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PostAnarchia Repertoire
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variously define anarchism are now retroactively shown to be applicable to an epistemology: how do we know, and how do we adequately represent our reality? Well, without authoritarianism, domination, or monologue; but with liberty, equality, and solidarity. In sum, with genuine respect for the dialogical principle, for participation, for the equality of potential, for innovation, proliferation, dissensus, paralogy, polycentrism, transversality of connections, and openness to the sharing of information by all, from all, to all, without limits. With this as our repertoire, let the games commence.

definitions are not set in stone, while on the other hand, they are not meaningless. Definitions do things in the real world even though they are not given as commandments on Mount Sinai. Definitions frequently slide as if slippery to our cognitive grasp. We ourselves frequently equivocate in discussion, not to mention the way definitions change in debates among the multitude. The representation of anarchism itself should be an anarchist representation, as it will have consequences. Even if we put a term under erasure in our discussion (Derrida used the Latin *sous rature*), even when we cross out an essentialist ~~definition~~, it continues to function in a way, so that we are forced to mark its consequences for our thought. Or, it continues to be necessary even as we acknowledge that it is inaccurate. So for example, the signifier "race" might be marked as unhappily as ~~race~~ because even though it has been deconstructed (in effect showing that its social construction is not fundamentally grounded in any biological signified but is rather based on binary oppositions and hierarchical social formations), still the inadequate term continues to be necessary even if only in some newly distanced manner. In contemporary science, "race" is a very loose polythetic category. There is no monothetic definition for race at the level of DNA, since the necessary and/or sufficient genes don't correspond to any social definition. Instead there is a surprising range of variation in clusters that are more polythetic. No one today really believes in race as a reified thing-in-itself, some essentialist noumenon, and yet race continues to operate with genuine consequences: sometimes as self-affirmation for ethnic groups (or what Gayatri Spivak calls "strategic essentialism") and other times used to oppress those groups. Sometimes ~~race~~ is used to identify actual clusters of genetics that make a real difference in the medical treatment of disease, but always polythetically. The clusters tend to be much smaller specific populations inside of the larger groups we have learned to think of as "racial".

In terms of the problem at hand, my suggestion is that a polythetic definition of anarchism is consonant with what anarchism aims at. This slippery yet consequential sensibility about "anarchism" itself is partly what is meant by the signifier "postanarchism". And it should be of further interest to anarchists that this approach is itself faithful to an ~~post~~-anarchist epistemology, wherein most of the set of characteristics that

Abstract

"PostAnarchia Repertoire" is a set of discrete propositions about postanarchism. These can be read either as stand-alone units in any order, or also as a linear development that unfolds from beginning to end. The essay attempts to articulate the implied principles, themes, and concepts from across a range of contemporary postanarchist writing. Themes here include: transversality across acentric and polycentric networks; the tension between the three revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality, and solidarity; the potential consequences of taking equality seriously; how the anarchist criticism of representation has been complicated by the paradoxes of deconstruction; the necessity of dissensus and the appeal of paralogy and the dialogical; and finally why a polythetic definition of anarchism is more suitable than an essentialist definition.

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> "We do not lack communication. On the contrary, we have too much of it. We lack creation. *We lack resistance to the present.* The creation of concepts in itself calls for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not yet exist [. . .] This people and this earth will not be found in our democracies. Democracies are majorities, but a becoming is by its nature that which always eludes the majority" (Deleuze & Guattari).

How did we get so sad? The 20th century is the story of failed revolutions against both capitalism and empire; that is, of the communist and anticolonialist revolts. Instead, capitalism has never been so widely embraced and embracing, meanwhile the empire re-insinuates itself in neocolonial exploitation and postcolonial nationalist regimes that grotesquely abuse their own citizens. The century was a trap. When it wasn't fascist violence that destroyed anarchism as in Spain, then it was totalitarian violence. When it wasn't colonial violence, then it was postcolonial violence. When it wasn't nationalism, then it was terrorism. When it wasn't overt violence, it was an even more insidious, because

covert, form of control: an economic and technical control of populations and of individuals that was difficult to name, much less to resist. We are sad because we were seduced and abandoned, forlorn lovers of humanity. This last century was not one of conspiracy, though many conspiracies succeeded. The only conspiracies allowed to succeed were those that conformed to and furthered the total drift into global capital. In an era of economic hierarchy, only the violence of the economy is permitted.

