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**Anthropology and Anarchism:  
Their Elective Affinity**

Brian Morris

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by Brian Morris

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Eds: Sophie Day, Olivia Harris, Catherine Alexander, Mao Mollona and Carrie Clanton

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George Marcus (1986), in what many regard as the founding text of literary or post-modern anthropology, are not only rather dismissive of feminist anthropology, but ignore entirely the ethnographic studies of non-“western” scholars such as Srinivas, Kenyatta, Fei and Aiyappan.

But in an important sense anthropology is the social science discipline that has put a focal emphasis on those kinds of societies that have been seen as exemplars of anarchy, a society without a state. Indeed, Evans-Pritchard, in his classic study *The Nuer* (1940), described their political system as “ordered anarchy.” Harold Barclays’ useful and perceptive little book *People Without Government* (1992) is significantly subtitled “The Anthropology of Anarchism,” and Barclays makes the familiar distinction between anarchy, an ordered society without government, and anarchism, a political movement and tradition that became articulated during the 19th century.

### **Anthropologists and anarchism: Reclus, Bougle, Mauss, Radcliffe-Brown**

Many anthropologists have had affinities with anarchism. One of the earliest ethnographic texts was Elie Reclus’ *Primitive Folk* (1903), which carries the sub-title “Studies in Corporative Ethnology.” It is based on information derived from the writings of travellers and missionaries, and though it has the evolutionary flavour of books written at the end of the 19th

In this essay, I want to bring together anthropology and anarchism, first by examining anthropologists who have expressed an interest in anarchism, then by discussing classical anarchist thinkers who have drawn upon anthropological literature to develop their ideas. In the second part of the essay, I offer some reflections on anarchism as a political tradition and deal with certain misconceptions that have been forwarded by its liberal and Marxist critics.

There is in many ways an “elective affinity” between anthropology and anarchism. Although anthropology’s subject matter has been diverse and its conspectus rather broad, as a study of human culture historically it has always had a rather specific focus: the study of non-state societies. But it is quite misleading to portray the anthropology of the past as being simply the study of so-called primitive people or the exotic other, and thus largely engaged in a kind of savage operation of disappearing cultures.

This is a rather biased and inaccurate portrait of anthropology, for the discipline has a long tradition of “anthropology at home,” and many important anthropological studies have been located in India, China and Japan. It is thus noteworthy that James Clifford and

century, it contains lucid and sympathetic accounts of such people as the Apaches, Nayers, Todas and Inuits. Reclus likened the moral and intellectual equality of these cultures to that of so-called civilised states, and it is of interest that he used the now familiar term Inuit, which means "people," rather than the French term Eskimo. Elie Reclus was also the elder brother, and lifetime associate, of Elisée, the more famous anarchist-geographer.

Another French anthropologist with anarchist sympathies was Celestin Bougle, who wrote not only a classical study of the Indian caste system (which had a profound influence on Louis Dumont) in 1908, but also an important study of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Bougle was one of the first to affirm, controversially in 1911, that Proudhon was a sociological thinker of standing. There was, in fact, a close relationship between the French sociological tradition, focussed around Durkheim, and both socialism and anarchism, even though Durkheim himself was antagonistic to the anarchist stress on the individual. Durkheim was a kind of guild socialist, but his nephew Marcel Mauss wrote the classical study of reciprocal exchange among pre-literate cultures, *The Gift* (1925). This small text is not only in some ways an anarchist tract, but one of the foundation texts of anthropology, read by every budding anthropologist.

British anthropologists have less connection with anarchism, but it is worth noting that one of the so-called fathers of British

anthropology, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown was an anarchist in his early years. Alfred Brown was a lad from Birmingham who managed, with the help of his brother, to attend Oxford University. There, two influences were important to him. One was the process philosopher Alfred Whitehead, whose organismic theory had a deep influence on Radcliffe-Brown. The other was Peter Kropotkin, whose writings he imbibed. In his student days at Oxford Radcliffe-Brown was known as "Anarchy Brown." Alas, Oxford got to him, and he eventually became something of an intellectual aristocrat, changing his name to the hyphenated "A.R. Radcliffe-Brown." But as Tim Ingold (1986) has written, Radcliffe-Brown's writings are permeated with a sense that social life is a process, although like most Durkheimian functionalists he tended to play down issues relating to conflict, power and history.

