

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright
May 21, 2012



Teoman Gee

“New Anarchism”: Some Thoughts

Teoman Gee
“New Anarchism”: Some Thoughts
2003

Retrieved on 8 May 2011 from www.alpineanarchist.org

2003

anyway. Flow, change, and transformation characterize a free society of diversity – and therefore what I'd call anarchist life. So, instead of a conclusion, nothing more but a final personal summary:

New Anarchism is good 'cause new is always exciting. But 'classical anarchism' is not obsolete, because, well, "the past didn't go anywhere, did it?" The important thing seems to be to keep the anarchist movement flowing, changing, and transforming, without denying the strength of its historical continuity. Strength in diversity. Diversity in unity. Strength in unity. (Or something like that.) If some of the thoughts presented in this essay can contribute to this strength, it's all I could have possibly wished for.

the same as a wobbly? Debate is good. Even over words. But I think that at some point it becomes fair enough to question both the importance of certain debates for the movement and the impact these debates have on it. If 90% of a comrade's time and energy goes into fighting 'leftists' (or, once again, I'm afraid often enough mere leftist bogeymen), where is the movement supposed to go, and in what kind of unity? It's one of the most unfortunate aspects of leftist history that sectarian and factionalist in-fighting has so often put a halt to its progression and growth, has divided and weakened it, has robbed it of its revolutionary potential, and has allowed the enemy to prevent its historic victory. It'd be a shame if we had to witness the irony of anti-leftists doing the same to the anarchist movement.

Ad 3) As far as the class struggle vs. lifestyle anarchism question is concerned, this has been debated long enough, and the rather simple conclusion to me seems to be the following: Where class struggle anarchism means Marxist economic reductionism, it is probably of little use in the anarchist struggle against a system of oppression that has become very multi-faceted; and that changing your own life has to be an essential component of the wider struggle for social change seems to be pretty much self-explanatory too (with many self-declared New Anarchists remaining very hypocritical in this respect, but that's kinda besides the point here). But does this mean that we have to rid ourselves of the historical struggles of the working class and the deep revolutionary knowledge acquired in these struggles? I don't think so. Rather, I think that integrating the historical struggle between the classes in our personal lives and our personal attempts to change, would do both their revolutionary historical significance justice and help us avoid personal retreat and bourgeois privatization which seem to be lifestyle anarchism's biggest inherent dangers (and here I agree with its critics).

Final Words

There is no conclusion at the end of this essay. I never promised one. I only wanted to offer ideas that might be of interest in the debates on the issues discussed. Fortunately, debates are always better than conclusions

Contents

First Words	5
1) New Anarchism as a US-American Phenomenon	5
2) 'New' vs. 'Classical' Anarchism	10
Final Words	18

as a simple matter of respect, it just doesn't seem cool to diss former generations of anarchists, whether we wanna bother studying them or not. Demands like the one "to forget about the men with the beards" might have their funny dimensions, yet, in the end, they are just pretentious and silly, and, furthermore, counterproductive (in various ways) to an intellectually open-minded and reflective movement that, I hope, we all want to have.

