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Introduction: why anarchism still matters

Global matters

In February 2002, Commander Brian Paddick, then Police Chief for the (London) Metropolitan Borough of Brixton, posted the following message on the direct action discussion forum www.urban75.com:

The concept of anarchism has always appealed to me. The idea of the innate goodness of the individual that is corrupted by society or the system. It is a theoretical argument but I am not sure everyone would behave well if there were no laws and no system. I believe there are many people forced into causing harm to others by the way society operates at the moment.

These comments, made by a senior British police officer already controversial for being openly gay and for extremely liberal drug enforcement policies, created something of a sensation in the mainstream media (where he also repeated them). The incident also prompted some sections of the slightly bemused alternative media to react with outrage that a policeman was wasting valuable anarchist discussion time on 'their' medium!

The controversy surrounding Paddick's comments provides a touchstone to explore matters that are becoming increasingly central to anarchist theory and practice. We live in an era where the politics of information are formulated and contested in a myriad of real and virtual locations and media, and where ascertaining influence, apportioning blame, conceptualising and co-ordinating strategy has become an almost impossible business. Who knows what the impacts and influence of Paddick's remarks have been on the wider milieu?

The resurgence of interest in anarchism, which has been steadily percolating through often quite different social movements in the West over the last few decades, has now begun to form significant waves on a much wider scale, linking First and Third World struggles. This has resulted in the formation of a diversity of political alliances coalescing around the politics of globalisation. The so-called anti-globalisation movement (sometimes called the 'alternative globalisation movement') that emerged in the mid-1990s includes indigenous peoples'

organisations, dispossessed or non-unionised workers, opponents of biotechnologies and militarism, environmentalists, squatters and campaigners against debt. What unites them is a fundamental questioning of the viability of existing mechanisms of decision-making, control, accountability and justice throughout the world. The neoliberal economic and political hegemony that has held sway for almost a generation is beginning to lose its legitimacy. Whilst it is clear that the diverse concerns of these countermovements are not reducible to single political programmes or monolithic analytical tools, the theoretical concepts most apparently to the fore appear to be those associated with anarchism. This is something that has been acknowledged by people within those movements, popular media commentators and even Marxist journals such as *New Left Review* (Graeber, 2002).

It is when a liminal moment such as Paddick's occurs, when the barriers between different forms of hierarchy and oppression relent to allow communication, about human nature, the desirability of particular political forms, the practical problems of consistency between means and ends, that anarchism still matters. It is when the Zapatistas in the Chiapas region of Mexico inspire Western activists to flock, like so many did to join the International Brigades in Spain in 1936, to participate in a complex struggle between indigenous cultures, national interests and international corporate power that anarchism still matters. When children on the streets of Delhi empower themselves through alternative education, squatters create their 'occasional cafés' in English cities such as Manchester and Leeds, needle exchange schemes flout repressive drug laws in the USA and Australia, then theories of self-organisation and mutual aid come into their own. When, after a pre-meditated State onslaught on protest against international finance and development ends in murder, like at the 'G8' Summit in Genoa, Italy during July 2001, activists regroup and rethink their tactics, it is then that anarchism very definitely matters.

From there to here

These examples are separated by considerable temporal and spatial divisions yet still retain a number of common themes. The fact that new generations seek out and quote 'classical anarchist' literature such as that of Peter Kropotkin, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, William Godwin, Michael Bakunin, Errico Malatesta, Emma Goldman or Alexander Berkman means that there are still issues and principles that, despite different contexts, are still worthy of debate. Amidst the uncertainties of globalisation and its culture of consumerism, people chance upon discourses of resistance: the accessible practicality of Colin Ward; the gentle reason of Noam Chomsky; the challenge of the anticivilisational critique of John Zerzan; and the enduring appeal of the Situationist International. Ecological activists interested in permaculture make connections with social ecology and the heroic and sometimes flawed attempt by Murray Bookchin to link Enlightenment

rationality with ecological thought. Experienced activists from campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s like Starhawk (2002b) help a new generation negotiate the pitfalls of protesting when the going gets tough. Postmodern and poststructural theory inspires artistic practitioners to problematise dominant representations of power and to construct more popular aesthetics based around grass roots activism. Scientific-minded activists are drawn to theories of chaos, complexity and emergence to help understand cause and effect in the social and natural worlds and the self-organising and yet unpredictable patterns that influence all life on earth.

The title of this book, *Changing anarchism*, attempts to convey the different sociological contexts for how contemporary anarchist theory and practice is to be understood. On the one hand, the contents epitomise many of the conceptual and practical concerns of this particular era, marking the changes in theories of power and offering strategies of resistance. Whilst we do not want to be accused of trying to map particular struggles on to certain sets of social, political or economic relations, it needs to be acknowledged that the contemporary political stage is both broader in scale and deeper in terms of critique than in the past. The much eulogised events of 'May 68' in France simply did not unite the diversity of political movements and oppressed groups across the world that currently challenge the rationale of globalisation.

We are increasingly living in what sociologists call 'world time', where particular events shape the future of whole populations instantaneously and not just those bound by nation states; this is a phenomenon perhaps first evidenced by the world's primary media war in Vietnam during the late 1960s. The construction of international events through increasingly subtle, far-reaching and effective media forces has amplified many of the ongoing concerns about the impact of mass culture and the forging of political consensus (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). The contestation of events that occur in 'world time' therefore takes on an added element of importance, whether this is enacted through existing notions of the global public sphere or the emerging alternatives to it. From the Oil Crisis of 1973, the 'Live Aid' spectacle of July 1985, the explosion of the Chernobyl nuclear power station in April 1986, or the protests at the World Trade Organisation conference in Seattle, United States, November 1999, there is a sense that 'the whole world is watching'.