Past, present, future. Anarchism, it is often said, has passed. It was a 19th century ideology that found expression in a few bombs and assassins, the "propagandists of the deed." Its fullest communal expression was in Spain before the fascists violently overthrew the Republic in that ultimate prelude to WWII. Hence, all anarchism has is a past, a hopeless cause in a mature world of democratic states. So goes the managed folklore. Nevertheless, an awkward present throws in with a certain return of anarchism, the "new anarchists", the "black blocs", the intentional communities, the temporary autonomous zones, the experimental social centers, the resurgence of publishing anarchist anthologies, classics, rereadings, and the startling reappearance of the symbol of anarchy everywhere: asserting that true order grows from anarchic liberty. It is no small irony, historic irony, that the status quo system of welfare state plus capitalism is the only one to have announced its own lack of a futurity: this has been called the "end of history" and "the end of ideology". The present is the ultimate attainment of human abilities, the wisest compromise is conveniently located nearby: the status quo turns out to be unsurpassable, an eternal present that would be useless to oppose, since all competing alternatives have failed. Yet like an uncanny ghost, anarchism then reappears to announce that reports of its demise are premature. On the contrary, it now is reinvented as "post-contemporary theory", calling attention to a "coming community" (Agamben) a "democracy to come" (Derrida) a "people that do not yet exist" (Deleuze & Guattari) in a paradoxically "unavowable community" (Blanchot) in which the rising "multitude" consists not of identities but instead of "singularities" (Hardt & Negri). These theories of libertarian communalism do not name themselves as anarchist — or at least only obliquely as can easily be shown in particular allusions and footnotes.

not against persons, while others traditionally practised assassination. Some anarchists believe in gradual reform, others in sudden revolution, while others reject both reform and revolution in favour of rebuilding the social fabric from an outside position, or perhaps inside out with alternative services, groups, and practices. These many differences are extensive and perennial, despite the occasional attempt to gather an ecumenical all-embracing "Anarchism without Adjectives" as Fernando Tarrida del Mármol called for in Cuba and also Voltairine de Cleyre in America in the late 19th century. Post-anarchism obviously re-attaches an adjective. This adjective upsets some anarchists. Nevertheless, it is the *noun* "anarchism" not the adjective that has traditionally required this or that modifier: individualist, social, syndicalist, green, libertarian, communal, activist, pacifist, nonwestern, and so forth. I propose to think this controversial issue of definition by way of the scientific approach called "polythetic classification". A polythetic definition is not monothetic, as in Aristotle's approach to defining a category by its properties, which must be both necessary and sufficient. There is no monothetic definition of anarchism, since some of the aspects above are necessary but not sufficient, while others might seem sufficient, but they are not necessary. Rather than disciplining the tradition of anarchism to make it fit an essentialist definition, I suppose we could use an anarchist approach to definition, one that is non-essentialist, more inclusive, and that deflates authority. Polythetic classification appears helpful, and it is used rigorously in several branches of biology. The approach is not difficult. One notes a set of characteristics or qualities that pertain, in our case to anarchism. We then agree that so long as something has a certain number of those qualities, probably most of the qualities though not all, then it is by definition anarchism. But the set of qualities are all equal in a specific manner: none is necessary in itself. Any might be absent, but the definition would still apply if most of the characteristics applied — in any possible combination. Rather than an anarchism without adjectives, this is an anarchism with many possible adjectives.

Depending on the number of qualities or aspects of anarchism one would include in this polythetic set, the possible permutations would be either few or many, delimited and strict, or extensive and lax. Here again we encounter one of the open secrets of deconstruction: on the one hand,

How does postmodern dissensus avoid the still serious charge of careless relativism? To assume in principle the equality of potential is not to conclude in haste that this potential is automatically realized, much less that everyone's opinion is "equally correct" or even "equally incorrect". Although this latter negation is very tempting, it too misses the mark badly. Let us assume more precisely that everyone has the equal potential to arrive at a better view or fuller view — you and me, experts and novices, minorities and majorities, host and guest, male and female, both Kant and Hegel, Darwin and Kropotkin, Marx and Bakunin, and at the far limits of our ability to imagine even Sarah Palin and Osama bin Laden have after all is said and done, the same potential to develop an adequate representation of themselves and others. This is very far from the careless claim that all of these representations are equally true, good, or beautiful. Neither are they equally false, bad, and ugly. Again this is a great temptation that must be overcome. The principle of a politics of equal representations necessarily affirms also the value of dissensus. To the degree that this is an uncomfortable or disappointing conclusion reflects the degree of one's mistrust in equality itself. Alternately, to the degree that this becomes acceptable, personally and politically, is the degree of trust in postanarchism.

