This essay offers some critical reflections on one strand of the alleged "new anarchism," namely poststructuralist anarchism, otherwise known as "post anarchism." It specifically addresses the so-called "poststructuralist critique" of anarchism, and attempts to show, with reference to the writings of Peter Kropotkin, that much of this critique is misconceived, and indicates a woeful misrepresentation of an earlier generation of social or class struggle anarchists.

Prologue

Over the past decade or so, academic scholars, along with anarcho-primitivists, Stirnerite individualists and autonomous Marxists, have been asserting that class struggle anarchism is now "obsolete" or "outmoded" or in need of a "major overhaul" or not relevant to contemporary radical activists (Black 1997, Purlds and Bowen 1997:3, Kinna 2005:21, Holloway 2005.21). By "anarchism" they appear to mean the social or class struggle anarchism that derives from Bakunin and Kropotkin and has been embraced by generations of activists throughout the twentieth century, from Goldman, Bocker and Landauer in the early part of the century, to Murray Bookchin, Colin Ward and the Anarchist (Communist) Federation in more recent decades.

We are thus informed that a "new anarchism" or a "new paradigm" has emerged that has completely replaced the "old" class struggle anarchism. According to Ruth Kinna (2005:21^37) this "new anarchism" consists of a rather esoteric pastiche of several political tendencies, namely: the anarcho-primitivism of John Zerzan (1994); the anarcho-capitalism of Murray Rothbard and Ayn Rand; the "poetic terrorism" that derives from Nietzsche and which has been embraced with fervour by Hakim Bey (1991) and John Moore (2004) as the new "ontological anarchy"; acolytes of the possessive individualism (egoism) proclaimed by the left - Hegelian Max Stirner; and finally, the poststructuralist anarchism advocated by Todd May (1994), which is derived from the writings of the French philosophers Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault and JeanFrancois Lyotard. None of whom, it is worth noting, were anarchists.

I have elsewhere offered some critical reflections on this so-called "new anarchism," questioning whether there is anything particularly "new" about it. For it is largely a re-affirmation of nineteenth century bourgeois individualism. I also emphasized that social or class struggle anarchism (libertarian socialism) is still a vibrant and ongoing radical movement and political tradition, and one very much involved in contemporary struggles and protests (cf. Sheehan 2003, Franks 2006).

Here I want to discuss one particular strand of the "new anarchism," namely, poststructuralist or postmodern anarchism, otherwise known as "post anarchism" (Newman 2001, Call 2003, Day 2005), and to specifically focus on what has been described as the "poststructuralist critique" of anarchism.

The Poststructuralist Critique

The "poststructuralist critique" of anarchism seems a rather strange expression, as none of the poststructuralist philosophers ever mention anarchism, let alone critically engage with the
 writings of anarchists like Bakunin, Kropotkin and Elisee Reclus. Jacques Derridas scholastic musings on the politics of Karl Marx, "Specters of Marx" (1994), for example, was essentially aimed at demonstrating his own radicalism, to affirm that he was not a nihilist or apolitical as his early writings undoubtedly suggested. Indeed Derrida emphasized that he was a philosopher and not a mystic, and was motivated by an interest in reason and truth, and was critical of the whole idea of the "postmodern" (Rotzer 1995:46-47). But in "Specters, " though there are plenty of references to Maurice Blanchot, Martin Heidegger (both pro-fascists) and Max Stirner, Derrida not only never mentions Bakunin, but utterly fails to discuss the anarchist critique of Marxism.

Likewise, A Thousand Plateaus (1988), which is considered to be Gilles Deleuze and Felix Gauittari s most political work, is written in the most impenetrable jargon, which even their devotees have difficulty in understanding. But significantly, though expressing some anarchist ideas in their "treatise on nomadology" (in a discussion of "the war machine" against the "state apparatus"), apart from a brief mention of the anthropologist Pierre Clastres, there is no mention at all in the book of anarchism, let alone critically engaging in the work of any anarchist.

Thus neither Derrida, nor Deleuze, nor Lyotard, nor Foucault, all rather detached philosophical mandarins, seem to have expressed any interest in the writings of Bakunin, Reclus, Kropotkin, or any other anarchist, let alone produce a critique. Nor do they express any interest in the work of their contemporary, Murray Bookchin. Still less did they engage with the French anarchist movement, at least in any radical sense. In fact, Lyotard ended up dreaming of intergalactic travel and supporting the right-wing Giscard d'Estaing in the French presidential election, while Foucault became an apologist for the reactionary Islamic clerics at the time of the Iranian revolution, and came to renounce all aspirations for a new social order (Eagleton 2003:37). Nevertheless, we are told that the poststructuralists (or postmodernists) have presented an important critique of social or class struggle anarchism.