In this respect, notions of 'risk' and 'contingency' as theorised by German sociologist Ulrich Beck (1992), help us to understand how social action, from the most private and individual through to the most collective and public, is constructed by the uncertainty of economic, political or technological relations. Managing the unpredictability of these forces is a challenge, Beck suggests, for governments, businesses and individuals, because of the global context within which most of them have to operate. As Colin Craig argues in this volume (chapter 7), it is this type of uncertainty that can be seized on by authority to legitimate new forms of repression and surveillance. This leads to the creation of 'wars of metaphor' which exist as much in the mind of the public as they do

in the policies of Western governments, most obviously in America, Europe and Asia after 11 September 2001. The consequences of these events have on the one hand managed to intensify the pressure on already-existing relations of inequality, poverty and ecological devastation, but crucially demanded that anarchists reposition themselves according to the 'new world disorder'.

One such stance has been the gradual move away from the still persuasive insurrectionary models of political change born of the industrial era, frequently based around 'capturing' power. Although there is considerable imaginative appeal in this scenario, tackling the complexity of the established webs of power makes for far less romantic endgames. Anarchism in an era of globalisation requires vastly different conceptual and practical tools which are able to identify different sources of power and contest them using context specific methods. How anarchist praxis might be configured in relation to these changes is the subject of the conclusion in the collection: 'How anarchism still matters'. Yet in order to begin to construct a sense of strategy, there is an intellectual terrain that needs to be mapped and formulated into feasible and appropriate courses of action that can relate to large numbers of people in terms of their daily experience. To accomplish this, some brief assessment of the relationship that contemporary anarchism has with the past is necessary.

Classical matters

In 1971, the publishers of the collection *Anarchism today* (edited by David Apter and James Joll) put the face of Michael Bakunin on the cover of their book. A number of its contributors also alluded to the important influence that Bakunin had had on the events of 'May 68' and within the resurgence of interest in anarchism generally, in the New Left and the American counter culture. The choice of Bakunin as a political talisman was in some ways apt, given the power of his insurrectionary legacy and the momentary possibility of a revolution in the West (see also Joll, 1979: 264). In other ways it was massively inappropriate, for as Stafford (1971) notes, considerable development of anarchist thinking took place during the twentieth century, particularly around the idea of 'permanent protest' and the transformation of people's states of mind before, during and after a revolution. The words of Gustav Landauer (cited in Stafford, 1971: 84), that 'the State is not something that can be destroyed by revolution . . . but is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings', seemed much more apposite than the iconoclasm of Bakunin. The continuing relevance of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anarchism is of course an evergreen debate and, over three decades on from May 1968, Bakunin would not necessarily be the choice of most ideal representative of the classical canon to inspire the latest wave of anarchist theory and practice.¹

In any kind of new interpretation of the history of anarchism, sometimes awkward and arbitrary decisions have to be taken about the framing of 'con-

temporary' events in terms of those in the past. Although many of the concerns of the contributors in this collection stem from debates that have arisen from the mid-1990s, we are using the post-'May 68' era as being indicative of what might be understood as the period of 'global anarchism'. This is not to suggest that anarchists did not express solidarity with struggles on the other side of the globe in previous eras (they clearly did), nor is it a wholesale rejection of all anarchist theory in the past. We are not claiming any overnight transformation of politics, culture and theory; rather, that the events in France and beyond seemed to act as a lens for a number of emerging movements which, in addition to existing official anarchist movements, have given anarchism a new lease of life.² These include the environmental movement, the women's movement, the anti-nuclear (power and weapons) movement, the lesbian and gay rights movement and aspects of the civil rights struggle, whose impact has already been well documented and all of which have expressed aspects of anarchist praxis to some degree. Each of these movements have spawned their own theoretical insights that can only be briefly acknowledged (see below). However, they should be seen as concurrent with the emerging intellectual impact of the Situationist International, the reaction to structuralist interpretations of society, as well as shifts away from more production-oriented versions of Marxism (assisted by the 'Prague Spring' in 1968). As with any vibrant period in the history of ideas, attributing particular cause and effect is difficult, but the more general point is that the logic of many of these discourses only realised their potential in *the late 1990s*. So, just as Apter and Joll had legitimate grounds for defining a new era of anarchism – even though it still seemed rather couched within the framework of nineteenth-century political praxis – we believe that there is now enough conceptual and material evidence to claim a 'paradigm shift' within anarchism.

When we talk about a global anarchism, we mean that it is impossible for anarchist theory and practice to be formulated in ways that do not acknowledge its relationship with global flows of people, ideas, technology, economics and, crucially, resistance. Indeed, it is significant that anarchism can no longer be said to be the preserve of white Westerners. Globalisation might have been predicted by Karl Marx in the mid-nineteenth century, but the sociological and philosophical concepts of that era which are able to help us understand the early twenty-first century are somewhat limited. If anything, an era of global anarchism calls for a repositioning of the individual within these global flows and the need to respond to complex ethical and strategic problems which involves new formulations of classic divisions within anarchism, such as that of individual liberty versus collective responsibility.

