The New Anarchism in Britain and the US

Towards a richer understanding of post-war anarchist thought

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Contents

Abstract

This article challenges the assumption that the post-war era was relatively insignificant in the development of anarchist thought. In fact, many of the most important figures within the post-war anarchist milieu in Britain and the US were concerned with questions of theory as well as practice, and their thought comprises a distinct and coherent ideological configuration of anarchism. In adapting anarchism to the post-war political context, this 'New Anarchism' revised key concepts of classical anarchism like 'revolution' and 'utopia', while placing stronger emphasis on concepts like 'education' and 'planning'. The New Anarchists were more 'practical' than their predecessors, as Ruth Kinna has noted—they looked for liberatory potential within the status quo, they eschewed sectarianism and they embraced piecemeal change. But the New Anarchists shared more than just practicality—they shared an innovative vision of anarchism with potential relevance to the present day. This article provides an account of the historical context that gave rise to the New Anarchism, develops an outline of the New Anarchism's main features and proposes some reasons as to why the New Anarchism has been neglected.

Introduction

Relative to other eras of anarchist thought, post-Second World War anarchist thought has been neglected as a subject for sustained scholarly attention. This is, in part, the consequence of a failure to recognize its very existence. Major figures in contemporary anarchist scholarship like Todd May have concluded that there is no coherent tradition of anarchist thinking between the collapse of 'classical' anarchism (usually dated to the suppression of the Spanish anarchists in 1937) and the emergence in the last few decades of what May terms a 'third wave' of anarchist thought.[1] Instead, what one finds in the middle decades of the 20th century are anarchist 'inflections' within social and cultural movements that were not explicitly anarchist, and an anarchist 'sensibility' not directly informed by the anarchist tradition itself. In other words, where we might expect to discover a second 'wave' of anarchist thought, we find at best merely some churning of the waters. The darlings of the era, from the perspective of much of contemporary anarchist studies, are the Situationists, whose aesthetic radicalism is viewed as prefiguring 'postanarchist' efforts to break with Enlightenment humanism and its conception of the 'subject'.[2] This retrospective assessment finds in post-war anarchist thought little to salvage, and it has helped to create the sharp dichotomy between 'classical' and 'contemporary' anarchism evident in much recent literature on the tradition.[3]

Yet, some recent scholarship has begun to make the case that a distinct strain of anarchist thought emerged during these years.[4] This scholarship has built off of a growing number of

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[1] See May's introduction to N.J. Jun and S. Wahl (Eds), *New Perspectives on Anarchism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), p. 3.

[2] See S. Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

[3] For a critique of this dichotomy, See J. Cohn and S. Wilbur, 'What's wrong with postanarchism?' *Theory and Politics* (2003), available at http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/jesse-cohn-and-shawn-wilbur-what-s-wrong-with-postanarchism

[4] For post-war British anarchism, see D. Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow: Left-Libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006); C. Honeywell, *A British Anarchist Tradition: Herbert Read, Alex Comfort and Colin Ward* (New York: Continuum, 2011). On post-war

studies of post-war anarchists as individuals,[5] highlighting the common features of their political outlooks and even arguing that they gave rise to a new anarchist 'tradition'. In this article, I seek to contribute to this literature by arguing that a 'New Anarchism' did in fact emerge out of the context of the Second World War and the social and political possibilities that followed in its wake.[6] This New Anarchism was not just a matter of 'sensibility', but a product of conscious theorizing undertaken by intellectuals working explicitly within the anarchist tradition. Furthermore, as existing studies have hinted at but failed to explore in any detail, this New Anarchism was an Anglo-American phenomenon, a phenomenon that encompassed, I will argue, every significant anarchist thinker in Britain and the US who rose to prominence during the Second World War and the first few decades thereafter.[7] The similarities were not coincidental: these thinkers

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American anarchism, see A. Cornell, 'A New Anarchism emerges, 1940–1954', *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, 5(1) (2011), pp. 105–132.

[5] For examples of individual studies of Herbert Read, see J. King, *The Last Modern: A Life of Herbert Read* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990); D. Goodway (Ed.), *Herbert Read Reassessed* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998); M. Paraskos (Ed.), *Rereading Read: New Views on Herbert Read* (London: Freedom Press, 2008); G. Woodcock, *Herbert Read: The Stream and the Source* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2008); and the recent film *To Hell with Culture: A Film about Herbert Read* (dir. H. Wahl, 2014). On Alex Comfort, see A. Salmon, *Alex Comfort* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1978). On Colin Ward, see S. White, 'Making anarchism respectable? The social philosophy of Colin Ward', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 12(1) (2007), pp. 11–28; Damien F. White and Chris Wilbert's introduction to D.F. White and C. Wilbert (Eds), *Autonomy, Solidarity, Possibility: The Colin Ward Reader* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2011); C. Levy (Ed.), *Colin Ward: Life, Times, and Thought* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2013); C. Burke and K. Jones (Eds), *Education, Childhood and Anarchism: Talking Colin Ward* (London: Routledge, 2014). On George Woodcock, see G. Fetherling, *The Gentle Anarchist: A Life of George Woodcock* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1998). On Paul Goodman, see K. Widmer, *Paul Goodman* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1980); P. Parisi (Ed.), *Artist of the Actual: Essays on Paul Goodman* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1986); T. Stoehr, *Here, Now, Next: Paul Goodman and the Origins of Gestalt Therapy* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1994); C. Honeywell, 'Paul Goodman: finding an audience for anarchism in twentieth-century America', *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, 5(2) (2011), pp. 1–33; J. Levine, 'Unacceptable: recovering Paul Goodman', *Boston Review* (2014), available at http://bostonreview.net/books-ideas/unacceptable; and the film *Paul Goodman Changed My Life* (dir. J. Lee, 2011). On Murray Bookchin, see J. Biehl, 'Introduction' to J. Biehl (Ed.), *The Murray Bookchin Reader* (London: Cassell, 1997); J. Biehl with M. Bookchin, *The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1998); D.F. White, *Bookchin: A Critical Appraisal* (London: Pluto Press, 2008). Additionally, a biography of Bookchin by Janet Biehl is forthcoming from Oxford University Press. On Noam Chomsky, see G. Woodcock, 'Chomsky's anarchism', *Freedom*, 35(45) (1974), pp. 4–5; J. Cohen and J. Rogers, 'Knowledge, morality and hope: the social thought of Noam Chomsky', *New Left Review*, 187 (1991), pp. 5–27; M. Rai, *Chomsky's Politics* (New York: Verso, 1995); R.F. Barsky, *Noam Chomsky: A Life of Dissent* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998); A. Edgley, *The Social and Political Thought of Noam Chomsky* (London: Routledge, 2000); J. Moore, 'Prophets of the new world: Noam Chomsky, Murray Bookchin, and Fredy Perlman', *Social Anarchism*, 20 (2006), available at http://www.socialanarchism.org/mod/magazine/display/23/#foot2; A. Price, *Recovering Bookchin: Social Ecology and the Crises of Our Time* (Porsgrunn, Norway: New Compass Press, 2012); and the film *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media* (dir. M. Achbar and P. Wintonick, 1992).

[6] Admittedly, the use of the phrase 'New Anarchism' poses some difficulties, for it has been applied in a variety of contradictory ways: some have used it simply to refer to the most recent crop of anarchist thinkers, while Robert Graham has used it in his documentary history of anarchism to capture all anarchist thought since 1939 and Paul McLaughlin has used it more narrowly to signify a 'non-dogmatic and open-ended form of anarchism inspired by Malatesta'. P. McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority: A Philosophical Introduction to Classical Anarchism* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), p. 167.

[7] There is some indication that the New Anarchism was a phenomenon that extended beyond the Anglo-American context, although the possibility cannot be explored here. See R. Graham (Ed.), *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Vol. 2 (The Emergence of the New Anarchism)* (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 2009) for some suggestive examples. Andrew Cornell also mentions exchanges between David Thoreau Wieck's *Resistance* and the French and Italian anarchists who published *Noir et Rouge* and *Volontá*, respectively. See Cornell, 'A New Anarchism emerges, 1940–1954', *op. cit.*, Ref. 4, pp. 130–131.

drew from common influences both within the anarchist tradition and without, aside from being aware of—and generally sympathetic to—one another's work.

