjustifiable authority; (2) an active moral commitment to abolishing such relationships and institutions based on coercion, domination, oppression, and other forms of arbitrary and unjustifiable authority; and (3) an active moral commitment to replacing these relationships and institutions with alternatives based on voluntary association and mutual aid. By radical egalitarianism, I mean unqualified moral opposition to all forms of arbitrary and

unnatural political, social, economic, sexual, and cultural inequality.

There are many thinkers who exhibit a commitment to radical antiauthoritarianism without a corresponding commitment to radical egalitarianism (e.g., right-wing libertarians); likewise, there are many thinkers who exhibit a commitment to radical egalitarianism without a corresponding commitment to radical antiauthoritarianism (e.g., authoritarian Marxists). An “anarchistic” (or “anarchic”) thinker is one who exhibits a commitment to both of these ideals in tandem. While the manner and degree to which this commitment is exhibited is important, they are not absolute criteria for determining whether a thinker qualifies as “anarchistic”—after all, even important members of the historical anarchist movement (as cited by Schmidt and Van der Walt) failed to perfectly live up to their own ideals. In my view, the task of the anarchist historian of ideas is to “read” theories, thinkers, and texts “anarchically”—that is, with a mind to discovering evidence of this synergistic commitment. It is my position that wherever she finds it she has also found evidence of anarchistic (or anarchic) thought.

A great deal of research has already been done which demonstrates a commitment to antiauthoritarianism and egalitarianism on the part of individuals who do not fall squarely within the “revolutionary communist” current of 19th-century anarchism—not just Godwin,⁹ Stirner,¹⁰ Proudhon,¹¹ Tolstoi,¹² and Tucker,¹³ but also the Chinese Taoists¹⁴ and Buddhists,¹⁵ the Greek Cynics,¹⁶ the Jewish¹⁷ and Islamic mystics,¹⁸ the Antinomians,¹⁹

⁹ See John Clark, *The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

¹⁰ See *Max Stirner*, ed. Saul Newman (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011); John Clark, *Max Stirner's Egoism* (London: Freedom Press, 1976).

¹¹ See Alan Ritter, *The Political Thought of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

¹² See Alexander Christoyannopoulos, *Tolstoy's Political Thought* (London: Routledge, 2012).

¹³ See James Martin, *Men Against the State: The Expositors of Individualist Anarchism in America, 1827-1908* (Auburn: Auburn University Press, 2009), 202–278.

¹⁴ See John Rapp, *Daoism and Anarchism* (New York: Continuum Books, 2012).

¹⁵ See Edward Krebs, *Shifu: The Soul of Chinese Anarchism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), esp. 56–58; see also Arif Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), esp. 70–75, 111–118.

¹⁶ See Donald Dudley, *A History of Cynicism* (London: Methuen, 1974),

Anabaptists,²⁰ and Diggers,²¹ the French *Enragés*,²² the Young Hegelians,²³ the American individualists,²⁴ the illegalists and insurrectionists,²⁵ the Catholic pacifists,²⁶ the Situationists,²⁷ and the punks.²⁸ The claim is not that these individuals are perfectly antiauthoritarian or perfectly egalitarian. What makes their attitudes, beliefs, and ideas distinctively anarchistic, in my view, is a general inclination toward *both* anti-authoritarianism and egalitarianism—again, expressed in various ways and to varying degrees. In direct contrast with Schmidt and Van der Walt, I do not believe that anarchism is *explicitly* socialist in the modern (anti-capitalist) sense of the word. Anarchistic thought can exist, and has existed, in pre-capitalist societies that were nevertheless quite inequitable. Anarchism as a philosophical or theoretical orientation is defined not by opposition to capitalism, but by opposition to morally unjustifiable forms of authority and

esp. 211–212.

¹⁷ See Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *The Jewish Historical Experience in a Comparative Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 73–81; see also David Biale, “Gershom Scholem and Anarchism as a Jewish Philosophy,” *Judaism* 32 (Winter 1983): 70–76.

¹⁸ See Patricia Crone, “Ninth-Century Muslim Anarchists,” *Past and Present* 167 (May 2000) 3–28; see also Hayrettin Yücesoy, “Political Anarchism, Dissent, and Marginal Groups in the Early Ninth Century: The Sufis of the Mu’tazila Revisited,” *The Lineaments of Islam*, ed. Paul Cobb (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 61–84.

¹⁹ See Raoul Vaneigem, *The Movement of the Free Spirit* (New York: Zone Books, 1994); see also Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), chaps. 8–13.

²⁰ Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *The Anabaptists* (London: Routledge, 1980).

²¹ Geoff Kennedy, *Diggers, Levellers, and Agrarian Capitalism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008).

²² See McKinley, *Illegitimate Children of the Enlightenment*, esp. 58–65.

²³ See Warren Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁴ See Martin, *Men Against the State*.

²⁵ See Alexandre Skirda, *Facing the Enemy: A History of Anarchist Organization from Proudhon to May 1968*, trans. Paul Sharkey (Oakland: AK Press, 2002), esp. chaps. 8, 10, and 12.

²⁶ See James Fisher, *The Catholic Counterculture in America, 1933-1962* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

²⁷ See René Viénet, *Enragés and Situationists in the Occupation Movement, France, May ‘68*, trans. R. Perry & H. Potter (New York: Autonomedia, 1992).

²⁸ See Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

inequality. To this extent, anarchistic thought is every bit as conceivable under feudalism as it is under capitalism. Nor is it necessary for anarchistic thinkers to specifically identify as “anarchists.” (Even Schmidt and Van der Walt admit something like this when they include the avowed Marxists Daniel De Leon and James Connolly in the historical anarchist movement).

In the penultimate section of this essay, I want to provide three examples of how ostensibly “non-anarchist” thinkers (namely, Spinoza, Sartre, and Lévinas) can be read “anarchically.” In doing so, I want to demonstrate a way of thinking about anarchism as a philosophical or theoretical trope which recurs transhistorically, although we can understand many general political-theoretical constructions in this way. For example, what might be called the “socialist trope” appears in Greco-Roman historical contexts, late-antique/medieval contexts, and modern contexts. In such instances, a distinction must be made between the 19th-century socialist movement, which is obviously a product of capitalism and the industrial revolution, and the concept of socialism more generally, which is not bound to particular schemes of production or property relations. In the case of anarchism, the point is to show that the anarchist trope can surface in philosophical contexts quite divorced from the historical anarchist movement of the 19th century.

This sort of endeavor will be familiar to anyone who has studied “postanarchist” writers like Newman, May, and Call and their respective anarchist “readings” of Lacan, Deleuze, Foucault, Lyotard, Baudrillard. Although these readings have tended to serve purposes very specific to the postanarchist milieu—e.g., to critically explore the extent to which postmodernist and post-structuralist thought improves upon the theoretical and practical insights of classical anarchism when read anarchistically—I believe the methodology can be generalized in a way that serves anarchist studies more broadly. Relying inordinately on thinkers within the historical anarchist tradition tends to produce a theoretical echo chamber that places unhelpful limits on how we think about anarchism. In seeking to demonstrate the “anarchistic” potential of thinkers we don’t normally think of as anarchist—including many who lack any obvious relation to the historical tradition—my goal is not to show that these thinkers are “anarchists” in an absolute sense, but to discover meaningfully “anarchistic” (i.e., radically antiauthoritarian and egalitarian) attitudes, thoughts, and opinions in their writing. I think it is true that many “anarchistic” (but not explicitly

anarchist) thinkers²⁹ can offer extremely novel contributions to conventional anarchist discourses surrounding, e.g., freedom, intersubjectivity, the nature of moral responsibility, and so on. Such contributions, in turn, provide new and more expansive ways of thinking about the anarchist canon.

