

Accumulation of Freedom

Writings on Anarchist Economics

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October 20, 2020

Deric Shannon, Anthony Nocella & John Asimakopoulos, eds., *Accumulation of Freedom: Writings on Anarchist Economics*. AK Press, 2012, 375 pp., \$21, paperback.

Accumulation of Freedom is a collection of essays written by various anarchists and libertarian socialists. They provide their own take on issues such as revolutionary strategy, globalization, class, hegemony and many others. Many of the contributors are anarcho-communists. The book is very much a mixed bag; some essays are really good, while others are quite bad. *Accumulation* begins with a preface by Kinna, who begins by presenting a critique of mainstream economics, which many believe is based on unrealistic assumptions. Kinna blames the ideology of neoliberalism for the emergence of a global economic system in which economic institutions such as the market are under-regulated and ill-planned. Contrary to the “anarcho”-capitalism of Murray Rothbard, Kinna argues “anarchism offers a strong and rich heritage of anti-capitalist thinking.” (6) According to Kinna, neoliberal globalization has produced three sets of problems: 1) Corporate capitalism, 2) environmental and ecological costs of industrialization and modernization, and 3) the unfairness of global market regulation and, in particular, the Western bias of institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. Although Kinna does a good job discussing issues raised by neoliberal capitalism, readers would have also benefited from a discussion of potential solutions to these problems.

The introductory essay by the editors, *Anarchist Economics: A Holistic View*, discusses why anarchists oppose capitalism and the institution of wage labor. The authors argue that anarchists generally accept a traditional two-class analytical framework which divides people into two categories: the working class and the ruling class. However, as the authors point out, not everyone fits neatly into these categories, as some have argued for the existence of a third class, such as the “the middle class,” “the coordinator class,” “the techno-managerial class,” etc. The editors then provide a brief overview of the three main anarchist schools of thought: Mutualism (Proudhon), Collectivism (Bakunin), and Communism (Kropotkin). Although the authors do a good job of providing a brief overview of classical anarchism, their discussion of Proudhon’s Mutualism is quite misleading. This is addressed later in this review.

In *Examining the History of Anarchist Economics to See the Future*, Spannos discusses key events in anarchist history. The essay is well written, and Spannos’ decision to use Maurice Brinton’s account of how the Bolsheviks dismantled workers’ control was a good choice. There is not

much discussion, however, of what role unions can or should play in building a more emancipatory and liberatory society.

In *Laying the Foundations: Proudhon's Contribution to Anarchist Economics*, Iain McKay provides an excellent overview of Proudhon, making a strong case for his continuing relevance. McKay's essay is very useful for first-time readers of Proudhon, with plenty of textual evidence. However, I did not find McKay's assertion that Marx's account of "exploitation" is essentially the same as Proudhon's very convincing. As I read him, Proudhon appears to be much more interested in theorizing in terms of property, as opposed to Marx who puts forward a value-theoretic critique of capitalism. For Proudhon, the value workers create is *their property* ["the price is not sufficient: the labour of the workers has created a value; now this value is their property" (McKay 2011, 114)] Thus, what capitalists are really appropriating is workers' property. McKay's assertion that "Proudhon was the first to expound many of the key concepts of Marxist Economics" (68) is also not very convincing. If McKay is suggesting that Proudhon came up with the notion of "surplus-value" before Marx, then this point is not clearly established. The problem for Proudhon, as I read him, is not that "workers [produce] more value than they [receive] in wages" (66), rather that workers do not enjoy the fruits of their labor. In other words, the problem is not the size of the wage, rather that only capitalists profit from any production opportunity undertaken even though the effort was a joint collaboration between workers and capitalists.

McKay also interprets Proudhon to be an early proponent of what is known in the Post-Keynesian school of thought as the "endogenous theory of money." (72) There are numerous problems with this assertion. First, the problem with the "endogenous theory of money" is that its proponents use a very different operating definition of "money" which, in my view, obscures the way money and taxes actually function in capitalist societies. According to the classical Quantity Theory of Money (Smith, Ricardo), which Marx rejected, money is *currency* (cash), which serves as 1) a measure of value and 2) a medium of exchange. Post-Keynesians use a confusing conception of "money". First, they define "money" as a "unit-of-account". Second, their definition of money is inclusive of credit instruments and debt obligations (IOUs). This approach is inimical to the medium of exchange character of money. On the question of whether Proudhon was a proponent of the "endogenous theory of money," it is not immediately discernible from McKay's comments whether this is the case. Proudhon writes,

Indeed, in all possible societies, even communistic, there is need for a measure of exchange, otherwise either the right of the producer, or that of the consumer, is affected. Until values are generally constituted by some method of association, there is need that one certain product, selected from among all others, whose value seems to be the most authentic, the best defined, the least alterable, and which combines with this advantage durability and portability, be taken for the symbol, that is to say, **both for the instrument of circulation and the standard of other values.** (McKay 2011, 230. Emphasis Added)

Here we can see that Proudhon, following the Quantity Theory of Money, thinks that money should be both "instrument of circulation" as well as "the standard for other values." This seems to suggest, contrary to McKay, that Proudhon was not a proponent of the "endogenous theory of money." Nonetheless, McKay's essay provides a very useful introduction to Proudhon, while making a strong case that Kropotkin owes many 'debts' to Proudhon.