Themes and schemes of *Changing anarchism*

The shifts within political cultures during the period which we are identifying as the era of global anarchism pose a number of questions regarding the weight

that contemporary theorists and activists place on the classical anarchist canon. We regard it as self-evident that anarchist activities are constantly occurring throughout the world and do so without any knowledge of ‘official’ anarchist history, Western or otherwise. In this respect it is significant that several of the contributions to this book only briefly acknowledge the relationship that their themes have with the classical Western anarchist tradition. There are good methodological as well as rhetorical reasons for continually identifying new forms of ‘anarchy in action’, not least because it presents an opportunity to cast a different eye over the history of social organisation, politics and change.

In attempting to widen out definitions and manifestations of anarchism, we do not wish to dismiss the importance of the many writers and figureheads of official anarchist histories, or the unknown millions who have struggled to realise their ideals in a myriad of difficult and dangerous struggles. But this book is not about those people and our bibliography and glossary must serve as a signpost for those who wish to understand the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anarchist tradition more clearly. Our intention has been to draw upon a number of valuable pointers that exist in the work of the classical anarchists, as well as a number of its enduring principles, and to frame them in new ways.

The value of couching present concerns to some extent within earlier debates is demonstrated in a number of the contributions here. Dave Morland’s chapter (chapter 1) concentrates on the issue of broadening the parameters of how anarchist theory and practice is conceptualised, and compares the major philosophical differences and strategies between the classical period (what he calls ‘social anarchism’) and the contemporary anti-capitalist movements which he regards as being poststructuralist in nature. John Moore (chapter 3) acknowledges these epistemological differences in his argument that the often-overlooked figure of Max Stirner can be useful for understanding the impact of power on the formation of the Self, as well as prefiguring poststructuralist and situationist perspectives on revolutionary language. It is through an assessment of Stirner that Moore raises one of the critical questions about the relationship between anarchism and the Enlightenment: the extent to which a particular rational subject has dominated its theoretical *oeuvre*. Moore suggests that, by concentrating on writers who are embracing non-rational and individualistic perspectives, one can identify an ‘anarcho-psychological’ genealogy, constituting an alternative and antiauthoritarian *episteme*. This can be traced through Max Stirner and Friedrich Nietzsche to more recent writers such as Hakim Bey and is pivotal for understanding contemporary manifestations of anarchism, as well as posing important methodological questions about ‘official’ histories of anarchist and libertarian thought.

In a very different vein, David Gribble (chapter 10) assesses the viability of libertarian education a century on from the life and work of Spanish writer and activist Francisco Ferrer and finds considerable evidence for the endurance of these ideals. Instead of this form of education being the preserve of the privi-

leged children of the Western middle classes, many of the experiments that he documents around the world were born out of adversity, from the poor Puerto Rican communities of Chicago to children on the streets of Delhi. The manner in which these projects emerge, with similar emphases in different parts of the globe, reprises arguments that were made by Kropotkin over a century ago about the 'natural' basis of anarchist ethics.

Even though Kropotkin's views of human nature as being naturally benign and co-operative might struggle to stand the test of time (see Morland, 1997, and this volume), there are still some grounds for claiming that Kropotkin is the 'classical anarchist' most worthy of continual attention. It is the current ecological crisis that makes Kropotkin's work continue to be relevant as well as his interdisciplinary methods. Whilst we do not want to prioritise eco-anarchism as such, some of the most intense debates within anarchist *milieux* have concentrated on the relationship between human and non-human eco-systems in terms of their respective evolution, intelligence and development of potential for 'freedom'. These ideas were pivotal to Kropotkin's work and form much of the basis for one of the most important developments out of them, Murray Bookchin's *The ecology of freedom* (1982). Bookchin and Colin Ward have been among the principal advocates of Kropotkin's ecological legacy and each has amassed considerable practical and theoretical material on the continuing relevance of these ideas. This legacy is also evidenced in his inspiration of several twentieth-century urban planners (Macauley, 1998), contemporary sociological theories of 'space' (Huston, 1997), and in anticipating the contemporary sciences of complexity and emergence (Purchase, 1994).

If some figures and concepts from over a century ago retain a degree of relevance and application in the present, the same can also be said for the principles upon which anarchists have premised their actions.

Power and principles

In chapter 1, Dave Morland outlines the continuing importance of key anarchist principles of the era of 'classical anarchism'. These can be summarised as: an opposition to all forms of representative politics; an opposition to one class or group assuming a privileged role in the political struggle (classically the proletariat); and the opposition to all forms of power, not just political or economic. In addition, one might also add: an advocacy of self-organisation, direct action and spontaneity; equating the means of an action with its ends; and plans for the future being determined by activists *in situ* rather than via revolutionary blueprints.

Whilst these are ideals recognised by many anarchists the world over, in the period that we have identified as that of 'global anarchism', these principles become firstly transformed by the re-emergence of critiques of power based on gender, ethnicity or sexuality and then by ecological discourses. In this context,

the acceptance of difference – always part of the anarchist *raison d'être* – becomes essential, particularly in the kind of alliance politics between global North and South described by Karen Goaman in her chapter (chapter 9). This applies on a theoretical as well as a practical level, so that new forms of analysis do not become deterministic, and particular interpretations come to dominate alliance politics. As Jamie Heckert's discussion of the actions of Gay Pride in Scotland indicates (chapter 5), sexual identity politics can easily become essentialist and simply end up reproducing dominant notions of difference and oppression by another route.