IV.

CASE #1: SPINOZA

Although Spinoza was “considered, during his lifetime and for a century after his death, a man of appalling wickedness,”³⁰ he was revered as a hero by the Romantics of the 19th century³¹ and has more recently been claimed as a champion of Enlightenment.³² To my mind, however, the most interesting recuperation of Spinoza has been carried out by contemporary thinkers like Balibar, Althusser, Negri, and Deleuze, for whom he stands as patriarch over the family of ideas known as poststructuralist philosophy.³³ Like the poststructuralists, Spinoza rejects the Cartesio-Kantian subject and, by extension, the concept of an essentialized *human* nature.³⁴ In this he departs not only from the liberal humanism of

²⁹ My choice of thinkers in this essay—which, as Ruth Kinna points out, are conspicuously male and Western—is not intended to reflect any bias on my part, but rather the specific and limited scope of my scholarly expertise. As the previously cited works indicate, many examples of female and non-Western “anarchistic” thinkers are available.

³⁰ Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976), 569.

³¹ Antonio Negri, “Spinoza’s Anti-Modernity,” *Les Temps Modernes* 46.539 (June 1991).

³² Robert Alexander Duff, *Spinoza’s Political and Ethical Philosophy* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970); Lewis Samuel Feuer, *Spinoza and the Rise of Modern Liberalism* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1958). For an opposing view, see S. Smith, *Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

³³ See Louis Althusser, *Reading Capital* (Verso: London, 1997); Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics* (New York: Verso, 1978); Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1988) and *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (New York: Zone, 1990); Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza’s Metaphysics and Politics*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). For a general overview of Spinoza’s reception in modern Continental philosophy, see Warren Montag & Ted Stolze, *The New Spinoza* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

³⁴ Negri, *The Savage Anomaly*, 211, 237, 245, 266, 268; Deleuze, *Expressio-*

Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, but also from Marx and other thinkers of the early post-Hegelian Left.³⁵

Deleuze in particular has made a convincing case for reading Spinoza as a kind of proto-structuralist at the level of ontology.³⁶ But this connection is not immediately obvious at the level of politics. Although Spinoza rejects the Cartesian humanism upon which much of the liberal tradition is founded, he nonetheless employs many of its key concepts, including natural right, the state of nature, and the social compact.³⁷ This fact, coupled with his ostensive endorsement of the liberal democratic state, places Spinoza immediately at odds with most thinkers on the post-Hegelian Left who tend to view social contractarianism as a bourgeois apology for class systems, the monopolization of force, etc.³⁸ It is thus far easier at first blush to read him as a liberal contractarian in the tradition of Hobbes or Rousseau than as a forebear of Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, let alone Deleuze and Foucault.³⁹

On the basis of such considerations, a view of Spinoza emerges which resists any sort of convenient “genealogization.” He is neither liberal nor radical, but rather a queer and perhaps confused amalgamation of both. To this extent, Spinoza’s philosophy shares much in common with the anarchism of the 19th and early 20th centuries, which also blends classical liberal and post-Hegelian radical elements. Spinoza accepts a form of liberal contractarianism and rejects liberal humanism. For the anarchists, as for Sartre, “human nature” only exists to the extent that there is an aspect of human existence—namely, freedom—that is not reducible to causal forces that shape and determine non-human existence. On this limited score is their affinity with liberalism and humanism laid bare. It is simply a mistake, however, to

nism in Philosophy, esp. chap. 10.

³⁵ For more on Spinoza and Marx, see Althusser, *Reading Capital* and Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*. See also Julie R. Klein, “Etienne Balibar’s Marxist Spinoza,” *Philosophy Today* 44 (2000): 41–50; Gordon Hull, “Marx’s Anomalous Reading of Spinoza,” *Interpretation* 28.1 (Fall 2000): 17–31; George L. Kline, “Spinoza East and West: Six Studies of Recent Studies in Spinozist Philosophy,” *Journal of Philosophy* 58 (June 1961): 346–354.

³⁶ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 1–11.

³⁷ See Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, chap. 16.

³⁸ See for example Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel’s Doctrine of the State & Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, in Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1992), 80.

³⁹ This is the reading of Duff (1970) and Feuer (1958); see note 32 above.

confuse such a belief in freedom with belief in an Augustinian soul, Cartesian subject, or Kantian transcendental ego. The anarchists are united with Spinoza in their rejection of such concepts.⁴⁰ Could they be united in more substantial ways?

In Spinoza's pan(en)theistic ontology, there is a single substance, *Deus sive Natura*, of which all things are finite and temporal modifications. It is this idea, more so than any other, which sets Spinoza so radically apart from his forebears, especially Descartes. For with the repudiation of any substantial distinction between God and man, creator and created, mind and body, the conventional dualism of Western metaphysics vanishes. Man becomes one of the infinite expressive modes of the attributes of God. What has heretofore been called mind, soul, or spirit is now identified with divine thought; the flesh, the body—indeed, matter itself—are in turn relegated to modes of the attribute of extension. Voluntarism gives way to parallelism, effectively abnegating the mind-body problem that has plagued philosophers since Descartes. With the rejection of dualism comes the rejection of free will, as well as all forms of teleological ethics that predicate a final cause (e.g., pleasure, *eudaimonia*, etc.) of human action. The traditional view of will as self-causing (hence irregular, non-predictable, and non-mechanistic) cause is impossible for Spinoza since: (a) all acts of will are reducible to cognitive acts by psycho-physical parallelism (b) and all acts, whether understood under the attribute of thought or extension, are determined by the same immutable laws which govern the one substance. To put it prosaically, there is no substantial difference between the causes of natural events (as when a boulder is impelled by gravity to roll down a hill) and the causes of “human events” (as when a man is impelled by hunger to eat a meal).

The *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* presents Spinoza's political theory *vis-à-vis* the abovementioned concepts.⁴¹ There he begins with the idea that Nature “has the sovereign right to do all that she can do; that is, Nature's right [*jus*] is co-extensive with her power [*potentia*]” (527). Moreover, since the universal power of Nature is nothing but the totality of all particular powers

⁴⁰ See Luc Bonet, “Spinoza: un philosophe ‘bon à penser’ pour l’anarchisme,” *Le Monde Libertaire* 915 (1993), and Daniel Colson, “Lectures anarchiste de Spinoza,” *Réfractons* 2 (2003).

⁴¹ Baruch Spinoza, *Complete Works*, trans. S. Shirley, ed. M. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002); hereafter cited parenthetically by page number.

belonging to individual things, it follows that “each individual thing has the sovereign right to do all that it can do,” that is, “to exist and to act as it is naturally determined” (527). Nature, therefore, prohibits nothing beyond what is undesired in practice or unattainable in principle. It disesteems neither “strife, nor hatred, nor anger, nor deceit, nor anything at all urged by appetite” (527). It is not bound by the laws of reason, which only seek mankind’s survival and self-interest, but by innumerable other laws that govern being as a whole (528).

Human beings, in contrast, *are* governed by the laws of reason. Unlike the laws of appetite, which vary from person to person, the laws of reason are universal. This is because reason is directed toward the “proper and true utility” of all human beings *qua* modes⁴²—that is, their common desire to persist, and to enjoy as many good affections and avoid as many bad affections as possible (528). Furthermore, because human beings’ capacity to experience good affections and persist as modes is directly proportional to the amount of affective power they possess, reason is also directed toward the maximization of affective power.

