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Retrieved on 29 April 2010 from libertarian-library.blogspot.com

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into play with the older insights of the libertarian socialist tradition, we can overcome some potential misconceptions about the road towards a free society and put back into play some otherwise "lost" strategies and insights.

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What is now being called "postanarchism" by some thinkers, including Saul Newman, can take on many forms, but the term generally refers to an attempt to marry the best aspects of poststructuralist philosophy and the anarchist tradition. One way to read the word, thus, is as a composite: poststructuralism and anarchism. However, the term also suggests that the post- prefix applies to its new object as well — implying that anarchism, at least as heretofore thought and practiced, is somehow obsolete. Together, these two senses of the word form a narrative: an aging, spent force (anarchism) is to be saved from obsolescence and irrelevance by being fused with a fresh, vital force (poststructuralism). We would like to question this narrative's assumptions and teleology, but not without some appreciation of what it has to offer.

Anarchists can indeed usefully take several things from poststructuralism:

1. Howard Richards has said that "what is sometimes called 'post-modern consciousness' . . . could more modestly be called an improved understanding of symbolic processes" (Letters From Quebec 2.38.8). Rather than seeing human beings as autonomous individuals who perceive the world objectively — a naïve realist position which would imply that the choices we make to participate in hierarchical and exploitative systems are made with open eyes — poststructuralists point to the many ways in which our consciousness of the world is filtered through social "texts" which script our lives.
2. In so doing, poststructuralism opens up a new terrain of struggle for political analysis: the struggle over signs, symbols, representations, and meaning in the media environment and everyday life. This has been particularly important for feminist theory over the last forty years, and it ought to be so for anarchism as well.
3. As long as we think of language as a tool distinct from its users, we can't adequately criticize the notion of "the individual" as an isolatable, self-contained unit, and that means we will still have trouble thinking beyond (or convincing others to try to think beyond) the sacred categories of capitalism. By undermining naïvely individualistic conceptions of subjectivity, poststructuralism furnishes a powerful

confirmation of the importance anarchists have always accorded to community and sociality.

4. All of this provides us with some splendid tools for ideological critique. Poststructuralism trains us to think critically in ways that allow us to see through the seeming political/ethical "neutrality" of certain discourses. We can use poststructuralist analytical approaches to read texts for the way they use language to construct identities and divisions, to frame issues and distort them, to lie by omission, to center certain perspectives while marginalizing others, and so on.
5. To understand that some things which seem "natural" are culturally constructed is to be aware that they might have been constructed otherwise. Poststructuralists challenge the notion that people have "natures" or "essences" that limit and determine what they can be — a point that should remind us of Kropotkin's riposte to the Social Darwinism of scientists like Huxley, who proposed that capitalism and war are merely social expressions of the natural struggle for "survival of the fittest."
6. Anarchists should also take to heart some of the ethical implications of poststructuralism. A poststructuralist emphasis on "otherness," on historical and cultural locatedness, on the multiplicity of perspectives and "subject positions," on the inescapable plurality of representations — all should confirm and deepen our awareness of our own limitations, our sense of respect for others. When Derrida's mentor, Emmanuel Levinas, says that ethics is the true "first philosophy," he delivers the best possible rebuke to Marx and other critics of anarchism, with their contempt for a theory which was too "simple" to be adequate (based as it was on an ethical position — the rejection of domination and hierarchy, the embrace of social freedom — rather than on some speculation about the laws of economics or the ultimate goal of history).
7. Poststructuralism can strengthen anarchist commitments to a social conception of freedom, as opposed to a simpleminded "liberationism" for which every social relationship is merely a constraint to be rejected. Despite the tendency of some to read poststructuralist accounts of the constructedness of things as an endorsement of a "deconstructive" liberationism, it does offer at least some resources

that seems necessary for political success": "Indeterminacy is, to my mind, a weak basis for political thought and organizing. It tends to drive people apart rather than bringing them together." Koch likewise declares that "the relativity of both ontology and epistemology, the plurality of language systems, and the impossibility of communicating intended meaning" imply that "the potential to reach consensus without deception or force becomes impossible." It is not to his credit that Koch terms this miserable result "anarchy."

