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modern radical aspirations towards community were a manifestation of the 'herd' mentality. However it may be possible to construct a ressentiment-free notion of community from Nietzsche's own concept of power. For Nietzsche, active power is the individual's instinctive discharge of his forces and capacities which produces in him an enhanced sensation of power, while reactive power, as we have seen, needs an external object to act on and define itself in opposition to.[66] Perhaps one could imagine a form of community based on active power. For Nietzsche this enhanced feeling of power may be derived from assistance and benevolence towards others, from enhancing the feeling of power of others.[67] Like the ethics of mutual aid, a community based on will to power may be composed of a series of inter-subjective relations that involve helping and caring for people without dominating them and denying difference. This openness to difference and self-transformation, and the ethic of care, may be the defining characteristics of the post-anarchist democratic community. This would be a community of active power — a community of 'masters' rather than 'slaves'.[68] It would be a community that sought to overcome itself — continually transforming itself and revelling in the knowledge of its power to do so.

Post-anarchism may be seen, then, as a series of politico-ethical strategies against domination, without essentialist guarantees and Manichean structures that condition and restrict classical anarchism. It would affirm the contingency of values and identities, including its own, and affirm, rather than deny, will to power. It would be, in other words, an anarchism without ressentiment.

[66] See Paul Patton 'Power in Hobbes and Nietzsche', Nietzsche, Feminism & Political Theory, ed., Paul Patton, Allen & Unwin: Australia, 1993, p. 152.
[67] Ibid., p. 156.
[68] Ibid., p. 154.

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and more extensive their liberty, the deeper and larger becomes my liberty.[64]

The inter-relatedness of equality and liberty may form the basis of a new collective ethos, which refuses to see individual freedom and collective equality as limits on each other — which refuses to sacrifice difference in the name of universality, and universality in the name of difference. Foucault's anti-strategic ethics may be seen as an example of this idea. In his defence of collective movements like the Iranian revolution, Foucault said that the anti-strategic ethics he adopts is "to be respectful when something singular arises, to be intransigent when power offends against the universal."[65] This anti-strategic approach condemns universalism when it is disdainful of the particular, and condemns particularism when it is at the expense of the universal. Similarly, a new ethics of collective action would condemn collectivity when it is at the expense of difference and singularity, and condemn difference when it is at the expense of collectivity. It is an approach that allows one to combine individual difference and collective equality in a way which is not dialectical but which retains a certain positive and life-affirming antagonism between them. It would imply a notion of respect for difference, without encroaching on the freedom of others to be different — an equality of freedom of difference. Post-anarchist collective action would, in other words, be based on a commitment to respect and recognize autonomy, difference and openness within collectivity.

Furthermore, perhaps one could envisage a form of political community or collective identity that did not restrict difference. The question of community is central to radical politics, including anarchism. One cannot talk about collective action without at least posing the question of community. For Nietzsche, most

[64]Bakunin, Political Philosophy, op. cit. p. 267.

[65]Michel Foucault, Is It Useless To Revolt?, Philosophy and Social Criticism 8 (1) (1981), pp. 1–9, p. 9.

Perhaps anarchism could become a new 'heroic' philosophy, which is no longer reactive but, rather, creates values. For instance, the ethic of mutual care and assistance propounded by Kropotkin could perhaps be utilized in the construction of new forms of collective action and identities. Kropotkin looked at the development of collective groups based on cooperation — trade unions, associations of all kinds, friendly societies and clubs, etc.[63] As we have seen, he believed this to be the unfolding of an essential natural principle. However, perhaps one could develop this collectivist impulse without circumscribing it in essentialist ideas about human nature. Collective action does not need a principle of human essence to justify it. Rather it is the contingency of identity — its openness to difference, to singularity, to individuality and collectivity — that is itself ethical. So the anarchist ethics of mutual aid may be taken from its essentialist foundations and applied to a non-essentialist, constitutively open idea of collective political identity.

An alternative conception of collective action may for instance, be developed from a re-articulation of the relationship between equality and freedom. To anarchism's great credit it rejected the liberal conviction that equality and freedom act as limits upon each other and are ultimately irreconcilable concepts. For anarchists, equality and freedom are inextricably related impulses, and one cannot conceive of one without the other. For Bakunin:

I am free only when all human beings surrounding me — men and women alike — are equally free. The freedom of others, far from limiting or negating my liberty, is on the contrary its necessary condition and confirmation. I become free in the true sense only by virtue of the liberty of others, so much so that the greater the number of free people surrounding me the deeper and greater

123, p. 123.

[63]Peter Kroptokin, Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution, Penguin Books Ltd.: London, 1939, p. 210.

"A word in the ear of the psychologists, assuming they are inclined to study ressentiment close up for once: this plant thrives best amongst anarchists..."[1]

Of all the nineteenth century political movements that Nietzsche decries — from socialism to liberalism — he reserves his most venomous words for the anarchists. He calls them the "anarchist dogs" that are roaming the streets of European culture, the epitome of the "herd-animal morality" that characterizes modern democratic politics.[2]

Nietzsche sees anarchism as poisoned at the root by the pestiferous weed of ressentiment — the spiteful politics of the weak and pitiful, the morality of the slave. Is Nietzsche here merely venting his conservative wrath against radical politics, or is he diagnosing a real sickness that has infected our radical political imaginary? Despite the Nietzsche's obvious prejudice towards radical politics, this paper will take seriously his charge against anarchism. It will explore this cunning logic of ressentiment in relation to radical politics, particularly anarchism. It will attempt to unmask the hidden strains of ressentiment in the Manichean political thinking of classical anarchists like Bakunin, Kropotkin and Proudhon. This is not with the intention of dismissing anarchism as a political theory. On the contrary I argue that anarchism could become more relevant to contemporary political struggles, if it were made aware of the ressentiment logic of its own discourse, particularly in the essentialist identities and structures that inhabit it.