In the state of nature, every individual has license to act on her particular appetites, even those that are injurious to others. The result, as Hobbes noted, is a “war of all against all” in which each individual’s desires are in constant conflict with those of all others, thereby causing a net reduction in individual affective power. Since all human beings desire “to live in safety free from fear” and “to enjoy as a whole the rights which naturally belong to them as individuals,” both of which are impossible in the state of nature, reason impels them to join together as one, forfeiting certain of their individual rights to the “common ownership” of the entire community (528). As a result, right is no longer “determined by the strength and appetite of the individual,” but by the common will and shared power of all.⁴³ This common will, in turn, constitutes the sovereign power of the state.

The forfeiture of individual rights is only countenanced to the extent that human beings as a whole possess “more power and

⁴² Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 263.

⁴³ Cf. Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 261: “Man in principle agrees in nature with man; man is absolutely or truly useful to man. Everyone, then, in seeking what is truly useful to him, also seeks what is useful to man. The effort to organize encounters is thus first of all the effort to form an association of men in relations that can be combined.”

consequently more right over nature than each of them separately.” (After all, any loss of right entails a corresponding forfeiture of power, and this is precisely what reason forefends). Although this is more likely to be true in a society than in the state of nature, it is not guaranteed to be so. Spinoza is sensible enough to realize that human beings, both within and without the state of nature, are not always guided by reason. The same irrational self-interest that engenders chaos in the state of nature can provoke tyranny and sedition in society.

For this reason, a contractual relationship between ruler(s) and ruled is necessary. On the one hand, sovereign power—whether invested in a monarchy, an oligarchy, or a democracy—is required to protect and promote “the public good and to conduct affairs under the guidance of reason” (530). On the other hand, citizens are required to honor the sovereign’s authority by obeying it in all matters. In contrast to Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, for whom the underlying force of the social contract is reciprocal obligation (either explicit or implied), Spinoza’s theory is practical rather than deontological. Citizens are impelled by reason to obey even objectionable commands, not because of duty or obligation, but because order is generally more conducive to their survival and well-being than chaos. Likewise, sovereign powers are impelled to promote the public good because failure to do so precipitates insurrection. As Spinoza points out, “The position has never been attained in which the state was not in greater danger from its citizens than from the external enemy, and where its rulers were not in greater fear of the former than the latter” (538). The relationship between ruler and ruled is thus symbiotic: the subject abdicates her natural right to the state in the interest of survival, and the sovereign pursues the common good in order to maintain its sovereignty.

This explains why human beings do not become slaves when they abandon the state of nature and submit themselves to the state. For Spinoza, a slave is one who obeys commands that are solely to the commander’s advantage: “But in a sovereign state where the welfare of the whole people, not the rulers, is the supreme law, he who obeys the sovereign power in all things should be called a subject, not a slave who does not serve his own interest” (531). When a state is governed by reason alone, its authority is absolute—that is, its right extends as far as its power. Such a state—which Spinoza identifies with democracy—has no interest beyond promoting the public good, protecting its subjects from harm, and enabling them to pursue their chosen ends. As a result, it both deserves and receives their obedience. Yet even in a

successful democracy, “no one transfers his natural right so absolutely that he has no further voice in affairs; he only hands it over to the majority of society, whereof he is a unit. Thus all men remain, as they were in a state of nature, equals” (531). Certain fundamental rights and powers, including the right to free thought and expression, remain unimpeachable (590).

In theory at least, the rational state regards the individual as sacrosanct and his rights as inviolable. The sovereign may use violence and force to curb the irrational appetites of its subjects, but such a use of force is limited by reason. Any state of affairs in which the ruled are more rational than the sovereign is guaranteed by psycho-physical parallelism to culminate in revolution. In this way, the transition from state of nature to rational state proceeds in a mechanistic and almost dialectic fashion. (This is how Spinoza both explains and advocates the rise of democracy, which he views as an ideally rational form of government [538]).

Interestingly, it is precisely this mechanistic and quasi-dialectical aspect of Spinoza’s theory that distinguishes it from conventional liberal theories and reinforces the anti-humanism stressed by Deleuze and others. In denying freedom and Cartesian subjectivity (i.e., the confluence of soul and body as the locus of the “self”), Spinoza departs significantly from Hobbes, Locke, and others within the liberal tradition. Determinism leaves neither room for rational choice, nor any kind of choice for that matter. Parallelism, in turn, relegates the “self” to a network of desires determined by and expressive of bodily relations. There are no such things as autonomous, atomized, individual selves in the Cartesio-Kantian and liberal-humanistic sense. In all this Spinoza exhibits a pronounced affinity with Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze, and others for whom “freedom” and “the self” are fictions, mere expressions of an all-encompassing immanence (variously understood as desires, drives, power, etc.).

Spinoza is also united with Hegel and the post-Hegelian left (including the anarchists) in his emphasis on the social nature of ontology and ethics. Against liberal individualism, his ethico-political theory stresses larger and progressively more complicated relations, as well as the role such relations play in constituting both self and community. Like Hegel, his understanding of ego and alterity is trans-personal, immanent, and intersubjective rather than atomized and transcendental.

These distinctions reveal another radical aspect of Spinoza’s philosophy—viz., his belief that the conventional methods of State and Church (traditional enemies of both Marxists and anarchists)

enslave rather than liberate human beings. This is because obedience to the dictates of State and Church is more often than not motivated by passive affections (e.g., fear of punishment, hope for a better life in this world or the next) rather than reason. The highest ethical goal for Spinoza is a condition of perfection that is co-extensive with both knowledge and the intellectual love of God. To the extent that the state or any coercive institution is justified at all, it is only by means of helping human beings attain this condition through the cultivation of enlightenment and reason.

Despite these ostensibly radical features, however, Spinoza's theory would nonetheless appear to support the existence of a state. The question, however, is whether such a state needs to exercise *coercive authority* in order to fulfill its role within Spinoza's system. If not, then the ground is provisionally cleared for a more comprehensive anarchist reading of Spinoza. As we noted above, Spinoza endorses an extremely robust determinism that denies human beings any freedom apart from natural necessity. Anarchist theories, in contrast, generally hold to libertarian conceptions of freedom that are at least as robust as Spinoza's determinism, if not more so. (I forewent detailed discussion of such conceptions in this section because there are as many anarchist theories of freedom as there are anarchist theorists. Suffice it to say, however, that the issue of freedom opens at least one chasm between Spinoza and the anarchists that is absolutely unbridgeable. The question is: are there any others?)

Our discussion of anarchism as a philosophical orientation revealed that anarchism is founded in part on moral opposition to unjustifiable authority. Strictly speaking there are no moral or normative principles in Spinoza's system since, to put it simply, there is no freedom. Thus Spinoza's political theory does not oppose authority in the sense of prescribing against it. But this is not to say that unjustifiable authority has no place in the theory. On the contrary, this is roughly what Spinoza has in mind when he talks about the power of the sovereign exceeding its right—in other words, when it fails to act according to reason and in the interest of the public good.