#### **Anarchists and anthropology: Kropotkin, Bookchin, Clastres, Zerzan**

Although anarchism has had a minimal influence on anthropology (though many influential anthropologists, such as Boas, Radin and Diamond, can be described as radical liberals and socialists), anarchist writers have drawn extensively on the work of anthropologists. Indeed, there is a marked contrast between anarchists and Marxists with respect to anthropology, for while anarchists have critically engaged with ethnographic studies, Marxist attitudes to anthropology have usually been dismissive. In this respect Marxists have abandoned the

broad historical and ethnographic interests of Marx and Engels. Engels' well-known study *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) is, of course, based almost entirely on Lewis Morgan's anthropological study, *Ancient Society* (1877). However, the writings of classical Marxists such as Lenin, Trotsky, Gramsci and Lukács are distinguished by a wholly Euro-centric perspective and a complete disregard for anthropology.

The entry for "Anthropology" in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Bottomore 1983) significantly has nothing to report in regard to Marx and Engels in the 19th century or to French Marxist anthropologists such as Godelier and Meillassoux during the 1970's. Equally amazing is that the Marxist text *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* (Hindness and Hirst 1975) not only suggested that the "objects" of theoretical discourses did not exist (and so rejected history as a worthwhile subject of study) but completely bypassed anthropological knowledge. This is matched by the dismissive attitude towards anarchism by other Marxist scholars such as Perry Anderson, Immanuel Wallerstein and E.P. Thompson.

In examining those anarchists who have creatively utilized anthropology I will briefly discuss four writers: Kropotkin, Bookchin, Clastres and Zerzan. Kropotkin is well known. As both a geographer and an anarchist who travelled extensively in Asia, he had wide ethnographic interests. This is most clearly expressed in his classic text

*Mutual Aid* (1903). Here Kropotkin attempted to show that the arenas of organic and social life were not characterised by laissez-faire competition, conflict, and survival of the fittest, but rather by mutuality and symbiosis. It was the ecological dimension of Darwin's thought, expressed in the last chapter of *The Origins of Species* (1859), that was crucial for Kropotkin: co-operation, not struggle, was the important factor in the evolutionary process and this is exemplified even by the ubiquitous lichen, one of the most basic forms of life and found practically everywhere.

Kropotkin's book gives lengthy accounts of mutual aid not only among hunter-gatherers and such people as the Buryat and Kabyle (now well-known through Bourdieu's writings), but also in the medieval city and in contemporary European societies. In a 1993 Association of Social Anthropologists monograph on socialism (edited by Chris Hann) two articles specifically examine anarchism among contemporary people. Alan Barnard looks at the issues of primitive communism and mutual aid among Kalahari hunter-gatherers, while Joanna Overing discusses anarchism and collectivism among the horticultural Piaroa of Venezuela. Barnard's essay has the sub-title "Kropotkin visits the Bushmen," indicating that anarchism is still a live issue among some anthropologists. Kropotkin himself was interested in the "creative genius" of people living during what he termed the "clan period" of human history, and in the resultant development of institutions of

mutual aid. For him, this did not entail the repudiation of individual self-assertion and, unlike many contemporary anthropologists, Kropotkin made a distinction between individuality and self-affirmation, and individualism.