Slave Morality and Ressentiment

Ressentiment is diagnosed by Nietzsche as our modern condition. In order to understand ressentiment, however, it is nec-

[1]Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1994, p. 52.

[2]Ibid., p. 161.

essary to understand the relationship between master morality and slave morality in which ressentiment is generated. Nietzsche's work On the Genealogy of Morality is a study of the origins of morality. For Nietzsche, the way we interpret and impose values on the world has a history — its origins are often brutal and far removed from the values they produce. The value of 'good', for instance, was invented by the noble and high-placed to apply to themselves, in contrast to common, low-placed and plebeian.[3] It was the value of the master — 'good' — as opposed to that of the slave — 'bad'. Thus, according to Nietzsche, it was in this pathos of distance, between the high-born and the low-born, this absolute sense of superiority, that values were created.[4]

However, this equation of good and aristocratic began to be undermined by a slave revolt in values. This slave revolt, according to Nietzsche, began with the Jews who instigated a revaluation of values:

It was the Jews who, rejecting the aristocratic value equation (good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = blessed) ventured with awe-inspiring consistency, to bring about a reversal and held it in the teeth of their unfathomable hatred (the hatred of the powerless), saying, 'Only those who suffer are good, only the poor, the powerless, the lowly are good; the suffering, the deprived, the sick, the ugly, are the only pious people, the only ones, salvation is for them alone, whereas you rich, the noble, the powerful, you are eternally wicked, cruel, lustful, insatiate, godless, you will also be eternally wretched, cursed and damned!'…[5]

In this way the slave revolt in morality inverted the noble system of values and began to equate good with the lowly, the powerless — the slave. This inversion introduced the pernicious spirit of revenge and hatred into the creation of values. There-

[3]Ibid., p. 12.
[4]Ibid.
[5]Ibid., p. 19.

out an essential subject? One might, however, ask the opposite question: how can radical politics continue without 'overcoming' essentialist identities, without, in Nietzsche's terms, 'overcoming' man? Nietzsche says: "The most cautious people ask today: 'How may man still be preserved?' Zarathustra, however, asks as the sole and first one to do so: 'How shall man be overcome?'"[59] I would argue that anarchism would be greatly enhanced as a political and ethical philosophy if it eschewed essentialist categories, leaving itself open to different and contingent identities — a post-anarchism. To affirm difference and contingency would be to become a philosophy of the strong, rather than the weak. Nietzsche exhorts us to 'live dangerously', to do away with certainties, to break with essences and structures, and to embrace uncertainty. "Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into unchartered seas!" he says.[60] The politics of resistance against domination must take place in a world without guarantees. To remain open to difference and contingency, to affirm the eternal return of power, would be to become what Nietzsche calls the superman or Overman. The overman is man 'overcome' — the overcoming of man: "God has died: now we desire — that the Superman shall live."[61] For Nietzsche the Superman replaces God and Man — it comes to redeem a humanity crippled by nihilism, joyously affirming power and eternal return. However I would like to propose a somewhat gentler, more ironic version of the Superman for radical politics. Ernesto Laclau speaks of "a hero of a new type who still has not been created by our culture, but one whose creation is absolutely necessary if our time is going to live up to its most radical and exhilarating possibilities."[62]

[59]Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, op. cit. p. 297.
[60]Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science, trans., Walter Kaufmann, Vintage: New York, p. 228.
[61]Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, op. cit. p. 297.
[62]Ernesto Laclau, 'Community and Its Paradoxes: Richard Rorty's "Liberal Utopia"' in Emancipations, ed., Ernesto Laclau, Verso: London, 1996, 105–

Rather than having an external enemy — like the State — in opposition to which one's political identity is formed, we must work on ourselves. As political subjects we must overcome ressentiment by transforming our relationship with power. One can only do this, according to Nietzsche, through eternal return. To affirm eternal return is to acknowledge and indeed positively affirm the continual 'return' of same life with its harsh realities. Because it is an active willing of nihilism, it is at the same time a transcendence of nihilism. Perhaps in the same way, eternal return refers to power. We must acknowledge and affirm the 'return' of power, the fact that it will always be with us. To overcome ressentiment we must, in other words, will power. We must affirm a will to power — in the form of creative, life-affirming values, according to Nietzsche.[56] This is to accept the notion of self-overcoming'.[57] To 'overcome' oneself in this sense, would mean an overcoming of the essentialist identities and categories that limit us. As Foucault has shown, we are constructed as essential political subjects in ways that that dominate us — this is what he calls subjectification.[58] We hide behind essentialist identities that deny power, and produce through this denial, a Manichean politics of absolute opposition that only reflects and reaffirms the very domination it claims to oppose. This we have seen in the case of anarchism. In order to avoid this Manichean logic, anarchism must no longer rely on essentialist identities and concepts, and instead positively affirm the eternal return of power. This is not a grim realization but rather a 'happy positivism'. It is characterized by political strategies aimed at minimizing the possibilities of domination, and increasing the possibilities for freedom.

If one rejects essentialist identities, what is one left with? Can one have a notion of radical politics and resistance with-

[56]Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, op. cit. pp. 55–56.

[57]See Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, trans., R.J Hollingdale, Penguin: London, 1969, pp. 28–29.

[58]Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', op. cit. p. 212.

fore morality, as we understand it, had its roots in this vengeful will to power of the powerless over the powerful — the revolt of the slave against the master. It was from this imperceptible, subterranean hatred that grew the values subsequently associated with the good — pity, altruism, meekness, etc.