The balance between collective strategies and individual freedom has always been a classic tension of all politics, yet because of the commitment of anarchists to notions of individual liberty and responsibility, it has often been more visible in the anarchist *milieu* than other parts of the political landscape. These difficulties are observed in a number of places in this collection, ranging from the practical implications of John Moore's interpretation of Stirner, David Gribble's discussion of pupil-designed education strategies to James Bowen's (chapter 6) advocacy of tolerance in the face of dogmatic praxis. Bronislaw Szerszynski and Emma Tomalin (chapter 11) note how, on protest camps and at alternative festivals, the freedom to develop one's identity through available spiritual 'resources' can occasionally clash with what is assumed to be collectively acceptable. The question of individual liberty and collective needs raises an equally important anarchist principle: equating the means of an action with its ends.

Personalised politics

For 'lifestyle anarchism'

If acknowledging difference has been one challenge in the era of global anarchism, an important added dimension has been the implication of anarchist critiques for living one's life in accordance to particular principles. Here we feel the need to consider how the 'politics of consumption' has become a central part of contemporary anarchist praxis, especially in terms of the impact that the actions of individuals and institutions have on human and non-human eco-systems. There are a number of critical positions that differentiate ecological forms of anarchism from their more mainstream counterparts. These have included social ecology, deep ecology and anarcho-primitivism as well as a number of permutations of these perspectives such as the 'inclusive democracy' project of Fotopoulos (1997).³ Despite huge differences between these positions as well as within them, there are serious attempts within each to utilise 'holistic' perspectives on the impact of capitalism and industrialisation on non-human eco-systems and human interrelationships. These critiques affect anarchist strategy and many of their advocates consider matters of principle to extend to the minimisation of harm inflicted on social or non-human eco-systems through the adoption of lifestyles based on reduced carbon consumption.⁴

To many, the extension of the feminist adage that the ‘personal is political’ seems both necessary and obvious; it is simply part of anarchist process that operates on a micro- and macro-sociological level simultaneously. However, the issue of ‘lifestyle anarchism’ has been even more hotly debated since the publication of Murray Bookchin’s book *Social anarchism or lifestyle anarchism: an unbridgeable chasm* (1995). The book is largely a defence of rationalism as part of the (collective) liberatory project and an onslaught on irrational and individualistic forms of anarchism, one of which is ‘lifestyle anarchism’ (in itself something of an umbrella term). Space prevents a comprehensive study of the history of this particular debate, but its existence is a useful indicator as to where the boundaries of ‘legitimate’ anarchist action are perceived to be.

Current research into radical movements, however, indicates the extent to which activists individually realise ethical codes and ‘personalised politics’ as part of their collective political struggles. This is most clearly argued in Paul Lichterman’s excellent *The search for political community* (1996) and is illustrative of the extent to which political action takes place on many different levels, increasingly based around the politics of consumption as much as the politics of production. So, just as rationality and irrationality are not clear-cut states of mind, neither are social anarchism and ‘lifestyle anarchism’ mutually exclusive categories. This is most clearly demonstrated in Szerszynski and Tomalin’s discussion of how activists knowingly construct their identities through a complex *bricolage* of ‘irrational’ ideas and unusual lifestyle politics.

Technology and violence

Personalised politics also extends to two related theoretical issues, regarding the extent to which the use of both technology and violence is so implicated in the reproduction of power relations that advocacy of the use of either is to be rejected out of hand. In the first instance, it is important to acknowledge the critique of technology that emerged from the Detroit-based *Fifth Estate* collective and writers such as Fredy and Lorraine Perlman, John Zerzan and George Bradford, initially in the 1970s but particularly during the 1980s. They drew upon earlier writers such as Lewis Mumford and Jacques Ellul who examined technological systems as being much more than just instruments of capitalism but sets of relationships in themselves able to shape consciousness itself. The argument asserts that technology cannot be neutral and must be rejected and that human societies must be organised on completely different lines.

This constitutes a significant departure from large swathes of ecological thought which have frequently adopted the position that technology can be liberatory if part of anarchist social relations. As Steve Millett (2003, and chapter 4, this volume) notes, this is a hugely controversial issue and although sometimes the critique lacks a practical application, it is extremely powerful in terms of raising questions about psychological dependency and alienation, in addition to

its primary claims. Regardless of whether the premises of these arguments are accepted, a theoretical Pandora's Box has been opened. It is also hugely ironic that this critique has enjoyed considerable exposure, particularly through Zerzan, but also the Unabomber Manifesto (2001)⁵ at a time when considerable weight has been placed on the importance of Internet and mobile 'phone technology in co-ordinating actions at the global summit protests described in Goaman's chapter (chapter 9).