Polythetic set: or, how to define anarchism? As a tradition, anarchism was never simply one thing. It too has a history of disagreements and even sectarian splits and at least varying emphases on any number of issues. Certainly anarchism is against domination — but then some anarchists believe in god or in the benefit of parental authority over their children. Others do not. Certainly anarchism is anti-State. Still, some anarchists argue that since transnational corporations are in many cases more powerful than the State, it would then behoove us to modulate this anti-state position to be more practically tactical in approaching social crises where the State can regulate and ameliorate some of the abusive practices of capitalism. The main tradition of anarchism was anti-capitalist and even communal. Yet some anarchists support free enterprise and even individualism. Most are modernist, but some are primitivist. Some anarchists are pacifist, while others practised "propaganda by the deed" with Molotov cocktails and more. Among the latter, some believe that violence is only to be applied against property but

But they everywhere reanimate the supposedly dead anarchist themes and rearticulate an older lexicon in neologisms for new emerging conditions. Postanarchism, therefore, asserts its future; while welfare state consumerism never tires of asserting its eternal present without any future development, in complete denial of history.

The people to come, those evoked by the great visionary artists, poets, philosophers — and here I refer to the likes of Blake, Whitman and Nietzsche — will not be clones of the proletarians, or preservations of beleaguered working class culture, or back to the severed roots of native tribes, or any essentialist identity (or foundationalist identification) whether masculine or feminine, black or white, true or false. These contemporary stylizations of radical imagery are rejected in postanarchist theory (and indeed essentialism was most often rejected in classical anarchism too). Instead, the new accent in all postanarchism is on neither preserving nor returning, but rather on becoming. The pure image of authentic proletarians or aboriginals or precolonial subalterns is now transformed and opened up to future "becoming-minor". Neither majority nor purity; but of vital concern here is the endlessly open process of becoming different from what one already was, *creating* a singularity rather than *being* an individual, branching outward rather than digging for roots. Singularities are unique clusters formed of both pre-individual elements and trans-individual elements, making up their own spaces and times. Nevertheless, what is affirmed and carried forth from the various marxisms, anti-colonialisms, and classical anarchism is what Deleuze and Guattari have listed as the source of the people to come: "an oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic, and irremediably minor race".

Where are we today? Caught like pawns between the two dominant and dominating institutions that have competed with each other and cooperated with each other for access to our domination: the State and the Corporation. Our political alternative will not be to take over and become the corporation, nor the state. But rather to sidestep these institutions by way of decentralization, which undercuts both. Both of these dominating institutions operate as hierarchies. More and more they also appear to operate like networks, a diffuse power that seeps into the fabric of society itself as "governmentality" or a "biopower" that subjects

us not through discipline or conformity to norms, but rather through suffusing its model of our supposed "interests" deeply and seductively into our own dreams and desires. This network power collapses the boundaries between public and private, between work and play, between home economics and the Economy. But this power, insidiously effective, is merely a contingent strategy, a screen that maintains the quite obvious hierarchies that it supports. Our alternative operation is networks too, but networks that are not screens but rather redistributions of power. Who speaks, who can be heard, who can see, who can be seen, who can decide, what is allowed to be decided upon — all of these are redistributed in genuine networks.

Networks. All kinds of networks for different purposes, using different kinds of connectivity. Oddly, network studies have shown that not every node on a network is equally decentered. Networks are potentially acentric, but in fact they evolve as *polycentric*: where some nodes are much more used and useful than others. The completely acentric interconnectivity is virtual, is available to be enacted; however in practice, most interconnections go through a smaller number of major hubs. The larger number of other nodes become relatively marginal, even though they are still connected to every other node, and are still potentially capable of becoming more "central". The result is a hybrid of hierarchy and equality: both/and yet neither/nor vertical and horizontal: something *in-between*. A new concept is called for. A diagonal, or better, *transversal* interaction. Networks instantiate the hybridity and the equality and the liberty and the mutual interconnectedness and the dialogical polyphony of the key postanarchist transvaluation of all values. The coming community is networked and it arrives through networked structures, and it enacts a network: polycentric when it wants to be, and yet always already decentered or acentric if wants to be. The network both enables and results from the self-organizing system of singularities in mutual connectedness.