Ad 2) The question of leftism and anti-leftism is, I think, merely a question of words and definition and, all in all, of hardly any real importance. Once most anarchists, whether stern leftists or decided anti-leftists, presented their respective definitions of leftism and hence explained their position in the terminological dispute, I think very little actual friction would remain. I assume that most anarchists would agree that authoritarian leftism sucks, while what some define as anti-authoritarian leftism, and others as anti-leftism, is surprisingly similar. Whatever label individuals then choose for their radical identity will depend on socio-cultural questions, I suppose, and is of as little significance as most disputes over words. So, while there lies very little actual problem in the dispute itself, the significance some people give it can be rather problematic. My concern is simple: In some radically anti-leftist anarchist rants, 'the leftist' seems to have become our biggest enemy. Never mind the government, never mind the capitalists, never mind the bourgeoisie, never mind even the extreme right: it's the evil leftist we are after! Where is this supposed to lead to? To throw our 'leftist enemies' together with conservative political leaders, corporate bosses, cops, or skinheads? To not even make a distinction anymore between our real enemies and the libertarian Marxist working in a not-for-profit bookstore, or the pacifist Rosa-Luxemburg-reading librarian, or the genuine social democrat trying to save retired workers' pensions? Come on. There is only one place such an attitude can lead us to: the isolation of the supposedly superior revolutionary avantgarde that becomes so alienated from the masses that in the end it can play no role in their liberation anymore whatsoever. (Interestingly enough, a position 'leftists' are so often accused of.) Besides, a healthy common sense seems to suggest that such an undifferentiated view of the enemy is simply stupid and unfair. How can one seriously claim that a racist bully, a fascist party leader, or a rich multinational manager, are

slogan of “the private is political” as the primary dictum for becoming engaged in the struggle for social change.

Me, personally, I find myself sitting on the fence here. I’ve always enjoyed reading the classical anarchist texts and studying the anarchist movement’s history — yet, I’ve always been vehemently opposed to comrades regarding this essential to an ‘anarchist consciousness’ or belittling those who “act without thought”. I have no problem whatsoever being associated with leftism; in fact, I even feel a sentimental attachment to the historical leftist project of revolting against and trying to overthrow an economic/political/social system of oppression and exploitation — yet, I’ve never joined any kind of political organization (as in: a body that demands membership, adherence to a certain set of prescribed rules, and an at least temporary commitment), as harmless as it might have seemed (for example, when many anarchist comrades joined a “left list” contesting elections for the students’ council at the university I attended in Austria — where, at least at the time, students’ councils were quite influential — it wouldn’t have even occurred to me to do so as well). Finally, I have enough respect for working class struggles to be genuinely offended when comrades talk them down as “old Marxist stuff” — yet, when the debates between class struggle and lifestyle anarchists first started, I always sided with the latter.

I’ll try to be more specific in regard to the points laid out before:

Ad 1) I think the study of anarchist theory and history still holds a lot of value, since it can inspire action, stimulate thought, and be the incentive to put yourself, your times, and your struggles into perspective. At the same time, this is, of course, by no means necessary to be ‘a comrade’. One of the beauties of anarchism is meant to be diversity, and this notion includes a diversity of comrades and their interests, needs, backgrounds, and expressions of anarchist identity. However, many individuals before our time have given a lot of sweat and tears, and sometimes their lives, to the anarchist cause, and even if there can’t be any denial that times change and certain forms of thought and action might lose their immediate significance for the struggle, those individuals’ sweat and tears and lives remain essential contributions to the anarchist cause, ‘classical’ or ‘new’, and — in one way or another — we all stand on their shoulders. So,

First Words

No one could seriously argue that the aftermath of the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle didn’t bring a significant change in the way the term ‘anarchism’ came to function in the media, academic discourse, and public dialogue. Inevitably, this affected the ideological debates within the anarchist movement itself. It is in this historic context that the newly coined term ‘New Anarchism’ seems to have descriptive legitimacy.¹ This, however, doesn’t say much about its value for anarchist politics in general. Four years after Seattle and the emergence of New Anarchism, an investigation into the phenomenon’s impact on the international anarchist movement can just about begin. The following thoughts don’t want to be more than humble contributions to this task. They will focus on 1) the specifically US-American character of New Anarchism (especially in comparison to the European continent), and 2) the relationship between the ‘new’ and — for the lack of a better term — the oddly dubbed ‘classical’ anarchism.

1) New Anarchism as a US-American Phenomenon²

My personal involvement in the anarchist movement dates back to 1989, being a high school student in western Austria. I don’t mention this to unnecessarily personalize this essay, but because it seems to make

¹ I do not specifically refer to David Graeber’s use of the term here in his *New Left Review* article “The New Anarchists”. I am referring to its wider usage within contemporary anarchist scenes. I hope this will become clearer in the course of the text.