Murray Bookchin is a controversial figure. His advocacy of citizens' councils and municipal self-management, his emphasis on the city as a potential ecological community, and his strident critiques of the misanthropy and eco-mysticism of the deep ecologists are the centre of many debates. But Bookchin's process-oriented dialectical approach and his sense of history, alive to the achievements of the human spirit, inevitably led him to draw on anthropological studies. The main influences on his work were Paul Radin and Dorothy Lee, both sensitive scholars of Native American culture. In *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982), Bookchin devotes a chapter to what he terms "organic society," emphasizing the important features of early human-tribal-society: a primordial equality and the absence of coercive and domineering values; a feeling of unity between the individual and the kin community; a sense of communal property and an emphasis on mutual aid and usufruct rights; and a relationship of reciprocal harmony rather than of domination. Bookchin's concern is that we draw lessons from the cultural past of pre-literate people rather than romanticising or emulating the life of hunter-gatherers.

Pierre Clastres was both an anarchist and an anthropologist. His minor classic on the Indian communities of South America, especially the forest Guayaki (*Ache*), is significantly titled *Society Against the State* (1977, emphasis added). Like Thomas Paine and the early anarchists, Clastres makes a clear distinction between society and the state and argues that the essence of what he describes as "archaic" societies – whether hunter-gatherers or horticultural (Neolithic) peoples – is that effective means are institutionalised to prevent power being separated from social life. Clastres bewails the fact that western political philosophy is unable to see power except in terms of "hierarchised and authoritarian relations of command and obedience" (1977: 9) and thus equates power with coercive power.

Reviewing the ethnographic literature of the people of South America (apart from the Inca State) Clastres argues that they were distinguished by their "sense of democracy and taste for equality" (1977: 9), and that even local chiefs lacked coercive power. What constituted the basic fabric of archaic society, according to Clastres, was that of exchange – coercive power, in essence – being a negation of reciprocity. He contends that the aggressiveness of tribal communities has been grossly exaggerated and that a subsistence economy did not imply an endless struggle against starvation, for in normal circumstances there was an abundance and variety of food. Such

communities were essentially egalitarian, and people had a high degree of control over their own lives and work activities.

For Clastres, the decisive break between archaic and historical societies was not the Neolithic revolution and the advent of agriculture, but the political revolution involving the intensification of agriculture and the emergence of the state. The key points of Clastres' analysis have recently been affirmed by John Gledhill (1994), whose analysis provides a valuable critique of western political theory that identifies power with coercive authority. Gledhill suggests looking at history less in terms of typologies and more as an historical process in which human activities have endeavoured to maintain their own autonomy and resisted the centralising intrusions and the exploitation inherent in the state.

While for Clastres and Bookchin political domination and hierarchy begin with the intensification of agriculture and the rise of the state, for John Zerzan the domestication of plants and animals heralds the demise of an era when humans lived an authentic free life. Agriculture is a form of alienation; it implies a loss of contact with the world of nature and a controlling mentality. The advent of agriculture thus entails an end of innocence and the demise of a golden age as humans leave the Garden of Eden, though Eden is identified not with a garden but with hunter-gathering existence. Given this advocacy of primitivism it is hardly surprising that Zerzan (1988, 1994) draws on

anthropological data to validate his claims and to portray hunter-gatherers as egalitarian, authentic, and as the "most successful and enduring adaptation ever achieved by humankind" (1988: 66). Even symbolic culture and the shamanism associated with hunter-gatherers is seen by Zerzan as implying an orientation to manipulate and control nature or other humans.

Zerzan presents an apocalyptic, even Gnostic vision. Our hunter-gatherer past is described as an idyllic era of virtue and authentic living. The last eight thousand years or so of human history after the Fall (agriculture) is seen as a period of tyranny and hierarchic control, a mechanised routine devoid of any spontaneity and involving the anaesthetisation of the senses. All those products of the human creative imagination – farming, art, philosophy, technology, science, urban living, symbolic culture – are viewed negatively by Zerzan in a monolithic sense.