So let us now discuss this so-called poststructuralist critique of anarchism - and by anarchism contemporary critics essentially mean the earlier social anarchism of Bakunin, Kropotkin, Goldman, Malatesta, Berkman and Rocker. This critique is well expressed by several scholars, all of whom have become rather enchanted with poststructuralism (or postmodernism). (See, for example, May 1994, Morland 2004, Call 1999, 2003, Newman 2001, 2004.)

This critique asserts the following:

* that early anarchists were simply and narrowly anti-statist, and thus failed to recognize or challenge other forms of power and oppression. Untrue!

* that anarchists viewed "power" only as repressive or coercive and this did not acknowledge that "power" was also "productive." Untrue!

* that anarchists have a Cartesian notion of human subjectivity or an "essentialist" conception of human nature which they view as fixed, immutable and essentially benign. Untrue!
* that old anarchists were obsessed with workers' power and the class struggle and therefore lacked any ecological sensibility. Untrue!

* that anarchists uncritically embraced the Enlightenment project and thus acclaimed reason, progress, humanism and science, to the neglect of culture, poetry, the arts, the emotions and the imagination. Untrue! and finally:

* that the old anarchists were "ideological" radicals, in that they explicitly framed their aims and the ethical and political principles that guided their actions. True!

Let me take each of these six criticisms in turn, focusing on the social anarchism of Peter Kropotkin, although it must be said that they are less criticisms than serious misrepresentations of the radical ideas of an earlier generation of anarchists.

**Anti-Statism**

That Kropotkin and other anarchists were only anti-state theorists and failed to recognize or challenge other forms of power and oppression, borders on being a rather silly accusation. But it has been expressed by a host of radical academics opposed to class struggle anarchism, typical examples being John Moore (1998), L. Susan Brown (1993:157) and Saul Newman (2004). Although it misrepresents Kropotkin's own critique of power, it does seem to satisfy scholars eager to promote their own originality. For example, Kropotkin was suggesting a "maximalist" (ugh!) critique of power long before John Moore, without ever adopting John Moore's bourgeois project of an aesthetic "ego" at "war" (no less!) with society.

For a start, Kropotkin was not only anti-capitalist, but opposed to all forms of economic exploitation - whether in the Siberian salt mines, the capitalist factories, or in relation to Russian serfdom. He also recognized that under the guise of the modern state, power relations had encroached into all aspects of social life, and as Richard Day recognized, Kropotkin, long before Habermas, Foucault and Mario Tronti, was expressing the "colonization thesis" that the state is taking over, capturing, colonizing, existing social relations and putting them to work in the name of its own authority (2005:144). As Kropotkin himself put it: "today the state takes upon itself to meddle in all areas of our lives" (1885:25). Thus the modern state has increasingly been intruding into all aspects of social life, taking over functions - education, health, social welfare, leisure, recreation - that had earlier been organized through voluntary associations and local communities. Kropotkin, of course, critiqued and challenged all these intrusions of state power.

Long before Foucault, Kropotkin also made a distinction between the state and government. The state implied the concentration of power in the hands of a political elite, the control of a specific territory, and domination through the state apparatus - army, police, and the administrative and judicial functionaries. In contrast, government was a more general concept, reflecting the forms and mechanisms of power that involved the management and policing of the working class (1993:163). Like Foucault, Kropotkin always emphasized that the modern state, including the ubiquitous "mechanisms" of power, played an important role in supporting capitalist hegemony.
Kropotkin also vehemently opposed state schooling and the prison system. However, unlike Foucault and Deleuze, Kropotkin was concerned not simply with prison "reform" but abolishing the prison system altogether. For Kropotkin, prisons were simply "obsolete" (cf Davis 2003).

Equally important, Kropotkin was critical of all forms of social power and all ideologies - economic, political, religious - that undermined or curtailed the freedom of the individual. He was thus critical of all religious ideologies - emphasizing the close relationship that had always existed between spiritualism and political hegemony -whether involving the tribal shaman or religious institutions like the Catholic Church. Like Marx, he was critical too of liberal economic theory and Stirner's individualism, emphasizing their ideological function, as well as being opposed to the Social Darwinism that was popular at the end of the nineteenth century.

Thus Kropotkin did not naively view the state as the "root of all evil" as Susan Brown herself naively assumes (1993:157), but was opposed to all forms of coercive power and authority. He was thus critical of both private property and the wage system - which he described as "wage slavery" - and all forms of religious authority, not just the state.

Needless to say, Kropotkin was a member of the International Working Men's Association, and like Bakunin, was highly critical of Marx's party dictatorship and the hierarchical relationships developing within the socialist movement itself. Long before the autonomist Marxists, Kropotkin was criticizing the notion of the vanguard party, or rule by intellectual savants.

Like many of his nineteenth century contemporaries Kropotkin lacked a gender perspective, but it is clear from his discussion of Bakunin in his "Memoirs" that both he and Bakunin were opposed to any form of gender inequality (1889:289). Kropotkin was also particularly critical of many religious communes, which he felt had made women the "slaves" of the community, reducing them to the role of domestic servants (1997:17).