Recall, however, that for Spinoza subjects are required to obey even objectionable commands. Does this mean that they must obey the sovereign even when it fails to act according to reason? I think not. What Spinoza has in mind here isn't a judgment of *reason* but a judgment of *appetite*. In other words, a subject may find a law or command "objectionable" in the sense of not liking it or recognizing that it causes her displeasure, but this is

different from judging it to be invalid or non-binding. For example, even though I may find paying taxes objectionable, in the sense that I don't like paying them, I can still believe that a tax system is a good thing (*ceteris paribus*) and so pay my taxes accordingly. Reasonable subjects don't have to *like* commands in order to recognize them as reasonable.

The only circumstance under which the sovereign is permitted to compel compliance by force is when a subject is being irrational—i.e., refusing to obey a reasonable command. In such cases, however, it acts not against her will, but against her irrational desires or appetites. This is because the will for Spinoza is merely a reflection of reason, which universally demands obedience to all reasonable commands. A command is only unreasonable if it requires a citizen to do something that is not to her rational advantage. And if commands are unreasonable they will *necessarily* be recognized as such by all fully rational subjects and met with open disobedience and possibly even revolution. Thus for Spinoza “domination” or “coercive authority” is better defined as “power to compel the compliance of another when such compliance is not in her rational interest.”

Understood in this way, coercive authority doesn't *need* to be opposed in Spinoza's system, because any such authority will necessarily be destroyed and replaced with reasonable authority. This follows from the nature of reason. But this raises an important question: why should there be any authority at all? That is, why do human beings have to bind themselves to a sovereign power that possesses more power and right than any of them do individually?

As far as I can tell, they do not. Spinoza is right to suggest that individual human beings have more power and right living in community than they do in the state of nature. But once they are in that state—a state in which the power of one is the power of all—there is no need to reify that collective power as a separate institution or apparatus (e.g., a monarch, parliamentary system, etc.) with its own idiosyncratic interests (e.g., in retaining its rule). For once such an institution exists, it will mimic human beings in all respects, including their tendency to act on selfish desire and irrational appetites. After all, whether it contains one king or a hundred senators, the sovereign power is still comprised of human beings. But if this is the case, there will always be revolutions as long as there are states.

The only way to stop this cycle, it seems, is to completely eliminate the distinction between the actual collection of human beings in a society and the political power of that society—in

other words, to adopt a one-man-one-vote direct democracy wherein all decisions are made by consensus. In such a situation, each individual's right and power is truly coextensive with the right and power of society as whole, since there is no intermediate between her will and the general will. Every man "rules" himself and all others equally, thus there is no desire to "retain rule" and no fear of revolution. There is no distinction between sovereign and subject, thus no division of interests. All will participate in debate and voting for the exact same reason—namely, to come into their power and maximize their experience of good affections. I am not suggesting that human beings *would* move directly from the state of nature to radical democracy, just that they *will* move there eventually given the quasi-dialectical operation of reason. In other words, anarchy will not be *chosen*, but will *obtain* precisely at that moment when perfect rationality prevails within human community.

CASE #2: JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

One of the more puzzling and frequently overlooked aspects of Sartre's 1968-1975 period is revealed in the following claim, made to an interviewer shortly after the uprisings: "If one rereads all my books, one will realize that I have not changed profoundly and that I have always remained an *anarchist*."⁴⁴ When asked about this same quote seven years later, Sartre replied:

That remains very true. . . . Still, I have changed in the sense that I was an anarchist without knowing it when I wrote *Nausea*. I did not realize that what I was writing could have an anarchist interpretation; I saw only the relation with the metaphysical idea of "nausea," the metaphysical idea of existence. Then, by way of philosophy, I discovered the anarchist in me. But when I discovered it I did not call it that, because today's anarchy no longer has anything to do with the anarchy of 1890. (24)⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Self-Portrait at Seventy," in *Life/Situations: Essays Written and Spoken*, trans. Paul Auster and Lydia Davis (New York: Pantheon, 1977), 24, emphasis mine; hereafter cited parenthetically by page number

⁴⁵ He reiterates the claim yet again in Alexandre Astruc's and Michel Contant's film documentary *Sartre By Himself* (1976).

What is odd, of course, is that prior to giving these interviews, Sartre had never once described his philosophy as anarchistic, nor referred to himself as an anarchist, nor associated with any self-identified anarchist movement (unlike Camus, whose libertarian politics he disdained). So what exactly is he talking about here?

Unfortunately, Sartre does not bother to explain in detail what he means by the word “anarchist,” and although he distinguishes his “anarchism” (“the anarchy of today”) from the “anarchy of 1890,” he defines neither. Elsewhere in the same interview, however, he does say: “I never allowed anyone to hold power over me, and I have always thought that anarchy—which is to say, a society without powers—must be brought about” (24–25). Based on this definition of “anarchy,” therefore, we can safely assume that an anarchist is, at minimum, one who believes that “a society without powers . . . must be brought about.” But what exactly is a society without powers? Other reflections in the interview of Sartre’s on May 1968 may provide a clue:

For me, the movement in May was the first large-scale social movement which temporarily brought about something akin to freedom and which then tried to conceive of what freedom in action is. And this movement produced people—including me—who decided that now they had to try to describe positively what freedom is when it is conceived as a political end. What were the people really demanding from the barricades in May 1968? Nothing, or at least nothing specific that power could have given them. In other words, they were asking for everything: freedom. They weren’t asking for power and they didn’t try to take it. For them, and for us today, it is the social structure itself that must be abolished, since it permits the exercise of power. (52)

The French *résurgence anarchiste* of 1968–1975 can be seen as a low point in Sartre’s long and illustrious career. Although at the time he remained France’s most important living intellectual, his longstanding authority as a philosopher had been weakened throughout the 1950s and 1960s by the rise of structuralists, poststructuralists, and various others who shared a common fondness for Sartre-bashing. (Foucault, for example, once described the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* as “the effort of a 19th-century man to imagine the 20th century.”)⁴⁶ Even some of

⁴⁶ For a long time the structuralists dismissed Sartre as a “courageous

the *Enragés* were dismissive of Sartre, both before and after 1968.⁴⁷ According to one famous story, when Sartre was invited to a meeting of students and professors to plan protests against the government, he was handed a piece of paper that read “Sartre, be brief.”⁴⁸

In another sense however, 1968 represented an unquestionably positive moment for Sartre, as evidenced by his unequivocal and enthusiastic support for the Paris Spring both in word and deed:

Sartre involved himself wholeheartedly from the first days onwards, doing all he could to encourage the students and win support for them. Now in his sixties, Sartre spent a night at the barricades, spoke before a tumultuous packed house at the Sorbonne, declared his old colleague Raymond Aron unfit to teach because of his attack on the students, and humbly interviewed the student leader, Daniel Cohn-Bendit.⁴⁹

and generous’ man of an earlier era, animated by a spirit that had passed from the intellectual scene.” This trend persisted well into 1968, by which time structuralism had mostly (though not completely) replaced existentialism as the dominant mode of French philosophy; Foucault, for example, publicly dismissed existentialism as an “enterprise of totalization” just two months before the uprisings. Interestingly, Foucault eventually reconciled with Sartre after 1968 and even collaborated with him. See Mark Poster, *Foucault, Marxism, and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), 5. For more on structuralism and 1968, see Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *La Pensée 68: Essai sur l’anti-humanisme contemporaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), and François Dosse, *The Sign Sets: 1967-Present*, vol. 2 of *History of Structuralism*, trans. Deborah Glassman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), especially part II, “May 1968 and Structuralism; or, The Misunderstanding.”

⁴⁷ Especially the Situationists, who tended to regard Sartre as an establishment figure. See the English edition of the 1965 Situationist pamphlet *On the Poverty of Student Life* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1983).