The essay *Capitalism in the 2000s*, by Volcano and Shannon is problematic. It is unclear what differentiates “neoliberal capitalism” from “non-neoliberal capitalism” and why this is relevant. The core characteristic features of the neoliberal paradigm are not specified. Although the authors do a good job scrutinizing the way globalization occurs under capitalism, in some areas their discussion is not very clear. They claim greater capital mobility has caused a “race to the bottom.” (82) This is an empirical claim which depends crucially on which part of the world you look at and what time period. They claim workers are “forced to work for wages well below the standards set by union victories in (over)developed countries.” (82) Perhaps this is true of most developing countries, but what does greater capital mobility have to do with this? Capitalists do not only seek low wages, they also seek higher levels of productivity and higher rates of profit. The authors are correct, however, that the discussion needs to shift from “globalization” to a different kind of globalization. The authors also discuss some polling data which appears to show increased interest in “socialist alternatives.” (85) However, many of these attitudes are contingent on the specific time period under examination. The victory of Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton in 2016, as well as the recent loss of Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primaries, indicates that conservative attitudes remain fairly popular in the U.S. The victories of Modi in India and Bolsonaro in Brazil, as well as other neo-fascists around the world, suggest the global working-class has not been won over to socialist ideas. The rest of the essay, however, does a good job discussing many of the problems which arise under capitalism, such as periodic crises, the feminization of poverty, and general ecological unsustainability.

Fight to Win! Tools for Confronting Capital by Cochrane and Monaghan is highly problematic. The major problem is that the authors recommend the works of two radical institutionalist economists, Johnathan Nitzan and Shimshon Bichler, who misrepresent Marx. For starters, it is unclear what the authors mean by the notion of “Labor theory of value,” a term which, in my view, does not accurately represent Marx’s value theory (nor Ricardo’s or Smith’s). Indeed, the authors do not bother defining the notion at all, it is simply presumed from the get-go that the term is problematic. Then the authors introduce readers to the concept of “Differential Accumulation” developed by Nitzan and Bichler. In their books *The Global Political Economy of Israel* (2002) and *Capital As Power* (2009), Nitzan and Bichler argue that capital is a “strategic power institution,” and that “capital represents the complex assemblages of assets under the control of particular capitalist entities, including the means of production.” (98) For Nitzan and Bichler, accumulation of capital represents the commodification of power, and claims of control over social processes. Thus, Cochrane and Monaghan write, “given that power can only be understood as a relation between two entities, capitalists judge their accumulatory success in relative terms.” (99) The writers use this concept to evaluate the success and failures of three political-economic disruption campaigns: 1) Anti-sweatshop targeting of Nike, 2) Take down SNC-Lavalin!, and 3) Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty. Although these campaigns were successful in damaging capitalist profits, they write, campaigns such as the anti-sweatshop campaign “intentionally mimicked the hierarchical structure of the corporations they targeted,” and their leadership structure “privileged the type of male-dominated, competitive, and non-participatory environments that anarchists are committed to eliminating.” (113) Although Cochrane and Monaghan’s analysis is sharp and insightful, readers should be aware that prominent Marx scholar Andrew Kliman has debunked Nitzan and Bichler’s characterizations of Marx [see *Value and Crisis: Bichler and Nitzan versus Marx* (2011)]. Moreover, Nitzan and Bichler’s theoretical apparatus systematically neglects any discussion of class.

The essay *Escaping Capitalist Hegemony* by Wright and Williams is very interesting. The authors challenge the widely held belief that we live in a “capitalist” world. Wright and Williams argue there is no such thing as “capitalist hegemony” by pointing to already existing non-capitalist economic spaces in contemporary society. By looking at alternative forms of work, such as work that is non-exchanged and non-monetized, or work that is monetized but not undertaken primarily for profit-motivated purposes, Wright and Williams argue that alternative non-capitalist economic practices are already prevalent in western economies. However, the notion of “capitalism” is used very loosely throughout the essay, obscuring the way capitalism actually functions. Chapter 51 of *Das Kapital* provides useful criteria for distinguishing capitalist modes of production from non-capitalist modes. For Marx, there are two defining features of the capitalist mode of production: production of commodities to satisfy human wants, and the production of surplus value. Under this definition, virtually all of what Wright and Williams are talking about, such as non-exchanged, non-monetized work not undertaken primarily for profit-motivated purposes, would fall within the purview of “capitalism.” This is not to say such programs are undesirable, rather that they are not “not-capitalist.” Furthermore, you cannot have “socialism” or “not-capitalism” in one country. For instance, it is unreasonable to say that Country A, such as China or Vietnam, is “socialist” or “not-capitalist”, while these countries continue to trade and interact with capitalist countries like the United States or Great Britain. This assertion relies on a confusing conception of “capitalism.” Perhaps in the future, there will be some overlap between capitalism and socialism as there was between feudalism and capitalism, but we are nowhere near the point where capitalism is coming to an end.