The New Anarchism I will describe overlaps roughly with what Ruth Kinna has termed 'practical' anarchism, incorporating all of the figures she includes under that definition (Herbert Read, George Woodcock, Colin Ward and Paul Goodman), but also a number of others, including—most controversially—*prima facie* hard cases like Noam Chomsky and Murray Bookchin. However, the anarchist thinkers I will examine shared more than simply a 'practical' or pragmatic attitude towards social change. Indeed, it is useful to think of them as collectively giving rise to an innovative, coherent and—by the standards of the tradition, anyway—comprehensive vision of anarchism, a vision that represents an ideological configuration distinct from both 'classical' and 'contemporary' anarchism. Pinpointing this New Anarchism is important not only because it gives us a more complete picture of anarchism as a theoretical tradition, but also because it points to an alternative to both 'classical' and 'contemporary' approaches with potential relevance to the present-day political scene. In this article, I attempt to provide an account of the New Anarchism by placing it in historical context, outlining its main features and proposing some reasons as to why it has been neglected.

The New Anarchism in historical context

There were a number of good reasons why anarchism might have evolved in a more practical direction after the Second World War. First, the models of revolution proposed by the insurrectionary and the anarcho-syndicalist wings of the movement were dealt a seemingly definitive blow with the suppression of the Spanish anarchists in 1937. Initially, the Spanish anarchists had succeeded where their predecessors had failed: they had managed to liberate substantial pieces of territory from state control and had commenced the restructuring of society along anarchist lines through the collectivization of industry and agriculture. When the revolution they tried to spearhead was prematurely snuffed out, it spelt the end of the illusion that armed insurrection and mass direct action would more-or-less spontaneously usher in an anarchist society. With the defeat of the Spanish anarchists, the international anarchist movement was in shambles: what had initially seemed like its renaissance took on the appearance of its epilogue, as anarchism was 'deprived', in Daniel Guérin's words, 'of its only foothold in the world'.[8] The triumph of the combined forces of fascism effectively wiped out what remained of the movement on the Continent. In Britain and the US, whose anarchist movements were small to begin with, only a remnant survived through the war years.

Those who retained their anarchist sympathies into the 1940s faced difficult choices about where to direct their political energies. The Spanish Civil War had offered an opportunity to fight for the anarchist movement and against fascism simultaneously. The political dynamics of the Second World War were more complex. Without an anarchist movement to fight for, and with the world's leading capitalist powers now in the vanguard of the struggle against fascism, even the most radical had to rethink their allegiances. Some of anarchism's leading lights—like the German anarcho-syndicalist Rudolf Rocker, who had criticized Peter Kropotkin for supporting the First World War—argued that the best way to preserve libertarian values under the circum-

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[8] D. Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), p. 144.

stances was to support the Allies.[9] Even some of those who disagreed and adopted a 'third camp' position during the war, like the budding anarchist Dwight Macdonald, gravitated afterwards towards the logic of choosing the lesser evil, as international battle lines were redrawn between the 'West'—American-style capitalism—and the 'East'—Soviet-style communism. In opting for the 'West' in a 1952 article, Macdonald explicitly attributed his choice to the absence of a revolutionary alternative: 'The Third Camp of the masses just doesn't exist any more, [sic] and so Lenin's "revolutionary defeatism" now becomes simply defeatism: it helps the enemy win and that's all'.[10] It was this kind of rationalization that made it necessary for the New Anarchists to demonstrate that the choice between West and East was a false one, and that even in the absence of a clear revolutionary agent it was possible to stake out an independent position that eschewed Cold War dichotomies.

Further complicating the position of anarchists after the war was the fact that the state—in Britain and the US, at least—had emerged from the conflict stronger than ever before. The Allies had responded to the aggression of the German state with their own massive mobilization of centralized power, countering Germany's malevolent statism not with *anti*-statism but rather *benevolent* statism—that is, the centralization of power and authority in the state in the service of 'freedom' and 'democracy', at least according to their own rhetoric. Their victory helped to validate the idea that a hulking state bureaucracy overseen by expert elites could be put to work on behalf of the common good. The public at large, primed by post-war triumphalism and optimism, was unusually ready to accept the idea that such a state could play a peacetime role as well. In Britain, the newly elected Labour government capitalized on this mood after the war by nationalizing a number of key industries and establishing the bedrock of post-war social policy. In the US, the esteem enjoyed by the government after the war did not so much enable new reforms as solidify existing ones, shoring up the legacy of the New Deal by—for the most part—protecting it from conservative backlash.[11] In both countries, it was now considered legitimate for the government to use its strength to corral market forces, run complex enterprises, plan social development and distribute the fruits of the capitalist economy more equitably.

Related to the triumph of what the Labour politician Anthony Crosland described as 'statism'[12] was the fact that Britain and the US were settling into a 'consensus', a kind of political stalemate that found the major parties in agreement about the general outline of public policy (although they of course disagreed about who could best implement it). The political complacency of everyday people, fostered by burgeoning economic affluence and the fears provoked by the Cold War, contributed to this 'consensus' as well. Popular participation in political affairs was officially discouraged by elites and by the leading political thinkers of the day, who emphasized the efficiency of placing decision-making in the hands of experts, and associated an overly mobilized populace with totalitarianism. From the standpoint of the consensual mainstream, any political perspective that prescribed qualitative change was seen as either irrelevant or threatening.

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[9] See W.O. Reichert, *Partisans of Freedom: A Study in American Anarchism* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1976), p. 484.

[10] D. Macdonald, 'I choose the west' in *The Responsibility of Peoples, and Other Essays in Political Criticism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974), p. 121.

[11] One notable exception was the Taft–Hartley Act, passed despite President Truman's veto in 1947. The Act was a blatant attempt to weaken the pro-labor Wagner Act of 1935 and undermine the influence of radicals within the labour movement.

[12] In fairness, he later regretted the term. See the discussion in *The Future of Socialism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1956), p. 34.

For all of these reasons, those who continued to think of themselves as anarchists faced a post-war world that had little place for them. It should be stressed, however, that not all anarchists came to the conclusion that this social and political context called for new ideas and new tactics. Some of those associated with the anarchist movement were, as Albert Meltzer put it, eager to get 'back in the old routine' after the war.[13] For Meltzer, this meant resuming a combination of domestic industrial agitation and support for revolutionaries internationally, particularly those exiled from Spain after Franco's ascendance to power. Meltzer, along with his eventual collaborator Stuart Christie, was probably the best example within the British context of what has been called the 'class struggle' strain of post-war anarchism.[14] Anarchists like Meltzer and Christie continued to focus on working-class industrial organization in the belief that 'only productive classes can be libertarian', and carried over from the pre-war era an avowedly revolutionary, combative and uncompromising attitude towards mainstream political institutions.[15]

Others concluded that anarchists needed to adopt a different approach after the war. Among them were the figures that Ruth Kinna has labelled 'practical' anarchists. Practical anarchists, she argues, rejected the idea that social change would come about through 'a final rupture with the state in the form of civil war or insurrection'. They did not believe in the imminent realization of an anarchist utopia. This is not to say that they dispensed with the idea of revolution entirely: rather, '[t]he leading insight of practical anarchism', according to Kinna, 'is that revolution can be achieved by evolutionary means'. Practical anarchists sought 'to bring anarchism into everyday life' and to spotlight the ways in which what Colin Ward called 'anarchy in action' was already present in everyday relationships and social organization.[16]

Instead of engaging in revolutionary agitation, practical anarchists turned their attention towards fostering self-determination at the grass-roots level and creating 'a more participatory, less bureaucratic, more decentralized and open society'.[17] They were interested in education as a means of fostering the psychological conditions of popular empowerment, and the democratization of planning as a means of involving the public in decision-making. Practical anarchists envisioned anarchist enterprises of various kinds cropping up within the status quo, as people experimented directly with alternative ways of living. As George Woodcock put it, in a passage quoted by Kinna: 'Instead of preparing for an apocalyptic revolution, contemporary anarchists tend to be concerned far more with trying to create, in society as it is, the infrastructure of a better and freer society'.[18] One consequence of the pragmatic orientation of practical anarchists is that, as Paul Goodman and Colin Ward acknowledged, 'there is an inherent conservatism in their strategy'. In commenting on this 'conservatism', Kinna cautions that although it 'is probably right that practical anarchism is more attractive to more people than strategies that promise revolution and civil war, it runs the risk of encouraging would-be anarchists to judge "what should be" by the standards of "what is"'.[19]

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[13] A. Meltzer, *I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels: Sixty Years of Commonplace Life and Anarchist Agitation* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1996), p. 121.