The future, we are told, is "primitive." How this is to be achieved in a world that presently sustains almost six billion people (for evidence suggests that the hunter-gatherer lifestyle is only able to support one or two people per square mile) or whether the "future primitive" *actually* entails, in Gnostic fashion, a return not to the godhead, but to hunter-gathering subsistence, Zerzan does not tell us. While radical ecologists glorify the golden age of peasant agriculture, Zerzan follows the likes of Laurens Van Der Post in extolling hunter-gatherer existence with a selective culling of the

anthropological literature. Whether such illusory images of green primitivism are symptomatic of the estrangement of affluent urban dwellers and intellectuals from the natural (and human) world, as both Bookchin (1995) and Ray Ellen (1986) suggest, I will leave others to judge.

### Reflections on anarchism

The term anarchy comes from the Greek, and essentially means “no ruler.” Anarchists are people who reject all forms of government or coercive authority and all forms of hierarchy and domination. They are therefore opposed to what the Mexican anarchist Flores Magon (1997) called the “sombre trinity” of state, capital and the Church. Anarchists are thus opposed to both capitalism and to the state, as well as to all forms of religious authority. But anarchists also seek to establish or bring about by varying means a condition of anarchy – that is, a decentralised society without coercive institutions, and organised through a federation of voluntary associations. Contemporary right-wing libertarians, such as Milton Friedman, Murray N. Rothbard and Ayn Rand, who are often described as “anarcho-capitalists” and fervently defend capitalism, are not in any real sense anarchists.

In an important sense anarchists support the rallying cry for liberty, equality and fraternity of the French Revolution and strongly believe that these values are inter-dependent. As Bakunin (1871: 240) remarked: “Freedom without socialism is privilege and injustice;

and socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality.” Needless to say Anarchists have always been critical of Soviet communism, and the most powerful and penetrating critiques of Marx, Marxist-Leninism and the Soviet regime have come from anarchists such as Berkman, Goldman, and Maximoff. Maximoff’s significantly titled *The Guillotine at Work* (1940) actually described the politics of Lenin and Trotsky as similar to, and as equally reactionary as, that of the Jacobins in the French Revolution.

With the collapse of the Soviet regime, Marxists are now in a state of intellectual disarray, and are floundering around looking for a safe political anchorage. They seem to gravitate either towards Hayek or towards Keynes and either way their socialism gets lost in the process. Conservative writers such as Roger Scruton take great pleasure in berating Marxists for having closed their eyes to the realities of the Soviet regime. Marxists themselves, however, have myopia when it comes to capitalism. The poverty, famine, sickening social inequalities, political repression and ecological degradation generated under capitalism is always underplayed by apologists like Scruton and Fukuyama. They see these as simply “problems” that need to be overcome and not as intrinsically related to capitalism itself.

Anarchism can be looked at in two ways. On the one hand it can be seen as a kind of river, as Peter Marshall (1992) describes it in his excellent history of anarchism. It can thus be seen as a libertarian impulse or as an

anarchist sensibility that has existed throughout human history, an impulse that has expressed itself in various ways: in the writings of Lao Tzu and the Taoists, in classical Greek thought, in the mutuality of kin-based societies, in the ethos of various religious sects, in such agrarian movements as the Diggers in England and the Zapatistas of Mexico, in the collectives that sprang up during the Spanish Civil War, and currently, in the ideas expressed in the ecology and feminist movements.

Anarchist tendencies seem to have expressed themselves in all religious movements, even in Islam. One Islamic sect, the Najadat, believed that power belongs only to God. They therefore felt that they did not need an imam or caliph, but could organise themselves mutually to ensure justice. Many years ago I suggested that Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te Ching* (“The Way and its Power,” as Waley (1958) translates it) should not be seen as a mystical religious tract (as it is normally understood), but rather as a political treatise. It is, in fact, the first anarchist tract, for the underlying philosophy of *Tao Te Ching* is fundamentally anarchist, as Rudolf Rocker (1938) noted.