Multinational conferences, held to official fanfare in cities named Kyoto, Seattle, Genoa, Copenhagen, etc., have repeatedly shown the failure of elite managers to come to any viable agreement about how best to partition the spoils, how to preserve privileges, how to guarantee the sustainability of capitalism, how to make power seem appealing, in sum

neither as a noble end, nor as a means to some other end such as consensus, but rather more immediately as a necessity that follows upon equality in a world of alterity. A better name here is dialogue — and not simply any old dialogue, but following Bakhtin, "*the dialogical*," a logic of polyphony that includes dissonance. Moreover, in postmodern science this dissensus-as-polyphony becomes what Lyotard called "paralogy" — in which scientific models and paradigms pursue paradoxes and proliferate a broad array of theories, approaches, objects; branching out and away with innovative modes of representation, multiple epistemologies and discourses. Lyotard saw the value of dissensus not only for avant-garde scientific knowledge, but also for justice. In a world of alterity, of proliferating identities, of fluid subjectivities, of incommensurable worldviews, then how are we to arrive at justice. Which language game ought to decide this? Which epistemology ought to dominate? Lyotard and Bakhtin agree with the anarchist approach to this problem: none ought to dominate. Incommensurabilty is not the problem; domination is the problem. The problem that modernity bequeathed to us is the hegemony of a single way of thinking, of talking about truth, goodness, and beauty. The monolithic monologue of technocracy, mass production, mass media, disenchantment, Weber's iron cage of rationality and materialism, the reduction of peoples to *homo economicus* delimited as a competitive self-interest, and so forth. But within this all-too-familiar modernity was a potential postmodern opening outward, sometimes activated as an oppositional modernism. The upshot is that Lyotard points out how today we could make all information equally available, and then let the games begin. The monological condition of postmodernity bears the seeds of an alternative postmodernism, a dialogical anarchism manifested on the Internet — that vast virtual world without a State, comprised of cooperating techniques and shareware, of free content freely contributed by anyone equally. The Internet is the clearest manifestation of spontaneous cooperation cutting across nations, above and beneath nations, a manifestation of the dialogical and of dissensus. The net and its world wide web do not so much prefigure a postanarchist community to come, but rather is today the planetary communicational commons of an actual postanarchist society.

many works, and is the principle by which Rancière proposes to rethink democracy, education, art practice, literary interpretation, and so on. He has insisted several times that equality is not an ontological claim, nor it any kind of normative, biological, or essentialist assertion. This is a political principle, not ontological. Instead, *egalité* is a theoretical hypothesis to be tested: What if we, regrettably for the first time, began to take seriously the principle of equality in as many situations as possible. What if for instance, we assumed that students really are equal to their teachers — just as a thought experiment and then perhaps as praxis. We might be surprised, as Rancière's book on the 18th-century educator, Jacotot, shows us (*The Ignorant Schoolmaster*). The political and pragmatic assumption of equality can lead to classroom experiences where this equality is manifested, that is, where students can teach themselves just as much as the teacher.

What if we assume that the reader is equal to the writer? What if the viewer is equal to the artist? What if everyone had in principle the same fundamental capacity to understand, to speak, to interpret? Representation, thence, would nevertheless remain problematic, but it would become, as if for the first time in history, a game of equals. Your representation of me, let us assume at the start of this game, is equal to my representation. One's representation of one's self-interest is equal to, not always better than, the other's representation of that interest. Both enter the game or contest as assumed equals, vying for attention. Again: this is not a claim about truth or eternity or reality or ontology. Being none of those, it is a political claim to think and to practice democracy. There shall be no hierarchy, and not even an overturned hierarchy in which the free individual is the monarch of his castle. Instead, we live together in a world of inevitable conflicts and competing representations. The merit of any claim informing our decision will be based on other criteria but not on the origin of that argument, whether from the subject or from the other.

Consensus or dissensus? What I have argued so far does not propose that all opinions are equal, as is sometimes said by college sophomores. Equality is a political strategy, not pure relativism. Dissenting opinions, however, are now presumed to have equal capacity and equal rights to expression as are those by established experts. Dissensus is affirmed,

how to save the status quo from its own poisons. This remarkable series of failures has been met by an equally remarkable series of forgettings in the muddle minded media. Whether amnesia or a wilful malice, the result has been that only an inspired group of protesters has called for an awakening from this stupor, albeit protesters usually depicted while being kicked and sprayed by the various national guards of the world, now indistinguishably attired in the uniforms of the stormtroopers from *Star Wars.* (The new Empire is not subtle in its symbolism.) The official negotiations attempt to preserve the status quo while making deals to cover the contradictions between nationalisms and global governance. It is only the protesters who have been able to propose an alternative to these failed negotiations: an alternative world to the business as usual model of globalization. The most acute analysis shows that another world is not only possible, but that another world is necessary. This necessary alternative is aligned with the principles of postanarchist governance.