[14] See the discussion in L. van der Walt and M. Schmidt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009).

[15] S. Christie and A. Meltzer, *The Floodgates of Anarchy* (London: Sphere Books, 1970), p. 28.

[16] R. Kinna, *Anarchism: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), p. 142.

[17] Kinna, *ibid.*, p. 143.

[18] G. Woodcock quoted in Kinna, *ibid.*, p. 143.

[19] Kinna, *ibid.*, p. 147.

Kinna's discussion of practical anarchism is a useful starting point in characterizing post-war anarchist thought. In what follows, I will build off of her exposition, although I will attempt to develop a conceptually richer account that fills out some of her main points and adds others. My ultimate argument, however, is more ambitious than Kinna's. I will attempt to show, first, that the tendencies Kinna has wrapped up in the term 'practical anarchism' can be discerned in a wider range of thinkers than the ones she invokes, and were indeed the predominant tendencies in post-war British and American anarchist thought. Second, I hope to demonstrate that these tendencies, far from being reducible merely to greater practicality, were part of an epochal shift in anarchist thinking. I argue, in short, that what developed during and after the Second World War was a genuinely *New* Anarchism, by which I mean a novel configuration of the concepts traditionally grouped under the heading of anarchism.

To be clear, this is not to suggest that post-war *anarchism*—broadly conceived—was always in keeping with the main thrust of post-war anarchist *thought*.[20] In attempting to distinguish one from the other, I will focus mainly on those anarchists who consciously engaged in what they described—or what was plausibly described by others—as anarchist 'theory'. It would also be possible to describe the New Anarchism as a *historical* phenomenon, in which case it would be more inclusive than my subject here and, by extension, less coherent conceptually.[21] Because I am describing the New Anarchism as an ideological rather than a historical phenomenon, I do not consider every articulation of anarchism in the post-war era. Neither, however, do I limit my analysis to the kinds of 'high-quality' accounts that one might expect from political philosophers (in part because this would make for slim pickings indeed).[22] Rather, I focus on what I deem to be the higher-quality articulations put forward by those who were distinguished by their efforts to explicate their political views in an extended and roughly systematic manner.

An outline of the New Anarchism

There is ample evidence that, as Kinna suggests, post-war anarchist thinkers in Britain and the US found it necessary to rethink the concept of revolution. With the defeat of the Spanish anarchists and the consolidation of state power after the war, the futility of traditional approaches to revolution was, as discussed above, freshly apparent to post-war anarchists. Herbert Read called on anarchists to admit that an anarchist society was 'in no sense immediately realizable'.[23] Any plausible anarchist position would have to reject what George Woodcock called 'revolutionary pie-in-the-sky', according to which social liberation was 'indefinitely postponed until the millennial day of reckoning'.[24] Post-war anarchists were coming to the conclusion, as Woodcock wrote

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[20] It should be said, to avoid confusion, that New Anarchist thought cannot, strictly speaking, be confined to the post-war years. It began to develop during and even before the war. Although I will use 'postwar anarchist thought' more or less synonymously with 'New Anarchism', a better term—were it not so cumbersome—would be 'mid-20th century anarchist thought'.

[21] For an excellent treatment of the New Anarchism as a historical phenomenon, see the aforementioned article by Cornell, 'A New Anarchism emerges', *op. cit.*, Ref. 4.

[22] I agree with Michael Freeden, in other words, that a focus on 'high-quality thinkers' is 'both restrictive and elitist from the viewpoint of ideological analysis'. See *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 119.

[23] H. Read, *A Coat of Many Colours* (New York: Horizon Press, 1956), p. 12.

[24] G. Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1962), p. 471.

elsewhere, that 'it was futile to imagine that a new society would emerge in its fullness at the time of revolution like Minerva stepping fully armed from the head of Jupiter'.[25] To persist in revolutionary fantasies was not only unconstructive and unrealistic, but also dangerous: Noam Chomsky argued that it was 'insidious' to call for revolution 'at a time when not even the germs of new institutions exist, let alone the moral and political consciousness that could lead to a basic modification of social life'.[26]

In most cases, however, these criticisms of the traditional idea of revolution represented not an abandonment of the concept, but an alternate decontestation of the concept.[27] Anarchists like David Thoreau Wieck argued that what was needed was a less 'romantic' understanding of revolution, one that did not rely so heavily on mass uprisings and the precipitous overthrow of the existing order. One did not, Wieck maintained, have to sacrifice the 'ultimate goals' of revolution to take a more realistic view of how social change was likely to come about.[28] Even the most unreformed revolutionary among post-war anarchist thinkers, Murray Bookchin, accepted that revolution would be a temporally elongated phenomenon rather than a catalytic event resulting in expeditious and large-scale change. He described revolutionary social change as 'a *process*, an admittedly long development in which the existing institutions and traditions of freedom are slowly enlarged and expanded'.[29] Unlike most of his contemporaries, Bookchin left room for potential revolutionary fireworks in the form of clashes between nation-states jealous of their territory and revolutionaries forced to defend their gains on the local level against backlash. But rather than forming the centrepiece of Bookchin's understanding of revolution, such hypothetical struggles were incidental to the painstaking work of building up autonomous local institutions and regional confederations of free municipalities.

For some post-war anarchists, it was but a short step from arguing that revolution would be a lengthy process to arguing that it would be a permanent one. Most post-war anarchist thinkers assumed that revolution, conceived as a process, did not have a climactic endpoint. Alex Comfort, for example, argued that revolution 'is not a single act, it is an unending process based upon civil disobedience'.[30] Nicolas Walter, similarly, described the 'libertarian revolution' as 'permanent protest, permanent disobedience'.[31] The language of 'disobedience' shared by Comfort and Walter reflected their difficulty in envisioning a future in which the individual was not actively resisting oppressive institutions. One reason for this difficulty was the feeling that under modern conditions individuals had to adopt a defensive posture towards society no less than the state, implying that even were the state to be eliminated, struggle of some sort would still be necessary.[32]

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[25] G. Woodcock in P. Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, ed. G. Woodcock (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1983), p. 198.

[26] N. Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 17.

[27] For the 'decontestation' of concepts, see Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 22, chap. 2.

[28] D. Wieck, 'From politics to social revolution', *Resistance*, 12(1) (1954), available at https://robertgraham.wordpress.com/2011/07/05/from-politics-to-social-revolution-david-wieck-and-the-new-anarchism/

[29] M. Bookchin, *From Urbanization to Cities* (London: Cassell, 1996), p. 245.

[30] A. Comfort, *Writings against Power & Death*, ed. D. Goodway (London: Freedom Press, 1994), p. 69.

[31] N. Walter, *Damned Fools in Utopia: And Other Writings on Anarchism and War Resistance*, ed. D. Goodway (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2011), p. 40.

[32] Comfort's wartime pamphlets found him at his most pessimistic in this respect: 'Society', he wrote, 'is rooted today in obedience, conformity, conscription, and the stage has been reached at which, in order to live, you have to be an enemy of society'. Comfort, *Writings against Power & Death*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 30, p. 39.

