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Terrorist/Anarchist/artist: Why Bother?
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sophical reflections on art offer an articulate development of anarchism's having a clear bearing on management; that indeed is why aesthetics offers a fruitful gateway to critical management. Much better than dusty moralism or obsolete materialist scientism! It is through aesthetics that we might approach an anarchist critical management, and art is to my mind the only vaccine against obsolete ideologies that make management into schooling for party-cadres to the right or left. That is why management scholars hungry for freedom reflect on Marcel Duchamp or Ai Wei Wei, and that is why I see the anarchist business as an art firm (2004). It is no coincidence that the Spanish Civil War had its most sustainable impact on art and literature from Orwell to Bunuel. To those interested in anarchism – performances, happenings, and installations offer activist showcases for gaining conceptual insight by concrete direct action. While early anarchists were primitive terrorists, contemporary activists call on a sophisticated arsenal of art to impact society. Today writers such as Jacques Ranciere teach how art and aesthetics spontaneously spark off social energy not yet tamed, disciplined, coded, or regulated in received paradigms or set theories. Read Ranciere for yourself, and you will recognize an updated version of anarchism in his politics of aesthetics; you will experience a real anarchist in the role of his ignorant schoolmaster. So go ahead and just do it!

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Labels are often flashy conduits for hasty assumptions and partial truths. At the time when I was writing *Action and Existence: Anarchism for Business Administration* in the late 1970s, the term anarchism served as a handy synonym for mess, chaos, and disorder. In this context the word cropped up in public debates about the Baader-Meinhof terrorism in Germany in the aftermath of Paris 68, for example. In putting my book together, I set out to explain what I had learned through my own reading and discussion about this often short-changed term. In the research and writing process I discovered that the word anarchism carried more concrete meaning than what I had first thought.

I did my investigation in West Berlin – then just a little island balancing on the Berlin wall between capitalism and communism – but the book was first published in Swedish 1978. The volume caught on and immediately thrust me into a strange world of 'professional anarchists': Daniel Guerin, the French friend of Buenaventura Durrutti, CNT[1] hero of the Spanish Civil War, initiator of the gay anarchist movement, and author of books like *Ni Dieu Ni Maitre* on Marxist anarchism; and Augustin Souchy, the Austrian connected to German anarchists Gustaf Landauer and Erich Mühsam as well as to Emma Goldman. I invited Augustin to lecture to my students at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. As he had just returned from Cuba, the lecture turned into a heavy attack on Fidel Castro's authoritarian perversion of the Revolution. My new world also included Nisse Lätt, the legendary Swedish veteran of the Spanish Civil War; Tönnis Tönnisson, the math teacher whose brilliant Swedish book *Makt som hobby (Power as a hobby)* unfortunately is not available in English; Gert Nilson, a Swedish publisher who, in addition to writing on topics related to anarchy, launched his publishing house Korpen by publishing PhD dissertations refused by the university; and Roland Vila, son of refugees from the CNT in Spain. Vila navigated

[1] Confederación Nacional del Trabajo

in Swedish anarchist circles and has colorfully documented his life in two booklets published by Bakhåll – Swedish for 'ambush' – Förlag in Lund, Sweden. Vila also introduced me to some small Swedish cliques nostalgically fueling on the CNT and FAI legends from the distant and mythical time of the Spanish Civil War in 1936–9. The FAI was made up of two cooperating Spanish anarcho-syndicalist unions: Confederation National del Trabajo and Federation Anarchista Iberica. These small coteries in Sweden circled around the syndicalist newspaper *Arbetaren* (*The worker*) and at the same time received exotic inspiration from recent actions taken in Quartier Latin in Paris or on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley. I began hearing how anarchist syndicalism had been violently repressed by social democracy – the reigning political ideology in Sweden for almost 40 years – and how the Fascists and Soviet Communists, or more accurately, the Bolsheviks, had liquidated anarchists since the 1920s. The Spanish Civil War was the historical showcase of how the Spanish Fascists, supported by the German and Italian right wings and indirectly assisted by the Communist-Stalinists, had crushed the social revolution of the CNT and FAI anarchists in Catalonia. While anarchism provided mobilizing enthusiasm in the short run, in the long run both the right and the left wanted them out of the picture. To my new friends, anarchists were proletarian martyrs, the freedom fighters of twentieth-century industrial capitalism.