To view Kropotkin (and other social anarchists) simply as naive anti-statists, or as conceiving "power" as residing solely in the state, is thus seriously misleading. For Kropotkin was critical not only of all manifestations and techniques of political power, but all ideologies, relationships and institutions that limited or inhibited the autonomy and self-development of the individual - Brown's existential individual no less! But unlike Brown, Kropotkin, as an anarchist communist, recognized and stressed that "true" individualism could only be expressed and accomplished in a society free of all hegemonic structures - a society which he described as "free communism" (for critiques of Brown's existentialist individualism, see Bookchin 1995:13-18, Morris 2004.184-86; and for her defence of radical humanism, see Brown 2004).

We may thus conclude that it is quite erroneous to dismiss Kropotkin as merely "anti-statist," for he stood firmly in the social anarchist tradition that expressed an opposition or negation of all hierarchical power relations - political, economic, social and cultural. He was thus critical of all forms of domination, sovereignty, representation and hierarchy (Wieck 1979:138-39). He would have agreed with Rudolf Rocker that "common to all (social) anarchists is the desire to free society of all political and social coercive institutions that stand in the way of the development of free humanity" (1989:20).
The Productivity of Power

The second criticism, namely that Kropotkin and other "old" anarchists failed to recognize that "power" is "productive" and not just repressive (May 1994:63, Patton 2000:8), is also completely misguided.

For the past two hundred years social scientists, political theorists and anarchists have all recognized that no hegemonic power or political ruler, even the most bloodthirsty tyrant, rules solely by means of repression and coercion. This was recognized long before Foucault arrived on the intellectual scene, as was the close relation between power and knowledge. Thus "power" has always been "productive," and throughout history there has been a symbiotic relationship between political domination and religious ideologies. Biopower is nothing new! Thus anarchists like Kropotkin were not so dumb as to fail to recognize that "power" (in the sense of pouvoir, "power over" encapsulated in social institutions as opposed to puissance, potentiality or creative power) is "productive" in that it produces prisons, propaganda, disciplined subjects, laws, ideologies, festivals and forms of knowledge, as well as, of course, modes of resistance. But for Kropotkin, as for Foucault, this "productivity" is not to be interpreted as something necessarily wholesome or conducive with human well-being. Far from it: it essentially refers to techniques of social control and social regulation that are achieved through non-coercive means (Morris 2004:209). Kropotkin was, of course, critical of such forms of power, and in contrast, advocated the kind of power expressed in direct action, and in the creation - the "production" - of new and alternative forms of social co-operation through voluntary associations and mutual aid. Power, as Bakunin expressed it, may be just as beneficial as harmful:

"It is beneficial when it contributes to the development of knowledge, material prosperity, liberty, equality, and brotherly solidarity, harmful when it has opposite tendencies" (Lehning 1973:150).

The notion that Kropotkin and the early anarchists saw power only as repressive or coercive is thus quite fallacious.

Essentialism

One of the most banal, misleading and oft-repeated criticisms of class struggle anarchists such as Kropotkin is that they hold an essentialist view of the human subject.

Everyone throughout the world, and in all cultures, express in their thoughts and actions some conception of human nature, and academic philosophers, Stirnerite egoists and Nietzschean aesthetes are no exception. However, in critiquing Kropotkin and other anarchists for holding essentialist conceptions of human nature, the implication is two-fold: either they - the anarchists - posit the human person as having a fixed, immutable, benign metaphysical essence (May 1994:63-64, Patton 2008:8, Newman 2004); or that they articulate a Cartesian conception of human subjectivity (Call 1999:100).

It seems to me that such postmodernists completely misrepresent the views expressed by Kropotkin and other anarchists on human subjectivity.
For a start, unlike their poststructuralist detractors, Kropotkin (like Elisee Reclus) was an evolutionary thinker, and thus recognized that humans as a species-being are the product of a long evolutionary history and development. Their sociality is therefore not some metaphysical essence - as Newman (2004:113) supposes - but a product of evolution. Kropotkin also recognized, like Marx and Bakunin before him, that human beings were social beings, not Cartesian rational monads, nor the "abstract" individual of bourgeois ideology - the asocial, possessive, power-seeking individual of Hobbesian theory (Macpherson 1962, Morris 1994:15-18). Marx, Bakunin and Kropotkin all critiqued - indeed ridiculed - these "abstract" conceptions of the human person long before Lacan and the poststructuralists.

When, for example, Marx (and Engels) in "The Communist Manifesto" called on workers of all countries to unite, this was because he recognized that all workers had multiple identities - in terms of gender, race, nationality and occupation, and that the "man" of bourgeois theory had no reality, that it was an abstraction, that it existed only in "the misty realms of philosophical fantasy" (1968:57). That is why in his early writings Marx defined the human person as an "ensemble of social relations."

