Title
Anarchistic Hermeneutics of Utopian Desires in the Late Nineteenth Century: Defining, Narrating, and Reading Anarchism

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5hk0r4wg

Author
Oda, Toru

Publication Date
2016

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

Anarchistic Hermeneutics of Utopian Desires in the Late Nineteenth Century: Defining, Narrating, and Reading Anarchism

DISSEDITION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Comparative Literature

by

Toru Oda

Dissertation Committee:
Associate Professor Adriana M. Johnson, Chair
Associate Professor Eyal Amiran
Professor Rei Terada

2016
DEDICATION

To

my parents, my brother, and my grandmother

"Ich hätte Ihnen so viel zu erzählen, daß Ich nicht [weiß] wo anfangen. Auch weiß ich nicht, was ich Ihnen tatsächlich schon geschrieben habe, und was nur im Gedanken erzählt."

Berg an Wiesengrund-Adorno. Wien, 2. 5. 1927
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CITATIONS | iv |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | v |
| CURRICULUM VITAE | vi |
| ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION | vii |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| CHAPTER 1: Anarchist Anxieties: Defining Anarchism, Reading Anarchistically | 27 |
| CHAPTER 2: Anarchistic Disciplines: Revisiting Past Anarchism after Post-Anarchism | 70 |
| CHAPTER 3: Émile Zola’s Ends of Naturalist Historical Representation: Wishful Narrative Conclusions in *Le Docteur Pascal* and *Les Rougon-Macquart* | 110 |
| CHAPTER 4: Peter Kropotkin’s Naturalist Ethics: Anarchist Hermeneutics of Already Existing Communist Feelings and Practices | 167 |
| AFTERWORD Anarchist Trouble: For Anarchistic Hermeneutics and Historiography | 220 |
| Works Cited | 237 |
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CITATIONS

CB        Kropotkin, The Conquest of Bread and Other Writings.
Cor       Zola, Correspondance. 10 vols.
EE        Kropotkin, Evolution and Environment.
“EN”      Kropotkin, “The Ethical Need of the Present Day.”
FW        Kropotkin, Fugitive Writings.
KRP       Kropotkin, Kropotkin’s Revolutionary Pamphlets.
MA        Kropotkin, Mutual Aid.
OC        Zola, Œuvres complètes. 12 vols.
RM        Zola, Les Rougon-Macquart. 5 vols.
WR        Kropotkin, Words of a Rebel.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my committee chair, Professor Adriana M. Johnson, who has shown an unwavering support for my dissertation project, encouraging me both emotionally and intellectually when I was sinking into self-doubt and nearly drowned there. Her critical feedback on earlier drafts always salvaged me from drifting away into a dark torrent of infinite digressions and endless footnotes to which I was constantly seduced. Without her unerring navigation this dissertation would have stranded and broken into pieces at any stage of planning, researching, writing, revising, and editing. I would also like to thank my committee members, Professor Eyal Amiran and Professor Rei Terada, for their intellectual generosity and hospitality which greatly assuaged my anxieties on writing a dissertation about anarchism, because such an inauthentic topic could have suffered from chilling indifference, even stern disapproval, from less sympathetic souls. No words can fully communicate the depth of my gratefulness for their warm, most welcoming atmosphere. I sincerely regret that I did not take advantage of chances they would have so willingly offered me if only I had asked them.

I would like to express the profoundest appreciation to Japan-United States Educational Commission (JUSEC), which offered me a prestigious Fulbright Grant. I also would like to thank my past advisors at the University of Tokyo, Professor Yasunari Takada and Professor Tadashi Uchino, who never tired of pushing me to study abroad. Without their strong encouragements, I would have never imagined applying to graduate school in the US. In addition, I am grateful to my senior colleagues and friends, Motonori Sato and Hiromasa Wakita, for those unforgettable hours of reading modernist literature together, which prepared me for graduate study in the US. A special thanks goes to Kohki and Tsugumi Watabe, who patiently listened to my still inchoate ideas and commented on them in a productive manner.