Anarchism inspired and is inspired by that old revolutionary trinity of equality, liberty, and solidarity (I prefer this latter term to the patriarchal "brotherhood" of fraternity). Anarchism is never fully realized, but is the political ideal to be worked toward continually, more democratic than "democracy" as currently established in systems of state representation. As an ideal, it is never fully present but always a potential to bring out the best in forms of free sociality. Even amid our current States, it is anarchistic practices that thrive between the cracks of failing systems. Anarchism as a theory and praxis has been the most faithful to the old ideal trinity, and has worked to evolve practices of everyday life that cultivate a viable community — one that can negotiate the very real tensions between the three: when equality violates liberty or vice-versa; or where liberty violates solidarity, and so forth. Anarchism at its best was never just about "freedom" nor about "equality" nor about "mutual aid" in and of themselves, but rather about affirming all three despite the tensions. Acknowledging that the tension will always remain between these three revolutionary ideals, and affirming this tension as productive and valuable, is the revolutionary tense of postanarchism.

Classical anarchism radically rejected representation, that is, representatives who speak in place of others. Poststructuralist theory adds a few layers of critique to this. Postanarchism will continue to read

the anarchist rejection with/through/against the poststructuralist complication of representation. The issue of representation will never be settled once and for all, as we discover that language itself is representation, and as such cannot simply be discarded, but only seen through as a construct even as it is necessarily employed. There is no pregiven natural presence that guarantees the ultimate truth of a re-presence of representation; nevertheless this also implies that all we have in terms of meaning are representations. Presence we can assume is indeed there, but the meaningfulness of this or that meaning is always a re-presentation. And representations have consequences. So far, this is Derrida in a nutshell, and begins with his point that there is no transcendental signifier, yet signification is always already underway in an interminable system of differences, where each difference that makes a meaningful difference can only do so in this very relational distinction to all the adjacent differences — which are themselves not present and not presences, but rather also relational differences. This will be a postanarchist topic, inexorably corrosive of all naturalist assumptions about identity and the proper place of my property. Representations are always de-naturalized, non-natural. Even *mimesis* as the direct mirroring of nature has proved to be historical instead of natural, as the history of the arts and sciences has shown. Collingwood's history of *The Idea of Nature*, alongside Auerbach's study of *Mimesis* in the history of literary representation come to mind as decisive illustrations of my theme: "nature" is given diverse meanings, the representation of nature slides over a range of equivocations, connotations, contradictions, modes, epistemes, genres, and does this *ad infinitum*. The consequence is a range of diverse meanings.

My mirror, my self. There is no essential guarantee that an authentic subject will give the true representation of that position from that position. Self-representations are just as susceptible to self-deception as are representations of the Other, and the Other's representations of myself. Misrecognition is sometimes a projection of one's disowned characteristics onto some other, as in Jung's metaphor of "the shadow"; but also to misrecognize is a mirror experience. That is, to see yourself and yet not to see at all what others see when they see you. A dramatic example of the mirror as misrecognition, literalized too much no doubt, is in the Taiwanese film *Yi-yi* (translated as *A One and a One)* by the late director

Edward Yang. In the film, a little boy snaps dozens of photographs of persons "behind their backs" so to speak — literally photos of their backs. The boy then presents these photos to each person as an uncanny gift. Late in the film, he is asked about this peculiar hobby. Speaking like a true artist, the boy's answer is both precocious and yet innocent; he explains that he wants people to see a side of themselves that they normally cannot see. We don't know what we look like to others from behind. The boy's representations are the Other's point of view, unavailable in the mirror. This too explains the creepiness of the famous painting by the Surrealist, Magritte, in which a man stares into a mirror and is stunned to find that he can only see his backside, but in a typically surrealist reversal, not his face. The wit here is in the implication that the real situation in everyday normality is simply a reversal of this maddening blind-spot. So likewise, cinema has the potential, sometimes fulfilled, to represent ourselves better than we have been able to see ourselves without this apparatus and without this Other perspective.

We must be suspicious of representation, even against it — but the paradox, probably the *aporia*, is that we cannot exist without representation. Anarchism was right to take sides against representation, and it should be emphasized that this is still important. In politics, equality and representation are in a contradictory tension, as too are liberty and representation. We must reaffirm the principle of open participation in decision making, especially enabling those who will be most affected by a decision to have the most participation in making that decision. Nevertheless, the issue of representation remains unresolved. Every representation is partial at best, distorted, perverse — including self-representation. We do not always give the best or rather only representations of ourselves. Representation itself is indeed a vexing problem — above all for anarchism — in that it isn't a psychological or aesthetic phenomenon merely, as my allusions so far have suggested, but also an enormous political problem. I propose that we experiment in thinking further about these problems of representation by bringing in the notion of *equality*, from behind so to speak, to supplement the notions of individual liberty and solidarity. My emphasis on equality may seem oddly perplexing, unless you have read Rancière, who I am nominating as a postanarchist, in my representation. "Equality" is the keyword to his