Another route to similar conclusions about the need to replace millennial revolutionary expectancy with an attitude of perpetual vigilance and resistance was through the refashioning of anarchism's negative task as opposition to domination in all of its forms. By making the phenomenon of domination anarchism's central target, and by tracing that phenomenon into realms far beyond the political and economic spheres, post-war anarchists expanded their aims to such an extent that it became hard to envisage a definitive end to revolutionary struggle. Although the widening of anarchism's critical focus beyond the comparatively narrow, traditional concern with the power of the state and private capital was evident as early as the 1940s[33] and could be found across the spectrum of post-war anarchist thought, Murray Bookchin did more than any other post-war anarchist thinker to make domination as such a conscious object of criticism. Bookchin argued that by aligning itself against domination anarchism would escape the increasingly evident obsolescence of class-based Marxist analyses and would be able to bring theoretical and political coherence to the 'new social movements' of the post-war era. The responsibility of the anarchist, according to Bookchin, was to do systematically what these movements were already doing in a targeted way: exposing and dismantling previously underappreciated social hierarchies—like those premised on age, race and gender—and the relations of domination they made possible.

In contrast to most other post-war anarchists, Bookchin held out the possibility that a sufficiently comprehensive revolution could sweep these hierarchies away in their entirety, ushering in 'a totally new, non-hierarchical society in which the domination of nature by man, of woman by man, and of society by the state is completely abolished—technologically, institutionally, culturally, and in the very rationality and sensibilities of the individual'.[34] But Bookchin explicitly, and unabashedly, characterized this as a utopian endeavour, offering his vision of a domination-free society less as a practical programme and more as a source of inspiration and aspiration to inform the 'admittedly long' process of revolution. Consequently, his perspective is not irreconcilable with the soberer assessments of post-war anarchists like Noam Chomsky who stressed that the project of contesting domination had to be seen as an open-ended enterprise. Chomsky, contrary to his undeserved reputation as a stubborn anarcho-syndicalist preoccupied with class, has characterized the anarchist agenda in terms just as broad as Bookchin's, as an effort 'to abolish all forms of domination and hierarchy in every aspect of social and personal life'. What distinguishes him from Bookchin is his frankness in concluding that the pursuit of such an ambitious goal will require 'an unending struggle, since progress in achieving a more just society will lead to new insight and understanding of forms of oppression that may be concealed in traditional practice and consciousness'.[35] Nevertheless, the differences between Bookchin and Chomsky on this front are mainly cosmetic. Although Bookchin was more convinced than Chomsky of the

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[33] In the 1940s, for example, anarchists in London's Freedom Press group began to develop a serious interest in the work of the psychologist Wilhelm Reich, whose account of sexual repression helped direct their attention to subtler operations of power that constrained freedom in a more fundamental and insidious way than the power of state and capital. Reich was also a major influence on American anarchists like Paul Goodman and Murray Bookchin.

[34] M. Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), p. 14.

[35] N. Chomsky, 'The soviet union versus socialism', *Our Generation* (1986), pp. 47–52. This is just one of a number of respects in which the depiction of Chomsky as a quasi-Marxist anarcho-syndicalist absorbed with matters of class is in need of serious qualification. For an extended consideration of Chomsky's relationship to anarcho-syndicalism and to other anarchist thinkers of the post-war era, see my 'Noam Chomsky and the anarchist tradition', *Noam Chomsky (Critical Explorations in Contemporary Political Thought)*, ed. A. Edgley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 33–54.

value of utopian imagery, their shared assumption that anarchism's special mission is to combat domination leads them to similar conclusions about the broad scope and therefore protracted if not infinite duration of that mission. Thus, while the time-honoured vision of a period of post-revolutionary contentment was, technically, preserved in Bookchin's work, on the whole the more far-ranging objectives of post-war anarchism (as formulated most clearly by Bookchin himself) served to undermine the traditional temporization of pre- and post-revolutionary periods, figuring the anarchist revolution as an ongoing project with no obvious terminus.

Even as the conceptualization of revolution shared by post-war anarchist thinkers counselled an indefinitely long-term approach to radical change, by diffusing revolutionary energies temporally and directing them towards myriad nodes of contention it also made revolutionary action more immediate, as well as more accessible at the level of the individual and the small group. Revolution was not a phenomenon restricted to a future period of disruption, but something that infused the present, and it depended not on the amassing of multitudes but on the adoption of a libertarian orientation by the principled few under far-from-ideal conditions. The 'non-romantic' revolution that David Thoreau Wieck called for consisted in 'present acts of liberation, present release and revival of vitality'. This implied that it was possible to bring anarchism into everyday life, 'to realize the anarchy of life in the midst of the order of living', as Herbert Read put it.[36] Borrowing terminology from his friend Eric Gill, Read wrote of the need to establish 'cells of good living' in the midst of a sick world.[37] Even on an individual level, argued Paul Goodman, it was possible 'to live in present society as though it were a natural society'.[38]

Passages like these reflect the fact that post-war anarchists were in search of ways of validating small-scale resistance—the only kind possible during and immediately after the war. But it would be a mistake to conclude that they were confusing revolution with mere lifestyle rebellion or with the extrication of isolated individuals from what Goodman called the 'Organized System'. Post-war anarchists believed that even small-scale actions could take on a revolutionary quality by prefiguratively embodying values that gestured towards an alternate social order, modelling the reconciliation of principle and practice. Such actions could, furthermore, have propagandistic, exemplary value when projected outward so as to inspire imitation in others—as Goodman put it: 'our acts of liberty are our strongest propaganda'.[39] In an illustrative metaphor, Dorothy Day, the *de facto* matriarch of the anarchist Catholic Worker movement, compared the multiplier effect generated by this kind of prefigurative, exemplary activity to the 'loaves and fishes' of the gospels.[40] However humble, acts fitting this description—from the conscientious objection of war resisters, to the provocative attempt of the *Golden Rule* crew to infiltrate a nuclear testing zone near the Marshall Islands, to Catholic Workers' own refusals to take part in civil-defence drills—contributed to the mustering of collective forces of social change through their suggestion of radical social alternatives and their inspirational influence.[41]

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[36] H. Read, *Anarchy and Order: Essays in Politics* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1954), p. 125.

[37] Read, *A Coat of Many Colours*, op. cit., Ref. 23, p. 10.

[38] P. Goodman, *Drawing the Line: The Political Essays of Paul Goodman*, ed. Taylor Stoehr (New York: Free Life Editions, 1977), p. 3.

[39] Goodman, *ibid.*, p. 19.

[40] See D. Day, *Loaves and Fishes* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

[41] For a discussion of 'prefigurative exemplarity' in post-war anarchist thought and practice, see my article 'Pacifism, nonviolence, and the reinvention of anarchist tactics in the twentieth century', *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, 9(1) (Spring 2015), pp. 61–94.