Face It: US Anarchism Exists!

After the English translation of Action and existence was released in 1991, I became more mindful of those seriously claiming to be anarchists. I met US-based activists Murray Bookchin – in Venice of all places – and I video-interviewed Leopold Kohr, author of the classic *The breakdown of nations*. Kohr had been befriended by George Orwell during the Spanish Civil War and got his book

Existence As Art

The anarchist position of focusing on 'action' instead of 'decision' implies downplaying argumentation and rationalization in favor of 'spontaneity', where humans act out and realize their nature. Noam Chomsky's classic debate with Michel Foucault (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=myy3vL-QKI4) is worth watching again. This anarchist philosophy claims that human nature is ethically good, and our natural instinct for mutual aid and solidarity should not be distorted by moral or legal organization. Minimize rules, norms, and maxims, and let people self-manage their cooperation. Norm does not go hand in hand with action! This optimistic scientific-ethics was, according to classical nineteenth-century anarchism, provable through careful observation of good human nature. Historically I do not doubt that anarchistic courage played an important role in making bold developments in social science and ethics possible.

But for today's critical management I see another philosophical facet of anarchism to be much more relevant, namely aesthetic anarchism. In the world of contemporary art we are able to see anarchist practices at work. Making art has become an unavoidable ideal type of direct action, and the art world provides a constantly growing multifaceted number of labs for experiments. Critical management is okay, but — to paraphrase Italian artist Michelangelo Pistoletto – critique is no longer enough. Art, free of the trappings of linguistic cliché and made real in venues, museums, biennales, and festivals is undoubtedly the most public manifestation of spontaneity today. At the same time, art is of course packaged by creative industries, and artists are constantly threatened to be reduced to a new creative class lumpen-proletariat. Art and artists must reinvent ways to avoid and also exploit the powers of both organizations and markets. In art worlds today we can discern concrete connections between anarchism and management. For example, at Art of Management conferences, such work has a forum. Philo-

sourced on scattered markets. Business could successfully be carried out by small firms, in cooperatives, and in communes that now reemerged on the radars of politicians and economists after having been long overlooked by the corporate conventionalism reigning in mainstream business schools. In my book *The moral philosophy of management* (1993), I revisit this flora of ideas for economic action where much is directly linked to anarchism. Anarchism has always focused on action, and business-and-work is an important economic category of 'direct action' for robbing back surplus value from big organizations and state monopolies. Anarchist Jerry Rubin's motto 'Do it' soon became the entrepreneurial slogan 'Just do it'. Armed with an anarchistic mindset, many 1968 student activists left politics to enter business.

Until the 1970s, anarchism was looked upon as providing youthful energizing revolutionary enthusiasm to social democracy. Then in the 1980s liberals launched a libertarian counterrevolution, and the political ambiguity of anarchism became obvious. Not only could the left flatter itself with having theoreticians, but a vast archive of anarchist essays on liberty and economy in tune with neo-liberal ideas also existed. Just as Marx stood on shoulders of Hegel, well-known political economists were indebted to less well-known anarchist philosophers. Behind Leon Walras and Charles Gide was Charles Fourier, for example; behind John Maynard Keynes stood Silvio Gesell. John Stuart Mill eloquently praised the activism of the French cooperative movement of self-management. No one with any knowledge of the Marx-Proudhon controversies can ignore the fact that economic action – doing business without the bosses – might be considered a 'direct action', an escape from the bottomless morass where bureaucratic middlemen constantly diffuse spontaneous 'revolts' by orchestrating 'revolutions' as everlasting power struggles. The controversy between Karl Marx and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon is central to the study of anarchism and its complex relationship with both liberals and Marxists.