That humans are social beings and not disembodied rational egos, or "abstract" (bourgeois) asocial individuals, was thus clearly recognized by both Bakunin and Kropotkin, as well as by generations of social scientists and anarchists, at least since Marx.

What happened was that in the 1970s - in opposition to Sartre's existentialism and Husserls phenomenology - French academic philosophers suddenly discovered for themselves what had been common knowledge among social scientists for more than a century. Namely, that human beings are social beings, not Cartesian monads, and that self-identity - personhood - in all human cultures is complex, embodied, shifting, relational, and involves multiple identities.

Thus, it has to be said, sociobiologists, evolutionary psychologists, behaviourists, Stirnerite egoists, cultural aesthetes like Hakim Bey and John Moore, and even poststructuralist philosophers like Foucault and Deleuze, are much more prone to essentialist thinking than Kropotkin ever was.

Indeed, it is of interest to note that Kropotkin suggested that the conception of an "abstract" asocial individual - whether the Cartesian rational monad, or the Hobbesian (Stirnerite) possessive individual - was a recent conception in human history. It was, he felt, intrinsically linked to the emergence of capitalism, to the treatment of human labour as a commodity. It was thus totally lacking in tribal society. For tribal peoples had a sociocentric conception of the human subject; that is, a non-essentialist concept of human nature (Morris 2004:177-190).

Equally interesting is that both Foucault and Moore seem to express a rather Hobbesian (that is, an essentialist) conception of the human person, in viewing interpersonal relationships as implying "war" - an inherent war of "all against all," that intrinsically, we "all fight each other" as Foucault put it (1980:208, Moore 1998:40). Neither appears to have read Kropotkin's " Mutual Aid" (1902).
Also important to note is that Kropotkin did not view the person as possessing some benign, metaphysical essence - he was as critical of Rousseau as he was of Hobbes - nor as ever completely divorced from social and political relations. Thus in foisting upon social anarchism a "Manichean logic," that is, an absolute dichotomy between good and evil, Newman (2004:109) presents a biased and quite misleading portrait of Kropotkin's conception of human subjectivity; one that - allegedly - implies an "essentialist identity." This essentialist identity is largely a figment of Newman's own imagination. For it not only depends on the conflation of several distinct conceptions of the human person (Morris 1994:10-13), but has very little connection with Kropotkin's own identity as a social being or his conception of human nature. In fact John Moore's "new" (Stirnerite) anarchism reflects, far more than social anarchism, a "Manichean logic." For he appears to see nothing between "power" - as a totalizing metaphysical abstraction that is wholly negative - and the human subject interpreted, in following Stirner and Nietzsche, as an isolated, asocial ego, anxious to assert its power in poetic insurrection.

(For a discussion of Bakunin's and Kropotkin's conception of the individual, which includes a rebuttal of their academic detractors see Morris 1993:92-94, 2004:180-190).

Ecology

Early social anarchists, obsessed with worker's control and the class struggle, were oblivious, we are told, to the environmental issues. By contrast, a key characteristic of the "new anarchism" is an ecological sensibility (Kinna 2005, Curran 2006). Two points need to be made.

First, it would be difficult to find anybody these days, whatever their politics, who does not claim to be "green" and intent on "saving" the planet earth. Secondly, many of the so-called poststructuralist anarchists (sic) - for example, Derrida, Baudrillard, Lyotard and Foucault (pictured at right) - can hardly be described as ecological thinkers, for their anti-realism virtually oblates the natural world.

But, of course, this criticism ignores the fact that the two key figures in the development of class struggle anarchism - Elisee Reclus and Kropotkin - were both pioneers in the development of an ecological worldview. Both scholars were important anarchist geographers, and both developed a metaphysics of nature that completely undermined the dualism, the anthropocentrism and the determinism of the Cartesian mechanistic worldview. This was long before the environmental philosophy (Zimmerman, Callicott), deep ecology (Naess), quantum physics and systems theory (Bateson, Capra) and eco-feminism (Spretnak). For what Kropotkin (and Reclus) recognized and affirmed were the following: that humans were not the special products of god's creation but evolved according to the principles that operated throughout nature; that there is an intrinsic physical and organic (not spiritual) link between humans and nature, such that humans were an integral part of nature; that openness, chance, creativity, and the agency and individuality of all living beings were integral aspects of the evolutionary process; and finally, Kropotkin and Reclus suggested a way of understanding that was naturalistic and historical (not static and spiritual). Thus human understanding and knowledge involved both critical reason and empirical observation and experiment.
Thus, in many ways, as Graham Purchase suggested, Kropotkin expressed in embryonic form seminal ideas that find a resonance in contemporary chaos theory and evolutionary biology. For Kropotkin, like Reclus, emphasized the importance of self-organization, complexity, and the idea that "order" is not necessarily something externally imposed, but is implicate and emerges spontaneously. (Baldwin 1927:118-19, Purchase 1996:138). Equally important, of course, is that Kropotkin's embrace of Darwin's evolutionary theory meant that he abandoned what Ernst Mayr (2002:74) described as typological or essentialist thinking. All this is lost on Kropotkin's recent detractors.