Post-war anarchists' decontestation of revolution as an extended process of change was linked to their embrace of the principle of non-violence. Although the rise of 'anarcho-pacifism' was a notable development of the post-war era, post-war anarchism was distinguished not so much by its pacifism *per se*—anarchists had long opposed 'capitalist' and 'imperialist' wars, which in practice generally meant every war except the class war—as by its rejection of violent means of struggle, even on behalf of anarchism. In some sense, adopting the principle of non-violence was a practical matter of historical context: there was simply no chance that anarchists—or anyone else—could compete with the modern state on the level of violence. But given the authoritarian developments that followed the Russian Revolution and, later, the struggles for national liberation in the third world, there was also a feeling that violence was counterproductive even when it 'succeeded'.[42] Even more significant was the realization that non-violence itself could be revolutionary. Gandhi's theory of revolutionary non-violence suggested that principled actions, when performed in a manner that maximized their symbolic impact, could be more tactically effective than actions which appeared to be crassly strategic or morally objectionable. Gandhi's innovation was to have devised a mode of militant struggle that broke down the distinction between principle and tactics by refusing to subordinate one to the other, and post-war anarchists were attracted to its humanistic qualities as much as to its efficaciousness, realizing that it had the potential to solve the means-end problem that had plagued prior generations of anarchists.[43] Non-violence was not simply imported into post-war anarchism from the outside, however. The influential work of Bart de Ligt demonstrated the affinity between non-violence and traditional anarchist tactics like the general strike and direct action, which emphasized the power of non-cooperation and the possibility of establishing popular control over social life without first wresting the means of coercion away from the political elite. Post-war anarchists like Nicolas Walter, Dorothy Day and Murray Bookchin became not only advocates of non-violent direct action but also some of its pioneering practitioners. Although outside of the Catholic Worker movement post-war anarchists were typically not non-violent absolutists, remaining open to the possibility that violence was in some instances justified, most agreed with Noam Chomsky that for reasons of both principle and pragmatism, 'in almost all real circumstances there is a better way than resort to violence'.[44]

As post-war anarchists began to embrace the principle of non-violence, they took a greater interest in methods of social change that had traditionally been subordinated to insurrectionary struggle. Most important was the renewed attention given to education, which received an emphasis in post-war anarchist thought unmatched since William Godwin imagined the spread of Enlightenment progressively dissolving coercive institutions in the late 18th century. Writing in the 1940s, Herbert Read proposed that education play a central role—*the* central role, in fact—in equipping people for self-government and stimulating social change, going so far as to claim

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[42] In the anarchist journal *Retort*, for example, Holley Cantine wrote of the Russian Revolution as evidence of the tendency of violent revolution to produce reactionary outcomes. See Cornell, 'A New Anarchism emerges', *op. cit.*, Ref. 4, p. 110.

[43] As the British anarcho-pacifist Geoffrey Ostergaard pointed out in his study of the *sarvodaya* movement, *The Gentle Anarchists*, Gandhi himself had integrated his practice of non-violence with a vision of society organized around the same principle and amounting to 'a condition of enlightened anarchy'. G. Ostergaard, *The Gentle Anarchists: A Study of the Leaders of the Sarvodaya Movement for Non-Violent Revolution in India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 28.

[44] H. Arendt et al., 'The legitimacy of violence as a political act?' in A. Klein (Ed.) *Dissent, Power, and Confrontation* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), p. 108.

that 'to introduce a democratic method of education is the only necessary revolution'.[45] Such a revolution was to be advanced peacefully through the gradual shaping of character. The 'total' education Read envisioned involved the cultivation not only of intellectual understanding but also of subrational sensibilities, taking from Plato the idea that the individual could be 'tuned', mind and body, in accordance with a variety of orientations.[46] Although education could not literally alter the individual's biological infrastructure, by properly guiding individual development down to the sensual level it could in some sense provide the 'biological conditions' for 'human progress'.[47]

In sharp contrast to Plato, however, Read and other post-war anarchists assumed that one of the chief objectives of education was to foster qualities of individual autonomy, rather than fitting individuals to preordained social roles and socializing them into the dominant culture. Colin Ward and Paul Goodman developed thoroughgoing critiques of the 'compulsory mis-education' of their time, which they believed was oriented towards turning students into obedient and functional cogs tailored to the needs of private and public bureaucracies.[48] They called for the restructuring of education institutionally and pedagogically by decentralizing schools, giving children a role in decision-making and providing a range of options for students of different interests and temperaments. Furthermore, they proposed extending education beyond the walls of the schoolhouse and into the surrounding environment. In arguing for an expansive understanding of what kinds of influences and experiences qualified as 'educational', both Goodman and Murray Bookchin invoked the ancient Greek notion of *paideia*, which had envisioned 'the entire network of institutions, the *polis*', as a kind of school or educator.[49] Within this broader educative context, the role of educators, in Read's words, was to act as 'guides and comrades rather than masters and headmasters'.[50]

Most educational proposals made by post-war anarchists aimed principally at expanding freedom within the educational setting and cultivating the individuality of children. While these objectives were individually enriching, however, they had the potential, in Read's words, to be 'socially disintegrating'. Thus, they needed to 'be accompanied by some process which corrects the tendency towards disintegration, and brings the individual back into the social unit'— 'individuation' had to be complemented by 'initiation'.[51] Paul Goodman's work on higher education represented the most careful consideration within post-war anarchist thought of how education could build community in addition to stimulating individual growth. Indeed, Goodman envisioned institutions of higher learning as themselves a species of community—a 'community of scholars' that was self-governing and 'walled off', figuratively speaking, from the surrounding society. The 'walls' were meant to ensure that education would not be colonized by the instrumental needs of the status quo, making it possible for universities to be havens of humanistic ideals, of a 'universal culture' into which students were voluntarily initiated. Once the

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[45] H. Read, *Education through Art* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956), p. 304.

[46] H. Read, *The Cult of Sincerity* (New York: Horizon Press, 1969), pp. 19–20.

[47] H. Read, *Selected Writings: Poetry and Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 356.

[48] See C. Ward, *Streetwork: The Exploding School* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973); P. Goodman, *Compulsory Mis-Education and the Community of Scholars* (New York: Vintage, 1964). See also N. Chomsky, *Chomsky on MisEducation*, ed. D. Macedo (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

[49] P. Goodman, *New Reformation: Notes of a Neolithic Conservative* (New York: Vintage, 1971), p. 69. See also M. Bookchin, *From Urbanization to Cities: Towards a New Politics of Citizenship* (London: Cassall, 1995), p. 64.

[50] H. Read, *To Hell with Culture* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 69.

[51] Read, *ibid.*, p. 79.

participatory atmosphere of the primary schools Goodman advocated had trained children in self-direction, education would be reoffered as a means of gaining access to the cumulative wisdom of the adult world—wisdom which, being in frequent tension with the short-sighted and self-interested agenda of social elites, would turn the young into social critics determined to build a society more in keeping with their ideals. Thus, post-war anarchists' somewhat complex decontestation of education saw it, first, as a means of fostering individual autonomy, and, second, as a means of initiating individuals into an idealized vision of community, realized to some extent within the walls of the university and waiting to be carried beyond those walls through the reform of the existing order.

In addition to reconceptualizing revolution, targeting the phenomenon of domination, embracing non-violence and foregrounding the importance of education, post-war anarchists developed a more complex attitude than their predecessors towards the state. This point deserves special emphasis because anti-statism has long been accorded a central place—often *the* central place—in distinguishing anarchism from other ideologies. The historical setting in which post-war anarchists found themselves, however, made uncompromising anti-statism both strategically and normatively problematic. The post-war welfare state was substantially different from the 19th-century states to which classical anarchist thinkers were reacting. Rather than representing a monolithic edifice of domination, it embodied competing tendencies, undermining self-determination in some ways and fostering it in others. The welfare state incorporated—however, imperfectly and incompletely—pieces of the socialist ideal, and state provisions like health care, social security and universal education could not be simplistically opposed by those who believed—as did most post-war anarchists—that social welfare was integral to individual autonomy and well-being, and that the market could not be trusted to provide it. Committed to finding ways of working within the new landscape created by the welfare state, they found that in some cases state activity could, if properly exploited, be put in the service of libertarian ends. This was especially true in the 1960s and 1970s, when the state began acting in some instances to promote decentralization and grass-roots involvement in policymaking. Even as post-war anarchists like Colin Ward called for a 'welfare society' rather than a 'welfare state', they adopted a nuanced position that made the best of what the system had to offer while consistently reiterating the need to build radical alternatives. As Ward put it, the state 'contains particular interests that happen to be ours, in making [its] legislation work'. The key is to '[use] every loophole in *their* legislation for *our* purposes'.[52]

Post-war anarchists realized, in other words, that anarchist objectives could not be simplistically boiled down to anti-statism. They turned working with, defending, or even strengthening the state into a matter of strategy rather than a matter of principle. Thus, Goodman did not see it as a contradiction of his anarchist ideals to call for a neo-New Deal that would establish a more active partnership between the federal government and local communities; nor did Ward see it as a contradiction to call for Claimants' Unions that would enable welfare recipients to exploit social services to the fullest; nor did Chomsky see it as a contradiction to argue for strengthening the regulative powers of the state against the power of private capital. All of these positions, they argued, furthered anarchist objectives precisely by eschewing knee-jerk anti-statism. Chomsky could even comment following the Thatcher/Reagan assault on the public sphere in the 1980s that 'protecting the state sector today is a step towards abolishing the state because it main-