⁴⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre et al., “On a raison de se révolter,” *Telos* 22 (Winter 1974-75) : 65–66.

⁴⁹ Ronald Aronson, *Jean-Paul Sartre: Philosophy in the World* (London: Verso, 1980), 312. For Sartre’s interview with Cohn-Bendit, see “L’Imagination au pouvoir’: Entretien de Jean-Paul Sartre avec Daniel Cohn-Bendit,” *Le Nouvel Observateur*, special supplement, May 20, 1968. For an English translation, see Hervé Bourges and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *The French Student Revolt: The Leaders Speak*, trans. B.R. Brewster (New York: Hill & Wang, 1968).

This period also marked his final break with both the PCF (“which is not a revolutionary party”) and the Soviet Union (“which is not a socialist regime”)⁵⁰ and ushered in his affiliation with the ultra-left Maoists, whom he regarded as “the only revolutionary force capable of adapting to new forms of the class struggle in a period of organized capitalism.”⁵¹ After that time, he cared little about his status as a celebrity, having refashioned himself as a “leftist intellectual” who “forsakes his privileges, or tries to, in actions.”⁵²

When Sartre talks about a “society without power,” he seems to be suggesting that power is the *negation* of freedom. Since freedom is neither given by power, nor taken from it, freedom must come from the abolition of power itself through whatever social forms permit its exercise. As such, the power Sartre has in mind here is obviously some kind of *repressive* power—i.e., power which prevents rather than allows, disables rather than enables, limits rather than expands, constrains rather than mobilizes, closes possibilities rather than opens them, etc. Therefore, anarchy is a “society without *repressive* powers,” and an anarchist, by extension, is one who believes that such a society must be brought about.

We know that Sartre considered himself part of the *Enragés* movement, which is undoubtedly what he has in mind when he calls himself an anarchist (indeed, a *lifelong anarchist*) in 1968 and again in 1975. Furthermore, we know that anarchy for Sartre is a “society without repressive powers” and that he, as an anarchist, strongly supports the creation of such a society. All of this suggests that Sartre’s description of anarchism in the interviews is a *reading* or *interpretation* of the movement that he encountered and endorsed in 1968. Sartre’s definition of anarchy as a

⁵⁰ Sartre et al., “On a raison de se révolter,” 347, 42. Elsewhere Sartre says of the Soviet Union, “The machine cannot be repaired; the peoples of Eastern Europe must seize hold of it and destroy it”; see Jean-Paul Sartre, “Czechoslovakia: The Socialism that Came in from the Cold,” in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, trans. John Matthews (London: Verso, 1974), 117.

⁵¹ “The Maoists in France,” in Sartre, *Life/Situations*, 171. Sartre also says of the Maoists, “I am with you because at least apparently you want to prepare a society which will not be founded on the auto-domestication of man, but on his sovereignty” (Sartre et al., “On a raison de se révolter,” 141). Cf. Aronson, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, 315.

⁵² “Sartre Accuses the Intellectuals of Bad Faith” [interview by J. Gerassi], *The New York Times Magazine*, October 17, 1971, 118.

“society without repressive powers” is more or less consistent with that of earlier anarchists such as Bakunin and Kropotkin, but what are we to make of his claim to have *always* been an anarchist?

Sartre’s ideas about anarchy and anarchists seem to have been shaped by his experiences with the *Enragés* of 1968. There is some disagreement, however, about whether and to what extent the *Enragés* ought to be considered “anarchists” in the first place. There is no question that they were opposed to all forms of coercive authority, including the state. (Cohn-Bendit claims, for example, that, “only by overthrowing all governments and every representative of authority, by destroying all political, economic and authoritarian lies wherever they are found, and by destroying the state, can we advance towards socialism.”)⁵³ What set the *Enragés* apart from their predecessors was their recognition of new forms of authority over and above the traditional “somber trinity.” As Richard Gombin notes:

[For them] the bureaucratic system of industrial society has considerably increased the sum total of the exploitation and repression of man in comparison with competitive capitalism and the liberal 19th-century state. The tremendous development of science and technology has led to the individual being completely taken over by the system; the individual is no more than a commodity, a reified object, placed on show, and manipulated by the specialists in cultural repression: artists, psychiatrists, psychologists, psychoanalysts, sociologists and ‘experts’ of all kinds. To fight against a ‘spectacular’ society, in which everything is treated as a commodity and in which creative energy spends itself in the fabrication of pseudo-needs, one must attack on all fronts simultaneously; not only on the economic and social fronts but also (and above all) on the cultural one: the virulent attacks on professors, on the system of education, and on university administration, at Nanterre in 1967-68 sprang from this way of thinking.⁵⁴

⁵³ Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism: The Left Wing Alternative* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 222.

⁵⁴ Richard Gombin, “The Ideology and Practice of Contestation Seen Through Recent Events in France,” in David E. Apter & James Joll, eds., *Anarchism Today* (London: Macmillan, 1971).

The unprecedented oppression engendered by the late capitalist “society of spectacle” required new forms of resistance within heretofore untapped domains. For this reason, the *Enragés* emphasized the importance of self-management—not merely in the sphere of labor, but in the sphere of “everyday life.”⁵⁵ This is made especially clear in their efforts during the uprisings of May 1968, some of which we have already mentioned. To offer another example: “Action committees instantaneously sprung up in neighborhoods made up of all the spectrum of society: the students, the workers, the peasants, the housewives. In the atmosphere of complete solidarity between everyone, students helped farmers to produce food for the city, while the housewives took care of delivery to the local shops.”⁵⁶

As noted above, Sartre defines anarchism as a society without repressive powers. Before attempting to analyze what he means by this, a few points are worth mentioning. First, like the anarchists, Sartre seems to acknowledge multiple sources of authority and exploitation. One obvious indication of this is that in the original French version of the interview mentioned above⁵⁷, he specifically refers to a society “*sans puissances*” (without powers) as opposed to “*sans puissance*” (without power). The use of the plural here seems telling. Another indication, as Ian Burchall notes, is the fact that “for Sartre racism, and the associated phenomena of fascism, colonialism and imperialism, were a central concern from his very earliest works to the very end of his life.”⁵⁸ Unlike the PCF, which “reduced all questions of oppression to a mechanical model of class,”⁵⁹ Sartre recognized that repressive power manifests itself in a variety of local forms, ranging from sexism to homophobia.

Sartre also seems to advocate *active* opposition to authority (another important feature of anarchism) when he says “*une société sans puissances doit être provoquée*” (“a society without powers *must* be brought about”—emphasis mine). This conviction is especially evident in the post-1968 period, at which time Sartre began to redefine the responsibilities of intellectuals in terms of action:

⁵⁵ Roger Navarri, “Les dadaïstes, les surréalistes et la révolution d’octobre,” *Europe* 461/462 (September-October 1967).

⁵⁶ Decker, 411.

⁵⁷ Originally published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* in 1975.

⁵⁸ Ian H. Burchall, *Sartre Against Stalinism* (London: Berghahn, 2004), 129.

⁵⁹ Burchall, *Sartre Against Stalinism*, 207.