Political values also grew from this poisonous root. For Nietzsche, values of equality and democracy, which form the cornerstone of radical political theory, arose out of the slave revolt in morality. They are generated by the same spirit of revenge and hatred of the powerful. Nietzsche therefore condemns political movements like liberal democracy, socialism, and indeed anarchism. He sees the democratic movement as an expression of the herd-animal morality derived from the Judeo-Christian revaluation of values.[6] Anarchism is for Nietzsche the most extreme heir to democratic values — the most rabid expression of the herd instinct. It seeks to level the differences between individuals, to abolish class distinctions, to raze hierarchies to the ground, and to equalize the powerful and the powerless, the rich and the poor, the master and the slave. To Nietzsche this is bringing everything down to level of the lowest common denominator — to erase the pathos of distance between the master and slave, the sense of difference and superiority through which great values are created. Nietzsche sees this as the worst excess of European nihilism — the death of values and creativity.

Slave morality is characterized by the attitude of ressentiment — the resentment and hatred of the powerless for the powerful. Nietzsche sees ressentiment as an entirely negative sentiment — the attitude of denying what is life-affirming, saying 'no' to what is different, what is 'outside' or 'other'. Ressentiment is characterized by an orientation to the outside, rather than the focus of noble morality, which is on the self.[7] While

[6]Ibid., p. 161.

[7]Ibid., p. 21.

the master says 'I am good' and adds as an afterthought, 'therefore he is bad'; the slave says the opposite — 'He (the master) is bad, therefore I am good'. Thus the invention of values comes from a comparison or opposition to that which is outside, other, different. Nietzsche says: "… in order to come about, slave morality first has to have an opposing, external world, it needs, psychologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act all, — its action is basically a reaction."[8] This reactive stance, this inability to define anything except in opposition to something else, is the attitude of ressentiment. It is the reactive stance of the weak who define themselves in opposition to the strong. The weak need the existence of this external enemy to identify themselves as 'good'. Thus the slave takes 'imaginary revenge' upon the master, as he cannot act without the existence of the master to oppose. The man of ressentiment hates the noble with an intense spite, a deep-seated, seething hatred and jealousy. It is this ressentiment, according to Nietzsche, that has poisoned the modern consciousness, and finds its expression in ideas of equality and democracy, and in radical political philosophies, like anarchism, that advocate it.

Is anarchism a political expression of ressentiment? Is it poisoned by a deep hatred of the powerful? While Nietzsche's attack on anarchism is in many respects unjustified and excessively malicious, and shows little understanding of the complexities of anarchist theory, I would nevertheless argue that Nietzsche does uncover a certain logic of ressentiment in anarchism's oppositional, Manichean thinking. It is necessary to explore this logic that inhabits anarchism — to see where it leads and to what extent it imposes conceptual limits on radical politics.

[8]Ibid., pp. 21–22.

reorganization of power relations — through struggle and resistance — in ways that are less oppressive and dominating. Domination can therefore be minimized by acknowledging our inevitable involvement with power, not by attempting to place ourselves impossibly outside the world of power. The classical idea of revolution as a dialectical overthrowing of power — the image that has haunted the radical political imaginary — must be abandoned. We must recognize the fact that power can never be overcome entirely, and we must affirm this by working within this world, renegotiating our position to enhance our possibilities of freedom.

This definition of power that I have constructed — as an unstable and free-flowing relation dispersed throughout the social network — may be seen as a non-ressentiment notion of power. It undermines the oppositional, Manichean politics of ressentiment because power cannot be externalized in the form of the State or a political institution. There can be no external enemy for us to define ourselves in opposition to and vent our anger on. It disrupts the Apollonian distinction between the subject and power central to classical anarchism and Manichean radical political philosophy. Apollonian Man, the essential human subject, is always haunted by Dionysian power. Apollo is the god of light, but also the god of illusion: he "grants repose to individual beings…by drawing boundaries around them." Dionysius, on the other hand is the force that occasionally destroys these "little circles," disrupting the Apollonian tendency to "congeal the form to Egyptian rigidity and coldness."[54] Behind the Apollonian illusion of a life-world without power, is the Dionysian 'reality' of power that tears away the "veil of the maya."[55]

[54]Friedrich Nietzsche, Birth of Tragedy, in Basic Writings, trans., Walter Kaufmann, Modern Library: New York, 1968, p. 72.

[55]See Allan Megill, Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1985, p. 39.

As political subjects we can never relax and hide behind essentialist identities and Manichean structures — behind a strict separation from the world of power. Rather we must be constantly on our guard against the possibility of domination. Foucault says: "My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous…If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism."[52] In order to resist domination we must be aware of its risks — of the possibility that our own actions, even political action ostensibly against domination, can easily give rise to further domination. There is always the possibility, then, of contesting domination, and of minimizing its possibilities and effects. According to Foucault, domination itself is unstable and can give rise to reversals and resistance. Assemblages such as the State are based on unstable power relations that can just as easily turn against the institution they form the basis of. So there is always the possibility of resistance against domination. However resistance can never be in the form of revolution — a grand dialectical overcoming of power, as the anarchists advocated. To abolish central institutions like the State with one stroke would be to neglect the multiform and diffuse relations of power they are based on, thus allowing new institutions and relations of domination to rise up. It would be to fall into the same reductionist trap as Marxism, and to court domination. Rather, resistance must take the form of what Foucault calls agonism — an ongoing, strategic contestation with power — based on mutual incitement and provocation — without any final hope of being free from it.[53] One can, as I have argued, never hope to overcome power completely — because every overcoming is itself the imposition of another regime of power. The best that can be hoped for is a

[52]Michel Foucault, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics', The Foucault Reader, ed., Paul Rabinow, Pantheon Books: New York, 1984, p. 343.

[53]Foucault, History of Sexuality, op. cit. p. 96.