The dismissal of Kropotkin as a crude positivist (Crowder 1992) or as a Cartesian rationalist (Call 1999) - he could hardly be both! - thus indicates a woeful misunderstanding of Kropotkin's (and Reclus') metaphysics of nature (cf Morris 2001, 2004:113-127, Clark and Martin 2004:19-42).

Unlike many "new anarchists," Kropotkin (and Reclus) did not see any dichotomy, let alone an opposition, between "green" anarchism, a concern for the environment and the "rights" of nature, and class struggle anarchism and a concern for class issues and social justice. In fact, in developing the social anarchist tradition Murray Bookchin (1980, 1982) was later to strongly affirm that there was an intrinsic fink between the domination of humans and the domination of nature.

Kropotkin has often been dismissed by Marxists as a Utopian dreamer. He was, of course, nothing of the kind; and in Fields, Faetones and Workshops (1899) - which Colin Ward described as one of the prophetic books of the nineteenth century - Kropotkin outlined a form of social economy which emphasized the productivity of small-scale decentralized industry, the importance of horticulture, and the need to integrate agriculture and manufacture in a decentralized economy. In doing so, Kropotkin offered important critiques of the factory system, petty commodity production and large-scale capitalist agriculture. He was thus an inspiration for both the social ecologist Lewis Mumford (1970) - in his critique of the mega machine - and Colin Ward (1973) whose ecological anarchism emphasized "anarchy in action."

It is also worth noting that Kropotkin, in Mufua/Az'c/ (1902), critiqued the ultraDarwinism espoused by Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer. This theory emphasized that nature always involved competitive struggle and the "survival of the fittest" - that nature was "red in tooth and claw." In contrast, Kropotkin argued that throughout the natural world, and throughout human history, mutual aid and cooperation were important factors in evolution. Such ultra-Darwinism is still an important trend in contemporary biology, especially among such biologists as Edward Wilson and Richard Dawkins (for critiques see Morris 1991:132-142, Rose and Rose 2000).

Thus there is no evidence at all that early anarchists lacked an ecological perspective - at least in relation to such social anarchists or libertarian socialists as Kropotkin, Elisée Reclus, Edward Carpenter and Gustav Landauer. (See for example Clark and Martin 2004, Barua 1991, Lunn 1973.)

The Enlightenment
It is a common pastime among many postmodern academics (as well as among the "new anarchists") to express a blanket dismissal of the Enlightenment tradition. Indeed, to hold the Enlightenment or reason as responsible for the political horrors of the twentieth century, rather than engaging with the real factors, namely, inter-state conflicts, fascist ideology and the realities of an expanding capitalism is a bit like blaming Jesus for the Inquisition and equally misconceived.

In many ways Kropotkin, like Marx, stood firmly in the tradition of the Enlightenment, which was not, of course, a purely French phenomenon. He has therefore been dismissed by "postmodern" anarchists as an Enlightenment "rationalist," or as a "humanist," or even as a "modernist." Certainly Kropotkin embraced many of the radical aspects of the Enlightenment tradition: the affirmation of such universal values as individual liberty, equality and fraternity; the promotion of a cosmopolitan outlook; a stress on the importance of free enquiry, secularism and religious tolerance; an advocacy of critical reason and scientific materialism and thus the repudiation of knowledge based on mystical intuition, divine revelation and religious dogma; and finally, a respect for craft industry and a belief in human progress through the application of scientific knowledge and technology. In this sense Kropotkin embraced "modernity" as opposed to political and religious absolutism and the authority of tradition and theology.

But it is also important to recognize that Kropotkin renounced many of the aspects of the Enlightenment tradition (or "modernity"). He repudiated, for example, not only the absolutist state but the democratic state and the whole idea of representative government. Equally important, Kropotkin rejected capitalism and the market economy, and was particularly critical of "private property," a key concept for Enlightenment liberals like Locke. Kropotkin also repudiated the metaphysics of the Enlightenment with its mechanistic conception of nature, its radical dualism and its essentialist conception of the human subject, whether as a rational monad (Descartes) or an abstract asocial individual (Hobbes, Stirner). For as noted above, Kropotkin recognized that evolutionary theory and advances in the natural and social sciences at the end of the nineteenth century had completely undermined the mechanistic philosophy of the Enlightenment. He thus came to acknowledge a "new philosophy" - which may be described as evolutionary holism (Baldwin 1927:116-119, Morris 2004:113 -27).