I wish I could mention all the people I came across at UCI. However, some names would inevitably go unmentioned. I therefore give up comprehensiveness to talk about only a handful. In early years of my graduate study, I had many great late night conversations and email correspondences with Brandon Granier. I also want to thank three adorable couples, Ben and Liz Aaron, Eddy Troy and Jamie Rogers, and Tamara Beauchamp and Ben Garceau, who welcomed me to their tables. I greatly enjoyed their hospitality, which made my isolated existence more bearable. I am also grateful of the UCI Travel Grant which allowed me to give a presentation far away from the campus. Lastly, I heartily appreciate Bindya Baliga for various kinds of paperwork, which literally helped me survive graduate study up to this very last moment.

I would like to thank my parents for their financial support, but my debt to them is heavier. No doubt my dissertation project began more than a decade ago, on that fatal date when my father asked my help to translate Emma Goldman’s autobiography, *Living My Life*. A few years later, another critical call came from him, suggesting I translate *Le Docteur Pascal* by Émile Zola. The very next day I found a paperback copy of the novel in a second-hand bookstore, purchased it, and immediately began to translate. I shudder retrospectively at my brave ignorance and admire my reckless bravery, because I knew almost nothing about anarchism or naturalism at that time. But perhaps only with such a blind engagement one could begin something truly unexpected, unpredictable, and ennobling. This dissertation, then, is perhaps a return gift to my father.
CURRICULUM VITAE

Toru Oda

2003 B.A. in Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies, University of Tokyo
2006 M.A. in Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies, University of Tokyo
2011 M.A. in Comparative Literature, University of California, Irvine
2016 Ph.D. in Comparative Literature, University of California, Irvine

FIELD OF STUDY

Critical Theory, Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Fictionalism, Naturalism, Utopian Literature, Historiography, Hermeneutics, Marxism, Anarchism

GRANTS

2008-10 Fulbright Grant, Japan-United States Educational Commission (JUSEC)
2015 Travel Grant, University of California, Irvine
ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Anarchistic Hermeneutics of Utopian Desires in the Late Nineteenth Century: Defining, Narrating, and Reading Anarchism

By

Toru Oda

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

University of California, Irvine, 2016

Associate Professor Adriana M. Johnson, Chair

My dissertation articulates late-nineteenth-century anarchism as effective and discursive events that problematize certain modern tendencies that are, from the anarchist perspective, coercive, oppressive, and self-destructive. In order to go beyond what is traditionally understood by the term “anarchism,” this dissertation questions this name itself which has been almost coerced to incorporate nearly contradictory meanings and almost incommensurable positions, while embodying utopian reveries. Chapter One examines various forms and expressions of anarchist anxieties that creep into discussions of defining and giving an historical account of anarchism, but it also takes such anxieties as creative moments, foregrounding their troubling nature in discursive sites. By drawing on the method of problematization, developed by Michel Foucault, Chapter Two addresses the problem of articulating anarchism as a discipline, especially recent attempts by several post-anarchists who reconsider traditional anarchist thematics in postmodern terms. Calling into question their philosophizing orientations, it displaces the post-anarchist critique of past anarchism as essentialist and revisits both anew with
the concepts of fiction and *as if*, elaborated by Hans Vaihinger. It proposes to read classical anarchism as explanatory fiction, where the reliance on essentialist constructs should not be seen as a sign of theoretical laziness but as narrative justifications with historically available givens and means. Chapters Three and Four offer close readings of the leading nineteenth-century authors, Émile Zola and Peter Kropotkin, respectively. Foregrounding oft-overlooked affective intersections with anarchist aspirations for betterment and justice, Chapter Three takes *Le Docteur Pascal*, the last volume of *Les Rougon-Macquart*, as Zola’s narrative response to the destabilizing anarchist wishes. It also uses the novel to develop an anarchistic hermeneutics that defies the pre-existing disciplinary expectations and authorial intentions, revealing Zola’s wishful fiction of the fraternal primary being that could still appear within the naturalist logic of the historical novel. Chapter Four takes Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid* as exemplifying anarchistic hermeneutics of reading the here and now reality almost against the grain and underscoring already existing communist feelings and practices. By reconsidering the question of anarchist trouble and examining Walter Benjamin’s philosophy of history, the Afterword concludes by making a case for anarchist historiography and hermeneutics.
Introduction