Anarchism

Anarchism as a revolutionary political philosophy has many different voices, origins and interpretations. From the individualist anarchism of Stirner, to the collectivist, communal anarchism of Bakunin and Kropotkin, anarchism is diverse series of philosophies and political strategies. These are united, however, by a fundamental rejection and critique of political authority in all its forms. The critique of political authority — the conviction that power is oppressive, exploitative and dehumanizing — may be said to be the crucial politico-ethical standpoint of anarchism. For classical anarchists the State is the embodiment of all forms of oppression, exploitation and the enslavement and degradation of man. In Bakunin's words, "the State is like a vast slaughterhouse and an enormous cemetery, where under the shadow and the pretext of this abstraction (the common good) all the best aspirations, all the living forces of a country, are sanctimoniously immolated and interred."[9] The State is the main target of the anarchist critique of authority. It is for anarchists the fundamental oppression in society, and it must be abolished as the first revolutionary act.

This last point brought nineteenth century anarchism into sharp conflict with Marxism. Marx believed that while the State was indeed oppressive and exploitative, it was a reflection of economic exploitation and an instrument of class power. Thus political power was reduced to economic power. For Marx the economy rather than the State was the fundamental site of oppression. The State rarely had an independent existence beyond class and economic interests. Because of this the State could be used as a tool of revolution if it was in the hands of the right class — the proletariat.[10] The State was only dominating, in other words, because it was presently in the hands of

[9]Ibid., p. 207

[10]Karl Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Program', in The Marx-Engels Reader 2nd. Ed., ed., Robert C. Tucker, W.W Norton & Co: New York, 1978, p. 538.

the bourgeoisie. Once class distinctions have disappeared, the State will lose its political character.[11]

Anarchists like Bakunin and Kropotkin disagreed with Marx precisely on this point. For anarchists, the State is much more than an expression of class and economic power. Rather the State has its own logic of domination and self-perpetuation, and is autonomous from class interests. Rather than working from the society to the State, as Marx did, and seeing the State as the derivative of economic relations of capitalism and the rise of the bourgeoisie, anarchists work from the State to society. The State constitutes the fundamental oppression in society, and economic exploitation is derived from this political oppression. In other words, it is political oppression that makes economic oppression possible.[12] Moreover for anarchists, bourgeois relations are actually a reflection of the State, rather than the State being a reflection of bourgeois relations. The ruling class, argues Bakunin, is the State's real material representative. Behind every ruling class of every epoch there looms the State. Because the State has its own autonomous logic it can never be trusted as an instrument of revolution. To do this would be to ignore its logic of domination. If the State is not destroyed immediately, if it is used as a revolutionary tool as Marxists suggest, then its power will be perpetuated in infinitely more tyrannical ways. It would operate, as Bakunin argues, through a new ruling class — a bureaucratic class that will oppress and exploit workers in the same manner as the bourgeois class oppressed and exploited them.[13]

So the State, for anarchists, is a priori oppression, no matter what form it takes. Indeed Bakunin argues that Marxism

[11] Karl Marx, 'After the Revolution: Marx debates Bakunin', in The Marx-Engels Reader, op. cit. p. 545.

[12] Mikhail Bakunin, Marxism, Freedom and the State, trans., K.J Kenafick, Freedom Press: London, 1950, p. 49.

[13] Mikhail Bakunin, Political Philosophy: scientific anarchism, ed., G.P Maximoff, Free Press of Glencoe, London, 1984, p. 228.

domination when the free and unstable flow of power relations becomes blocked and congealed — when it forms unequal hierarchies and no longer allows reciprocal relationships.[51] These relations of domination form the basis of institutions such as the State. The State, according to Foucault, is merely an assemblage of different power relations that have become congealed in this way. This is a radically different way of looking at institutions such as the State. While anarchists see power as emanating from the State, Foucault sees the State as emanating from power. The State, in other words, is merely an effect of power relations that have crystallized into relations of domination.

What is the point of this distinction between power and domination? Does this not bring us back to original anarchist position that society and our everyday actions, although oppressed by power, are ontologically separated from it? In other words, why not merely call domination 'power' once again, and revert back to the original, Manichean distinction between social life and power? However the point of this distinction is to show that this essential separation is now impossible. Domination — oppressive political institutions like the State — now comes from the same world as power. In other words it disrupts the strict Manichean separation of society and power. Anarchism and indeed radical politics generally, cannot remain in this comfortable illusion that we as political subjects, are somehow not complicit in the very regime that oppresses us. According to the Foucauldian definition of power that I have employed, we are all potentially complicit, through our everyday actions, in relations of domination. Our everyday actions, which inevitably involve power, are unstable and can easily form into relations that dominate us.

[51] Michel Foucault, 'The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom', The Final Foucault, ed., J. Bernauer and D. Rasmussen, MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass, 1988, p. 3.

cault's definition, power is a "mode of action upon the action of others."[46] Power is merely the effect of one's actions upon the actions of another. Nietzsche too sees power in terms of an effect without a subject: "… there is no being behind the deed, its effect and what becomes of it; 'the doer' is invented as an afterthought."[47] Power is not a commodity that can be possessed, and it cannot be centered in either the institution or the subject. It is merely a relationship of forces, forces that flow between different actors and throughout our everyday actions. Power is everywhere, according to Foucault.[48] Power does not emanate from institutions like the State — rather it is immanent throughout the entire social network, through various discourses and knowledges. For instance, rational and moral discourses, which anarchists saw as innocent of power and as weapons in the struggle against power, are themselves constituted by power relations and are embroiled in practices of power: "power and knowledge directly imply one another."[49] Power in this sense is productive rather than repressive. It is therefore senseless and indeed impossible to try to construct, as anarchists do, a world outside power. We will never be entirely free from relations of power. According to Foucault: "It seems to me that…one is never outside (power), that there are no margins for those who break with the system to gambol in."[50]

However, just because one can never be free from power does not mean that one can never be free from domination. Domination must be distinguished from power in the following sense. For Foucault, relations of power become relations of

[47]Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, op. cit. p. 28.

[48]Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality VI: Introduction, trans., R. Hunter, Vintage Books: New York, 1978, p. 93.

[49]Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison, trans., Alan Sheridan, Penguin Books: London, 1991, p. 27.