If these particular technologies can be seen to be committing violence on the planet in terms of their exploitation of natural and human resources, those opposing the destruction are themselves locked into a number of debates as to the respective violence of their own protest tactics. In such circumstances we have seen the reappearance of long-established anarchist debates that have been reinvigorated through exposure to tactics used by the peace movement, the civil rights movement and the women's movement in particular. These have built on arguments used by Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi (see Randle, 1994) that nonviolence can have extremely positive effects in the carrying out of civil disobedience and direct action strategies. In addition to the frequently made points that violence begets further violence and creates even more alienated activists, there are more complex matters when addressing issues of violence on property and violence as being appropriate or inappropriate for all circumstances (Hart, 1997). Considerable debate has occurred within the alternative globalisation movement about the tactics of the 'Black Block' anarchists, particularly in Seattle in November 1999 and at Genoa in July 2001. In the first instance the debates focused on the extent to which the trashing of multinationals such as Nike, McDonald's or Starbucks was useful to the overall message of the protests. In the second instance, the brutal policing tactics turned 'peaceful' protesters into victims, regardless of their intentions on the day. One journalist caught up in the violence compared the situation to Pinochet's Chile (Porter, 2001: 79). In the circumstances, hundreds of people were faced with the choice of defending themselves or facing serious injury, whilst the media focused on the Black Block for allegedly provoking violence. Research into anarchist attitudes towards violence in the past has been mixed, with the response often based around the relative short- or long-term vision of the person(s) in question (Chan, 1995). On balance, however, the internationalisation of much anarchist action has produced a greater inclination towards nonviolence, bearing witness (in Mexico and Palestine for instance) and the sharing of experiences. Although some writers have equated nonviolence and pacifism with 'pathology' (Churchill, 1999), the case for recognising violence as being multifaceted and operating on many levels appears to be made, something that Heckert notes in this collection with respect to 'forcing' political messages on to the general public.

It is our contention that the critical mass of these ethical matters and points of principle rising out of different analyses of power constitute a significant shift within anarchist theory and practice.

Theoretical matters

Definitional issues

If the sociological contexts within which the aforementioned key anarchist principles operate have changed so much, then to what extent are existing definitions of anarchism useful? We have already intimated at the beginning of this Introduction that the issue of whether anarchism as a single ideology can be said to exist is one of considerable contemporary relevance. The choice of book title further challenges this notion of shared critique and practice, but this would be to misunderstand the diversity of perspectives that have always been present within anarchist politics. Even a cursory glance at anarchist history reveals the existence (and frequent coexistence) of mutualists, communists, collectivists, syndicalists and individualists during the heyday of ‘classical anarchism’ between 1860 and 1939. Moreover, these versions of anarchism offered different interpretations of the classical principles outlined above. In this respect we note the endurance of a number of debates: the relative importance of individual versus collective liberation; the option to prioritise manifestations of political or economic power; and the eternal dilemma of whether the right road of change must be carried out through violent or nonviolent means. Whilst these theoretical and practical dilemmas prevail today, the world in which they are interpreted and the criteria employed to do so are massively more sophisticated and diverse. To this extent, we believe that it is only in the era of global anarchism that the concept of *anarchisms* can really hold any weight. The analytical difference can be demonstrated through considering the emphases placed within definitions of anarchism itself.

In the introduction to his anthology *For anarchism*, the historian David Goodway captures the parameters of classical anarchist epistemology very effectively. Anarchism manages to:

Combin[e] a socialist critique of capitalism with a liberal critique of socialism, a (*laissez-faire*) liberal rejection of the State, both as status quo and as a vehicle for social change, with a socialist insistence upon human solidarity and communitarianism. (1989: 1)

Such frames of reference are by no means uncommon (see Apter, 1971; Walter, 1979) and, whilst important, do demonstrate the extent to which theorists of revolution have tended to prioritise particular characteristics of the critique of modernity. Economic and political analyses continue to be important and in some situations are perhaps the most visible constituencies of power, yet this should not obviate responsibility from recognising other discourses. That anarchists have focused on a wide range of issues and have often declared their critique of capitalist society to be exhaustive and comprehensive is not a new phenomenon. Debates about the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism were important in the theory and practice of anarchism over a century ago (Marsh, 1981) and one of its principal figures, Emma Goldman, also wrote

about racism in (American) society (1977). Indeed, the ecological influence of Kropotkin (and to some extent Proudhon) manifested itself practically in a number of sustainable living experiments in both rural and urban locations (see Hardy, 1979). Animal rights and vegetarianism were also emerging as part of a libertarian critique during this time period, particularly through figures such as Louise Michel in France and Edward Carpenter in England.

What becomes clear during the era of global anarchism is the consolidation of many of these latter critiques within distinctive anarchist movements and networks. Indeed, this period also saw the emergence of new claims for a more comprehensive analysis of power than those offered by the classical era.

Challenging anarchism

During the 1960s, the concept of ‘totality’⁶ began to gain intellectual weight, largely as a result of the critique of consumer capitalism offered by the Situationist International. However, whilst their contribution to anarchist theory is well established and acknowledged,⁷ a number of their contemporaries have only recently begun to accrue the same degree of critical appraisal. The aforementioned *Fifth Estate* collective (outlined in chapter 4 by Millett), comprised part of a *milieu* of radical communist intellectuals, including Jacques Camatte, Jean Baudrillard,⁸ Cornelius Castoriadis and the ‘Socialism or barbarism’ group⁹ who were all exploring ways to extend the critique of capitalism into new areas. One of the significant positions to emerge from some of these writers was to challenge the Marxist position that the aim of revolution was to capture ‘capital’ for the proletariat. Instead, the point was to abolish it and all of its attendant relations.

So, whereas some of the aforementioned new social movements brought new critiques of power to understanding oppression in terms of gender, race or ecology, these radical communists sought to encapsulate all relations of authority within the same conceptual space. For instance, based on a reading of the ‘lost sixth chapter’ of Karl Marx’s *Capital* (see Millett, 2003), Camatte sought to explain how the economic relationships inherent in capitalism also percolated into all other areas of life as well. This was a starting point for writers such as Perlman (1983) and John Zerzan (1999) to question power on much more ontological levels.

