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"The bourgeoisie may blast and ruin their own world before they leave the stage of history. But we carry a new world in our hearts." (Buenaventura Durruti)

"We must act as if the future is today." (Howard J. Ehrlich)

The idea that the form of post-revolutionary society must be foreshadowed in the form of the "revolutionary" organization has been a primary feature of anarchist theory, at least since Michael Bakunin's famous disagreements with Marx over the role of the state in the transition to socialism. Bakunin's central conflict with Marx was related precisely to the former's conviction that an authoritarian revolutionary movement, as Marx espoused, would inevitably initiate an authoritarian society after the revolution. For Bakunin, if the new society is to be non-authoritarian then it can only be founded upon the experience of non-authoritarian social relations. The statement produced by Bakunin's supporters in the IWMA during his battle with Marx in 1871 asked: "How can you expect an egalitarian and free society to emerge from an authoritarian organization?". This conviction was repeated a century later by participants in the Paris insurrection of 1968: "The revolutionary organization has to learn that it cannot combat alienation through alienated forms".

Recent anarchist initiatives have gone well beyond Bakunin's preoccupation with prefiguring the future society in contemporary revolutionary forms to creating the future immediately. As James Joll noted with respect to the activities of participants of the May 1968 uprising in Paris:

"For these young people, the revolutionary movement is not only the pattern of future society which Bakunin believed that it should be: it is future society. Their Utopia is realized here and now in the process of revolution itself".

Perhaps the most significant form of contemporary anarchist futures-present is the "autonomous zone" or more simply @-zone. These sites, often but not always in squatted buildings, are home to diverse types of activity. Autonomous zones are used primarily as community centres organized around anarchist principles of mutual aid, providing meals, clothing and shelter for those in need. @-zones also serve as gathering places where community members can learn about anarchist theory and practice, both historic and contemporary. Because of their concern over

the dangers of insularity, organizers try to build and nurture connections with residents of the neighbourhoods in which the @-zones are situated. Their intention is to create broadened free zones which may be extended, from block to city to region to nation, as resources and conditions favour.

These are the building blocks of what Howard Ehrlich refers to as the anarchist transfer culture, an approximation of the new society within the context of the old. Within it anarchists try to meet the basic demands of building sustainable communities.

A transfer culture is that agglomeration of ideas and practices that guides people in making the trip from the society here to the society there in the future. As part of the accepted wisdom of that transfer culture we understand that we may never achieve anything that goes beyond the culture itself. It may be, in fact, that it is the very nature of anarchy that we shall always be building the new society within whatever society we find ourselves.

In this sense, anarchist autonomous zones are liminal sites, spaces of transformation and passage. As such they are important sites of re-skilling, in which anarchists prepare themselves for the new forms of relationship necessary to break authoritarian and hierarchical structures.

Participants also learn the diverse tasks and varied interpersonal skills necessary for collective work and living. This skill sharing serves to discourage the emergence of knowledge elites and to allow for the sharing of all tasks, even the least desirable, necessary for social maintenance.

controlled day-care centers; neighborhood groups; tenant and workplace organizing; and so on.

While these are obviously not strictly anarchist groups, they often operate to provide examples of mutual aid and non-hierarchical and non-authoritarian modes of living which carry the memory of anarchy within them.

Landauer thus advocated the development of self-directed communities which would permit a break from institutions of authority. Revolution, reconceptualized by Landauer as a gradual rejection of coercive social relations through the development of alternatives, was not a borderline between social conditions (marking temporalities of "pre-" and "post-") but a continuous principle spanning vast expanses of time.

This view of revolution as a process of constructing alternative forms of sociation as models of a new society is largely shared by contemporary anarchists. Revolution is a process, and even the eradiction of coercive institutions will not automatically create a liberatory society. We create that society by building new institutions, by changing the character of our social relationships, by changing ourselves — and throughout that process by changing the distribution of power in society. If we cannot begin this revolutionary project here and now, then we cannot make a revolution.

For Paul Goodman, an American anarchist whose writings influenced the 1960s New Left and counterculture, anarchist futures-present serve as necessary acts of "drawing the line" against the authoritarian and oppressive forces in society. Anarchism, in Goodman's view, was never oriented only towards some glorious future; it involved also the preservation of past freedoms and previous libertarian traditions of social interaction. "A free society cannot be the substitution of a 'new order' for the old order; it is the extension of spheres of free action until they make up most of the social life". Utopian thinking will always be important, Goodman argued, in order to open the imagination to new social possibilities, but the contemporary anarchist would also need to be a conservator of society's benevolent tendencies.