[50]Michel Foucault, 'Power and Strategies', in Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972–77, ed., Colin Gordon, Harvester Press: New York, 1980, p. 141.

pays too much attention to the forms of State power while not taking enough account of the way in which State power operates: "They (Marxists) do not know that despotism resides not so much in the form of the State but in the very principle of the State and political power."[14] Oppression and despotism exist in the very structure and symbolism of the State — it is not merely a derivative of class power. The State has its own impersonal logic, its own momentum, its own priorities: these are often beyond the control of the ruling class and do not necessarily reflect economic relations at all. So anarchism locates the fundamental oppression and power in society in the very structure and operations of the State. As an abstract machine of domination, the State haunts different class actualizations — not just the bourgeoisie State, but the worker's State too. Through its economic reductionism, Marxism neglected the autonomy and pre-eminence of State — a mistake that would lead to its reaffirmation in a socialist revolution. Therefore the anarchist critique unmasked the hidden forms of domination associated with political power, and exposed Marxism's theoretical inadequacy for dealing with this problem.

This conception of the State ironically strikes a familiar note with Nietzsche. Nietzsche, like the anarchists, sees modern man as 'tamed', fettered and made impotent by the State.[15] He also sees the State as an abstract machine of domination, which precedes capitalism, and looms above class and economic concerns. The State is a mode of domination that imposes a regulated 'interiorization' upon the populace. According to Nietzsche the State emerged as a "terrible tyranny, as a repressive and ruthless machinery," which subjugated, made compliant, and shaped the population.[16] Moreover the origins of this State are violent. It is imposed forcefully from without and has noth-

[14]Ibid., p. 221.

[15]Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, op. cit., p. 61.

[16]Ibid., pp. 62–63.

ing to with 'contracts'.[17] Nietzsche demolishes the "fantasy" of the social contract — the theory that the State was formed by people voluntarily relinquishing their power in return for the safety and security that would be provided by the State. This idea of the social contract has been central to conservative and liberal political theory, from Hobbes to Locke. Anarchists also reject this theory of the social contract. They too argue that the origins of the State are violent, and that it is absurd to argue that people voluntarily gave up their power. It is a dangerous myth that legitimizes and perpetuates State domination.

The Social Contract

Anarchism is based on an essentially optimistic conception of human nature: if individuals have a natural tendency to get on well together then there is no need for the existence of a State to arbitrate between them. On the contrary, the State actually has a pernicious effect on these natural social relations. Anarchists therefore reject political theories based on the idea of social contract. Social contract theory relies on a singularly negative picture of human nature. According to Hobbes individuals are naturally selfish, aggressively competitive and egotistic, and in a state of nature they are engaged in a war of "every man, against every man" in which their individual drives necessarily bring them into conflict with one another.[18] According to this theory, then, society in a state of nature is characterized by a radical dislocation: there is no common bond between individuals; there is in fact a constant state of war between them, a constant struggle for resources.[19] In order to put a stop to this state of permanent war, individuals come together to form a social contract upon which some kind of au-

[17] Ibid., p. 63.
[18] Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1947, p. 83.
[19] Ibid., p. 82.

replace the State once it is overthrown. However, as we have seen, this world free of power is jeopardized by the desire for power latent in every individual. The more anarchism tries to free society from relations of power, the more it remains paradoxically caught up in power. Power here has returned as the real that haunts all attempts to free the world of power. The more one tries to repress power, the more obstinately it rears its head. This is because the attempts to deny power, through essentialist concepts of 'natural' laws and 'natural' morality, themselves constitute power, or at least are conditioned by relations of power. These essentialist identities and categories cannot be imposed without the radical exclusion of other identities. This exclusion is an act of power. If one attempts to radically exclude power, as the anarchists did, power 'returns' precisely in the structures of exclusion themselves.

Nietzsche believes that this attempt to exclude and deny power is a form of ressentiment. So how does anarchism overcome this ressentiment that has shown to be so self destructive and life-denying? By positively affirming power, rather than denying it — to 'say yes' to power, as Nietzsche would put it. It is only by affirming power, by acknowledging that we come from the same world as power, not from a 'natural' world removed from it, and that we can never be entirely free from relations of power, that one can engage in politically-relevant strategies of resistance against power. This does not mean, of course, that anarchism should lay down its arms and embrace the State and political authority. On the contrary, anarchism can more effectively counter political domination by engaging with, rather than denying, power.

Perhaps it is appropriate here to distinguish between relations of power and relations of domination. To use Michel Fou-

[46] Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, Harvester Press: Brighton, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, 1982, p. 221.

cial law of the State. However I would argue that anarchism, if it can free itself from these essentialist and Manichean categories, can overcome the ressentiment that poisons and limits it. Classical anarchism is a politics of ressentiment because it seeks to overcome power. It sees power as evil, destructive, something that stultifies the full realization of the individual. Human essence is a point of departure uncontaminated by power, from which power is resisted. There is, as I have argued, a strict Manichean separation and opposition between the subject and power. However I have shown that this separation between the individual and power is itself unstable and threatened by a 'natural' desire for power — the power principle. Nietzsche would argue that this desire for power — will to power — is indeed 'natural', and it is the suppression of this desire that has had such a debilitating effect on man, turning him against himself and producing an attitude of ressentiment.

However perhaps one could argue that this desire for power in man is produced precisely through attempts to deny or extinguish relations of power in the 'natural order'. Perhaps power may be seen in terms of the Lacanian Real — as that irrepressible lack that cannot be symbolized, and which always returns to haunt the symbolic order, disrupting any attempt by the subject to form a complete identity. For Jacques Lacan: "…the real is that which always comes back to the same place — to the place where the subject in so far as he thinks, where the res cogitans, does not meet it."[45] Anarchism attempts to complete the identity of the subject by separating him, in an absolute Manichean sense, from the world of power. The anarchist subject, as we have seen, is constituted in a 'natural' system that is dialectically opposed to the artificial world of power. Moreover because the subject is constituted in a 'natural' system governed by ethical laws of mutual cooperation, anarchists are able to posit a society free from relations of power, which will

[45]Ibid., p. 49.

thority can be established. They agree to sacrifice part of their freedom in return for some kind of order, so that they can pursue their own individual ends more peacefully and profitably. They agree on the creation of a State with a mandate over society, which shall arbitrate between conflicting wills and enforce law and order.