It is [his responsibility] to put his status at the service of the oppressed directly. Just as the German intellectual who told Hitler and talked about his anti-Nazism while he earned money writing scripts for Hollywood was as responsible for Hitler as the German who closed his eyes, just as the American intellectual who only denounces the Vietnam war and the fate of your political prisoners but continues to teach in a university that carries out war research and insists on law and order (which is a euphemism for letting the courts and police repress active dissenters) is as responsible for the murders and repression as is the Government and its institutions, so too, here in France, the intellectual who does not put his body as well as his mind on the line against the system is fundamentally supporting the system and should be judged accordingly.⁶⁰

Such ideas are conspicuously reflected in Sartre's many political activities both during and after May 1968, some of which we noted earlier. We know, then, that Sartre is kin to the anarchists in his commitment to direct action and his recognition of the plural nature of oppression. The question is whether his endorsement of a "society without powers" is anarchistic in the sense outlined previously (i.e., as opposed to all forms of closed, coercive authority). I think it is. For evidence, we need only look to a few examples from Sartre's post-1968 writings, most of which are replete with anarchistic and anti-authoritarian sentiments. First, in "Elections: A Trap for Fools," Sartre very clearly rejects electioneering in favor of direct action:

To vote or not vote is all the same. To abstain is in effect to confirm the new majority, whatever it may be. Whatever we may do about it, we will have done nothing if we do not fight at the same time—and that means starting today—against the system of indirect democracy that reduces us to powerlessness. We must try, each according to his own resources, to organize the vast anti-hierarchical movement which fights institutions everywhere.⁶¹

⁶⁰ "Sartre Accuses the Intellectuals of Bad Faith," 119.

⁶¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Elections: A Trap For Fools," in *Life/Situations*, 210. See also Bill Martin, *The Radical Project: Sartrean Investigations* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 79–90.

Second, in conjunction with his final and unequivocal repudiation of Soviet communism and his concomitant flirtation with Maoism, Sartre disavowed the concept of the vanguard party as well as the centralized, bureaucratized “worker’s state” ruled by party dictatorship (“Self-Portrait at Seventy,” 60–61).⁶² Third, he came to advocate workers’ self-management, direct democracy, and the integration of *gauchiste* social movements into a proletarian “revolution from below.”⁶³ Likewise, he believed that “political ideas and tactics should not be brought to the masses from the outside, as Lenin’s *What Is To Be Done?* had implied, but that revolutionaries should learn from the masses.”⁶⁴ Fourth, and finally, Sartre exhibited an “understanding of conventional authority as based on power alienated from its subjects, [a] rejection of bourgeois propriety, [an] acceptance of violence and illegality, and [an] unending willingness to contest and redirect himself.”⁶⁵ Taken together, these examples strongly suggest that Sartre’s post-1968 politics are indeed anarchistic, especially in the eclectic, and non-ideological manner of the *Enragés*.

At the same time, however, Sartre’s claims to have been a *lifelong* anarchist are difficult to understand at first blush. At the height of the Cold War (1952–1956) Sartre was a firm supporter of Stalinism. In *The Communists and Peace*,⁶⁶ for example, “he deployed extended economic, social and historical arguments in an attempt to establish the Communists, especially in their negative traits, as the necessary and exact political expression of the proletariat.”⁶⁷ Even after his break with Stalinism in the aftermath of the 1956 Soviet intervention in Hungary, Sartre remained for many years a loyal and steadfast supporter of both the Soviet Union and the Soviet-backed PCF. This ambivalence is reflected in most of Sartre’s political works between 1956 and 1968, even those that are critical of Soviet policies. For example, although Sartre was profoundly disillusioned by the Hungarian intervention and ostensibly sought to condemn it in *The Spectre of*

⁶² Cf. Martin, *The Radical Project*, chaps. 1 and 2.

⁶³ See D. Kellner’s review of *On a raison de se révolter* in *Telos* 22 (Winter 1974–75).

⁶⁴ Sartre et al., “On a raison de se révolter,” 147–160.

⁶⁵ Aronson, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, 314.

⁶⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, “Les Communistes et la paix,” in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations*, Vol. VI (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), and *The Communists and Peace: With an Answer to Claude Lefort*, trans. Irene Clephane (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1969).

⁶⁷ Aronson, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, 218.

Stalin,⁶⁸ his attitude throughout the book is seldom indignant or outraged. Instead, he addresses the Soviets patiently and empathically as well-meaning “comrades.”⁶⁹

Sartre’s often obsequious attitude toward the Soviets during this period may be related to his sincere hope for a reformed U.S.S.R—a hope he never fully abandoned until 1968 (“Self-Portrait at Seventy,” 18–20). It may also have been a political survival tactic:

Before 1968 the communist movement seemed to represent the entire left, and to break with the party was to push oneself into a kind of exile. When you were cut off from the left, you either moved to the right, as many former socialists did, or stayed in a kind of limbo where the only thing you could do was to go as far as you could in thinking what the communists did not want you to think. (“Self-Portrait at Seventy,” 18)

Whatever the case, by the late 1950s this attitude had given way to the much more openly and unapologetically anti-Soviet perspective of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, which Sartre describes as “a Marxist work against the communists” (“Self-Portrait at Seventy,” 18).⁷⁰ It is here that we find the first explicit and unqualified expression of an idea that heretofore had merely lurked under the surface—namely, that “true Marxism had been completely twisted and falsified by the communists.”⁷¹ Although certain moves recall the apologetic of *The Communists and Peace* (as, for example, the claim that the centralization and bureaucratization of socialist revolutions follows necessarily from scarcity⁷²), the *Critique* is the first systematic articulation of ideas that would prove crucial to Sartre’s later anarchist turn. His rejection of vanguardism and Stalinist bureaucracy can be traced back to other works of the late 1950s, including *The Spectre of Stalin*; the same is true of various anti-racist and anti-colonialist works, including “On Genocide,”⁷³ “La Pensée politique de Patrice

⁶⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Spectre of Stalin*, trans. I. Glephane (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1969).

⁶⁹ Aronson, *Jean-Paul Sartre*, 313.

⁷⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Vol. 1, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (London: Verso, 2004).

⁷¹ Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

⁷² Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 660–663.

⁷³ Jean-Paul Sartre, “Le Génocide,” in *Situations*, Vol. VIII; trans. “On Genocide,” in *Against the Crime of Silence: Proceedings of the Russell*

Lumumba,⁷⁴ etc.

A case can be made that the whole of Sartre's existentialist philosophy, with its rejection of an essentialist human nature and a vow of freedom as the for-itself, provides a promising framework within which to develop anarchistic ideas. As Herbert Read noted in 1949, "Anarchism is the only political theory that combines an essentially revolutionary and contingent attitude with a philosophy of freedom. It is the only militant libertarian doctrine left in the world, and on its diffusion depends the progressive evolution of human consciousness and of humanity itself."⁷⁵ In the end existentialism may offer what anarchist theories have too often lacked—namely, an ontological and ethical foundation, an explanation of what freedom is, how we can create it for ourselves and others, and why we are obliged to do so. But we shall leave this question open for another time.

CASE #3: EMMANUEL LEVINAS

Emmanuel Levinas belongs to a tradition of philosophers all of whom offer sustained and radical critiques of traditional Western metaphysics. Unlike Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida, however, Levinas grounds his critique of metaphysics in an extremely novel conception of ethics. Whereas traditional ethics is taken to follow upon ontology (or, in the case of Deleuze, to be immanent to ontology), Levinasian ethics is *prior* to ontology. With this prioritization comes a systematic critique of the privilege of Being and, by extension, the corresponding model of epistemology that posits subjects of consciousness before objects of knowledge. For Levinas, consciousness is produced through a face-to-face encounter with an Other to whom we have infinite ethical responsibility.