Asimakopoulos’ *Globalized Contradictions of Capitalism and the Imperative for Epochal Change* argues that capitalism is destined to collapse repeatedly unless the state uses violence to keep it in place. (140) Asimakopoulos looks at SSA Theory developed by Kotz, McDonough and Reich in their book *Social Structures of Accumulation* (1994). SSA emphasizes the role of institutional arrangements on long-term economic growth, as opposed to what Asimakopoulos calls “deterministic-mechanistic Marxist economic theory.” (140) Asimakopoulos examines the emergence of three regimes, financial regime, neoliberal trade regime, and globally segmented labor markets, arguing that hegemonic powers like the U.S. and the European Union are in a position of global privilege. SSA theory incorporates neo-marxist perspectives developed by Baran and Sweezy, in particular their ideas on overproduction and underconsumption, as well as World-Systems Theory developed by Andre Frank. The problem is that these perspectives shift the discussion away from the exploitative relationship between capitalists and workers, instead, looking at interactions among states, like the U.S., or a conglomeration of states like the EU. Should libertarian socialists express solidarity with “underprivileged” states like India, China, Indonesia, etc.? Or should they express solidarity with the international working-class? It is not the state which appropriates surplus value from workers, rather it is capitalists. The section on “The neoliberal trade regime” (144–146) is quite confusing. Asimakopoulos spends a fair bit of time explaining the United States’ trade deficit with countries like Mexico and China, but it is unclear why trade deficits are inherently undesirable. A trade deficit is only half the picture, there is also a net inflow of capital from countries that run trade surpluses with the U.S., such as China and Mexico. When countries like China purchase U.S. securities like treasury bills, they finance the government’s budget deficit and create employment opportunities for workers in the U.S. Thus, Asimakopoulos presents an incomplete picture of an interconnected world where current account deficits are offset by capital account surpluses.

Hahnel's essay *The Economic Crisis and Libertarian Socialists* does a good job examining the United States' lackluster response to the 2007–2008 financial crisis, and remains relevant in light of the economic crises induced by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important to remember, however, that the Covid-19 recession is much bigger than the Great Recession of 2007–2008. Although Hahnel does a good job of looking at how the United States' policy response to the crises was insufficient, readers would have also benefited from a discussion of the various ways in which the economy could have been restructured to be made more democratic. Various conditions could have been attached to firms that were bailed (GM, Chrysler), such as more representation on the board of directors, increasing worker-equity through policies like employee stock ownership plans, maximum wages for CEOs, and other such policies to make the workplace more equitable and democratic.

In their essay, *Education's Diminishing Returns and Revolutionary Potential in the United States and Beyond*, Armaline and Armaline discuss education policy, an important issue which is often neglected when thinking about envisioning a new and better society. "The new generation of workers, young adults, and graduates face a difficult economic climate—all amidst rising costs for education, credit, general costs of living, and record levels of national debt. As it seems, many will enter the employment market carrying significant debt in comparison to previous generations." (180–181) The authors argue that school in many ways remains a "false promise", as it not only reproduces inequalities along the lines of race, class and gender (183), but also maintains and perpetuates global capitalism, since "public education is often a mechanism to produce new generations of workers socialized for their inclusion, typically as wage slaves, in the larger political economy." (183) Indeed, schools are coercive institutions which teach students to conform to social, cultural and occupational hierarchies, rather than "rather than critical independent thought necessary for personal autonomy and democratic societies" (183). Many working-class students perceive school to be irrelevant to "real life." (186) Overall, the authors do an outstanding job in criticizing the current state of public education and pointing to some ways forward.

Gordon's essay, *Anarchist Economics in Practice*, is also well-written and very useful. Gordon provides an important discussion of actual economic practices undertaken by anarchists, including abstention, anarchist unions, workplace and university occupations, cooperatives and communes, local currencies, Food Not Bombs, Free shops ("gift economies"), DIY cultural production, and the electronic commons. As Gordon writes, many of these practices are *prefigurative*, that is, the methods by which these practices are undertaken aim to exemplify the type of future society anarchists strive towards. However, as Gordon writes, some practices such as local currency exchanges are not sufficiently prefigurative:

Some readers may object to the inclusion of certain examples, which, they may argue, do not in fact qualify as anarchist. Alternative currencies and workers' cooperatives, for example, would receive criticism from anarcho-communists since they retain, respectively, the use of symbolic means of exchange and the payment of wages. Thus they are not only islands inside capitalism, but also not sufficiently prefigurative of an anarchist-communist society— one in which there are no wages, and products are not exchanged but distributed according to need. (204–205)