Kropotkin was also critical of the moral philosophies associated with the Enlightenment, both Kant's rationalist ethics (deontology) and the utilitarianism of both John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham. Kropotkin thus advocated an ethical naturalism that entailed a "prefigurative ethics," a linking of means and ends (as Benjamin Franks (2006:94) describes it, without ever exploring Kropotkin's own theory of ethics). This, of course, completely undermined the fact/value dualism upheld by such Enlightenment thinkers as David Hume, and the later positivists.

To describe Kropotkin (and other class struggle anarchists) as a "modernist" is therefore quite misleading. In many respects he was "anti-modernist." Kropotkin embraced the concept of "reason" to undermine absolutism, and to re-affirm the crucial importance of human agency and social freedom. But this did not imply that either Kropotkin or such Enlightenment thinkers as Hume, Diderot and Adam Smith, did not put an equal stress on the importance of other human faculties such as intuition, emotions (passions) and the imagination. Following Adam Smith, Kropotkin argued that our moral conceptions are the product of both our feelings and our reason,
and have developed naturally in the life of human societies. Particularly important for Kropotkin were the feelings of sympathy and solidarity, neither of which were unique to humans, as they existed among all social animals (Kropotkin 1924:199-208, Morris 2004:161-63).

Because Kropotkin put an emphasis on critical reason and empirical science, this did not imply that he ignored or devalued other aspects of human life and culture. Like Emma Goldman, Kropotkin often gave lectures on literature, and was particularly well-versed in Russian literature and drama. In fact, in England Kropotkin was greatly respected in literary circles, and Oscar Wilde, Bernard Shaw and William Rossetti were among his friends and admirers (see introduction by George Woodcock to Kropotkin 1905).

Kropotkin (and other class struggle anarchists) is often dismissed as an Enlightenment "humanist" (or "rationalist") - and the terms are used in the most negative and derogatory fashion. If one means by humanism (or rationalism) a belief in the capacity of humans themselves, through their reason and imagination, to deal with the problems of human existence, and thus the rejection of any spiritualist or religious metaphysics; together with the affirmation of such universal human values as solidarity and freedom, tolerance, empathy and equality, such values being relative to humans and not derived from any divine source: then Kropotkin and other class struggle anarchists were committed humanists and rationalists.

If, however, one means by "humanism" the idea that the human species is some god-like creature, that it implies a Cartesian conception of human subjectivity, and that it also entails a Baconian (or Faustian) ethic sanctioning the human domination of nature by means of technological mastery, then, most certainly, Kropotkin was not a humanist. Neither was he a philosophical rationalist, for like Darwin he stressed the importance of empirical knowledge.

It is, then, rather disheartening to observe the "new" or postmodern anarchists joining hands with religious mystics and apologists for religion misleadingly equating humanism (and science) with anthropocentrism and an ethic of domination.

Although Kropotkin lived at a time when the "myth of progress" was a dominant motif, the anarchist, like his friend Elisée Reclus, had a more nuanced, comprehensive and holistic conception of human history. He saw history as neither a chronicle of unending progress, nor, as with the anarcho- primitivists, as one of cultural degradation and decline after some alleged "fall of agriculture" from grace. Thus although Kropotkin affirmed the importance of science and technology in overcoming ignorance and material scarcity, he also acknowledged the many retrogressive aspects of human history - the rise of hierarchical relations and state power in particular. Thus Kropotkin suggested that throughout human history there had always been "two tendencies." A legacy of control and domination expressed by shamans, prophets, priests and governments, and a legacy of freedom and struggle expressed not only in the creative power of people themselves in establishing social institutions and voluntary associations, but in the struggle of people throughout history for emancipation and autonomy (Baldwin 1927: 146-47, Bookchin 1999:278).

As right-wing neo-liberals are now taking up a defence of the Enlightenment tradition, allegedly to counter Islamic fundamentalism in the "clash of civilizations," it behoves anarchists to follow
Foucault in rejecting the whole idea of being for or against the Enlightenment. Thus refusing to succumb to a kind of "blackmail" - as Foucault called it (Rabinow 1984:42-3).

The legacy of the Enlightenment is an ambiguous legacy, as Kropotkin acknowledged long ago. (For a radical defence of the Enlightenment see Bronner 2004.) To discuss Kropotkin as an Enlightenment "rationahst" as if this were some kind of intellectual aberration, is therefore unhelpful and obfuscating.