The anarchist tradition is not a complete, perfect whole which is beyond question or criticism; it stands in need of rigorous and permanent critique, and certain elements of poststructuralist theory might be valuable in this reconstructive work. In this respect, Colson's recently published *Petit lexique philosophique de l'anarchisme de Proudhon à Deleuze*, while it has recourse to some dubious poststructuralist rhetoric (in phrases such as "rejecting all mediation"), seems to illustrate some of the more interesting intersections between 19th-century anarchist ideas and practices, on the one hand, and Deleuze's "strange unity . . . which never speaks but of the multiple" on the other. Here, Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Stirner are revisited, but so are Makhno, Bookchin, Grave, Michel, Pelloutier, Reclus, and Landauer, as well as Agamben, Serres, Latour, de Certeau, Balibar, and Negri. Rather than unidirectionally projecting poststructuralism back onto anarchism ("correcting" its supposed humanist, foundationalist, rationalist, and essentialist "errors"), Colson places the two discourses in dialogue, allowing each to illuminate the other in its turn.

We are excited to find social philosophers attempting to rethink anarchism in connection with poststructuralism — and impatient with what we see as the shortcomings of these attempts. We value the poststructuralist work in large part because it strikes us as concerned with going to the limits, finding its own breaking points. Poststructuralism acknowledges the dual responsibilities of radicals to engage in potentially "interminable" analyses while not letting us forget how immediately urgent the problems that face us are. But it has very little specific analysis of its own, and is hesitant in its engagements with the traditional forms of the struggle for freedom. It is our hope that by putting its insights

a "Union of Egoists," but this, too, is an inadequate and implausible conception — a kind of laissez-faire utopia in which the social is replaced by the utilitarian, equality produced by the equal exertion of force, and the common good is reducible to an infinity of private whims. Ultimately, for Stirner, "community . . . is impossible." Nor is it clear that Stirner manages to avoid his own form of essentialism in positing a "fixed" concept of the subject as an self-identical "nothingness." Where anarchists have articulated sharp critiques of Stirner — Landauer's objection was precisely that Stirner's "ego" is something that never develops or grows, since anything it takes in, it has to spit out, lest it become a "fixed idea" — some poststructuralists have been prone to overlook problems: thus, Koch uncritically endorses Stirner's claim that "socal liberalism robs people of their property in the name of community," as if this did not appeal to a rather flagrantly essentialist notion of the "person" and what is "proper" to it. While Stirner's attack on the bloodless abstractions of liberal political philosophy is still relevant, they can be and have been articulated by others (such as Bakunin) without the accompanying endorsement of an all-too-ideologically-suspect individualism.

9. Seeing how postanarchism constitutes itself via a rhetoric which dismisses the categories of the natural and the universal tout court, we should not be surprised to find that it takes on board a substantial quantity of subjectivism and relativism. It is instructive to trace Mike Michael's arguments demonstrating what he takes to be the relevance for anarchism of Bruno Latour's sociological critique of science, for which agreements are only ever a matter of "power," produced through a process of "interessement" or "recruitment" in which "one aims to convince actors that, rather than maintain a particular set of self-understandings . . . they should really be conceptualizing themselves through the categories that you provide." From this kind of poststructuralist perspective, there is no way to distinguish between free agreements and instrumentalist manipulation: cooperation is always a con game. As May has noted recently, in a review of Newman's *From Bakunin to Lacan*, these varieties of poststructuralism take such a "deconstructive approach to language and politics" that they seem to preclude "the kind of collective action

for thinking about the necessity and possibility of social reconstruction. Foucault, for instance, ridicules liberationism in its left-Freudian forms (centered on the concepts of a naturally good desire which must be "expressed" rather than "repressed" by a bad society), and ultimately proposes a kind of "ethics" premised on our ability to construct ourselves. It's not an entirely successful effort (Foucault is still somewhat captive to a liberationist discourse in much of his writing), but it's suggestive. Derrida appears to be developing gradually a politics of "friendship," "memory," "responsibility," "hospitality," etc. Jean-Luc Nancy, Giorgio Agamben and others have given us a wealth of engagements with "community."