The extent of the State's authority may vary from the liberal State whose power is supposedly tempered by the rule of law, to the absolute State power — the Leviathan — dreamt up by Hobbes. While the models may vary, however, anarchists argue that the result of this social contract theory is the same: a justification of State domination, whether it be through the rule of law or through the arbitrary imposition of force. For anarchists any form of State power is an imposition of force. The social contract theory is a sleight of hand that legitimates political domination — Bakunin calls it an "unworthy hoax!"[20] He exposes the central paradox in the theory of the social contract: if, in a state of nature, individuals subsist in a state of primitive savagery, then how can they suddenly have the foresight to come together and create a social contract?[21] If there is no common bond in society, no essence within humans which brings them together, then upon what basis can a social contract be formed? Like Nietzsche, anarchists argue that there is no such agreement that the State was imposed from above, not from below. The social contract tries to mystify the brutal origins of the State: war, conquest and self-enslavement, rather than rational agreement. For Kropotkin the State is a violent disruption of, and an imposition upon, a harmoniously functioning, organic society.[22] Society has no need for a 'social contract'. It has its own contract with nature, governed by natural laws.[23]

[20]Bakunin, Political Philosophy, op. cit. p. 165.
[21]Ibid.
[22]Peter Kropotkin, The State: Its Historic Role, Freedom Press: London, 1946, p. 37.
[23]Bakunin, Political Philosophy, op. cit. p. 166.

Anarchism may be understood as a struggle between natural authority and artificial authority. Anarchists do not reject all forms of authority, as the old cliché would have it. On the contrary, they declare their absolute obedience to the authority embodied in what Bakunin calls 'natural laws'. Natural laws are essential to Man's existence according to Bakunin — they surround us, shape us and determine the physical world in which we live.[24] However this is not a form of slavery because these laws are not external to man: "those (natural) laws are not extrinsic in relation to us, they are inherent in us, they constitute our nature, our whole being physically, intellectually and morally."[25] They are, on the contrary, what constitute man — they are his essence. Man is inextricably part of a natural, organic society according to Kropotkin.[26] Anarchism, then, is based on a specific notion of human essence. Morality has its basis in human nature, not in any external source: "the idea of justice and good, like all other human things, must have their root in man's very animality."[27]

Natural authority is implacably opposed to "artificial authority." By artificial authority Bakunin means power: the political power enshrined in institutions such as the State and in man-made laws.[28] This power is external to human nature and an imposition upon it. It stultifies the development of humanity's innate moral characteristics and intellectual capacities. It is these capacities, the anarchists argue, which will liberate man from slavery and ignorance. For Bakunin, then, political institutions are "hostile and fatal to the liberty of the masses, for they impose upon them a system of external and therefore despotic laws."[29]

[24]Ibid., p. 239.
[25]Ibid.
[26]Kropotkin, The State: Its Historic Role, op. cit. p. 12.
[27]Bakunin, Political Philosophy, op. cit. p. 121.
[28]Ibid., p. 212.
[29]Ibid., p. 240.

the lack at the heart of every individual. Bakunin suggests that this desire for power is an essential part of human subjectivity. Perhaps the implication of Bakunin's power principle is that the subject will always have a desire for power, and that the subject will be incomplete until it grasps power. Kropotkin, too, talks about the desire for power and authority. He argues that the rise of the modern State can be attributed in part to the fact that "men became enamoured of authority."[43] He implies, then, that State power is not completely an imposition from above. He talks about self-enslavement to law and authority: "Man allowed himself to be enslaved far more by his desire to 'punish according to law' than by direct military conquest."[44] Does the desire to "punish according to law" grow directly out of humanity's natural sense of morality? If this is the case, can human essence still be seen as unpolluted by power? While anarchism's notion of subjectivity is not entirely undermined by this contradiction, it is nevertheless destabilized by it: it is made ambiguous and incomplete. It forces one to question anarchism's notion of a revolution of humanity against power: if humans have an essential desire for power, then how can one be sure that a revolution aimed at destroying power will not turn into a revolution aimed at capturing power?

Will to Power

Has anarchism as a political and social theory of revolution been invalidated because of the contradictions in its conception of human subjectivity? I do not think so. I have exposed a hidden strain of ressentiment in the essentialist categories and oppositional structures that inhabit anarchist discourse — in notions of a harmonious society governed by natural law and man's essential communality, and its opposition to the artifi-

[43]Kropotkin, The State: Its Historic Role, op. cit. p. 28.
[44]Ibid., p. 17.

fullness. I would argue, then, that anarchism can only posit the subject as 'moral' and 'rational' in opposition to the 'immorality' and 'irrationality' of political power. In the same way the identity of the 'slave' is consolidated as 'good' by opposing itself to the identity of the 'master' which is 'evil'. Nietzsche would see in this an attitude of ressentiment par excellence.

So the Manicheism that inhabits anarchist discourse is a logic of ressentiment that for Nietzsche is a distinctly unhealthy outlook, emanating from a position of weakness and sickness. Revolutionary identity in anarchist philosophy is constituted through its essential opposition to power. Like Nietzsche's reactive man, revolutionary identity purports to be unpolluted by power: human essence is seen as moral where power is immoral, natural where power is artificial, pure where power is impure. Because this subjectivity is constituted within a system of natural law — as opposed to artificial law — it is a point which, while oppressed by power, remains outside power and unpolluted by it. But is it?