Anarchistic Reading of Late-Nineteenth-Century Anarchism

In *Idée générale de la Révolution au dix-neuvième siècle*, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the father of modern anarchism, enumerates the vices of government in a hyperbolic manner, as if almost indulging himself in linguistic play:

Être GOUVERNÉ, c'est être gardé à vue, inspecté, espionné, dirigé, légiféré, réglementé, parqué, endoctriné, prêché, contrôlé, estimé, apprécié, censuré, commandé, par des êtres qui n'ont ni le titre, ni la science, ni la vertu... Être GOUVERNÉ, c'est être, à chaque opération, à chaque transaction, à chaque mouvement, noté, enregistré, recensé, tarifié, timbré, toisé, coté, cotisé, patenté, licencié, autorisé, apostillé, admonesté, empêché, reformé, redressé, corrigé. C'est, sous prétexte d'utilité publique, et au nom de l'intérêt général, être mis à contribution, exercé, rançonné, exploité, monopolisé, concussionné, pressuré, mystifié, volé ; puis, à la moindre résistance, au premier mot de plainte, réprimé, amendé, vilipendé, vexé, traqué, houplé, assommé, désarmé, garrotté, emprisonné, fusillé, mitraillé, jugé, condamné, déporté, sacrifié, vendu, trahi, et pour comble, joué, berné, outragé, déshonoré. Voilà le gouvernement, voilà sa justice, voilà sa morale ! (341)

To be GOVERNED is to be kept in sight, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, estimated, valued, censured, commanded, by creatures who have neither the right, nor the wisdom, nor the virtue to do so.... To be GOVERNED is to be at every operation,
at every transaction, noted, registered, enrolled, taxed, stamped, measured, numbered, assessed, licensed, authorized, admonished, forbidden, reformed, corrected, punished. It is, under pretext of public utility, and in the name of the general interest, to be placed under contribution, trained, ransomed, exploited, monopolized, extorted, squeezed, mystified, robbed; then, at the slightest resistance, the first word of complaint, to be repressed, fined, despised, harassed, tracked, abused, clubbed, disarmed, choked, imprisoned, judged, condemned, shot, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed; and, to crown all, mocked, ridiculed, outraged, dishonored. That is government; that is its justice; that is its morality.

(Property Is Theft! 598)

What can we read into this hyperbolically exacting list of seemingly concrete instances? One interpretation is to discern the anarchist abhorrence of abstraction, which would be reiterated in various ways by direct and indirect descendants of Proudhon thereafter. In Statism and Anarchy, Mikael Bakunin, a left-Hegelian, insurrectionist anarchist, would criticize the Hegelian predilection for abstraction, while insisting that concrete social life must precede abstracted ideas: “Anyone who relies on abstraction will die in it” (133). A few pages later, Bakunin repeats even more emphatically that thought cannot be the origin from which both natural and social life derive, even though “all metaphysicians, positivists, and scholarly or unscholarly

1 It does Hegel a disservice, however, to blame him for bad abstraction, because his short newspaper article titled “Who Thinks Abstractly?” condemns abstract thinking as false. Hegel rightly criticizes such a bad abstraction, because it reduces complex and disparate concrete realities into one single attribute which subsumes all the other attributes under one single word and makes a categorical moral judgment erroneously: “This is abstract thinking: to see nothing in the murderer except the abstract fact that he is a murderer, and to annul all other human essence in him with this simple quality” (Kaufmann, Hegel 463). In this critical sense, abstract thinking is a sign of one's incapability of articulating messy and heterogeneous phenomena and grasping them in their complexity and multiplicity.
worshipers of the goddess science” would claim so, because life is a “spontaneous and self-generated development” with different phases moving to multiple directions: “Life develops out of its own inexhaustible depths by means of a succession of diverse facts, not a succession of abstract reflections” (135). Anarchist orientations and tendencies toward concrete, particular, and singular beings and things are not a superficial characteristic but a truly defining trait. The passages above by Proudhon and Bakunin both exemplify such a materialist gesture, and a few decades later, Peter Kropotkin would repeat it, critiquing the transcendental habit of indulging in big words and ideas that block us from attending to the biological and ecological reality that is both continuous and discontinuous with the socio-historical reality (EE 51-52).