On the other hand, anarchism may be seen as a historical movement and a political theory that had its beginnings at the end of the 18th century. It was expressed in the writings of William Godwin, who wrote the classic anarchist text *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1798), as well as in the actions of the *sans-cullotes* and the *enragés*

during the French Revolution and by radicals like Thomas Spence and William Blake in Britain. The term “anarchist” was first used during the French Revolution as a term of abuse describing the *sans-cullotes* (“without breeches”), the working people of France who during the Revolution advocated the abolition of government.

Anarchism as a social movement developed during the 19th century. Its basic social philosophy was formulated by the Russian revolutionary Michael Bakunin. It was the outcome of his clashes with Karl Marx and his followers, who advocated a stateist road to socialism during meetings of the International Working Men’s Association in the 1860’s. In its classical form as expressed by Kropotkin, Goldman, Reclus and Malatesta, anarchism was a significant part of the socialist movement in the years before the First World War, but its socialism was libertarian, not Marxist. The tendency of writers like David Pepper (1996) to create a dichotomy between socialism and anarchism is both conceptually and historically misleading.

Of all political philosophies anarchism has perhaps had the worst press. It has been ignored, maligned, ridiculed, abused, misunderstood, and misrepresented by writers from all sides of the political spectrum: Marxists, liberals, democrats and conservatives. Theodore Roosevelt, the American president, described anarchism as a “crime against the whole human race,” and it has been variously judged as destructive, violent and nihilistic. A number

of criticisms have been lodged against anarchism, and I will deal briefly with each of these. There are eight complaints in all.

1. It is said that anarchists are too innocent, too naïve and have too rosy a picture of human nature. It is said that, like Rousseau, they have a romantic view of human nature as essentially good and peace-loving. But of course real humans are not like this; they are cruel, aggressive and selfish and so anarchy is just a pipe dream. It is an unrealistic vision of a past golden age that never really existed. This being so, some form of coercive authority is always necessary. The truth is that anarchists do not follow Rousseau. In fact, Bakunin was scathing in his criticisms of the 18th century philosopher. Most anarchists tend to think humans have both good and bad tendencies. If humans were all goodness and light, would they mind being ruled? It is because anarchists have a realistic rather than a romantic view of human nature that they oppose all forms of coercive authority. In essence, anarchists oppose all power in the sense of the French word *puissance* ("power over") (rather than *pouvoir* ("power to do something")), and believe, like Lord Acton, that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. As Paul Goodman (1968) wrote, the issue is not whether people are "good enough" for a particular type of society; rather it is a matter of developing the kind of

social institutions that are most conducive to expanding the potentialities we have for intelligence, grace, sociability and freedom.

2. Anarchy, it is believed, is a synonym for chaos and disorder. This is, in fact, how people often use the term. But anarchy, as understood by most anarchists, means the exact opposite of this. It means a society based on order. Anarchy means not chaos, or a lack of organisation, but a society based on the autonomy of the individual, on co-operation, and without rulers or coercive authority. As Proudhon (1851) put it, liberty is the mother of order. But equally anarchists do not denounce chaos, for they see chaos and disorder as having inherent potentiality; as Bakunin (1842) put it, to destroy is a creative act.

3. Another equation made is that between anarchism and violence. Anarchism, it is said, is all about terrorist bombs and violence. There is even a book currently in bookshops entitled *The Anarchists' Cookbook* that describes how to make bombs and dynamite. But as Alexander Berkman (1929) wrote, resorting to violence against oppression or to obtain certain political objectives has been practiced throughout human history. Acts of violence have been committed by the followers of every political and religious creed: nationalists, liberals, socialists, feminists, republicans, monarchists,

Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, democrats, conservatives, fascists. And every government is based on organised violence. Anarchists who have resorted to violence are no worse than anybody else. But most anarchists have been against violence and terrorism, and there has always been a strong link between anarchism and pacifism. Anarchists even go one step further in that they challenge the violence that most people do not recognise and which is often of the worst possible kind: lawful violence. Needless to say, some of the best-known anarchists, such as Tolstoy, De Cleyre, Gandhi and Edward Carpenter, were pacifists.