Perlman’s metaphor of ‘Leviathan’ as a giant machine, of which the State, capitalism and technology are all part, is an attempt to understand power relations as systems that arose with the early civilisations. It essentially merges Thomas Hobbes’ (seventeenth-century) idea of a sovereign authority (1968 edition) with Lewis Mumford’s notion of the ‘megamachine’ (1988). Mumford talked about the existence of an authoritarian (as opposed to democratic) ‘technics’ that organised all human relationships in the period of the early civilisations. It has been through such systems that societies have internalised and reproduced alienated power relationships.

Whilst clearly enjoying considerable appeal during an age of globalisation and American supremacy, these ideas can be seen to form the backbone of the contemporary anti-civilisational and anti-technological anarchist critique. In particular, they raise questions about human dependency upon technology, relations of authority, fetishisation of work and alienation from nature. Moreover, as Goaman points out (chapter 9), the kinds of new political alliances that are taking place between groups from the often impoverished global South and the ‘developed’ North suggest a rethinking of many of these notions, particularly where there are assumptions about technology as being beneficial. This is not a new argument and it is interesting to note a re-emergence of 1960s radical anthropology, such as the ‘original affluent society’ thesis offered by Marshall Sahlins in *Stone age economics* (1972).

The writer most aligned with this particular position in the contemporary anarchist milieu is John Zerzan, who has suggested that contemporary activists are looking for a ‘theory that is pitched at a deeper level’ (Campbell, 2001: 2). In his books *Future primitive* (1995) and *Elements of refusal* (1999), he has tried to provide such a theory. In the former work, Zerzan embraces Sahlins’s thesis, arguing that pre-agricultural hunter-gatherer societies had an intelligence, health and social stability, a fact ignored by generations of anthropologists and archaeologists on account of its implications for the alleged ‘progress’ of civilisation. In the latter book, he extends this position through systematic attacks on the supposedly liberatory benefits of the invention of language, art, technology, numerical systems and concepts of ‘time’. Each of these he sees as having a role in legitimising the exploitative relations that emerged in the ‘cradle of civilisation’ with agriculture and domestication, and which have, according to Zerzan, continued to feed the alienation of people from each other and from the natural world ever since.

These ‘total’ critiques of civilisation and technology offered by anarcho-primitivists certainly suggest new ways of conceptualising power that have hitherto been largely absent from the anarchist critique. What cannot be underestimated though is how controversial and problematic some of these positions are (note the different interpretations taken by Goaman, Millett and Bowen in this book for instance). The value of these ‘deeper’ critiques is that they offer a significant challenge to entrenched anarchist positions, particularly around questions of alienation, attitudes to nature and psychological reliance on technological systems. Whether they offer tangible strategies for remaking society is a moot point and one that we shall return to in the conclusion of the book. For now it is worth noting that in the period of global anarchism, there has been something of an acceleration in analytical frameworks which claim new interpretations of power, but the anti-civilisation critique is not one that necessarily holds sway.

Poststructuralism, anarchy and chaos

Two other philosophical perspectives that have begun to have an impact in the era of global anarchism are poststructuralism and theories of complexity and

chaos from the natural sciences. These are also extremely problematic, but as Jonathan Purkis argues (2001, and this volume, chapter 2) they offer important new methods for thinking about the constitution of power in contemporary societies and how one can affect change in all kinds of ways simultaneously.

In *The Political philosophy of poststructural anarchism* (1994), the American author Todd May has argued that the poststructural move away from analytical frameworks which rely on a single explanatory 'hinge' is extremely compatible with anarchism. Both May and Andrew Koch (1997) have suggested that the theoretical tradition which includes Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida offers ways of problematising the rationalistic, humanistic and scientific assumptions behind classical anarchism and conceptualising power in unique ways. Certainly, all of these have critiques of the Enlightenment and particular 'meta-narratives' that may be of use to some anarchists. Foucault's work on the reproduction and perpetuation of social power through discourses specific to particular historical situations offers insights into the diverse manifestations of power and levels of complicity involved, willing and unwilling. Similarly the micro-sociological observations inherent in Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) concept of the 'rhizome' and the decentred, lattice-like and non-deterministic nature of power is attractive when we are trying to understand the ever-increasing complexities of global forces.

Ironically, the aforementioned associations are embraced more enthusiastically by non-anarchists than anarchists, and this may well be on the grounds that poststructuralism is not a philosophy of praxis.¹⁰ In a review of May's book, Moore (1997a) notes the propensity for poststructuralists to talk about power as something that can be divided into negative and positive forms, a situation that most anarchists would feel uncomfortable with, but, in terms of praxis, anarchists also must engage with. As Moore points out in his own chapter in this collection (chapter 3), Foucault's seductive analysis of power/knowledge (1980) presumes that countercultural and antipolitical forces actually want to negotiate with those in power as opposed to desiring the abolition of power and organising in spite of them. It is this kind of reasoning which leads anarchists to see the areas of poststructuralism and also postmodernism as more of a conceptual toolbox than a particular advancement in anarchist theory and praxis as such (Goaman and Dodson, 2000; Zerzan, 1991).