At the same time, we see a number of serious problems with postanarchism's manner of wedding poststructuralism to anarchism:

1. Postanarchism has, as one of its core narratives, a drastically reduced notion of what "anarchism" is and has been. The "classical anarchist" tradition treated by Andrew M. Koch, Todd May, Saul Newman, and Lewis Call, usually restricted to a limited number of "great thinkers" (Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin), is reductive at best. As the late John Moore noted in his review of *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, postanarchists omit any mention of "second wave" or "contemporary" anarchism, reducing a living tradition to a dead "historical phenomenon" called "classical anarchism." Reiner Schürmann is content to dismiss "Proudhon, Bakunin, and their disciples," in a single paragraph, as "rationalist" thinkers, plain and simple. There is almost complete inattention to the margins of the "classical" texts, not to mention the margins of the tradition. Such "minor" theorists as Gustav Landauer, Voltairine de Cleyre, Josiah Warren, Emma Goldman, and Paul Goodman, to name just a few of those excluded, would seem to merit some consideration, particularly if the project is a rethinking of "normal anarchism."
2. Conflict, as well as diversity, is smoothed over in the historical accounts of anarchism given by postanarchists. Anarchist history is a terrain occupied by materialists and mystics, communists and mutualists, nihilists and scientists, progressivists and primitivists alike.

Terms taken for granted in much postanarchist critique — "science," for example — were the explicit subject of complex struggles within anarchism and socialism broadly. To fail to look at this history of internal difference can also blind us to the related history of organizational conflict and strife — the other set of forces at work in shaping anarchism and socialism as we have had them passed down to us. Marc Angenot notes that "the point of departure for Proudhon" is not "an axiom," but a sense of "scandal" — a provocation into thought by "something unthinkable." Just as we have to read Kropotkin's theory of "mutual aid" as a response (or, as Kingsley Widmer calls it, a "countering") to Huxley, we ought to analyze other key developments in anarchist theory in the context of an anarchist milieu traversed by a continuing series of disputes, controversies, and epistemological "scandals."

3. Where Koch, May, Newman, and Call examine specific "classical anarchist" texts, the passages they cite often seem far from representative of the actual arguments made by those writers. Particularly when using texts like G. P. Maximoff's *Political Philosophy of Mikhail Bakunin* — a patchwork of translated quotations from some twenty-nine source texts in three languages — close attention to the overall use of concepts is necessary to compensate for the unsystematic nature of the original sources. Lack of such attention, together with preconceptions about anarchist "rationalism," can lead to curious misreadings. In Newman's "Anarchism and the Politics of Ressentiment," for example, the argument proceeds by reading "classical anarchism," represented by Bakunin and Kropotkin, as follows: at certain points, these anarchists depict the human subject as naturally opposed to power, while at other points they seem to say that power naturally emanates from human subjects. From this premise, Newman goes on to conclude that classical anarchism is riven by a fundamental inconsistency, a damaging "contradiction." The unstated assumption which warrants this move from premise to conclusion is that these two characterizations of the human subject are mutually exclusive — that Bakunin and Kropotkin cannot intend both. This assumption begs the question: why not? In fact, a close reading of texts by these theorists would support a different conclusion — that for both of them,

and it is why he wrote so extensively on questions of pedagogy and culture: just as government is ultimately founded not on physical coercion but on popular obedience springing from culturally learned "opinions" and "prejudices," a non-authoritarian society would have to be the product of cultural change — not "human nature." His real argument against "the state, as a coercive institution" (and against every other coercive institution) is simply that it is coercive, when cooperation is possible. Human beings — whatever else we are — are capable of negotiating conflicts and coordinating efforts without resorting to force or manipulation. In Godwin's words: "The evils existing in political society . . . are not the inseparable condition of our existence, but admit of removal and remedy." This is all that ever need be argued ontologically, and all that Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin really require: the possibility of free cooperation, which is the possibility of a life in which no one is treated merely as an instrument.