4. Anarchists have been accused, especially by Marxists, of being theoretical blockheads, of being anti-intellectual, and of creating a cult of mindless action. But as a perusal of the anarchist movement will indicate, many anarchists and people with anarchist sympathies have been among the finest intellectuals of their generation, truly creative people. One may mention Godwin, Humboldt, Reclus, Tolstoy, Bertrand Russell, Gandhi, Chomsky and Bookchin, among others. Moreover, anarchists have produced many seminal texts outlining their own philosophy and their own social doctrines. These are generally free of the jargon and the pretension that masquerades as scholarship among many liberal scholars, Marxists and post-modernists.

5. Another criticism is the opposite of this: anarchism is ridiculed for being apolitical and a doctrine of inaction. Anarchists, according to the ex-doyen of the Green Party Jonathan Porritt, do nothing but contemplate their navels. Because they do not engage in party politics, Porritt even suggests that anarchists do not live in the "real world." All the essential themes of the Green Party manifesto – the call for a society that is decentralised, equitable, ecological, co-operative, and with flexible institutions – are, of course, simply an unacknowledged appropriation of what anarchists like Kropotkin had long ago advocated, but to Porritt this vision is simply hitched to party politics. As a media figure, Porritt completely misunderstands what anarchism – and a decentralised society – is all about. Anarchism is not non-political. Nor does it advocate a retreat into prayer, self-indulgence or meditation, whether or not one contemplates one's navel or chants mantras. It is simply hostile to parliamentary or party politics. The only democracy it thinks valid is participatory democracy and anarchism believes that putting an "X" on a piece of paper every five years is a sham. Doing so serves only to give ideological justification to power holders in a society that is fundamentally hierarchical and undemocratic.

Anarchists are of many kinds. They have therefore suggested various ways of challenging and transforming the present system of violence and inequality – through communes, passive resistance, syndicalism, municipal democracy, insurrection, direct action and education. One of the reasons why some anarchists have emphasised publishing propaganda and education is that they have always eschewed party organisation as well as violence. Anarchists have always been critical of the notion of a vanguard party, seeing it as inevitably leading to some form of despotism. And with regard to both the French and Russian revolutions, history has proved their premonitions correct.

6. A consistent critique of anarchism offered by Marxists is that it is utopian and romantic: a peasant or petty-bourgeois ideology, an expression of millennial dreams. Concrete historical studies by John Hart on anarchism and the Mexican working class (1978) and by Jerome Mintz on the anarchists of Casas Viejas in Spain (1982) have more than adequately refuted some of the distortions about anarchism. The anarchist movement has not been confined to peasants; it has flourished among urban workers where anarcho-syndicalism developed. Nor is it utopian or millennial. Anarchists have established real collectives and have always been critical of religion. None of the early anarchists expected some

immediate or cataclysmic change to occur through “propaganda by deed” or the “general strike,” as the various writings of Reclus and Berkman attest. They realised it would be a long haul.

7. Another criticism of anarchism is that it has a narrow view of politics, that it sees the state as the fount of all evil, ignoring other aspects of social and economic life. This is a misrepresentation of anarchism. It partly derives from the way anarchism has been defined, and from the attempt of Marxist historians to exclude anarchism from the broader socialist movement. But when one examines the writings of classical anarchists like Kropotkin, Goldman, Malatesta and Tolstoy, as well as the character of anarchist movements in such places as Italy, Mexico, Spain and France, it is clearly evident that it has never had this limited vision. It has always challenged all forms of authority and exploitation, and has been as critical of capitalism and religion as it has of the state. Most anarchists were feminists, and many spoke out against racism, as well as defended the freedom of children. A cultural and ecological critique of capitalism has always been an important dimension of anarchist writings. This is why the writings of Tolstoy, Reclus and Kropotkin still have contemporary relevance.