Ideology

A final criticism that is foisted on the earlier generation of class struggle anarchists like Kropotkin, as well as upon contemporary anarchists like Murray Bookchin and the Black Bloc, is that they are ideological. Rehashing the old wishy-washy liberal idea of the "end of ideology," and contending that the "new anarchists" (as well as Stirner and Nietzsche) were non-ideological, liberal scholars such as Giorel Curran (2006) condemn an earlier generation of anarchists as ideological. They are thus portrayed as being dogmatic, sectarian, doctrinaire - conforming blindly to tradition, authoritarian, vanguardist, confrontational - if not outright violent, and of course "essentialists." In contrast, the "new anarchists" - poetic terrorists, anarcho-primitivists, anarcho-capitalists, Stirnerite individualists and poststructural anarchists - are described as open, nonviolent, tolerant, flexible and eclectic, concerned with methodology not ideology, and as expressing the "spirit" of anarchism, not some dreadful, misguided anarchist ideology. As with other academics such as John Moore and Ruth Kinna, Curran articulates a rather simplistic, linear, bipolar conception of anarchist history, though Curran admits that there might be some continuity between the "old" and the "new" anarchism.5

Three points need to be made regarding this baneful analysis. The first is that there is no such intellectual or political position or theory that is non-ideological (using the term "ideology" in a non-pejorative sense). For by their thoughts and actions all anarchists and political radicals express an ideology. Autonomist Marxism, anarcho-primitivism, Stirnerite ultra-individualism, postmodern anarchism, and poetic terrorism (ontological anarchy!) are all ideologies, and their devotees are just as ideological as any social or class struggle anarchist.6

Of course, the old anarchists were committed to anarchism as a political ideology and movement, whether mutualists (Proudhon), collectivists (Bakunin), anarcho-syndicalists (Rocker) and anarchist communists (Kropotkin, Reclus, Goldman, Malatesta). All reflected upon, defended and propagated (social) anarchism as a political ideology or tradition. This was thought of as an ongoing, developing tradition. But they were not conformists, blindly following a tradition. Kropotkin, for example, was critical of certain aspects of the anarchism of Proudhon and Bakunin, but unlike contemporary academic radicals like Moore, Holloway and Kinna, he did not pretentiously declare them "obsolete," irrelevant, or "outmoded."

Secondly, it would be difficult to find among an earlier generation of anarchists (from Bakunin to Landauer) any that are more doctrinaire, more dogmatic, more sectarian or more "ideological" than the anarcho-primitivists Bob Black and John Moore. Given their blanket dismissal of all aspects of civilization, and their equally hostile dismissal of libertarian socialism, and all forms
of working-class struggle. There is indeed a sense in which anarcho-primitivism is akin to the individualist fringes of American right-wing extremism (Sheehan 2003:43).

Thirdly, showing no real engagements with the writings and political struggles of the "old" anarchists, Curran's account verges on caricature. For she uncritically embraces all the negative opinions of the detractors of class struggle anarchism - whether Uberai academics, ultra-individualists, or postmodernists. And so she falsely accuses "old" anarchists of being "ideological," that is, lacking the appropriate anarchist temperament or as being devoid of the "spirit" of anarchism. Setting up a radical dichotomy between anarchism as a political tradition, shared by all social anarchists, and the "spirit" of anarchism is quite fallacious. And accusing an earlier generation of anarchists, like Kropotkin, of lacking such a "spirit" is quite unfounded.

Anarchists like Bakunin and Kropotkin - like any radical scholars - were always open to new ideas, and critically absorbed ideas from a wide range of sources: philosophical, cultural, political, scientific. They had far more scholarship than some of their postmodern and Uberai critics, but being anarchists and not university academics, they expressed their ideas as lucidly as possible, aiming to reach and appeal to a working-class readership. They also gave their ideas some degree of coherence, though neither Bakunin, Kropotkin nor Guisée Reclus attempted to create some philosophical system in the style of Spinoza or Hegel. All this contrasts markedly with the "new" anarchists, who congratulate themselves on being able to hold incompatible or contradictory premises - advocating for example, both tribal communaUsm and Stirnerite possessive individualism - as well as expressing their ideas in the most obscurantist, scholastic jargon.

Kropotkin not only embraced and developed (social) anarchism as a political ideology, but in his Life and practices expressed also the "spirit" of anarchism - apart from a sad lapse of his principles at the outbreak of the first world war. Reclus expressed the "spirit" of anarchism even more (see Morris 2007, Clark and Martin 2004).

Conclusions

We can but conclude that there is very little substance in the so-called poststructuralist critique of (social) anarchism. Such a view is certainly confirmed in Richard Day's (2005) excellent study of anarchist currents in recent social movements. For Day acknowledges that Kropotkin long ago formulated an ongoing struggle between the logic of hegemony and the logic of affinity (i.e. anarchism); that his writings on the state "prefigure" those of Deleuze and Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus (1988); and that Kropotkin affirmed the creative power of the "masses" not only in resisting oppression but in creating new social institutions through mutual aid and voluntary cooperation. Throughout history this has been achieved by direct action, or what Day describes as "structural renewal." Thus Day concludes that Kropotkin was the "first postanarchist" (2005:121-23).