Gordon also provides a useful discussion of revolutionary strategy. He differentiates between three different outlooks: 1) constructive direct action, 2) propaganda by the deed, 3) and the politics of collapse. Indeed, as Gordon writes, "Constructive direct action means that anarchists who seek a world based on different social relations undertake their construction by themselves. On such an account, for social change to be successful, the modes of organization that will replace

capitalism, the state, patriarchy, and so on must be prepared and developed alongside (though not instead of) the attack on present institutions.” (213) It is important to realize, as Gordon notes, that “anarchist economic practices ultimately function within rather than outside capitalism,” and so “are by no means entirely detached from the capitalist economy.” (213) With respect to “propaganda of the deed,” readers would have benefited from an explicit definition of the phrase. As Gordon writes, the term has often been associated with destruction and violence. However, its origins are quite different, and if one interprets the term (as Gordon does) as “the actual implementation and display of anarchist social relations” (214) then the term “prefigurative politics” captures the essence of this phrase without any of its negative connotations. In that respect, his discussion of “propaganda of the deed” is redundant. Gordon’s discussion of “the politics of collapse” also merits close attention. Gordon’s rhetoric towards the end comes across as alarmist. He writes, “the converging crises of the twenty-first century—climate change, financial meltdown, and the imminent peak in oil production—*may be the only hope for large-scale social transformation.*” (216, emphasis added) This type of rhetoric has a tendency to dissuade activists from using their agency to bring changes to the world. It conveys a sense of inevitability, that things in the world occur due to the immutable “internal logic” of institutions. This perspective denies the role of human agency which can be used to create alternatives and bring changes to the world. The actions of institutions, such as corporations that pollute the environment, cannot be detached from the role humans played in enabling them.

Readers will experience difficulties in understanding Kaltefleiter’s essay. Kaltefleiter’s *Currency and Café Anarchy* is about money and currency, but the basic issue is Kaltefleiter’s decision to use a theory by Stuart Hall known as the encoding/decoding model of communication. The theory, in my view, is unnecessarily complicated and not very useful in this context. Money is an instrument that the ruling class uses to subordinate workers. The question of how to encode or decode texts is, in my view, a distraction. Furthermore, Kaltefleiter does not provide readers with terminology that is adequately defined. As an example, Kaltefleiter writes,

Popular and scholarly understandings of money tend to share some common traits found in narratives of globalization and modernity dyads. Cultural anthropologist Faidra Papavasiliou argues that *money is a “fact,” a reality that almost assumes the status of an agent, an agent that is increasingly unified and uniform across sociocultural, political, and economic boundaries.* (226, emphasis added)

There is some interesting discussion of alternative forms of currency (mediums of exchange), such as the Ithaca HOURS system in Ithaca, New York. However, some of Kaltefleiter’s statements are prone to misinterpretation. For instance,

The capitalist agenda contributes to what Heidegger referred to as the loss of any meaningful distinction between “nearness” and “distance” and contributes to a leveling down of human experience, which in turn spawns an indifference that renders human experience monotonous and one-dimensional. *It is within this space of one-dimensionality that a sense of community is lost unless local citizens take responsibilities for charting their own forms of social change.* (229, emphasis added)

One could misinterpret the sentence highlighted above as an injunction to pursue ethnocentric policies. Local communities should assert themselves, but only in the context of a wider

project which calls for solidarity with the global working-class. Finally, Kaltefleiter fails to discuss some key issues like how debt is used as a system of bondage by capitalists, or what remuneration of work would look like in a post-capitalist society.

Occupy, Resist, Produce! Lessons from Latin America's Occupied Factories by Marie Trigona looks at movements across Latin America to occupy factories and other places of work through direct action. Many of these occupations occurred in Argentina, spreading in the wake of the financial crisis of 2001. Trigona writes, "In Argentina, more than 13,000 people work in occupied factories and businesses, otherwise known as recuperated enterprises." (238). The occupation of BAUEN Hotel is discussed in great detail, as is the occupation of FASINPAT, a ceramic tile factory. Overall, Trigona does an excellent job highlighting successful experiences of worker control. Indeed, as Trigona writes, workplace occupations "provide a liberatory vision by sowing the seeds for a new society today," and by "challenging market systems of domination, and questioning the legitimacy of private property." (240)

Ernesto Aguilar's essay, Call It an Uprising: People of Color and the Third World Organize against Capitalism, is deficient in many respects. The essay does not have an underlying thesis; rather there is a topic of discussion: "the response of people of color to capitalism." (257) Moreover, Aguilar barely mentions classical anarchists (Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin), instead relying heavily on Marxists like István Mészáros, C.L.R James, Vijay Prashad, etc. Aguilar writes,