As many recent anarchist writings suggest, the potential for resistance might be found anywhere in everyday life. If power is exercised everywhere, it might give rise to resistance everywhere. Present-day anarchists like to suggest that a glance across the landscape of contemporary society reveals many groupings which are anarchist in practice if not in ideology. Examples include the leaderless small groups developed by radical feminists, coops, clinics, learning networks, media collectives, direct action organizations; the spontaneous groupings that occur in response to disasters, strikes, revolutions and emergencies; community-

Gift Economies and Anarchist Transfer Cultures: Anarcho-communism, from DIY to Self-Valorization

In his compelling and provocative essay, The High-Tech Gift Economy, Richard Barbrook argues that the gift economy provides a starting point for thinking about social relations beyond either the state or market. More than that, the gift economy provides the basis for an incipient anarcho-communism, visions of which, have inspired a variety of recent community media and "do-it-yourself" (DIY) cultural activism. Despite the contributions Barbrook's article makes to a rethinking of both emergent social movements and alternatives to statist capitalism, his emphasis on gift exchange leaves his analysis at the level of consumption and exchange, rather than addressing crucial issues of production. Yet it is predominantly questions of production, and especially the transformation of production relations, that have motivated anarcho-communists historically. In this short discussion I attempt to look more closely at the contestatory and transformative aspects hinted at by DIY production within the anarchist gift economies. Such production, more than issues of how exchange occurs, suggests possibilities for eluding or challenging relations of capitalist value production. Crucial for understanding the liberatory potential of the "new economy", beyond the practices of consumption or exchange, is the notion of self-valorization, or production which emphasizes community (use) values rather than capitalist value.

As Barbrook suggests, for participants in a diversity of contemporary affinity groups, DIY activities offer a context for coming together, a shared opportunity for mutual expression and unalienated labor. Contemporary usage of the term DIY in underground movements comes from punk rock and its visceral attack on the professionalization of rock and the related distance between fans and rock stars. This anti-hierarchical perspective and the practices that flow from it are inspired by a

deep longing for self-determined activity that eschews reliance on the products of corporate culture.

As an alternative to the market valorization and production for profit embodied in corporate enterprises, anarchist DIYers turn to self-valorizing production rooted in the needs, experiences and desires of specific communities. In place of a consumerist ethos that encourages consumption of ready-made items, anarchists adopt a productivist ethos that attempts a re-integration of production and consumption.

It is perhaps highly telling that in an age of multinational media conglomerates and gargantuan publishing monopolies a number of younger people have turned towards artisanal forms of craft production in order to produce and distribute what are often very personal works. Even more than this, however, are the means of production, involving collective decision-making as well as collective labor in which participants are involved, to the degree that they wish to be, in all aspects of the process from conception through to distribution.

While cultural theorist Walter Benjamin spoke of disenchantment in the "age of mechanical reproduction", DIY projects offer expressions of re-enchantment or authenticity. This authenticity is grounded at least in the sense that such works help to overcome the division between head and hand that reflects the division of labor in a society of mass-produced representation. As attempts to overcome alienation and address concerns with overly mediated activities, DIY activities suggest a striving for what an earlier era might have called control over the means of production and what has now come to include control over the means of representation. Perhaps ironically this has been aided by the availability of inexpensive desk top publishing and other means of "mechanical reproduction" since the 1980s (though not all anarchists choose to use it).

Along with DIY production often comes the collective production of alternative subjectivities. For many the content as well as the process of DIY production expresses a confrontation with the cultural codes of everyday life.

While such activities express a variety of styles and viewpoints, they tend to present a vision of a desired society which is participatory and democratic. In production, content and, often through distribution in gift economies, they advocate active production of culture rather than

Re-Visioning Anarchy?

While some commentators question the pedigree of contemporary anarchism, I would suggest that there are clear precedents in the works of classical anarchist writers. Bakunin, for example, viewed trade unions not merely as economic institutions but as the "embryo of the administration of the future" and argued that workers should pursue co-operatives rather than strikes. Recognizing the impossibility of competing with capitalist enterprises he called for the pooling of all private property as the collective property of freely federated workers' associations. These ideas would serve as the intellectual impetus for anarcho-syndicalism and its vision of the industrial syndicate as the seed of the future society.

Perhaps most influential in the current revisioning of anarchy has been the work of Gustav Landauer. Influenced by the writings of the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, Landauer identified himself as an "anarchist socialist" to distinguish himself from popular currents of Stirnerist egoism. Drawing upon Tönnies distinction between Gemeinschaft (organic community) and Gesellschaft (atomized society), Landauer desired the rebirth of community from within the shell of statist and capitalist society. The forms within which the new society would gestate were to be the bunde, local, face-to-face associations.

The anarchist-socialist community, for Landauer, is not something which awaits a future revolution. Rather it is the growing discovery of something already present: "This likeness, this equality in inequality, this peculiar quality that binds people together, this common spirit is an actual fact". In as much as anarchism would involve revolution, this "revolution", for Landauer, would consist of elements of refusal in which individuals withdraw co-operation with existing state institutions and create their own positive alternatives.