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[52] C. Ward, *Talking Houses* (London: Freedom Press, 1990), p. 136.

tains a public arena in which people can participate, and organize, and affect policy, and so on, though in limited ways'.[53] Whether this attitude led to more compromise with the state than was necessary can certainly be debated—Herbert Read, for one, would never be forgiven by his anarchist comrades for accepting a knighthood in recognition of his services to literature, and both Chomsky and Bookchin have incurred much criticism from anarchists for endorsing a degree of participation in elections. But from the perspective of most post-war anarchists, it was foolish not to 'make use' of what the state had to offer and to attempt to influence its policies, at least until viable alternatives to state provisions were devised.[54] Given the long-term understanding of radical change that had been incorporated into post-war anarchist thought, this could mean supporting liberal or social democratic policies in the short term. As Read put it, immediate problems like poverty, unemployment, slums and malnutrition

> must be solved. Let us solve them in the manner suggested by democratic socialism— that seems the fairest and most practical method, but only if we keep the anarchist principle in mind at every stage and in every act. Then we shall avoid the fatal mistakes that have been made in Russia. We shall avoid creating an independent bureaucracy, for that is another form of tyranny, and the individual has no chance of living according to natural laws under such a tyranny. We shall avoid the creation of industrial towns which separate men from the fields and from the calming influences of nature. We shall control the machine, so that it serves our natural needs without endangering our natural powers. Thus in a thousand ways the principle of anarchism will determine our practical policies, leading the human race gradually away from the state and its instruments of oppression towards an epoch of wisdom and joy.[55]

Finally, despite their generally practical bent, post-war anarchist thinkers like Colin Ward, Paul Goodman and Murray Bookchin sought to reclaim the concept of utopia from figures like Karl Popper who equated the term with totalitarianism and authoritarian social engineering. Drawing from what Marie Louise Berneri called the 'libertarian' strain of the utopian tradition,[56] as well as the 'Garden City' tradition initiated by Ebenezer Howard,[57] they found in a certain brand of utopian thought not reckless social idealism but admirable principles of limit and moderation that could be used to rein in the dynamics of unfettered industrial capitalism and urbanization.[58] Like Kropotkin, whose *Fields, Factories, and Workshops* was a major source of inspiration, they saw the reconstruction of social institutions as closely bound up with the reconfiguration of social space, and they were drawn to Kropotkin's anarcho-communist vision of modestly sized,

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[53] N. Chomsky, *Chomsky on Anarchism*, ed. Barry Pateman (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), p. 213.

[54] C. Ward, *Tenants Take Over* (London: The Architectural Press, 1974), p. 120.

[55] H. Read, *The Contrary Experience: Autobiographies* (New York: Horizon Press, 1963), p. 208.

[56] See M.L. Berneri, *Journey through Utopia* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950).

[57] See P. Hall and C. Ward, *Sociable Cities: The Legacy of Ebenezer Howard* (Chichester: John Wiley, 1998).

[58] For examples, see books like P. and P. Goodman, *Communitas: Ways of Livelihood and Means of Life* (New York: Random House, 1960); C. Ward, *Utopia* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Education, 1974); and M. Bookchin, *The Limits of the City* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); *From Urbanization to Cities*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 48; *The Ecology of Freedom*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 34.

accessibly organized communities ecologically tailored to their environments and complemented by decentralized, small-scale industrial enterprises.[59]

Reflecting their scepticism of *laissez-faire* and their interest in efforts to imagine alternatives to urbanization, post-war anarchist thinkers departed from their predecessors in attempting to strike a balance between the cherished anarchist concept of spontaneity and the concept of planning. Scepticism of spontaneity was merited, Bookchin argued, because of the conflation of the concept with the invisible hand of the market: a market society, he maintained, could 'not be trusted to produce spontaneously a habitable, sanitary, or even efficient city, much less a beautiful one'.[60] Anarchists no less than their socialist counterparts, then, had reason to bring social dynamics under conscious public control. It was necessary, however, to ensure that public control did not come to mean the direction of social life by technocratic mandarins. Consequently, post-war anarchists looked for inspiration to decentralist planners like Patrick Geddes who placed emphasis on respecting democratic input and local diversity when implementing social plans. Planning rooted in popular participation, they believed, would not only result in outcomes more sensitive to people's actual needs, but also enrich ingenuity by drawing from a wide array of perspectives in perpetual danger of being overlooked when social development was subordinated to the proposals of master planners.

Implicit in post-war anarchists' interest in utopianism and planning was the belief that anarchists had typically left their visions of the future too ambiguous; in Herbert Read's succinct formulation, 'decentralization is a long word which means nothing unless you have a plan'.[61] Read was not, however, endorsing an approach that tried to implant social blueprints forcefully into a messy reality—rather, he and other post-war anarchists believed that utopian potential had to be discovered and cultivated within social existence as given. This meant being sensitive, as Kinna points out, to what Ward called 'anarchy in action': the myriad ways in which people were already taking charge of their physical and social environments, adapting them to their needs through direct action and weaving patterns of mutual aid into their everyday lives. The primary task of the anarchist was to nurture those tendencies of solidarity, spontaneous organization and self-help already in existence: 'This we do tentatively', wrote Read,

> by taking the voluntary organizations which already exist and seeing to what extent they are capable of becoming the units in a democratic society … We then consider the functions which are now performed by the state, and which are necessary for our well-being, and we ask ourselves to what extent these functions could be entrusted to such voluntary organizations.[62]

Paul Goodman, in a similar vein, argued that '[a] free society cannot be the substitution of a "new order" for the old order: it is the extension of spheres of free action until they make up most of social life'.[63] What was 'conservative' about this attitude, according to Kinna, was its effort to build off of already-extant tendencies, to preserve and develop promising institutions

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[59] One notable exception is Noam Chomsky, who, while expressing some sympathy for the anarcho-communist position, sees it as unrealistic and unnecessarily reactionary in its attitude towards modern industry. See his 'Reply' to Moore, 'Prophets of the new world', *op. cit.*, Ref. 5.

[60] Bookchin, *The Limits of the City*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 58, p. 101.

[61] H. Read, *The Tenth Muse* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 89.

[62] Read, *A Coat of Many Colours*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 23, p. 63.

[63] Goodman, *Drawing the Line*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 38, p. 2.

and practices rather than to reject the totality of the social order (as recommended, for example, by Herbert Marcuse's 'great refusal'). Indeed, the pragmatic utopianism typical of post-war anarchist thought embodied the recognition that teasing utopian possibilities out of the status quo meant being able to discern value in what was already in existence rather than adopting a posture of pure negativity.

For post-war anarchists, utopia and social planning were to be approached not only with a measure of scepticism towards unrestrained idealism and intemperate deconstruction, but also in a spirit of experimentation. Nowhere was the experimental, anti-dogmatic tenor of post-war anarchist thought more evident than in Colin Ward's journal *Anarchy*. The idea behind the journal, Ward wrote, was 'to take the problems which face people in our society, the society we're living in, and to see if there are anarchist solutions'.[64] Ward believed that anarchists had to adjust to the reality of a pluralistic society, a society in which the anarchist perspective had to demonstrate its superiority to other political perspectives in practice, rather than seeking to inspire quasi-religious faith in a coming anarchist millennium. Proving anarchism's utility to sceptics meant it was necessary to show that adopting an anarchist perspective could yield constructive strategies for working within the system and for solving problems of social life that were being inadequately addressed or inappropriately handled by the state. The conception of utopia favoured by post-war anarchists was able to accommodate this kind of experimentalism and political pragmatism precisely because it was premised neither on a prophecy of the future, nor on a predetermined plan of action. Rather, it was conceived as a way of orienting immediate thinking and acting to an expansive vision of social possibility, ensuring that even questions of reform—like the restructuring of the New York public school system or the expansion of tenant involvement in housing administration—were approached with the broadest possible perspective, and that even the most practical steps contributed to the drawing together of the real and the ideal.