As a movement that aims for libertarian socialism, anarchism must account for the experiences of people of color because of their unique role in (sometimes forcibly) building modern capitalism, as well as maintaining it. Further, as a movement that aims to abolish all hierarchical authority, anarchism requires an analysis of colonialism, imperialism, and white supremacy in order to live up to its own aims. Unfortunately, in much anarchist theorizing and movement building this is notably absent. (258)

But how is "anarchism," an ideology which includes a wide-ranging set of ideas (from the Egoism/Individualism of Stirner to the Collectivism of Bakunin), inattentive or inimical to "colonialism, imperialism and white supremacy"? Aguilar doesn't provide a sufficient justification. Instead, Aguilar simply moves on to a different topic, globalization. Perhaps the only unifying theme in Aguilar's essay is the concept of "dignidad," the Spanish word for dignity. But dignity in relation to what? The workplace? Race? Class? Aguilar is correct that many people of color continue to fight against capitalism. But some of these people are also reactionaries who do not want anything to do with socialism. Furthermore, if states in the Global South such as Venezuela, Ecuador or India, challenge the global hegemony of the U.S., it would be irrational to interpret this as *the people* of those countries fighting against the imperialism of The West. Thus, if (former) heads of states like Rafael Correa challenge the legitimacy of Ecuador's debts or reject U.S. trade agreements, it does not follow that "people of color are challenging capitalism and oppression." (268)

Towards the end, Aguilar writes, "Radical white revolutionary tendencies such as First World socialism and anarchism have not adequately responded to the ways people of color and the Third World have taken on capitalism." He continues, "one of Marxism's most stunning failures, and a major obstacle to relevance beyond shorthand in the new millennium, has been a chronic inability to understand race and to dismiss racial oppression in favor of economism and reductionism.

Such critiques paradoxically reduce race and gender to personal identity and competitors to class, thus missing their material basis and the ways they intersect with class.” (270) One could argue that this is the case. However, it is hardly reasonable to suggest that all Marxists *uniformly* are economistic and reductionists. If anything, the shortcomings of some Marxists warrant a more integrated approach to issues of “race” and “class,” which Aguilar fails to offer.

Shannon’s essay, *Chopping Off the Invisible Hand: Internal Problems with Markets and Anarchist Theory, Strategy, and Vision*, also suffers from numerous drawbacks. Shannon argues that Proudhon’s Mutualism is essentially a market form of socialism. While one can certainly interpret Proudhon in this manner, Shannon does not provide textual evidence to establish this claim. Instead Shannon assumes that this is the case, and writes “Proudhon envisioned a world where these worker-owned and self-managed firms would compete in a stateless market—a socialist market that was regulated by a grand agro-industrial federation.” (276) Relying heavily on Kevin Carson’s erroneous presentation of Proudhon, Shannon argues that “expropriation of surplus-value cannot occur without state coercion.” (277–278) This statement is problematic on numerous grounds. On the one hand, capitalists *appropriate* surplus value produced by workers, not “expropriate.” On the other hand, it is not immediately clear that Proudhon uses the same conception of exploitation as Marx. As mentioned previously, I interpret Proudhon to be putting forward a property-theoretic critique of capitalism. By contrast, Marx presents a value-theoretic critique. For Proudhon, the value workers produce, *is their property*. When capitalists unjustly appropriate additional value produced by workers, Proudhon uses the term “collective force.” (67) Unfortunately, Shannon relies heavily on the secondary literature: Kevin Carson, Benjamin Tucker, Martin and Barrot. Shannon also unconvincingly argues, following Joseph Kay, that co-operatives “as a demand under capitalism” suffer from “self-exploitation.” (282) Shannon fails to make a convincing argument, however, as his earlier discussion of Proudhon’s conception of “exploitation” is based on Carson’s erroneous rendering of Proudhon.

In *Ditching Class: The Praxis of Anarchist Communist Economics*, Nappolos argues that the abolition of class exploitation should be the foundation of any future socialist economy. He argues that libertarian communist economics has the following four defining features: 1) A commitment to a future economy based on the praxis of the revolutionary working class and popular classes, 2) An economy based on the destruction of the wage system of labor, and a de-linking of the value of labor in production from the distribution of society’s wealth to its members, 3) Collective control and management of the entire economy by the direct control of workers and community members united in a council system of direct democracy, 4) The abolition of intermediary institutions of power governing the economy. (292) Nappolos discusses the concept of “prescriptive economics,” which he defines as “attempts to lay out a vision, in our case, of a post-capitalist economic system based on some core values,” (292) and “praxis”, which Paulo Freire defined as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.” (293) Nappolos writes, “Libertarian communist prescriptive economics has then been shaped by belief in the potential leadership of the working class and popular classes, and the commitment to prescriptive economics reflecting both a strategy for achieving such an economy and a theory which reflects our experiences in struggle.” (293)