Bakunin himself throws some doubts on this when he talks about the power principle. This is the natural lust for power which Bakunin believes is innate in every individual: "Every man carries within himself the germs of the lust for power, and every germ, as we know, because of a basic law of life, necessarily must develop and grow."[42] The power principle means that man cannot be trusted with power, that there will always be this desire for power at the heart of human subjectivity. While Bakunin intended to warn others of the corrupting danger inherent in power, he has perhaps unconsciously exposed the hidden contradiction that lies at the heart of anarchist discourse: namely that, while anarchism bases itself upon a notion of an essential human subjectivity uncontaminated by power, this subjectivity is ultimately impossible. Pure revolutionary identity is torn apart, subverted by a 'natural' desire for power,

[42]Ibid., p. 248.

In this critique of political authority, power (artificial authority) is external to the human subject. The human subject is oppressed by this power, but remains uncontaminated by it because human subjectivity is a creation of a natural, as opposed to a political, system. Thus anarchism is based on a clear, Manichean division between artificial and natural authority, between power and subjectivity, between State and society. Furthermore political authority is fundamentally repressive and destructive of man's potential. Human society, argue the anarchists, cannot develop until the institutions and laws which keep it in ignorance and servitude, until the fetters which bind it, are thrown off. Anarchism must, therefore, have a place of resistance: a moral and rational place, a place uncontaminated by the power that oppresses it, from which will spring a rebellion against power. It finds this in an essential human subjectivity. Human essence, with its moral and rational characteristics, is an absent fullness that lies dormant in man, and will only be realized once the political power negating it is overthrown. It is from this place of absent fullness that will emanate the revolution against power. The innate morality and rationality of man will counteract political power, which is seen as inherently irrational and immoral. According to anarchist theory, natural law will replace political authority; man and society will replace the State. For Kropotkin anarchism can think beyond the category of the State, beyond the category of absolute political power, because it has a place, a ground from which to do so. Political power has an outside from which it can be criticized and an alternative with which it can be replaced. Kropotkin is thus able to envisage a society in which the State no longer exists or is needed; a society regulated not by political power and authority, but by mutual agreements and cooperation.[30]

[30]Ibid., p. 157.

Such a society is possible, according to anarchists, because of the essentially cooperative nature of man.[31] Contrary to the Darwinist approach that insists on an innate competitiveness in animals — the 'survival of the fittest' — Kropotkin finds an instinctive cooperation and sociability in animals, particularly in humans. This instinct Kropotkin calls mutual aid and he says: "Mutual aid is the predominant fact of Nature."[32] Kropotkin applies these findings to human society. He argues that the natural and essential principle of human society is mutual aid, and that man is naturally cooperative, sociable and altruistic, rather than competitive and egotistic. This is the organic principle that governs society, and it is out of this that notions of morality, justice and ethics grow. Morality, Kropotkin argues, evolves out of the instinctive need to band together in tribes, groups — and an instinctive tendency towards cooperation and mutual assistance.[33] This natural sociability and capacity for mutual aid is the principle that binds society together, providing a common basis upon which daily life can be conducted. Therefore society has no need for the State: it has its own regulating mechanisms, its own natural laws. State domination only poisons society and destroys its natural mechanisms. It is the principle of mutual aid that will naturally replace the principle of political authority. A state of 'anarchy', a war of "all against all" will not ensue the moment State power has been abolished. For anarchists, a state of 'anarchy' exists now: political power creates social dislocation, it does not prevent it. What is prevented by the State is the natural and harmonious functioning of society.

For Hobbes, State sovereignty is a necessary evil. There is no attempt to make a fetish of the State: it does not descend from heaven, preordained by divine will. It is pure sovereignty, pure

[31]Bakunin, Political Philosophy, op. cit. p. 156.

[32]Peter Kropotkin, Ethics: Origin & Development, trans., L. S Friedland, Tudor: New York, 1947, p. 14.

[33]Ibid., p. 45.

cial authority that is central to anarchism. Secondly, ressentiment is characterized by the fundamental need to identify oneself by looking outwards and in opposition towards an external enemy. Here, however, the comparison to anarchism is not so clear-cut. For instance, one could conceivably argue that anarchist subjectivity and ethics — the notion of mutual aid and assistance — is something that develops independently of political power, and that therefore it does not need an oppositional relationship with the State in order to define itself. However, I would suggest that although anarchist subjectivity does develop in a 'natural' system which is radically exterior to the 'artificial' system of political power, it is precisely through this assertion of radical exteriority that ressentiment emerges. Anarchism subscribes to a dialectical logic, according to which the human species emerges from an 'animal-like' state, and begins to develop innate moral and rational faculties in a natural system.[40] However the subject finds this development impeded by the 'irrational', 'immoral' power of the State. Thus the subject cannot achieve his full human identity as long as he remains oppressed by the State. This is why, for Bakunin: "The State is the most flagrant negation…of humanity."[41] The realization of the subject is always stultified, deferred, put off, by the State. This dialectic of Man and State suggests that the identity of the subject is characterized as essentially 'rational' and 'moral' only in so far as the unfolding of these innate faculties and qualities is prevented by the State. Paradoxically the State, which is seen by anarchists as an obstacle to the full identity of man, is, at the same time, essential to the formation of this incomplete identity. Without this stultifying oppression, the anarchist subject would be unable to see itself as 'moral' and 'rational'. His identity is thus complete in its incompleteness. The existence of political power is therefore a means of constructing this absent

[40]Ibid., p. 172.

[41]Ibid., p. 138.

logic that pervades anarchism: the place of power — the State — must be overthrown by the essential human subject, the pure subject of resistance. Anarchism 'essentializes' the very power it opposes.