However, this materialist inclination in these anarchist samples above does not imply that such classical anarchists as Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin dismiss reflective thought altogether. Certainly they are critical of the metaphysical perversity of reversing the order of life and thought observed in both philosophy and science, in both professionals and non-specialists. However, this critique also implies that our thought generates from natural and social life, being the result of the latter. In order to contextualize historical anarchism as well as to underscore its contemporaneity and resonance with intellectual tendencies in modern times, it might be tempting to compare this anarchist primacy of life, expressed in the nineteenth-century critical language, with Husserl’s historical critique of forgetting of the life world and the privileging of abstraction in mathematics, geometry, and physics. In The Crises of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, Husserl simultaneously joins this historic return to “original intuition” as much as he differentiates his intellectual historiography of Western thought from it: while “the pre- and extrascientific life-world...contains within itself all actual life, including the scientific life of thought, and nourishes it as the source of all technical constructions of
meaning,” it also poses a difficult question, since “one must choose the naïve way of speaking of [everyday] life, but must also use it in a way which is appropriate for rendering evident what is shown” (59). In this way, Husserl articulates the aporetic condition of talking about everyday life as such and suggests a proper way out from it, a “naive” way of speaking which is neither simply immediate nor simply mediated, avoiding the dual pitfall of the status quo of philosophical language and the mere refusal of it which is no less ideological than what it intends to escape from in the first place. For Husserl, what matters is “the proper return to the naïveté of life—but in a reflection which rises above this naïveté” and this “is the only possible way to overcome the philosophical naïveté which lies in the [supposedly] ‘scientific’ character of traditional objectivistic philosophy” (59).

With this double injunction in mind, Proudhon’s Whitemanesque lines which are ever-expanding in an indiscriminating manner, would begin to sound not uncontroversial. As a speech act, they appear to embrace both the concrete and the general by virtue of specific referents and abstract categories, but by doing so, they also leave unsaid, untouched, and unfolded other concrete alternatives that are potentially contained in the general. One might argue, somewhat ironically, that it is simply impossible to exhaust the general and the universal in an empirical, quantitative manner: the more the text specifies and introduces concrete referents, the wider the gap expands between those specified and those unspecified, between those actualized and those that remain virtual. In fact, Proudhon's exuberant exclamation registers only that which are in essence specific to the social, religious, cultural conjunctures in which he and his contemporaries were living, namely, French society in the mid-nineteenth century: however comprehensive and encompassing they strive to be, these sentences cannot but remind us who read this text today of the distance between us and the author: we are not, or no longer exactly in the identical
circumstance with the author, because of absences, omissions, exclusions, biases, distortions, prejudices, and perhaps thanks to some historic advances in social justice that have taken place since then. In a sense, we are living in a global age of neoliberalism and the security state where political power can be exercised without any consultation of “the public utility” or “the general interest,” in a technological space under perpetual surveillance where power can function without being seen and without actually interpellating, in a sexualized and racialized world where race and gender are no less significant coordinates of power than law and class.

Instead of taking this as a comprehensive list that dismantles the eternal evilness of being governed, I would like to read this as a rhetorical performance, a provocative speech act directed at the implied reader who, as Étienne La Boétie wondered one and a half centuries before in La Discours de la servitude volontaire, voluntarily and cowardly accepted the tyranny of government despite that s/he should know that they, the governed, were more numerous than the governing class, and therefore always, at least potentially, capable of toppling it down at any moment. Both Proudhon and La Boétie suggest that the state of being governed is a consequence of obediently accepting the actually existing reality, and it is such obedient subjects that cause and maintain governance and government and not the other way around. Obviously, their provocation is an open invitation to revolt against the current condition of life, or at least, to a critical examination of where you stand, of why you have come to be where you are now. My point here is that this passage, and by extension every anarchist definition, might better be taken not as a theoretical stipulation that ought to be understood in an anonymous, empty, unspecified space of reading and interpretation, but as a subversive, linguistic performance in a quite specific discursive setting which is as much specified as self-specifying, however general and totalizing they might appear and even if anarchist writers might have intended their words that way.
To put this differently, my critical tasks of reading anarchism will always be two-fold, as what to read and how to read are inextricable and as embedded into disciplinary conflicts as into histories of interpretation: the act of reading, especially as a critically anarchistic practice, is always more than just reading a given text, because each reading entails reading other texts, their subtexts and contexts, which have been forcefully handed down to us as much as we construct unfreely and freely, and more importantly because such an anarchist reading hopes to undo the existing hierarchy of the signifying economy and make sense of a text anew.