In a very different vein, many contemporary anarchist theorists have tried to draw on the natural and physical scientific notions of chaos and complexity. The significant 'hook' here is the existence of 'self-organising' systems as an integral part of the ordering of life itself, that there are 'mutualistic' processes at work which allow other patterns to 'emerge' according to their own internal dynamics (rather than being imposed on from outside). As already indicated, there is considerable debt to Kropotkin here, although this is rarely acknowledged within the scientific community who 'discovered' these processes, perhaps because research into complex systems takes place in extremely hierarchical and profit-driven knowledge communities. As Chesters (2003) has recently noted, the

concerns in some radical quarters¹¹ that complexity will become comprehensively adopted by business cultures (as opposed to being a passing fad) is of less concern than it might otherwise have been. Competitive, hierarchical money-making enterprises cannot exist with ‘flat structures’ or ‘complex adaptive systems’ that allow new cultures to emerge simply because they do not have the rationale or organisational flexibility to do so. However, Chesters suggests, it is precisely in the organisational cultures of the ‘alternative globalisation movement’ (AGM) that these processes will begin to be visible:

[The movement’s] reliance upon flat structures, network forms, its antipathy to institutionalisation and leaders *per se*, its generation and proliferation of events, gatherings, e-mail lists and web sites has created a structure that is dynamic, resilient and actualises through ‘weak ties’ the potential of those belonging to it. The apparent disorganisation . . . masks a deeper truth – an emergent order on the edge of chaos. (Chesters, 2003: 56)

These concepts are still in their infancy, but are in a long line of ‘holistic’ perspectives frequently linked to ecological thought that have interested anarchists to varying degrees. Curiously, some areas of eco-anarchist philosophy – and especially Bookchin’s version of social ecology – have expressed distrust to an uncritical embracing of concepts from the natural sciences, although there often appears to be more of an overlap than is sometimes acknowledged.¹²

Deconstructing old themes with new tools

Despite their different assumptions and trajectories, each of the aforementioned theoretical perspectives offers useful ways of rethinking the enduring areas of anarchist concern. In a sense, it is the generic idea of ‘complexity’ that differentiates the classical era of anarchism from the global one. This is perhaps best realised through the idea of the ‘emergence’ of pre-existing ‘total critiques’ into temporal and spatial contexts within which they make far more sense and impact. In particular, the deconstruction of dualistic and deterministic philosophy has to become a starting point for theories of global anarchism and this is evident in many of the contributions that follow.

Firstly, the importance of transcending dualistic philosophy is central to the arguments of Heckert (chapter 5), who, following very much in the footsteps of sexual revolutionaries such as Emma Goldman and Alex Comfort, offers some potentially unpopular but extremely important words for established Leftist practitioners of identity politics. For Heckert, any analysis of sexual politics should transcend critiques of political economy as well as essentialist positions that are culturally exclusive; indeed, in both theoretical and practical senses (on the streets), these discourses effectively reinforce the oppressive oppositions of Self and Other. Such questions of normality and the politics of intimacy are pivotal to Joanna Gore’s (chapter 8) exposition on the boundaries of oppression as defined by both the educational and psychiatric professions. Gore embraces

the often overlooked tradition of 1960s pioneers R. D. Laing, David Cooper and Thomas Szasz, whose anti-dualistic theories helped to deconstruct dominant definitions of normality and socialisation. Her argument, however, also makes important comparisons with the way that young people learn about the most appropriate forms of emotional expression within society, especially through artistic media. Here Gore draws on the radical tradition of 'community arts' that in the 1970s was a political force to be reckoned with before the evolution of a 'commissioning culture' in the 1980s. The former was a time when boundaries between artist and audience were being experimented with in many areas of politics and popular culture continuing the work of the Situationist International, the Living Theatre and drama theorist Augusto Boal. Interestingly, from different trajectories, both Gore and Heckert are effectively elaborating on a theme raised by Colin Ward in his essay 'Play as an anarchist parable' (1982). Undermining the serious and rational sentiments of political discourse is of course a fine situationist tactic, and in this context it is an effective one: sexuality without a sense of fun is as dull as everyday life without laughter. These arguments are central to Gribble's consideration of the philosophy of libertarian education and the importance of student-*defined* as opposed to student-centred forms of learning: education should be a pleasure, not a duty.

Contesting oppression in such micro-sociological contexts forms an essential part of Moore's evocation of the need for 'lived poetry' (chapter 3), a fantastically optimistic glimpse of how the Self could develop without the clutter of everyday power relations. The permeation of oppression through all areas of contemporary living is something that many of the essays here identify, regardless of which philosophical premises they draw upon, and is symptomatic of the limitations of and move away from dualistic thinking. If there is one particular area that defines much contemporary anarchist thought, it is the need to challenge existing divisions between humanity and non-human nature, long a concern of ecological critiques.

This relationship is addressed here in a number of different ways: by Millett in terms of the anti-technological position of the influential *Fifth Estate* collective; by Goaman in terms of bridging the distance between Western perspectives and movements in the global South; by Heckert through the deconstruction of debates about natural and unnatural sexuality; by Purkis in terms of the theoretical perspectives utilised by social scientists; and by Szerszynski and Tomalin through the notion of 'enchantment'. The latter authors raise the thorny question of spirituality within radical political discourse, asking what insight contemporary activists can glean from the adoption of apparently 'irrational' perspectives.