Manichean logic thus involves a reverse mirroring operation: the place of resistance is a reflection, in reverse, of the place of power. In the case of anarchism, human subjectivity is essentially moral and rational while the State is essentially immoral and irrational.[38] The State is essential to the existence of revolutionary subject, just as the revolutionary subject is essential to the existence of the State. One defines itself in opposition to the other. The purity of revolutionary identity is only defined in contrast to the impurity of political power. Revolt against the State is always prompted by the State. As Bakunin argues: "there is something in the nature of the State which provokes rebellion."[39] While the relationship between the State and the revolutionary subject is one of clearly defined opposition, the two antagonists could not exist outside this relationship. They could not, in other words, exist without each other.

Can this paradoxical relationship of reflection and opposition be seen as a form of ressentiment in the Nietzschean sense? I would argue here that, although there are differences, the Manichean relationship of opposition between the human subject and political power that is found in anarchism obeys the general logic of ressentiment described above. This is for two reasons. Firstly, as we have seen, ressentiment is based on the moral prejudice of the powerless against the powerful — the revolt of the 'slave' against the 'master'. We can see this moral opposition to power clearly in anarchist discourse, which pits the essentially 'moral' and 'rational' human subject against the essentially 'immoral' and 'irrational' quality of political power. It is evident in the opposition of natural to artifi-

[38]Bakunin, Political Philosophy, op. cit. p. 224.
[39]Ibid., p. 145.

power, and it is constructed out of the emptiness of society, precisely in order to prevent the warfare immanent in the state of nature. The political content of the State is unimportant as long as it quells unrest in society. Whether there be a democracy, or a sovereign assembly, or a monarchy, it does not matter: "the power in all forms, if they be perfect enough to protect them, is the same."[34] Like the anarchists, Hobbes believes that the guise taken by power is irrelevant. Behind every mask there must be a pure, absolute power. Hobbes' political thought is centered around a desire for order, purely as an antidote to disorder, and the extent to which individuals suffer under this order is incomparable to the suffering caused by war.[35] For anarchists, on the other hand, because society regulates itself according to natural laws and because there is a natural ethics of cooperation in man, the State is an unnecessary evil. Rather than preventing perpetual warfare between men, the State engenders it: the State is based on war and conquest rather than embodying its resolution. Anarchism can look beyond the State because it argues from the perspective of an essential point of departure — natural human sociality. It can, therefore, conceive of an alternative to the State. Hobbes, on the other hand, has no such point of departure: there is no standpoint that can act as an alternative to the State. Society, as we have seen with Hobbes, is characterized by rift and antagonism. In fact, there is no essential society to speak of — it is an empty place. Society must therefore be constructed artificially in the shape of the absolute State. While anarchism can rely on natural law, Hobbes can only rely on the law of the State. At the heart of the anarchist paradigm there is the essential fullness of society, while at the heart of the Hobbesian paradigm there is nothing but emptiness and dislocation.

[34]Hobbes, Leviathan, op. cit. p. 120.
[35]Ibid., p. 120.

Manicheism

However it may be argued that anarchism is a mirror image of Hobbesianism in the sense that they both posit a commonality that derives from their indebtedness to the Enlightenment. They both emphasize the need for a fullness or collectivity, some legitimate point around which society can be organized. Anarchists see this point of departure in the natural law which informs society and human subjectivity, and which is impeded by the State. Hobbes, on the other hand, sees this point of departure as an absence, an empty place that must be filled by the State. Hobbes' thought is caught within the paradigm of the State. The State is the absolute conceptual limit, outside which are the perils of the state of nature. Political theories such as this, based on the social contract, are haunted by the threat that if one gets rid of the State, one will revert back to a state of nature. Anarchism, because it proceeds from a radically different conception of society and human nature, claims to be able to transcend this quandary. But can it?

Anarchism operates within a Manichean political logic: it creates an essential, moral opposition between society and the State, between humanity and power. Natural law is diagrammatically opposed to artificial power; the morality and rationality immanent in human subjectivity comes into conflict with the irrationality and immorality of the State. There is an essential antithesis between anarchism's uncontaminated point of departure, constituted by essential human subjectivity, and State power. This logic which establishes an absolute opposition between two terms — good and evil, black and white, humanity and the State — is the central feature of Manichean thought. Jacques Donzelot argues that this logic of absolute opposition is endemic to radical political theory:

[36] Jacques Donzelot, 'The Poverty of Political Culture', Ideology & Consciousness, 5, 1979, 73–86, p. 74.

Political culture is also the systematic pursuit of an antagonism between two essences, the tracing of a line of demarcation between two principles, two levels of reality which are easily placed in opposition. There is no political culture that is not Manichean.[36]

Moreover, anarchism, in subscribing to this logic and making power the focus of its analysis, instead of economy as Marxism did, has perhaps has fallen into the same reductionist trap as Marxism. Has it not merely replaced the economy with the State as the essential evil in society, from which other evils are derived? As Donzelot argues:

which — that capitalism is not the unique or even principle source of evil on earth that one rushes to substitute for the opposition between capital and labour that between State and civil society. Capital, as foil and scapegoat, is replaced by the State, that cold monster whose limitless growth 'pauperises' social life; and the proletariat gives way to civil society, that is to say to everything capable of resisting the blind rationality of the State, to everything that opposes it at the level of customs, mores, a living sociability, sought in the residual margins of society and promoted to the status of motor of history.[37]

Opposing living sociability to the State, in the same way that Marxism opposed the proletariat to capitalism, suggests that anarchism was unable to transcend the traditional political categories which bound Marxism. As Donzelot argues, Manicheism is the logic that skewers all these theories: it is the undercurrent that runs through them and circumscribes them. It does not matter if the target is the State, or Capital, or anything else; as long as there is an enemy to destroy and a subject who will destroy it; as long as there is the promise of the final battle and final victory. Manichean logic is, therefore, the logic of place: there must be an essential place of power and an essential place of revolt. This is the binary, dialectical

[37] Ibid.