8. The "epistemologically based" or "poststructuralist" anarchism that Koch traces back through Nietzsche to Stirner, on the other hand, is precisely the conception of the world in which all relations are held to be instrumental — and here is another major problem with postanarchist projects. In criticizing the supposed "essentialism" of "classical anarchism," rather too many postanarchists throw the baby out with the bathwater, rejecting the broadly communitarian, populist, and working-class character of that tradition, and preserving only Stirner's radical individualism. Indeed, for Newman, Stirner's value is precisely that he "perpetuates" Hobbes's "war model" of society, while Koch finds in his thoroughgoing nominalism a weapon to use against "the tyranny of globalizing discourse," ultimately against all "universals." The problem is that Stirner's notion of "uniqueness" denies legitimacy to any universal and every collectivity: if, as Koch says, any "concepts under which action is coordinated" can be dismissed as mere "fictions," while only the "individual" is "real," then it must follow that any coordinated action or "consensual politics" is simply a form of domination, the "impos[ition]" of "one set of metaphors" on the infinite plurality of society. Newman insists that "Stirner is not opposed to all forms of mutuality," citing his concept of

Haslam counts no less than six distinct concepts lumped together under the one word) that it can be applied to almost any statement qua statement, and feminists like Gayatri Spivak have argued that some uses of "strategic essentialism" are endemic to any politics whatsoever. Nonetheless, for Koch, May, and Newman alike, Godwin, Proudhon, and Kropotkin are representative of a hopelessly "essentialist" or "ontological" anarchism: as Koch writes, "eighteenth- and nineteenth-century anarchists' attacks on the state were based on a 'rational' representation of human nature" in which a basically static human subject is innately possessed of "reason, compassion, and gregariousness"; on this view, "corruption takes place within social institutions and is not an essential part of human nature," since "the human being is seen as a rational, cognitive, and compassionate creature." Certainly, if these theorists believed in this sort of innate goodness, they would have a hard time explaining the prevalence of violence, inequality, and domination; however, they affirm no such thing. For instance, in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, far from assuming a spontaneously good, rational, or gregarious human subject, Godwin depicts the subject as the result of social construction: "the actions and dispositions of men are not the offspring of any original bias that they bring into the world in favour of one sentiment or character rather than another, but flow entirely from the operation of circumstances and events acting upon a faculty of receiving sensible impressions." Thus, he ridicules the idea that complex behavioral patterns such as a favorable disposition towards "virtue" are "something that we bring into the world with us, a mystical magazine, shut up in the human embryo, whose treasures are to be gradually unfolded as circumstances shall require," and denies equally that "self-love" (egoism) or "pity" (compassion) are "instincts"; both, to him, are learned behaviors. The "representation" of the human subject that emerges from *Political Justice* is far from "fixed" or "closed" — it is dynamic, endlessly mutable: "Ideas are to the mind nearly what atoms are to the body. The whole mass is in a perpetual flux; nothing is stable and permanent; after the lapse of a given period not a single particle probably remains the same." This, in fact, is why Godwin thinks we are capable of doing better,

it is the human subject itself which is the site, as Kropotkin writes in his Ethics, of a "fundamental contradiction." What Newman misses is the possibility that, in Dave Morland's words, "anarchists are proprietors of a double-barrelled conception of human nature" as composed of "both sociability and egoism." Of course, for Anglophone writers and readers, the difficulties of understanding are compounded by a linguistic barrier: for instance, of the thirty-nine texts collected in fifteen volumes of Proudhon's complete works, only four have ever been translated into English, so the only glimpses of his more ambitious "theoretical" work available to us — including his paradoxically "absolute" refusal of "the Absolute" — are in *Selected Writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, a collection of scattered quotations.

4. Poststructuralist critiques of "classical anarchism" tend to place it in intellectual contexts — "humanism," "rationalism," "Enlightenment" — which are likewise treated in the most reductive terms. For instance, Cartesian rationalism is conflated with movements directly opposed to it — and is applied to texts from the late 19th century, as if there was no significant developments in ideas about subjectivity, truth, or rationality after the 17th century. Rather than artificially tying the ideas of anarchist theorists to those of philosophers they directly oppose (such as Rousseau), we might be better off looking at Kropotkin's use of Wundt's psychology and Guyau's ethics, Goldman's reading of Nietzsche, Godwin's engagement with the epistemology of Hume and Hartley, Malatesta's flirtation with pragmatism, or what Bakunin might have learned from Schelling's call for a "philosophy of existence" in opposition to Hegel's "philosophy of essence." Contemporary French sociologist Daniel Colson's recent essay on "Anarchist Readings of Spinoza" in the journal *Réfractions* is suggestive of what can be done along these lines.
5. Having constructed, on such an impoverished basis, an ideological ghost called "classical anarchism," postanarchists then subject this phantom entity to a critique based on some drastically undertheorized concepts, tending to proceed as if the meaning of key terms like "nature," "power," and even "poststructuralism" were both self-evident and unchanging. They act, as Foucault hears Nietzsche complain of Paul Rée, as if "words had kept their meaning . . . ignor[ing]