Nappolos also discusses the experience of small and large scale Libertarian Communist projects, such as Hungary in 1956, Ukrainian communes under Nestor Makhno, Zapatistas, Argentinian factory seizures, Israeli Kibbutz, as well as anarcho-syndicalists during the Spanish Revolution. (294–296) He discusses the role of Gaston Leval, a Spanish anarchist who partici-

pated in revolutionary communes across Spain. Nappolos does a good job discussing the ways in which Spanish anarchists realized their vision of a future egalitarian society in the very methods they undertook to carry out their revolution. (297–300) With respect to how distribution of goods in a libertarian communist society might occur, Nappolos distinguishes between planned communist economies, and emergent economies. Whereas in planned economies the distribution of goods occurs through planned production, in an emergent economy, distribution “relies on intuitions and lessons from seeing society as an interdependent, living, and complex, organism-like body” (303) “The motivation for this position,” argues Nappolos, “arises from two sources. First there is a suspicion here about our ability to plan successfully, consciously, and explicitly a full economy; and secondly *there is both support for and historical antecedents of a dynamic and evolving form of self-planning in a communist society.*” (303)

Toward the end, however, Nappolos runs into trouble:

During the Hungarian and Spanish revolutions, people were able to take over the economy and in some instances in a very rapid period of time convert existing production for private profit into a collectivized economy for common use. This occurred initially outside of any single unified planning apparatus. Distribution evolved out of countless actions of individuals and groups which came to unify and reorganize to meet the demands presented by the wars and communities. This isn’t to say there wasn’t organization, but to say there is a difference between organization that is structurally and historically open and has the ability to produce emergent and evolving structure, versus extensively planned organization that is predictive and fairly static. There is little evidence to point to people living under such conditions guiding their activities by adhering to such programs. ***We can understand the activity of an economy as emergent out of problem-solving at countless levels, and producing stability once equilibrium can be reached.*** This is a problem that is unfortunately hidden from these discussions: ***how to obtain equilibrium in a revolutionary context is in many ways a more significant problem than that of abstract models of potential futures.*** (303, emphasis added)

What does it mean to reach an “equilibrium” in a “revolutionary context”? “Equilibrium” as a theoretical concept does not belong to classical economics (Smith, Ricardo, Marx; rather it has been popularized by neoclassical economists, but many proponents of classical political economy feel it is not very useful. In fact, I would argue that it is obscurantist, since it misrepresents relations of exploitation based on one’s class position. How can there be an “equilibrium,” “balance” or “stability” with respect to class exploitation? Moreover, in his “critique of the wage system” Nappolos misinterprets the fundamental issue with wage-labor. While he is correct that communists reject wage-labor, the issue is not unfair remuneration for work done, i.e. the problem is not is the magnitude of wages \$100/hour vs \$1/hour. Rather, it is a matter of ending the hierarchical and exploitative arrangement between bosses and workers. Under capitalism, labor-power is commodified and treated as private property. Capitalists have a monopoly on deriving use-value from labor-power by virtue of their class position, workers cannot do the same. Workers must sell their labor-power for the sake of their livelihood. Capitalists, on the other hand, use the labor-power of workers to make profits, thereby further enriching themselves. The objective is to eliminate this asymmetry in one’s relationship to private property. Furthermore, Nappolos fails

to discuss workers' control of the means of production. Decision-making in large capitalist firms is highly centralized, falling within the purview of the board of directors. These decisions are then handed down to subordinates, who enjoy some degree of independence, but nevertheless are compelled to follow directives from above. Will these hierarchical and authoritarian social relationships exist in a Libertarian Communist society?

Wayne Price's essay, *The Anarchist Method: An Experimental Approach to Post-Capitalist Economies*, addresses the question of what a libertarian socialist economy might look like, and what method to pursue in order to realize this objective. Price distinguishes the "anarchist method" from the *Utopian-Moral* approach – exemplified by Saint-Simon, Robert Owen, Fourier, Cabet, Proudhon – to the *Marxist-Determinist* approach, exemplified by Marx and Engels. Price classifies Parecon ("participatory economics") as a part of the Utopian-Moral approach. Price argues that the advantages of utopian models is that "[thinkers] start with a set of moral values by which the present society may be condemned", then move on to "envision social institutions which could embody these values." (313) In other words, Utopian-Moral methods such as Parecon "offer a yardstick by which to judge potential economies, as well as real ones, so that radicals do not claim to be for freedom but accept some totalitarian monstrosity." (313) However, with the exception of Parecon, Price argues that "historic utopian models were very undemocratic in structure." (314) Moreover, Price argues, "there is a problem in that the utopian approach starts from values rather than from an analysis of how capitalist society functions", that is, "There is really no necessary connection between any particular model and the dynamics of capitalism (besides the moral critique)." (314) Furthermore, "The visions of the possible futures do not point to any strategies for getting to these futures"; "A program that does not say whether to be revolutionary or reformist is not much of a guide to action." (314)