² For my Canadian comrades: I was torn between speaking of New Anarchism as a US-American or a North American phenomenon in this essay. On the one hand, by no means do I want to leave the contribution of Canadian activists for the movement unacknowledged. At the same time, a lot of what’s gonna be pointed out here is indeed US-specific, and so speaking of North American would often subsume Canada once again under what actually only applies to the US. So, in the end, I decided that US-American, all in all, seemed more appropriate than North American. It’ll be up to the individual comrade to conclude how the contents of this essay apply to Canada.

sense to point out that much of what I'll feel like saying will have its roots in my European background and my political socialization in the European autonomist movement of the 1980s and 1990s.

New Anarchism is mainly a US-American invention. This is neither said to flatter the US-American comrades, nor to dismiss the phenomenon. It's pure observation. November 1999 in Seattle was the defining moment for New Anarchism, and — despite of the international participation — the Seattle WTO protests were a very US-American event. As has been analyzed often enough, both orchestration and impact of the protests were determined by the specific nature of US activism (sophisticated media use, theatrics, drama) and the global dominance of the US-based media.

In historical continuity of associating anarchism with violence, the corporate media labeled the protesters who participated in the destruction of corporate property at the WTO meeting as anarchists. In another historical continuity, after the protests, pacifist anarchists were more eager than ever to point out that their means of resistance differed dramatically from those attributed to the overnight infamous 'black bloc'. As an outcome of the following internal, public, and academic debates on anarchist identity, 'the anarchist' became the new prototype of a political radical. This seemed to happen simultaneously in the processes of self-definition of radical activists and in public discourse. Once it was agreed upon that anarchists could be militant as well as peaceful, could wear black masks as well as tie-dyed shirts, could live in squats as well as intentional rural communities, could be work resisters as well as teachers, etc., radical activists and critics alike embraced the term 'anarchist' as the now apparently most appropriate label for pretty much any politically active person left³ of Al Gore (or at least Ralph Nader). Considering the old radical labels of 'red', 'Marxist', even 'socialist', as historically outdated (or, at least, ideologically unfit), most radicals felt good as 'anarchists', and those talking and writing about them had a fancy and strong term to talk and write about. Everyone seemed happy. From Boston to Berkeley anarchist reading groups emerged, anarchist poet nights,

³ Even though a lot of anarchists nowadays wanna distance themselves viciously from 'leftisms' of any sort — but more about this later.

class struggle reductionism has been critiqued within the 'leftist' anarchist tradition itself for a very long time. I will say a little more about this further down.)

3. To use terms that have been discussed widely within the anarchist scene in the last decade, for most people (again, activists and critics alike) New Anarchism embraces the values of 'lifestyle anarchism' much more so than those of 'class struggle (or social) anarchism'.⁶ I think we'd have to agree with this assessment. If class struggle anarchism means an attachment to Marxist class analysis as the main tool for understanding oppression in a capitalist society, and if it demands political activism focusing on attacking (and ultimately dismantling) the economic forces shaping our world while hoping that an anarchist society would then emerge from the capitalist ashes; and if lifestyle anarchism stands for the belief in a social transformation that begins in your private life by going vegan, growing vegetables, boycotting Nike, joining community groups, forming collectives, etc., then New Anarchism seems to accommodate and represent lifestyle anarchists much more so than their class struggle counterparts.