the fact that the world of speech . . . has known invasions, struggles, plundering, disguises, ploys." Moore, again, fingered this difficulty: "'One would not call all exercises of power oppressive,' May states. But surely that depends upon who one is." Why assume that what Bakunin meant by the word "power," in one particular essay, is the same concept designated by Foucault's use of the word, or Moore's, or May's — or even that named by the same word in a different Bakunin essay? Indeed, even Newman seems to allow the meaning of the term to slide in a strategically convenient manner: on the first page of *From Bakunin to Lacan*, he uses "power" as synonymous with "domination," "hierarchies," and "repression," but soon shifts over to a Foucauldian usage which defines "power" as "something to be accepted as unavoidable," while defining "domination" and "authority" as things which are "to be resisted." The problem is that, depending on which definition is in play, Newman could be contradicting Bakunin or simply reiterating him. In his "Reflections on Anarchism," Brian Morris makes a distinction (similar to the Spinozan opposition between "potestas" and "potentia" to which Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt apeal) between "power over" and "the power to do something." It is only "power" in the first sense that anarchists categorically oppose, while "power" in the second sense, as what Hannah Arendt calls "the human ability not just to act but to act in concert," is central to anarchist theorizations of the social. Bakunin considers what he and Proudhon call "social power," conceived as the non-coercive influence of individuals and groups on one another, to be absolutely real and ineradicable, condemning as "idealist" the "wish to escape" the play of "physical, intellectual, and moral influences" which is continuous with society itself: "To do away with this reciprocal influence is death."

6. The intended sense of the prefix "post-" in "postanarchism" often seems to be uncritically progressive, as if "anarchism" per se is something that belongs to the past; this is reinforced by the frequent suggestions that anarchism is merely a continuation of a clapped-out "Enlightenment" thought. This is far too simplistic. First of all, you don't have to be Noam Chomsky to think that the Enlightenment produced some ideas of lasting value: as Donna Haraway suggests,

"Enlightenment modes of knowledge have been radically liberating" because "they give accounts of the world that can check arbitrary power." Secondly, it is by no means clear that poststructuralism places itself categorically outside, after, or beyond the thought of "Enlightenment," nor that it can or ought to. Lyotard defines the "postmodern" as that within the "modern" which keeps it lively and resists reification, and these days, even Newman acknowledges that for Foucault there are not one but two "Enlightenments" — "the Enlightenment of continual questioning and uncertainty" as well as that of "rational certainty, absolute identity, and destiny." We can also recall here Derrida's guarded defense of "the projects of the Enlightenment" and Haraway's "insider strategy" where science and development are concerned, characteristically preferring "blasphemy" to "apostacy," emphasizing choice within a conflicted, dangerous field instead of simple opposition to what is ultimately a "naturalized" structure rather than a natural one. "Non-innocent" resistance and the business of dealing with complicity seem to be common to many poststructuralist positions. Having shifted away from simple opposition, poststructuralism has to abandon some simple forms of moralizing as well. This is why, finally, Haraway rejects the "postmodern" label, preferring Latour's formulation that "we have never been modern." And it's why folks from Baudrillard to Derrida have such a dismissive attitude toward "good souls" who think they can attack something like "the Enlightenment" from the outside, without complicity. In any case, poststructuralists have provided us with many, many reasons to be "incredulous" towards "grand narratives" of linear historical progress and to remain open to what is open, living, and potentially radical in tradition.

7. The way in various critical missteps can compound one another is perhaps clearest in the discussions of "essentialism." Much postanarchist critique echoes Nietzsche's charge that anarchism is "poisoned at the root" (a rather essentialist claim); for postanarchists, ironically the "poison" is "essentialism." This notion however, is compromised to begin with: for some time now, theorists from Diana Fuss to Hubert Dreyfus have been complaining that the term "essentialism" has become a mere pejorative epithet, so flexible in its usages (Nick