Price contrasts the Utopian-moral method to the Marxist-Determinist approach, as expounded by Marx and Engels. For the "original Marxists," Price argues, it was "necessary to analyze how capitalism was developing, including its main drive mechanism: the capital-labor relationship in production." (314) The working-class revolution "provided the basis of a strategy" and "indicated the emergence of a new society out of that revolution." (314) For Marx and Engels, Price argues, the nature of this new society was only mentioned in passing remarks, such as a few paragraphs in Marx's "Critique of the Gotha Program." (314) For instance, Marx argued that workers would initially be paid with "labor credits" and later be provided with goods freely upon need. (315) "The goal of Marx and Engels," writes Price, "was not to implement a new social system." Rather, "It was to see that the working class overthrew the capitalist class and took power for itself. Once this happened, the historical process would take care of further social development." (315) The advantage of the Marxist-Determinist method for Price is that it is grounded in economic theory. He writes, "It has an analysis of what forces are moving in the direction of a new society and what ones are blocking them." Furthermore, he writes, "It leads to a strategy that identifies a specific change agent (the working class, leading other oppressed groups)." (315) On the other hand, Price argues, the Marxist-Determinist method "has no moral standard." He writes,

So when Marxist-led revolutions produce state-capitalist totalitarianisms that murder tens of millions of workers and peasants, very many Marxists support this as the result of the historical process which has created "actually existing socialism." Marx and Engels would undoubtedly have been horrified by what developed in the Soviet Union and other so-called communist countries. But a method without a moral standard made it difficult for Marxists to not support these states. (315)

Price contrasts both of these approaches with the “anarchist method,” which, he writes, “starts from the doubt that every region and national culture will choose the same version of libertarian socialist society.” (316) As Malatesta writes, there will not be ‘one solution’, rather “a thousand different and changing solutions in the same way as social existence is different and varied in time and space.” (316) Nevertheless, solutions tried must be non-exploitative and non-oppressive. In other words, “they must ‘prevent the constitution and consolidation of new privilege’ and ‘leave the way open for future improvements.’” (317) Differing models of post-capitalist societies, however, raises a different set of issues. One problem which Price identifies is *the method of coordination in the post-capitalist economy*. How will resources be distributed across the economy? Price points to three proposals: a market, central-planning, and some sort of non-centralized planning. (318) “In a pluralist, experimental, post-capitalist world” writes Price, “different regions might experiment with different types of economic coordination.” (319) Another issue identified by Price, is *the size of the economic unit*. Price writes,

As internationalists, we are aware that the world is being knit together by imperialist globalization. At the same time we know that much of this worldwide centralization is not due to technical needs but to the need of capitalists to control natural resources, to dominate world markets, and to exploit the poorest workers in order to make the biggest profits. To end the rule of states and bureaucracies, anarchists want *as much as possible* of local, face-to-face democracy. This requires a degree of economic decentralization. Indeed, any sort of economic planning would be easier, and easier to make democratic, the smaller the units. Finally it would also be easier to keep production and consumption in balance with nature, the smaller the units are. (319)

Another issue discussed by Price, is that of *technology*. “Just as is true of economic institutions,” writes Price, “productive technology would have to be flexible, pluralistic, and experimental.” (320) “Machinery and the methodology of production have been organized by the processes of capitalism (and militarism) to serve its interests. Technology would have to be completely reorganized and redeveloped over time to meet the needs of a new society.” (320) Another key question is *reward for work*. “In a fully communist society,” writes Price, “work would be done only for the pleasure of doing it, or because people feel a duty, or because of social pressure.” Price continues, “consumption will be a right, based only on human need and unrelated to effort.” (321) The rest of the essay discusses a “transitional society.” (322–323) As Price notes, the notion of a ‘transitional society’ has been used to justify all sorts of horrors for Stalinist totalitarian dictatorships. (323) As Price writes, “This is not what Bakunin, or even Marx, had in mind. It shows the need for a vision with moral values to judge a new society.” He continues, “Neither Marx nor Bakunin/Guillaume proposed a mechanism for going from a transitional phase to full communism. One possibility might be to use the idea of a split economy (a basic communism and a non-basic needs sector). As productivity grows, the free communist sector might be deliberately expanded, until it gradually includes all (or most) of the economy.” (323)

There are numerous issues with Price’s essay. First, Price fails to distinguish a capitalist system from a non-capitalist system. What is a “capitalist” system? (See my critique of the essay *Escaping Capitalist Hegemony* by Wright and Williams above.) Furthermore, as someone who identifies as an anarchist, I am not in agreement with Marx’s conception of “the first phase of a communist society.” Marx’s position on the legitimacy of the state has always been ambiguous. Can a society

in which harmful instrumentalization of the state persists be characterized as “communist”? I and many other anarchists would say no. Furthermore, it is necessary to draw a distinction between “the first phase of a communist society” vs a “transitional society,” which are not the same thing. The notion of a “transitional society” is in many ways a Leninist concept, which I reject. In my reading of Marx, I have not come across any discussion of a “transitional society,” but rather a direct transition from capitalism to socialism via a proletarian revolution. Marxists have, in my view, erroneously interpreted Marx as a proponent of a so-called “transitional society.” The essential point is that many people on the left find the concept of an intermediate “transitional society” to be highly objectionable. We should strive for a socialist society, not a “transitional society.”