Kropotkin, of course, was not "post" anything. But this suggestion does indicate that there is nothing particularly new or original in the poUtics of the poststructuralists. Indeed, Day continually implies that both the poststructuralist philosophers (Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida) and autonomist Marxists (Hardt and Negri 2005, Houtoway 2005) simply appropriated and replicated
the basic principles of social or class struggle anarchism, with very little acknowledgement. As he coyly put it: "Deleuze, Foucault or Derrida might owe certain unacknowledged debts to the anarchist tradition" (2005:94). John Holloway's autonomist Marxist text "Changing the World Widiout Taking Power"(2005) simply indicates either a refusal to acknowledge the existence of anarchism or a rather baneful ignorance of this political tradition. For anarchists have been advocating an alternative both to Uberai reformism and to the Marxist revolutionary party and workers' state for well over a century. Indeed, ever since William Godwin, who first advocated a communist society without government (Baldwin 1927:290).7

The "logic of affinity," "structural renewal," "changing the world without taking power" - these simply describe the radical practices long advocated by social or class struggle anarchists; practices that have just been re-discovered by the postmodernists!

Sidebar

"...today the state takes upon itself to meddle in all areas of our lives"

Footnote

Notes

1. I am informed that this article is unduly strident and polemical. This polemical tone stems partly from the fact that the essay was initially given as a talk on the "new anarchism" to the Northern Anarchist Network (in September 2007) and partly from my own exasperation at the derisive treatment of an earlier generation of anarchists by many contemporary academics. Needless to say, following a long anarchist tradition I see no antithesis between polemics and scholarship. But note: although the tone of the paper may be critical and polemical, nowhere do I intend to belittle or misrepresent the work of the scholars I discuss.

2. By social or class struggle anarchism I refer to the kind of anarchism long ago outlined by Bakunin and Kropotkin (see my studies of these anarchists, 1993, 2004). It embraces the following basic tenets : a rejection of the state and all forms of power and authority that inhibit the liberty of the individual; a rejection of capitalism along with its competitive ethos and its possessive individualism (and thus the advocacy of some form of socialism); and, finally, the creation of forms of social organization based on mutual aid and voluntary co-operation, and which enhance and promote the fullest expression of human liberty. Such organizational forms are thus independent of both the state and capitalism. (For a contemporary definition of class struggle anarchism see Franks 2006:12).

It must be recognized, of course, that social or class struggle anarchism is not a monolithic category, for it contains within it several distinctive strands. Between such tendencies there are often disputes. For example, anarcho-syndicalists have long been highly critical of Bookchin's emphasis on municipal politics, but it has to be recognized that Bookchin never repudiated the class struggle and was vehemently anti-capitalist (see Bookchin 1999 : 264). Likewise, both Nicolas Walter and Colin Ward have been (falsely) characterized as wishy-washy "liberals" by class war anarchists, but again it has to be recognized that both men remained true to the spirit of
Kropotkin and social anarchism. In advocating the importance of creating alternative forms of social organization, independent of both the state and the capitalist economy - what Day (2005 : 208) has recently described as "structural renewal".

3. It is important to understand that this paper is not a critique of poststructuralism, anarchist or otherwise. Nor is it an assessment of whether or not poststructuralist (or postmodern) philosophers (or their acolytes) are anarchists. It is, rather, focussed specifically on the misrepresentation of an earlier generation of class struggle anarchists by the academic devotees of poststructuralism (or postmodernism). My own feeling is that apart from Deleuze and Foucault (at odd moments) none of the poststructuralists (Bourdieu, Baudrillard, Derrida, Lyotard, Rorty et al) can be considered anarchists. See my short review of the poststructuralists "The Great Beyond" in Freedom (68/23 (2007) 5).


5. John Moore's bipolar conception of anarchist history was well expressed in the pages of the "Green Anarchist" (e.g. 57 (1999) 23) where social anarchists are described pejoratively as "leftists", and dismissed as dreary, political racketeers. As well, of course, in his review of Todd May (1994) where Moore explicitly outlines a "two-phase periodisation" of anarchist history ("Anarchist Studies 5 (1997) 157). He personally suggested to me that Kropotkin's revolutionary anarchism was "obsolete", prompting me to write a book on Kropotkin's anarchism and social ecology! The book (2004) aimed to re-affirm Kropotkin's continuing relevance for anarchist theory.

With regard to Ruth Kinna; although within the chapter "What is Anarchism" she presents a more nuanced account of anarchism, this completely undermines and runs counter to the key dichotomy she embraces between the "old" and the allegedly "new" anarchism, and her suggestion that "traditional" anarchism (i.e. class struggle anarchism) has now become "outmoded" (2005 : 21). Setting up a dichotomy between the "old" and allegedly "new" anarchism is both conceptually and historically highly problematic, if not obfuscating.

6. I use these different radical tendencies not because I oppose them, but because they have been described by Curran (2006) as the "new" radicalism and as being "post ideological".

7. It is of interest that the only mention of anarchism in Holloway s entire text is to declare that anarchism - as distinct from reform and revolution - no longer seems "relevant" to contemporary activists (2005 : 21).

Additional references for this piece are available online at http://www.socialanarchism.org/.

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