published thanks to UK anarchist Herbert Reed. I naively paid visits to US libertarians like Murray Rothbarth, who had been the chief US propagandist for Ludwig von Mises and paved the way for some of the Chicago-Hayek impact on concrete neo-liberal politics, and Israel Kirzner to discover how they were supplanting the 'worker anarchist' with the 'entrepreneur-anarchist'. Their references were of course selectively American and ranged from Ayn Rand back to Henry David Thoreau; in their accounting, however, they systematically forgot American union activists like Sacco and Vanzetti. They were sanctifying Austrian economics and in the process kidnapping Habsburg liberals like Ludwig von Mises, who claimed theoretically that any kind of regulation that upset the natural balance of the free market would eventually snowball into a complete police-state environment like Nazi Germany; and Friedrich Hayek, who turned Mises' 'slippery slope' into a 'road to serfdom' and after WW II founded the Mont Pelerin Society, the intellectual cradle of neo-liberalism, and held them in their libertarian camp. Mises had launched the 'slippery slope' model for bureaucratic dictatorship for which Friedrich Hayek became the Nobel Prize-winning custodian. James Buchanan sophisticated it into a 'public choice theory' that eventually made him Nobel-laureate as well.[2] These were attempts to argue theoretically what anarchism intuitively believed; namely, that any minor compulsory local regulation will snowball into a totalized global police state. Anarchism postulated that all organizational processes lead to dictatorship in totalitarian states, whether the dictator is a Hitler, a Stalin, or a Mussolini. To the US libertarians neither labor unions nor representative democracy could escape this universal law of anarchism obscured by vague morality and religious belief in organizational bliss. US anarchism actually slipped into libertarianism as the 'economic-man' argu-

[2] Editors' note: the 'Nobel Prize for Economics' is not among the Nobel Prizes established by Alfred Nobel but was founded and endowed by the Swedish National Bank and is not without controversy, being seen by some as biased towards mainstream and neo-liberal economics.

ment became a declaration of neo-liberal faith in ultimate salvation by the entrepreneurial market-maker. We know the rest of the story, and anarchists mostly dislike it!

Independent Anarchism?

While anarchism did supply a cool vibe to both the left and right political movements, it also gave these powers cold feet. Anarchism provides a concrete criticism of capitalism but at the same time fuels fierce attacks on bureaucracy. Western industrial capitalism was a historical target but so was socialist bureaucracy! During the Cold War, Soviet Communists had paid alleged anarchists to mess things up in the West, and the West reciprocated by diffusing audio-visual rock-and-roll anarchists and artistic freedom fighters behind Iron Curtains and Chinese walls. Before the crumbling of the Berlin Wall this was a high-risk game since anarchists instinctively started blurring the two Cold War systems. The fall of the Berlin Wall, cementing the delineation between socialism and capitalism, blurred things even further, fusing anarchist capitalist-bashing with critique of organization.

Herein lies the essential anarchist lesson for critical management: neither state nor market will solve the problems of capitalism, and the struggle never ends. Those who believe in a final solution in a steady state might find anarchism cool as an initial revolt, but eventually the anarchists will be silenced or tamed into useful idiots of the systems they dislike. This was the gloomy fate of the anarchist core of the Attack movement soon recuperated by the traditional left. Another case in point: the twin anarchists Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari today rebranded by the Catho-Mao-Marxist twins Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek.

Go for Direct Action!

So what about management? I grew up in a Nordic welfare state with capitalist machinery lubricated for growth by banks working smoothly with the central social democratic labor union. Terms like ‘planning’ and ‘systems’ were the core curriculum of business schools, where the issue of wages was unheard of primarily because salaries were fixed centrally by national unions. Finance was not even considered a discipline then. In such a world the only point to studying management or even attending business school was to be integrated into a large limited liability stock corporation. That was the expectation for all graduates not more than 50 years ago. In other words, business schools educated managers to be good capitalist bureaucrats.

Managers were sleepwalkers in big welfare gearboxes. Management was their faith solidly rooted in functionalism and preached by the increasing number of organizational scholars who tinkered with logically sophisticated sciences of decision-making. So thick was the decision-making mist that one could not see her own hand in front of her face. Readings on anarchism reveal ‘decision theorizing’ as a modern mystification. Was management then simply a drug designed to make managers forget about action even in the form of concrete work and labor? Was anarchism an antidote to logical infections of business school scholasticism?

This type of thinking appealed to many. In Sweden, Nils Brunson (1989) became indignant at the hypocritical gap between decision and action largely inspired by James G. March’s article on ‘the technology of foolishness’. Ingmar Arbnor and Björn Bjerke´s book on management methods (2008) rang an anarchist bell by focusing on what they called the actor-perspective, an anarchist trait of seeing organizing as using language from sweet-talk to pure bullshit to obscure what is or ought really to be done. Organizing could be the problem; I observed how big corporations began to crackle as ‘pyramids’ were scrapped, and operations were out-