Conclusion: the neglect of post-war anarchist thought

The evidence marshalled here on behalf of the claim not only that 'postwar anarchist thought' is a recognizable phenomenon, but that it can be aptly characterized as a 'New Anarchism', is necessarily selective. But even on the basis of this short survey, I believe there is reason to conclude that post-war anarchist thought was more original, consistent and coherent than has typically been recognized. If this is the case, what explains the fact that it has been so underappreciated as a distinct ideological configuration?

First, it must be said that some observers both inside and outside of the anarchist movement did comment on the emergence of a 'new' anarchism in the post-war years. This kind of commentary, however, did not really take off until the explosion of political activism and cultural radicalism in the 1960s, and it tended to equate the new anarchism with the spirit of that era. Few had any illusions about the rebirth of the anarchist *movement*, but something like 'intuitive anarchism' seemed to have acquired cultural cachet, especially among the youthful members of the New Left.[65] This new anarchism was described in various and somewhat contradictory ways, but some generalizations are possible. Sampling from relevant pieces by commentators like Ger-

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[64] C. Ward (Ed.), *A Decade of Anarchy, 1961–70* (London: Freedom Press, 1987), p. 13.
[65] The term is Murray Bookchin's. See *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (San Francisco, CA: Ramparts Press, 1971), p. 60.

ald Runkle, Leonard Krimerman and Lewis Perry, Terry Perlin, David Apter, Michael Lerner and Richard Gombin reveals general agreement, first, that the new anarchists had little if any sense of their relationship to the anarchist tradition—they were 'anarchistic',[66] evincing 'vague feelings of affinity to anarchism'.[67] This had to do, in part, with the fact that they were anti-dogmatic, eschewing 'ideological orthodoxy' and adopting an 'experimental attitude toward social change'.[68] They were wary of grand revolutionary narratives, but they were certainly not averse to thinking of themselves as revolutionaries. In fact, the new anarchism had 'an uncompromising character', reflecting the 'moral absolutism' that flowed out of the belief that 'ideals activated by will can bring about revolutionary transformation'.[69] For this reason, the new anarchists were wary of 'complexity and compromise', searching instead for 'directness and simplicity'.[70] Although few of them hoped to destroy the state completely, they did seem to believe it possible to effect a 'fundamental modification of the state' through violence. Alternately, they opted for 'dropping out' of the system, and sought to establish 'the *de facto* right of counter-culture communities to control their own affairs at a local level'.[71]

Second, it was claimed that the new anarchism was less rationalistic than the old, in part because it incorporated the insights of modern psychology and existentialism.[72] Rather than searching for ordered, rational regularity, its keyword was 'spontaneity',[73] and it maintained that freedom would be realized by 'randomizing the universe and ... keeping it unpredictable'.[74] Its metaphors were increasingly 'mystical, playfully irrational, or reactionary (harkening back to an earlier Utopia)'.[75] In fact, it was the mistrust of rationality and the general anti-intellectualism of the new anarchism, more than anything, that explained its anti-dogmatism: 'The anti-doctrinaire position reflects a broader characteristic of the counter-culture—its suspicions of "rationality", "objectivity", and the intellectual posture more generally'.[76]

The new anarchism, most were agreed, was centred in the youth: the youthful counterculture was now 'the main carrier of anarchist ideas'.[77] The attraction of young people to anarchism could be explained in part by its 'emphasis on individual acts'.[78] This was not to suggest that the new anarchism was purely individualistic, however, for it had a communal aspect as well. Orga-

[66] G. Runkle, *Anarchism Old and New* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1972), p. 175.

[67] L.I. Krimerman and L. Perry (Eds), *Patterns of Anarchy: A Collection of Writings on the Anarchist Tradition* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966), p. xv. The poet Karl Shapiro, for example, wrote of 'the spread of anarchist thought among the rising generation. They do not call it by that name, or any name; they do not philosophize about the State or Nonviolence or Disaffiliation, but the interest is unmistakably there'. See 'On the revival of anarchism' in I.L. Horowitz (Ed.) *The Anarchists* (New York: Dell, 1964), p. 573.

[68] T. Perlin (Ed.), 'The recurrence of defiance', in *Contemporary Anarchism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1979), p. 7.

[69] Perlin, *ibid.*, p. 6.

[70] D.E. Apter, 'The old anarchism and the new—some comments', in D.E. Apter and J. Joll (Eds) *Anarchism Today* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), p. 9.

[71] M. Lerner, 'Anarchism and the American counter-culture', in Apter and Joll, ibid., p. 41.

[72] There is an extended discussion of the relationship between the 'new' anarchism and existentialism in Runkle, *Anarchism Old and New*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 66, chap. 10.

[73] Perlin, 'The recurrence of defiance', *op. cit.*, Ref. 68, p. 7.

[74] Apter, 'The old anarchism and the new', *op cit.*, Ref. 70, p. 12.

[75] Lerner, 'Anarchism and the American counter-culture', *op. cit.*, Ref. 71, p. 56.

[76] Lerner, *ibid.*, p. 54.

[77] Apter, 'The old anarchism and the new', *op cit.*, Ref. 70, p. 7.

[78] Perlin, 'The recurrence of defiance', *op. cit.*, Ref. 68, p. 6.

nizationally, new anarchists took from traditional anarchism 'the ideas of organizing themselves into small autonomous groups and of self-management'.[79]

For an anarchist veteran of the Old Left like Sam Dolgoff, many of the characteristics of the new anarchism could be explained by pointing to the fact that, on both a sociological and an ideological level, anarchism had taken on a 'bourgeois' character. The features that Dolgoff attributed to 'bourgeois' anarchism paralleled most of the features mentioned above: it was escapist, evidencing the belief that society would be undermined by large numbers of people 'dropping out'; it was Nechayevist, glorifying conspiracy and violence; it was bohemian, fostering irresponsibility and lack of discipline, an obsession with 'lifestyle' choices and exhibitionism; it was anti-social, idealizing individual rebellion; and it was overly enamoured of spontaneity, espousing action for the sake of action. The young rebels, Dolgoff lamented, 'stress the negative aspects and ignore or misinterpret the constructive principles of anarchism'.[80]

What Dolgoff shared with the other authors cited above was a tendency to treat the radical political and cultural New Left tendencies of the 1960s as synonymous with 'new' anarchism. This begs the question of how this anarchism, or pseudo-anarchism, compares with the 'New Anarchism' outlined in the last section. There are some obvious similarities. New Anarchist thinkers also espoused a less rigidly ideological and more 'experimental' approach to social change. They, too, drew from new intellectual trends like psychology and existentialism, which complicated the optimistic rationalism that had informed classical anarchists. Their thought also strove for a blend—perhaps a more delicate blend than the counterculture—of individuality and community. And they were, in both their biographical backgrounds and in their efforts to attract the attention and respect of the middle class, undoubtedly more 'bourgeois' than prior anarchists.

That post-war anarchist thinkers should not simply be conflated with the 'intuitive' anarchists described above should, however, be just as obvious as these similarities. First, the New Anarchists all engaged closely with the anarchist tradition, and worried about the fickleness of a *de novo* radicalism dismissive of the ideas and lessons of the past and dependent upon immediate feelings of alienation.[81] Second, unlike some of their contemporaries the New Anarchists were open to 'complexity and compromise', and therefore more accepting of reform and resistant to the drift of the left towards sectarianism and violence in the late 1960s. Third, although they appreciated the importance of subrational aspects of the human psyche, the New Anarchists continued to see anarchism as an ideal rooted in Enlightenment assumptions about the rationalization of social life and individual behaviour. Their respect for the organizing power of reason was related to the fourth point: the New Anarchists did not fall prey to an excessive love of spontaneity, placing a considerable amount of stress on the importance of conscious and considered social planning. Fifth, while New Anarchist thinkers may have been bourgeois in certain respects, their individualism was strongly tempered by a consistent communitarian impulse that focused their energies not just on freeing the individual spirit but on restructuring social life in a manner that promoted values of community and popular participation in decision-making (rather than simply 'dropping out'). Finally, the general outlook of the New Anarchism was not

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[79] R. Gombin, 'The ideology and practice of contestation seen through recent events in France', in Apter and Joll (Eds), op. cit., Ref. 70, p. 27.