Despite Levinas' profound influence in metaphysics, ethics, and theology, very little attention has been paid to the political

International War Crimes Tribunal, ed. John Duffet (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968).

⁷⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, "La Pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba," in *Situations*, Vol. V; trans. Helen R. Lane, "Introduction" in *Lumumba Speaks: The Speeches and Writings of Patrice Lumumba, 1958-1961* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1972).

⁷⁵ Herbert Read, "Existentialism, Marxism, and Anarchism," in *The Essential Works of Anarchism*, ed. Marshall Shatz (New York: Quadrangle, 1972), 538.

ramifications of his philosophy.⁷⁶ One reason for this is that Levinas seldom wrote about politics in anything but occasional writings; indeed, none of his major works discuss the subject at length. As Howard Caygill notes, however:

Of all the twentieth-century philosophers Levinas was the most directly touched by the violent events of the century's political history . . . Such proximity to the convulsions of twentieth-century political history made reflection on politics and the exercise of political judgment a predicament rather than a choice for Levinas, and had an enormous, if unappreciated, impact on his formulation of an ethics of alterity.⁷⁷

Caygill, of course, is one of many younger scholars who have begun to focus attention on the “enormous, if unappreciated” political dimension of Levinas’ work. My goal in what follows is similar but a bit less ambitious. Instead of attempting to “construct” a genuine Levinasian politics, I will briefly explore how Levinas’ conception of ethical responsibility can support a tactical, local, anti-teleological anarchistic political philosophy.

Taking his cue from Rosenzweig, Levinas finds his philosophy upon a radical critique of totality—i.e., a universal synthesis or globalizing perspective that tries to reduce all

⁷⁶ Some notable exceptions include Don Awerkamp, *Emmanuel Levinas: Ethics and Politics* (New York: Revisionist Press, 1997); Roger Burggraeve, *Emmanuel Levinas: The Ethical Basis for a Humane Society*, trans. C. Vanhove-Romanik (Leuven: The Centre for Metaphysics and Philosophy of God, 1981), 5–57; Roger Burggraeve, *From Self-Development to Solidarity: An Ethical Reading of Human Desire in its Socio-Political Relevance according to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. C. Vanhove-Romanik (Leuven: The Centre for Metaphysics and Philosophy of God, 1985); Howard Caygill, *Levinas and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2002); Leorino Garcia, “Infinite Responsibility for the Other: The Ethical Basis of a Humane Society According to Emmanuel Levinas,” in *Philippines after 1972: A Multidisciplinary Perspective*, ed. Ramon C. Reyes (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University, 1985), 148–165; Noreen O’Connor, “The Person is Political: Discursive Practice of the Face-to-Face,” in *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other*, eds. Robert Bernasconi and David Wood (London: Routledge, 1988), 57–69; George Salemohamed, “Levinas: From Ethics to Political Theology,” *Economy and Society* 21.2 (1992): 192–206.

⁷⁷ Howard Caygill, “Levinas’ Political Judgment: The Esprit Articles,” *Radical Philosophy* 104 (November–December 2000): 6–15.

experience.⁷⁸ Here Levinas is calling attention to Hegel in particular, who attempts to reduce both phenomena and our consciousness of them to the operations of a universal Mind. Against Hegel, Levinas argues that being is more than synthesis and reduction; it is rather “in the face to face of humans, in sociality, in its moral signification” (77). The self-other relationship cannot be synthesized or reduced; the Other always goes beyond my consciousness of it in a face to face encounter. Hence Levinas claims “first philosophy is an ethics” (77).

The face of the Other is not a thing in the world so much as a process or action—a “facing.” As such it has no phenomenology; it does not appear or represent itself so much as speak, or rather command, and its commandment—“thou shalt not kill”—is ethical in content (85). When the face speaks, it does more than reflect back on the self in order to create Hegelian self-consciousness; rather it opens up a portal to infinite responsibility (88). This infinite responsibility to the Other is not an object of knowledge but a form of desire that cannot be satisfied; to this extent it “is like thought, which thinks more than it thinks, or more than what it thinks” (92).

For Levinas infinite ethical responsibility is “the essential, primary, and fundamental structure of subjectivity” (95). By comprehending my responsibility to the Other, I come to have an awareness of myself: “subjectivity is not for itself; it is, once again, initially for another” (96). Even before my comprehension of it, however, this responsibility is “imposed” upon me by the look of the Other; it precedes even my responsibility for myself (96). With comprehension comes the realization that I am responsible not only for the Other’s life but for the Other’s responsibility and the Other’s death as well (99).

Responsibility for the Other is infinite in two senses. First, it is infinite because it can never be “discharged” through any particular action. I am always and already responsible for the Other, more so than I am even for myself: “We are all responsible of all and for all men before all, and I more than the others” (99). Second, responsibility is infinite because it holds irrespective of reciprocity; that is, I remain responsible for the Other even if the Other is somehow remiss in his/her responsibility for me. Indeed,

⁷⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Detroit: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 77; hereafter cited parenthetically by page number.

I am responsible for the whole world: “The I always has one responsibility *more* than all the others” (99).

As we noted above, the ethics of infinite responsibility “is not merely different from thinking . . . it cuts across ontology, it is radically and irreducibly ‘otherwise than being or beyond essence’” (8). For this reason it is very difficult, if not impossible, to define ethics, as doing so “collapses the ‘what ought to be’ of ethics into the ‘what is’ of ontology” (8). At the very least, we know that Levinas’ conception of ethics is very different from more traditional conceptions, all of which derive their prescriptive and and/or axiological content from ontological descriptions of the world. For Levinas, in contrast, prescription or commandment *precedes* being, and any attempt to describe the world is necessarily shaped and constituted by it.⁷⁹ At the same time, however, this pre-ontological ethics lacks the specific content we associate with traditional moral philosophy: it does not provide hard and fast principles of behavior nor systematic accounts of the good life. Unlike Kant, who claims that “ought implies can,” Levinas begins with a “thou must which takes no account of a thou can.” This becomes the precondition for the formulation of any second-order moral theory. Even before we develop a casuistry that tells us when it is acceptable and unacceptable to take the life of the other, we are “faced” with our own infinite responsibility for the Other’s life and death.

For Levinas, then, responsibility is the structure of ethics, and responsibility is always understood in terms of “the two.” Politics emerges only with the addition of “the third,” and responsibility for “the third” is what Levinas means by *justice*. Regrettably, Levinas has precious little to say about what justice entails. One notable exception occurs in his essay “Politics After,” where Levinas suggests that the just state is one that establishes and safeguards the conditions of possibility for acting on one’s ethical responsibility. At the same time, Levinas is quick to acknowledge the capacity of real-world political entities to become unjust and even genocidal. For this reason, I think, the “state” is not so much a political entity for Levinas as it is an *ethical* entity; the state emerges wherever ethical responsibility is promoted and protected. But this is not an innate feature of the coercive apparatuses which Deleuze calls “state-forms.”

There is no hard and fast analogue to “oppression” (or Deleuzian repressive “force”) in Levinas. This may be due in part

⁷⁹ In this he echoes Marx’s thesis on Feuerbach: “The philosophers have merely attempted to understand the world; the point is to change it.”

to the fact that Levinas is coming out of the phenomenological tradition of Heidegger and Husserl rather than the genealogical tradition of Nietzsche; that is, Levinas remains fundamentally concerned with the question of how things appear to us rather than the conditions of possibility for those appearances. As we have seen, moreover, how things appear to us for Levinas is primordially and inexorably linked to ethical responsibility, which strictly speaking lacks any conditions of possibility. Put another way, Levinas would deny that ethical responsibility is “produced” by something else (e.g., “force”). This does not mean, however, that there is no room for an account of force—especially oppressive force—in Levinas’ theory. On the contrary, oppressive force (especially in egregious cases like genocide) seems to be the principal antithesis of Levinasian justice; it is what prevents ethical responsibility from being pursued and protected in the political context of the three. We will return to this point below.