The final essay by Albert, *Porous Borders of Anarchist Vision and Strategy*, discusses participatory economics, or “Parecon,” which Albert helped develop in tandem with Robin Hahnel. Albert argues an anarchist society would forbid the systematic privileging of some people materially or socially over others. He writes, “in an anarchist society citizens should freely fulfill themselves without being systematically subordinate to or systematically superior to other citizens. We should each benefit from the same structural opportunities. We should each gain from the gains others enjoy.” (327) Albert writes, while an anarchist society should rule certain institutions out, freedom to own slaves, or the freedom to hire wage-slaves, it should also rule in social components deemed anarchistic. According to Albert, a positive institutional vision would allow people to “have the information, circumstances, inclinations, opportunity, and even the responsibility to creatively and knowledgeably self-manage their own situations.” (329) Albert argues that the first value which a future anarchist economy should embody is that “people should have a say in decisions proportionate to the degree those decisions affect them.” (329) Second, “citizens should have a claim on society’s economic product that increases if they do socially valued work longer, more intensely, or under worse conditions.” (330) Third, “people should care about one another’s well being rather than each of us trampling the rest or at the least turning the other cheek to others’ difficulties.” (330) Fourth, “people should have a wide range of options available and that when making choices, diverse paths forward should be kept available or experimented with.” (330) The fifth and sixth values, are that

humans and the rest of the environment ultimately constitute an entwined community in which humans have to take responsibility not only for the impact of our choices on ourselves but also on the rest of nature’s domain – and, in turn, efficiency is the related idea that economic activity should produce what people seek for fulfillment and development without wasting assets we value, while furthering self-management, equity, solidarity, diversity, and husbandry. (330)

Albert argues that an anarchist economic vision should propose specific institutions because worthy economic values are essential but are not convincing by themselves. In other words, people’s skepticism cannot solely be dispelled by asserting worthy values; we must also “describe institutions consistent with those preferred values.” Furthermore, Albert argues, “values alone do not provide needed orientation for strategy and tactics.” He writes, “Institutional insights that move us toward effective strategic choices need to be shared and built upon, rather than each actor having to start over repeatedly as if no one had traveled similar ground before.” Thus, “parecon proposes a minimalist institutional vision for establishing economic conditions that

will permit future people to self manage their own economic lives while also being sufficient to overcome cynicism and inform strategy.” (331) A potential minimalist structure for addressing equitable remuneration and work apportionment are Balanced Job Complexes.

Moreover, Parecon thinks that economic allocation should occur according to participatory planning, that is, “cooperative negotiation of economic inputs and outputs by nested, self-managing workers’ and consumers’ councils.” (336) Albert rejects a pluralist approach, that is, a society where economic allocation is based on a mixture of markets, central-planning and participatory planning, since “If there are two, three, or more different methods for allocating items, then the same items will have different and conflicting relative prices depending which method of allocation is consulted, and there will also be different and conflicting logic and associated implications for behavior operating as well, and the contradictions will more often than not disrupt viable operations.” (335) Second, “if we self-consciously, or even just inadvertently, include either markets or central planning or any combination of the two as our means of allocation in a future economy, these structures will subvert our other libertarian values and aspirations, just like including corporate divisions of labor would subvert our agendas, or including top-down rule would subvert our agendas, or including remuneration for property would subvert our agendas.” Thus, an anarchist vision, according to Albert, should reject market and centrally planned allocation.

On the question of an “Anarchist Strategy,” Albert supports democratic centralism as an organizational principle, but only as a means of facilitating the creation of participatory communes and fostering popular power. Under complicated circumstances, such as in the “early stages of a transition process seeking self-management throughout society” or a situation where a country is in a massive project to bring about structural transformation, Albert argues that democratic centralism could be justified. (340–342) Albert concludes by addressing the necessity to overcome “not only capitalist, but also coordinator mentalities and structures in our own projects and in society writ large.” (343) It is crucial to recognize, Albert writes, that “there is no single virtuous or effective anarchist strategy such that one size fits all.”

On balance, *Accumulation* does a satisfactory job of providing non-Marxist socialist perspectives on important issues which the left should be concerned with. However, many of the essays rely heavily on what Marxists have to say, or use other people’s erroneous depictions of classical anarchists. Marie Trigona’s essay was my favorite out of the entire collection.

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From Anarcho-Syndicalist Review #81, Winter 2021

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