[80] S. Dolgoff, 'The relevance of anarchism to modern society', in Perlin (Ed.), op. cit., Ref. 68, p. 38.

[81] In his last political book, Goodman chided young radicals for being defined by what they opposed, and wrote that alienation was 'a poor basis for politics, including revolutionary politics'. Goodman, *New Reformation*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 49, p. 52.

simply absorbed into the New Left or overtaken by it, but rather outlived it: it was carried into the 1970s and beyond by figures like Ward, Chomsky and Bookchin.

These important differences make it unsurprising that some of the New Anarchists felt out of step with the trajectory of cultural and political radicalism in the 1960s. Herbert Read, who was coaxed out of political retirement by the anti-nuclear movement, desisted in his activism in 1961 when he decided that tactics were becoming too combative and unconstructive. Paul Goodman, one of the early doyens of the student movement, became deeply disillusioned with the youthful radicalism he had helped to inspire and began calling himself a 'conservative' anarchist towards the end of his life. Even Noam Chomsky and Murray Bookchin, who remained gurus of sorts on the left while figures like Read and Goodman faded into obscurity, were often sharply critical of the unfocused and unproductive radicalism that was all-too-common in the 1960s—including, according to Chomsky's controversial assessment, the much-celebrated student strike at Columbia University in 1968 and the events in Paris the following month.[82] The resistance of the New Anarchists to certain developments of the 1960s era had to do with the fact that although many of them (e.g. Ward, Goodman, Chomsky and Bookchin) first attained widespread notoriety in the 1960s, their political sympathies evolved considerably earlier, within a climate far less sympathetic to anarchist ideas. Consequently, their attraction to anarchism was borne of deep-seated intellectual affinities that had little to do with its immediate viability or its popularity as a doctrine. They entered the 1960s having already evolved thoughtful and informed understandings of anarchism, which insulated them from the tempestuous fluctuations in political ideology that claimed many of the 'intuitive' anarchists of that decade, and informed their suspicion of the impulsive action and oversimplified social analyses prevalent during the period.

Suffice to say that most who remarked in the 1960s and early 1970s on the development of a 'new' anarchism did not single out Kinna's 'practical' anarchism (or my 'New Anarchism') as an isolatable phenomenon. Those who did pick up on the phenomenon tended to be those who were familiar with divisions within the small anarchist movement in England grouped around the Freedom Press.[83] David Stafford, for example, wrote of a split that had materialized 'between "traditionalists" and "reformers" within the anarchist ranks, with the former adopting a more revolutionary stance towards immediate issues of the day, while the latter concentrate on practical and pragmatic approaches to various social issues'.[84] Among the 'traditionalists' were 'class struggle' anarchists like Albert Meltzer and Stuart Christie, who had little doubt that a new variant of anarchism very much like the New Anarchism I have described was taking shape. They argued that the revisionist, pragmatic anarchism that developed in the post-war years was in fact little more than 'militant liberalism'.[85] It was unable 'to comprehend the class struggle', and was smitten with ineffective tactics of protest and persuasion.[86] The anarchist movement, they lamented, was being taken over by students and bourgeois intellectuals, a veritable 'pacifist-

[82] See Barsky, *Noam Chomsky, op. cit.*, Ref. 5, p. 131.

[83] For competing accounts of this split, see G. Woodcock, *Letter from the Past* (Markham: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1982); A. Meltzer, *The Anarchists in London, 1935–1955* (Sanday: Cienfuegos Press, 1976) and *I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels, op. cit.*, Ref. 13.

[84] D. Stafford, 'Anarchists in Britain today', in Apter and Joll (Eds), op. cit., Ref. 70, p. 93. George Woodcock was one of the few to explore parallels between the 'older', 'unorthodox' anarchists who had initiated this revisionism and the sensibility of radical youth in the 1960s. See his 'Anarchism revisited' in Perlin (Ed.), op. cit., Ref. 68, pp. 23–36.

[85] Christie and Meltzer, *The Floodgates of Anarchy, op. cit.*, Ref. 15, p. 59.

[86] Christie and Meltzer, *ibid.*, p. 60.

liberal Mafia who sought to re-invent anarchism in their own image'.[87] Relative to the New Anarchism, Meltzer and Christie's 'class struggle' anarchism placed more stress on direct action, rejecting the suggestion that worker consciousness needed to be developed in an 'intellectual' direction before workers were able to govern themselves competently.[88] There were two, mutually exclusive, ways of understanding anarchism, wrote Meltzer:

> Either it was a marble effigy of utopian ideals, to be admired and defined and even lived up to by some chosen individuals within the framework of a repressive society, or it was a fighting creed with a programme for breaking down repression.[89]

From the perspective of class warriors like Meltzer and Christie, by opting for the 'marble effigy' the New Anarchism was robbing the anarchist tradition of its unique identity and fighting spirit by phasing it into an idealistic version of liberalism.[90] If one reason for the failure to recognize the New Anarchism was the tendency to conflate developments within anarchism with the Zeitgeist of the 1960s, then another reason was that there were some who argued that this 'revisionist' anarchism was not properly categorized as anarchism at all.

The phenomenon of the New Anarchism remained obscure, however, due not only to the perceptions of outsiders, but also to the failure of New Anarchists themselves to stake out a distinctive ideological claim that might have loosely united their ideas into a recognized genre of anarchist thought. Although they read each other's work, published in the same journals, and occasionally acknowledged their debts to one another, the New Anarchists never forged a sense of collective identity. At best, they recognized a common sensibility which distinguished them—to reiterate—both from sectarian anarcho-syndicalists like Meltzer and Christie and from the neophyte radicals of the 1960s. I have argued in this article, however, that the New Anarchism was more than just a sensibility: it was a distinct ideological configuration, at least as coherent as those thinkers and ideas grouped under the headings of 'classical' or 'contemporary' anarchism. There is value, I believe, in attributing to the New Anarchists an *ex post facto* identity that reflects their similar uses of key concepts. Admittedly, this requires some innovation on the part of the scholar, as well as generalizations that cannot help but do some violence to the complexity and diversity of post-war anarchist ideas. But as Michael Freeden argues, ideological mapping of this kind

> is not itemizing, and hence never simply description. First, it is not entirely reflective of existing usage, because it extrapolates from such usage what the limits of the possible are and could be ... Second, the presentation of a map of internal conceptual relationships is an invitation to a viewing, to an interpretation of the social and political world.[91]

[87] P. Roff, 'Introduction' to Meltzer, *I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 13, p. 5.

[88] Meltzer, *I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 13, p. 36.

[89] Meltzer, *ibid.*, p. 104.

[90] One reason for the blurring of this boundary was the fact that, as David Stafford noted, New Anarchists had demonstrated 'a willingness to participate in or support movements or organizations which in no sense could be said to have any kind of specifically revolutionary perspectives—e.g. pressure groups such as the National Council for Civil Liberties'. Stafford, 'Anarchists in Britain today', *op. cit.*, Ref. 84, p. 94.

[91] Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 22, p. 128.

This article should be seen as an addition to the growing number of scholarly voices seeking to 'invite' readers to a 'viewing' of the New Anarchism, in the hopes that doing so will entitle post-war anarchist thought to a fairer hearing than it has heretofore received.

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Disclosure statement

Benjamin J. Pauli
The New Anarchism in Britain and the US
Towards a richer understanding of post-war anarchist thought
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