According to the above, the conflict between 'classical' and 'new' anarchism can be summed up as: trying to prolong an anti-authoritarian political trajectory marked by at least 150 years of political agitation in the name of anarchist ideals vs. reinventing anarchism as a political movement by a new generation; remaining attached to a leftist identity (and, hence, remaining open to political work within a leftist context, including alliances with non-anarchist leftists, especially in single-issue campaigns) vs. employing a militant anti-leftism, suggesting leftists are as integral a part of the system to be overthrown as capitalists, the bourgeoisie, or even the extreme right; holding on to ideological roots in history's class struggle and working class movements vs. embracing the

⁶ I generally agree with those who think that the distinction between class struggle and lifestyle anarchism falls short of a complex analysis of the anarchist scene due to its simplistic dichotomy. However, at the same time I believe that the distinction has analytical value, and since it has furthermore become very influential I still consider it a useful terminological tool in the context of this text.

respective countries or not, it seems obvious that there is an apparent difference in defining leftism among US-American and European anarchist circles: Listening to or reading anti-leftist US-American comrades' denunciations of leftism, it always seems that for them leftism equals what I'd probably just call Stalinism: institutionalized authority, oppression, brutality, intolerance, totalitarianism, dictatorship, rigidity, bureaucracy, party structure, etc. I think that if this really defined leftism as a whole, one would be hard pressed to find an anarchist feeling any kind of affiliation with it. However, having been politicized in a European context, leftism has always been a very broadly defined and complex term to me. In its core it meant nothing but a commitment to the creation of a society of equals without the hierarchies that necessarily imply oppression and exploitation; a commitment to the creation of a society that would allow the individual to grow and develop as a unique creature in solidarity with others, rather than it being condemned to an existence of egocentric survivalist (bourgeois) competition. That was what leftism was all about. And that was what, ultimately, all anarchists with a social conscience (as opposed to the somewhat goofy 'individualist anarchists') wanted. So, of course you were a leftist as an anarchist. Only that, unfortunately, there were other leftists (the vast majority, in fact) that had different ideas of achieving the ideals mentioned above: while you believed in decentralized, extra-parliamentarian, autonomous, independent, self-determined resistance based on anti-authoritarianism and spontaneity, other leftists demanded — in varying degrees — organization, discipline, coercion, education, and leadership. But this never meant that we were less left-wing than they were. It only meant that there was a non-authoritarian ('libertarian', 'autonomous') left, and an authoritarian left (from orthodox academic Marxists to young urban Maoist guerrilleros and guerrilleras), and that, as anarchists, we belonged to the former. And that was that. And in my impression, this hasn't changed much to this day. (New Anarchism's anti-leftism seems to have an interesting and valid point in its critique of class struggle reductionism (where it actually develops such a critique — often enough it seems to exhaust itself in defamations of quasi-fascist leftist bogeymen). However,

anarchist radio shows, anarchist teach-ins, anarchist garden workshops, anarchist cooking courses. Suddenly, anarchists were everywhere: "hi, I'm Dave, an anarchist from . . .", "speaking as an anarchist . . .", "we as anarchists . . .", "from an anarchist perspective . . .", etc. At the same time, the coverage on 'anarchism' and 'anarchist politics' in the corporate media must have risen by about 1000% compared to, let's say, the mid-90s, and in terms of academic interest in anarchist subject matter as expressed in academic papers, research grants, and conferences, the number would probably be similar. In short, in a combined effort of activists, media personnel, and academics, 'anarchism' escaped its almost complete obscurity and became a household name pretty much overnight.

However, this mainly remained a US-American phenomenon. Even though in other continents explicit discourses about anarchism have without doubt picked up as well since November 99, these remain mainly reduced to observing — or, in some cases, adapting to — developments in the US. In Europe, for example, the anarchist scene/movement and its role and status in the wider context of European radicalism, European politics, and European society, have changed far less than in the US. (I'm actually tempted to say they've hardly changed at all. This also seems true for Australasia and Africa. As far as Latin America is concerned, I can't make any assessments since I know too little.) I think there are various reasons for this, which, I hope, will also help to further explain why I have called New Anarchism a US-American phenomenon:

1. European culture can't (yet) measure up to the near-perfect US-American installment of the society of the spectacle that allows for near all-encompassing capitalist commodification of, well, just about anything. To a large degree, the 'New Anarchist' is a pop-cultural hero. And the concept of turning a political radical into a pop-cultural hero simply works much better in the US-American socio-economic model than in the context of European social realities.
2. US-American academics work under much more competitive and corporate pressure than academics in Europe. The need to be 'productive' and 'original' is much higher. Hence, the temptation to jump on and thereby reinforce public ('pop-cultural') bandwagons in order

to exploit them scholarly is much bigger. I dare say that most European intellectuals would frown upon most of the papers currently presented as either ‘anarchist research’ or ‘research on anarchism’ at conferences in North America. That’s not to say that they necessarily have valid reason to do so. It’s just to say that they would.

3. Even though there were radical leftist mass movements in the US in the 19th and early 20th century⁴, Europe has an overall stronger and — particularly significant in this context — more alive radical leftist tradition than the US. As one consequence of this, any terms referring to such a tradition — from the pretty innocent ‘socialist’ to the usually frightening ‘Maoist’ — could pretty easily be disposed of in the US, and not only by conservatives and liberals, but also by political radicals amongst whom many are proudly anti-leftist today. This could not happen in the same way in Europe. Even though there were drastic adjustments to the new political landscape amongst the radical European left after the political changes in Eastern Europe in the late 80s (the most obvious of those adjustments having been the changes of leadership, policies, and names of radical leftist parties), leftist terms experienced redefinition rather than disposal. So, while in the US it was easy for a new label for radical political activism to take over, it was not in Europe. While there was a vacuum of (self-)identification of political radicals in the US, most political radicals in Europe were still ‘socialist’, ‘Trotskyist’,

⁴ Of course there was also a component of radical leftism in the protest movements of the 1960s. However, what I refer to as radical leftist mass movements in the 19th and early 20th century were movements that were carried by the working class, had a specific focus on the social question (the question of labor, if you will), and were explicitly ‘socialist’, ‘communist’, ‘syndicalist’ or ‘anarchist’ in orientation. The protest movements of the 1960s — without denying the influence of radical leftist politics on the SDS, the Panthers, the Weathermen, etc. — were to a large degree about a wider ‘cultural’ revolution, and were not carried by the working class. I hope this distinction makes sense (especially in the context of this text).

anarchism’ supposedly belonging to a rejected leftist tradition (see point 2 below), but another part probably simply with the fact that most New Anarchists are very young (mostly late teens, early twenties), and, even though radical and all, don’t seem to differ too much from their square peers in the curious assumption that the arrival of their generation coincided with the birth of a new era. (One could also argue here — in relation to New Anarchism being described as a mainly US-American phenomenon above — that US-American society has strong anti-historical dimensions in general, but I’m afraid such a discussion would lead too far in the context of this essay.) As a result, studying classical anarchist texts is often enough regarded as a waste of time, older long-term anarchist activists suspected to be dangerous leftists, and any historical attempts at creating anarchist communities/societies brushed off as obvious failures.

2. As mentioned above, leftism has a weaker recent tradition in the US than in Europe, and it is therefore more easily discredited and disposed of. It is true that there’ve always been strains of anarchism that saw themselves outside of any political left-right-scheme and were outright opposed to socialist ideas and politics, but even these were (and are) mainly US-American (from Tucker to quasi-anarchist militias — one could argue that this is a reflection of US-society’s deep embeddedness in an individualist ideology crossing the line to capitalist Social Darwinism if taken to the extreme, but it’s not the purpose of this paper to make such an argument either). As stated before, in the European context anarchists have always been part of the left since the emergence of anarchism as a political movement in the context of trying to solve the Social Question of the 19th century by radically progressive means. And even though there have been (again, this was mentioned before) major redefinitions of what the left is and can still stand for in Europe, I think very few European anarchists would bother to passionately disassociate themselves from the left. In fact, even though some might not care either way (regarding the left-right-scheme as obsolete in ‘post-political’ postmodern times), some without doubt remain proud of a radical left-wing identity, or remain at least sentimentally attached to it. Now, whether it’s due to the difference in traditional strength and complexity in the

out there not to let the enemy take our identity away, as cunning as its current attempts might be.