"The state is a condition, a certain relationship among human beings, a mode of behaviour between them; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently toward one another . . . We are the state, and we shall continue to be the state until we have created the institutions that form a real community and society of men."

passive consumption of cultural (or even entertainment) commodities. Self-production provides an opportunity for producers to act against the proprietorship of information. Most DIY communications, whether literature, music, videos or broadcasts, for example, are produced as anti-copyrights or as "copylefts" and sharing of material is encouraged. Indeed as a key part of gift economies, DIY takes on an important place in experimenting with communities that are not organized around market principles of exchange value. They help to create a culture of self-valorization rather than giving creativity over to the logics of surplus value.

The notion of self-valorization, as used by contemporary anarcho-communists and libertarian socialists builds upon Marx's discussion of use value versus exchange value. While under communist social relations there will be no exchange value, what is produced will still retain use value. People produce things because they have some kind of use for them; they meet some need or desire. This is where the qualitative aspect of production comes in. Generally people prefer products that are well-made, function as planned, are not poisonous and so on. Under capitalism, exchange value, in which a coat can get two pairs of shoes, predominates use value. This is the quantitative aspect of value that does not care whether the product is durable, shoddy or toxic as long as it secures its (potential) value in sale or other exchange with something else.

And capitalism's driving focus on the quantitative at the expense of the qualitative also comes to dominate human labour. The quality (skill, pleasure, creativity) of the particular work that people do is not primarily relevant for the capitalist (except that skilled labour costs more to produce and carries more exchange value). That is partly because exchange is based on the quantity of 'average-socially-necessary-labour-time' embodied in the product human labour produces. That simply means that if some firm takes a longer time to produce something on outdated machinery they can not claim the extra labour time they take, due to inefficiencies, compared to a firm that produces more quickly using updated technology, and that is one reason why outmoded producers go under).

Capitalist production is geared towards exchange as the only way that surplus value is actually realized rather than being potential; the capitalist can not bank surplus as value until the product has been exchanged. Use value plays a part only to the extent that something has to have some use for people or else they would not buy it; well, if the thing seems totally useless the bosses still have advertising to convince people otherwise. Under other non-capitalist "modes of production", such as feudalism, most production is geared towards use value production rather than exchange value.

Surely if, under communism, people are producing to meet their needs, they will continue to produce use values (and even a surplus of them in case of emergency) without regard for exchange value (which would, certainly, be absent in a truly communist society anyway). Unless one is talking about a communism of uselessness perhaps. Certainly people would value their work (qualitatively) in ways that cannot be imagined now since they would be meeting their community's needs and would try to do so with some joy and pleasure in work, providing decent products without fouling up the environment.

The new subjectivities emerging from the transition to neo-liberalism have sought to contest and overcome the impositions of productive flexibility within regimes of capitalist globalization. Rather than accepting the emerging socio-political terrain or, alternatively and more commonly, attempting to restrain it within the familiar territories of the welfare state, recent movements have "appropriated the social terrain as a space of struggle and self-valorization".

For many contemporary activists and theorists the concept of self-valorization offers an important starting point for thinking about "the circuits that constitute an alternative sociality, autonomous from the control of the State or capital". Originating in autonomist Marxist reflections on the social movements that emerged most notably in Italy during the intense struggles of the 1970s, the idea of self-valorization has influenced a range of libertarian communist and anarchist writers. As Hardt suggests:

"Self-valorization was a principal concept that circulated in the movements, referring to social forms and structures of value that were relatively autonomous from and posed an effective alternative to capitalist

circuits of valorization. Self-valorization was thought of as the building block for constructing a new form of sociality, a new society".

Twentieth century notions of self-valorization echo the arguments made by classical anarchist communists such as Kropotkin and Reclus, regarding the construction of grassroots forms of welfare developed through mutual aid societies. Self-valorization is one way by which a variety of recent theorists have sought to identify social forms of welfare that might constitute alternative networks outside of state control. As Del Re suggests, part of the new parameters for change includes "the proposal to go beyond welfare by taking as our goal the improvement of the quality of life, starting from the reorganization of the time of our lives."

For radical political theorists in Italy, the experiences of the social movements "show the possibilities of alternative forms of welfare in which systems of aid and socialization are separated from State control and situated instead in autonomous social networks. These alternative experiments may show how systems of social welfare will survive the crisis of the Welfare State". These systems of social welfare, however, are based on social solidarity outside of state control through practices of autonomous self-management. Beyond providing necessary services these practices are geared towards freeing people from the necessity of waged labour, of valorization for capital. In this, self-valorizing activities challenge the limits even of the gift economy and shift emphasis again towards that great concern of anarcho-communists historically — the abolition of the wage system.