Such positions are not unusual in radical thought, and Szerszynski and Tomalin note some of the overlapping relationships between millenarianism, environmentalism and anarchism. The history of anarchism has been periodically peppered with advocates of non-aligned or anti-institutional forms of religious belief. Of the classical anarchists, Leo Tolstoy was perhaps the most

sympathetic to religious beliefs, although some of his ideas are problematic (Hopton, 2000). More recently Taoism has become linked to anarchist ideas by a number of thinkers (Clark, 1984; Rapp, 1998) and in the science fiction novels of Ursula LeGuin.

Oppositional gambits

A key issue in these ecologically conscious, antidualistic currents is the extent to which the body becomes a focus and a vehicle for identifying and contesting power and oppression. Since the mid-1980s this has become a fashionable part of academic discourse, particularly in the humanities and social sciences. For our purposes, it is possible to identify a definite 'anarchist politics of the body' in a number of the contributions to this book. In his assessment of the role that the regulation of drugs has in wider forms of social control, Craig notes the manner in which the taking of narcotics can constitute a form of radical opposition. This can be couched in terms of individual self-determined acts of recreational resistance, or more soberingly a rejection of the very organisation of capitalist reality. In terms of the physical intervention of individuals in a protest situation, the body has always been an inspiring symbol of resistance, be this in the classic Gandhian-inspired form of civil disobedience (identified by Szerszynski and Tomalin) or the inventive symbolic interventions of protestors against globalisation, here discussed by Goaman. For many, the body is a central focus for the kinds of activist politics of consumption that intensified in the 1990s. As individuals have adopted non-exploitative lifestyles to co-exist with the protest tactics and philosophies of animal liberation, ecological direct action, anti-militarism and so forth, so the body becomes defined in new ways.

The theoretical matters that define the global age of anarchism are complex, controversial and constantly adapting to new forms of conflict and struggle in ways that seem impossible to articulate coherently. This has often been the problem of anarchist epistemology in a general sense, and being dismayed by the difficulties of categorisation and comprehensive analysis is perhaps to miss a crucial point about the need for indeterminacy in the world. For too long, anarchists have been burdened by embarrassingly simplistic, redundant visions of political analysis and engagement. Some of these may still be applicable in certain contexts, but, for the most part, the application of modernist and Enlightenment anarchism to the plethora of struggles around the globe requires at best a healthy degree of scepticism. The possibilities for influence and change are, to paraphrase an old situationist quote, endless and bizarre and are, in all probability, indicative of a paradigm shift that we are suitably unable to recognise at this point in history. Nevertheless, the issue of contesting and abolishing power wherever it is located is of course another matter and it is to these strategic considerations that we return in the conclusion. The diversity of perspectives on anarchism that follow serves to illustrate that the pursuit of libertarian forms

of human organisation is a complex, challenging, but enriching and worthwhile matter.

Notes

- 1 Bakunin does feature, by default, in the argument made by Goaman, that there has often been an affinity between anarchism and the politicisation of the peasantry, something that connects seventeenth-century English radicals like the Diggers and contemporary indigenous movements like the Zapatistas.
- 2 Some theorists, whilst not discounting these events as indicating a sea-change in political cultures, have downplayed the idea that the new movements sprang up quite so dramatically. Jan Willem Duyvendak, for instance, suggests that 'May 68' was largely a battle over 'old movement politics' and the repositioning of the Left wing of French politics (1995: 113ff.).
- 3 In the 1980s, these debates were about the relative merits of social and deep ecology, with the political positions of the US Earth First! movement coming under scrutiny (see Bookchin and Foreman, 1991). The 1990s were characterised more by the growing impact that anarcho-primitivism had on the radical environmental movement and some within the growing alternative globalisation movement. One of the common denominators in many of these debates was the figure of Murray Bookchin, whose attacks on other theorists have received more attention than the ideas which he has tried to defend (see 1995 in particular). Good summaries of (some) of these debates can be found in Watson (1996) and Light (1998).
- 4 These positions are obviously culturally relative. In particular, critiques of anthropocentrism have been vociferous in Britain where animal liberation and rights movements have been very effective, but this has not been true even within the West, let alone the wider world.
- 5 'The Unabomber' (Theodore Kaczynski) is currently serving three life sentences in American prisons for a seventeen-year long war on technological society (which included fatalities). He has become a cult figure for some anarcho-primitivists.
- 6 The concept of 'totality' can be traced back to the Marxism of Georg Lukács.
- 7 The Situationist International and the work of Guy Debord (1987 [1957]) and Raoul Vaneigem (1967, 1994) in particular has been the focus of a number of high-profile treatments such as Plant (1992).
- 8 Baudrillard's legacy on social theory in general has been immense, although anecdotal evidence often suggests that his 'early work' such as *For a critique of the political economy of the sign* (1972) has a lasting relevance that some of his 1990s works lack. *Simulations* (1983) and its discussion of simulacra and hyper-reality are a constant reminder of the fluid and shallow nature of post-modern living, with more than a nod to the Situationist International along the way.
- 9 *Socialism or barbarism* was a radical communist journal edited by Castoriadis that ran from 1948 to 1967. Figures closely associated with it in the late 1960s included J. F. Lyotard and Daniel Cohn-Bendit.
- 10 The somewhat inward-looking dimension to poststructuralism, perhaps in reaction to the failures of 'May '68', has been pointed out many times (see Berman, 1992; Eagleton, 1996).

- 11 See for instance Fotopoulos (2000).
- 12 Many of the concepts that Bookchin discusses, such as non-human and human ecosystems having their own potential to 'actualise' through self-organisation and unfolding processes, feel a lot closer to these reference points than he himself acknowledges.