8. A final criticism of anarchism is that it is unrealistic: anarchy will never work. The market socialist David Miller expresses this view very well in his book *Anarchism* (1984). His attitude to anarchism is one of “heads I win, tails you lose.” He admits that communities based on anarcho-communist principles have existed, and given a chance have had some degree of unexpected success. But due to lack of popular support and state intervention and repression they have, he writes, always been failures. On the other hand, he also argues that societies could not exist anyway without some form of centralised government. Miller seems oblivious to the fact that what Stanley Diamond (1974) called “kin-communities” have long existed within and often in opposition to state systems, and that trading networks have existed throughout history, even among hunter-gatherers, without any state control. The state, in any case, is a recent historical phenomenon, and in its modern nation-state form has only existed for a few hundred years. Human communities have long existed without central or coercive authority. Whether a complex technological society is possible without centralised authority is not a question easily answered; neither is it one that can be lightly dismissed. Many anarchists believe that such a society is possible, though technology will have to be on a “human scale.” Complex systems exist in nature

without there being any controlling mechanism. Indeed, many global theorists nowadays are beginning to contemplate libertarian social vistas that become possible in an age of computer technology. Needless to say, if Miller had applied the same criteria by which he so adversely adjudges anarchism – distributive justice and social well-being – to capitalism and state “communism” then perhaps he would have declared both these systems unpractical and unrealistic too. But at least Miller wants to rescue anarchism from the dustbin of history, and to help us to curb abuses of power and keep alive the possibilities of free social relationships.

Society, we are told by such authorities as Friedrich Hayek, Margaret Thatcher and Marilyn Strathern, either does not exist or it is a “confused category” that ought to be excised from theoretical discourse. The word derives, of course, from the Latin *societas*, which in turn derives from *socius*, meaning a companion, a friend, a relationship between people, or a shared activity. Anarchists have thus always drawn a clear distinction between society in this sense and the state, that is between what the Jewish existentialist scholar Martin Buber (1992) called the political and the social principles. Buber was a close friend of the anarchist Gustav Landauer, who argued long before Foucault that the state could not be destroyed by revolution. It could only be undermined by developing other kinds of relationships and



by actualizing social patterns and forms of organization that involved mutuality and free co-operation. Such a social domain is always in a sense present, imminent in contemporary society, and co-existing with the state.

For Landauer, as for Colin Ward (1973), anarchy is not something that only existed long ago before the rise of the state, or exists now only among people like the Nharo or Piaroa living at the margins of capitalism (although Zerzan would not see the Piaroa, being horticulturists, as truly authentic!). Nor is anarchy simply a speculative vision of some future society. Rather, anarchy is a form of social life that organizes itself without the resort to coercive authority. It is always in existence, albeit often buried and unrecognised beneath the weight of capitalism and the state. It is like "a seed beneath the snow," as Colin Ward (1973: 11) graphically puts it. Anarchy, then, is simply the idea "that it is possible and desirable for society to organize itself without government" (Ward 1973: 11). Anthropology has much to learn from the anarchist tradition, and it is of interest that two post-structuralist scholars – Foucault and Deleuze – who have now become academic icons, implicitly drew on this political tradition.

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- Undergraduate honours degrees: BA Anthropology, BA Anthropology and Communication Studies, BA Anthropology and Sociology.
- Research strengths: gender, sexuality and identities, power and transnational processes, visual anthropology, institutions and organisations.

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## About the author

Brian Morris is Professor Emeritus in the Anthropology Department at Goldsmiths College. He carried out fieldwork in South India, and has published on the anthropology of religion, conceptions of the self and on herbalism in Malawi. He has also written on ethnobotany, ethnozoology, classification, religion, ritual and symbolism, hunter-gatherer societies, herbalism and fungi. His most recent publication is *Animals and Insects*, a study of human-insect interactions in Malawi.

The Brian Morris prize was founded in 2004 and is awarded to the undergraduate anthropology dissertation at Goldsmiths that most embodies the creative spirit of Brian Morris. Each prize-winning paper will be published as an issue of GARP.

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