As a possible compromise for the time being, I'd suggest the following:

Classical anarchists accept first that the anarchist movement has undergone major changes in recent years, changes that inevitably affect their perception and identity as anarchists; and they accept secondly that — despite of all possible historical credit — no one can ever have a monopoly on how to define anarchism, so that in the end the recent developments cease to be seen as a mere nuisance but become accepted as a healthy challenge.

At the same time, New Anarchists make a certain commitment to trying to prevent turning anarchism into a mere fad; they'd commit themselves to filling the term with meaning rather than throwing it around loosely.

I think that if we followed these notions, all anarchists, 'classical' and 'new', would uphold anarchism as a strong and meaningful political term to signify a radical anti-Statist movement. And we would prevent it from being nullified by a capitalist axiomatic geared for nothing but commercial exploitation and (hence) preservation of the sickening status quo.

However, back to the more ideological differences between 'classical' and 'new' anarchism. In order to explain the (often wide) gap that exists between the two, and in order to attempt an assessment of the State and the current potential of the anarchist movement (especially in regard to its (dis)unity), we need to try to define what's actually new in New Anarchism. I see mainly three defining aspects (the first two being directly linked to defining New Anarchism as a predominantly US-American phenomenon — and all three of them being closely linked to each other):

1. New Anarchism is anti-historical. Even though references to Bakunin or Kropotkin can be found here and there, and Sacco&Vanzetti as well as Emma Goldman have risen to pop-cultural political idols, and even though some young anarchists know to praise the anarchist heroics of the Spanish Civil War, not much time in the New Anarchist scene is dedicated to theoretical study, especially not of historical anarchist figures and movements. Part of this has to do with 'classical

'autonomist', whatever. There was simply less need for anarchism (or any other radical political label) to fill a void.⁵

4. The fourth reason seems more like one of those historic coincidences that end up casting long shadows: Whatever one might think of John Zerzan and the anarcho-primitivist movement — ideologically or concerning its actual representative value with respect to today's US-American anarchist movement — , if it hadn't been for the impact this scene had on radical politics in Eugene and on the riots related to the Reclaim The Streets event there in June '99, the media might have very well not picked up so readily on the term 'anarchists' as a label for those involved in the corporate property destruction in Seattle. If the image of the dangerous, masked, black-clad, and violent anarchist had still been completely absent from corporate media, Seattle might have never born any New Anarchism. Again, maybe the primitivists have never been more than a small minority and might have never been very representative of the anarchist movement in the US as a whole; yet, for quite some time now they've been amongst the loudest. And in a society where being loud counts for a lot, this goes a long way — amongst radicals ('anarchists') as much as anywhere else.

Identifying New Anarchism as a US-American phenomenon had primarily analytical purposes. I didn't mean to suggest that the New Anarchism phenomenon has no impact on anarchist movements elsewhere. US-American culture exports well and, to a certain degree, permeates global culture, and this is true for radical politics too. Being an anarchist

⁵ The fact that — apart from being a defining moment for New Anarchism — Seattle also became a milestone in the anti-globalization movement, which, obviously, is a global phenomenon that goes way beyond US-American confinements, does, in my eyes, not contradict this. While the entire anti-globalization agenda had constituted a worldwide movement long before Seattle, and while certain forms of resistance employed in Seattle without doubt inspired non-US-American activists (Seattle caused, for example, a resurgence of the originally European black bloc phenomenon on the European continent itself), the anarchist (self)labeling remained almost exclusively reduced to the US. European anti-globalization activists, for example, talk little about anarchism, are very rarely referred to as anarchists, and refer to themselves as such probably even less so. (The reasons for this are, I think, akin to the ones I tried to sketch above historically.)

today doesn't mean what it meant ten years ago. Definitely not in the US, but neither in Europe, nor, I guess, elsewhere.