As we have seen, one of the salient features of ethical responsibility for Levinas is that it is *infinite*—in other words, it cannot be discharged or otherwise done away with. To this extent, the justice that comes about from protecting and promoting ethical responsibility is always deferred, always “to come” (to use Derrida’s and Blanchot’s locution). Just as for anarchists respite from oppressive power (read: justice) cannot be obtained by “abolishing” force *tout court*, justice for Levinas cannot be obtained by a permanent “discharging” of ethical responsibility—say, through the establishment of a utopian republic. Justice, then, is a *practice* for Levinas, not a state. Here he follows the anarchists in insisting that the program of resistance must be ongoing, fluid, and ever-vigilant.

So, too, Levinas would most likely deny that evil can be located at a unitary site any more than infinite ethical responsibility itself can. Wherever there is an encounter between the two there is a possibility of evil, and wherever there are encounters among the three there is a possibility of injustice. The converse holds as well—possibilities of evil always entail possibilities of righteousness, but as we saw above that possibility can never be known ahead of time. (This calls attention to the “messianic” quality of Levinas’ philosophy, a quality that had a great influence on Derrida’s later political writings.) To this extent, Levinas would stringently deny—with Deleuze and many anarchists—that justice can be vouchsafed through *destruction* or any other reactive practices. Rather, justice must be *created* through the pursuit of possibility.

By way of summary: Levinas is very anti-Manichean in

insisting that evil and injustice are *effects*—perhaps inevitable effects—of infinite ethical responsibility. Injustice is not arbitrarily imposed (though he often speaks of injustice being “instantiated”). Political liberation, for Levinas, would indeed be a consequence of the collapse and dissolution of oppressive structures, but any such liberation is produced by infinite ethical responsibility itself. Put another way, ethics undoes the same injustices to which it occasionally gives rise. In this sense Levinas is very much of a piece with Deleuze, for whom desire always contains both revolutionary and fascist inclinations that manifest themselves variously.

Levinas further insists that “the infinite within the finite,” like Deleuzian desire, is not a thing in the world so much as a “process” or “event” which gives rise to or produces subjectivity. To this extent it is both ubiquitous and constitutive; it cannot be “done away with” or discharged in favor of something else. This is not to say, however, that oppression is invincible or that it cannot be resisted when it occurs. Though he is by no means clear on this score, Levinas does seem to think that there is a transgressive, liberatory operation of ethical responsibility that can in some sense be “channeled” at the level of practice—in anarchist terms, insurrection (in Deleuzian terms, deterritorialization or escape along lines of flight) is a possibility, and the actualization of this possibility is not necessarily a product of mere chance or coincidence.

Again, Levinas would deny that oppression emerges at a unitary locus (e.g., capitalism, patriarchy, etc.) that can be identified and combated. There is no “macrofascism” to which all “microfascisms” can be reduced; rather, oppressive structures are identified solely in terms of their attempts to limit the pursuit of ethical responsibility or else to actively undermine that responsibility, and this can and does happen within multiple sites. As with Deleuze, this necessitates a praxis that is always and already *local* in orientation; the emancipatory collapse of an oppressive structure (“a Nazi Germany”) at one site quickly gives rise to the generation of a new structure (an “Israel”) at another site. Political praxis must be dynamic, fluid, and eternally vigilant lest the new structure become oppressive.

Lastly, Levinas’ political philosophy spurns teleological or utopian discourses as a foundation for praxis, as any such discourses inevitably reproduce the structures they aim to oppose. It is this insight, more so than any other, which underlies occasional essays such as “Politics After.” For Levinas, the revolution necessarily lacks a *telos* or *eschaton* and so must be in

some sense *eternal*. Ethical responsibility cannot be discharged; justice and love are always (a la Derrida) “to come.” Freedom is not a goal so much as a practice or process that is immanent to the struggle against un-freedom. Anarchism emerges as the condition of possibility for engaging in this open-ended and free-floating “practice of freedom” which does not, and need not, culminate in a utopian “end of history.” All of this is by way of saying that Levinas’ philosophy does evince a meaningful political content—one that is decidedly anarchistic in orientation.

V.

In this essay I have tried to articulate a distinction between two expressions of anarchism—viz., as a historical movement and as a philosophical or theoretical orientation. Although these expressions frequently overlap with one another, they are not identical. This means that the study of anarchist history can and should proceed along two distinct but related trajectories, the first of which seeks to understand and analyze the movement, the second of which seeks to understand and analyze the philosophy. Both forms of inquiry are capable of making important contributions to the anarchist canon but, as I have suggested, the canon itself is best understood as a repository of anarchistic ideas that can be consulted and marshaled in the service of contemporary struggles.

Anarchist history in the second sense amounts to the history of anarchist ideas. Its principal methodology involves what I have called “reading anarchically”—the hermeneutic practice of discovering anarchistic attitudes, ideas, and thoughts in literature, philosophy, and other venues. Whether or not Schmidt and Van der Walt’s *Black Flame* succeeds as a work of history in the first sense, it fails because it neglects this second sense of doing history. The authors would loudly disclaim Spinoza, Sartre, and Levinas as anarchists, and I would agree with them—they are not “anarchists” in the sense of belonging to a historical anarchist movement or self-identifying as “communist anarchists.” But these individuals (and many others besides) can be read as “anarchistic” thinkers whose ideas should be seen as important and worthwhile to anarchists. For this reason alone, they are worthy candidates for “canonization.”

At the same time I am sympathetic to Schmidt and Van der Walt’s fear of making everyone and everything an anarchist. I want to maintain a real distinction between a historical anarchist political tradition (including the philosophical ideas that emerge

from within that tradition) and other political traditions. I believe, however, that anarchist ideas can emerge, and have emerged, in contexts other than the historical anarchist political tradition. I take it for granted that ideas from the former can and often will be in tension with ideas from the latter— perhaps we could call it a tension between anarchism and the anarchic, or something like that— but I think this tension is healthy. Our understanding of classical anarchist ideas can inform our understanding of "anarchistic" ideas just as much as the other way round.

In closing, I would emphasize that "reading anarchically" does not commit one to the view that there are no better or worse anarchist thinkers. Even within a broad and diverse canon it is still possible to recognize and appreciate "The Greats" using commonsensical criteria of judgment. Nor does "reading anarchically" entail a relativistic attitude toward competing anarchist theories. It leaves open the possibility that that anarcho-syndicalism, for example, is superior to insurrectionism as a strategic philosophy. This, however, is a position that must be argued on political-theoretical, rather than strictly historical grounds. "Reading anarchically" does not permit the mass excommunication of entire anarchist traditions simply because of their minoritarian status within the broader historical movement. Lastly, "reading anarchically" does not commit one to the view that everyone who thinks anarchistically is an "anarchist" in the same way that, for example, Bakunin, Kropotkin, or Goldman were anarchists—i.e., not just anarchistic thinkers, but important members of the historical anarchist movement. It simply acknowledges that the condition of possibility for any great movement is a great idea, and that ideas can and do take on lives of their own.