2) 'New' vs. 'Classical' Anarchism

The first ten years of my involvement in anarchist politics (from 1989 to 1999) being an anarchist was an oddity, and the scene pretty much resembled a social ghetto that was often enough only subject to ridicule and despise, even amongst non-anarchist political radicals. At best, we were seen as incurable idealists, chasing dreams of a just society made for fairytales much rather than the real world. Maybe with the exception of a couple of countries in which historical anarchist struggles earned the anarchist belief system at least some kind of political credibility and acceptance (Spain and Greece probably remain the most prominent examples), one often didn't dare declare oneself an anarchist in radical networks geared towards single-issue political activism, just to avoid the danger of not being taken seriously. (Like in the context of my political socialization, I always found it curious that even though the politics of the European autonomist movement heralded largely anarchist principles, 'anarchism' was almost entirely absent as a self-identifying political term. We were 'autonomist', not 'anarchist'.) Of course there are historic reasons for this, but tracing these seems not essential for the purpose of this paper. What does seem essential is to recall the isolated and disregarded socio-political space we found ourselves in as anarchists for almost all of the 1980s and 1990s.

As suggested above, this has changed drastically since November 1999, especially in the US. It's common now to read about anarchists in the media, to introduce oneself as an anarchist, to refer to your neighbor as an anarchist. Anarchists finally seem to have recognition. The lack of which used to be heavily bemoaned within the anarchist scene, to the point where our position as 'misunderstood social outcasts' became part of our oh so tragic anarchist identities. So, given the recent developments, everyone should be happy. But a lot of 'classical' anarchists are not. In fact, a lot of 'classical' anarchists don't feel very close to the 'new' anarchists who seem solely responsible for having turned anarchism

into a household name. In the strongest forms of disapproval, 'classical' anarchists even disassociate themselves from New Anarchism, or even claim there's nothing anarchist about it.

A somewhat ironic aspect of the classical anarchists' skepticism in regard to new anarchism is that the latter seems too popular. While, on the one hand, expanding the movement has always been one of us anarchists' biggest desires and being socially ostracized one of our biggest woes, there lay, on the other hand, a certain comfort in the intimate social circles of a selected revolutionary few we moved around in. To a certain degree, our extreme minority status guaranteed our righteousness in a world in which the masses were brainwashed by the evil ruling elite. Part of this (rarely openly admitted) rationale was that anything popular was suspicious. And, for a fair amount of classical anarchists, this logic now applies to New Anarchism as well: New Anarchism attracts a fairly big crowd, hence something's gotta be wrong with it.

I guess it's clear that where this suspicion only stems from the fear of losing the comfortable elitist grounds one could settle in before as an enlightened obscure anarchist, we don't have to spend much time dealing with it, since we can't let such revolutionary vanity dictate our debates. However, where certain anarchists are simply afraid that the inflationary use of the term 'anarchism' will water its contents down to a degree where it loses all revolutionary substance and where many long-time anarchists will hence find themselves in a sudden political identity crisis, there, I think, we find a valid point in discussing the possible problems of New Anarchism's widespread popularity. And I for one do actually believe that once anarchism has fully degenerated into a fashion show on MTV, we might have to look for other terms to position ourselves as anti-Statist political radicals in this society. However, as long as there is a serious anarchist movement alive, anarchism will never fully degenerate into an MTV fashion show (just like punk never fully degenerated into one just because of The Offspring or Blink 182). Where exactly the line runs beyond which the term won't be any more but a mere fad seems impossible to determine, and it must be defined by each anarchist comrade herself. As far as I am concerned, though, we are still far from crossing that line. There is still enough 'true' anarchist spirit