Defining, Narrating, and Reading Anarchism

My dissertation, titled *Anarchistic Hermeneutics of Utopian Desires in the Late Nineteenth Century: Defining, Narrating, and Reading Anarchism*, articulates late-nineteenth-century anarchism as effective and discursive events that problematize certain modern tendencies that are, in anarchism's opinion, coercive, oppressive, and self-destructive. Late-nineteenth-century anarchism in European and global contexts is my primary research object, which, roughly speaking, spans from the Franco-Prussian War to WWI. However, my exploration seeks to study this topic beyond what is traditionally understood by the term “anarchism,” whether it is a political theory of free association, a moral philosophy of individual freedom, a labor movement of direct action and syndicalism.²

² If anarchism's intellectual influence was relatively negligible, anarchist attraction was more prominent in other realms. On the one hand, turn-of-the-nineteenth-century anarchist movements are largely workers' movements. And its political influence might better be found outside of the West (See Schmidt, *Cartography of Revolutionary Anarchism*). If these non-Western places enabled anarchist politics to flourish, anarchism was more inspiring for artists and influential as cultural forces in the nineteenth-century and twentieth-century West: 1) French symbolism and anarchist violence (Eisenzweig, Halperin, Kristeva, McGuinness, Sonn, Vírias); 2) Anglo-Saxon literary modernism, little magazine, and individualist anarchism (Goodway, Kadlec, Weir); 3) art and education, anarchist communes (Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism*, Avrich, *The Modern School Movement*, Green, Whimster); 4)
I therefore begin with questioning this name and term which has been almost coerced to carry nearly contradictory meanings, occupying radically incommensurable positions and tendencies, while embodying idealistic and utopian reveries and orientations. Instead of determining the “true” face of anarchism in a definitive manner, I am more interested in examining misunderstood and misrecognized facets of it (or those “bad” and “evil” aspects which anarchists have criticized as their misrepresentations), and moreover, various forms and expressions of anxieties that creep into discussions of anarchism, whether by self-claimed and committed anarchists or those non-anarchists whose interest in it is scholarly and distanced. This problematizing approach will in turn invite us to consider the problem of articulating anarchism as a discipline, especially in recent, post-anarchist attempts to reconsider traditional anarchist thematics in postmoder(nist) contexts.

Though I have explored various definitions and understandings of anarchism which have in one way or another tried to construct a legitimate research object worthy of the existing departments and institutions, I am not interested in deciding which one is more authentic than others either. Indeed, my multiple interests in defining anarchism, where I will examine both historical and recent endeavors to giving a definite shape to anarchist discourse, do not lead me to seek for the transcendental essence of anarchism that could be applied across time and place, beyond a certain period of time and over a geographical border. Being skeptical of the eternity and ubiquity of anarchism, I will instead take such transhistorical claims as essentially historical efforts to legitimate anarchist discourse, simultaneously problematizing originary gestures of surrealism, dada, and anarchism (apart from Walter Benjamin’s classical essay, “Surrealism: the last snapshot of the European intelligentsia,” see Leighten). See also the special issue on anarchism of Modernism/Modernity 2.2 (April 1995). The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies 4.2 (2013) discusses “Anarchism's Modernisms,” as Allan Antliff ingeniously puts in the introduction to the issue.
pinning down anarchism to historical or fictional origins. In this way, I will displace the properly historical task of offering the ontological truth of anarchism to a more historiographical and hermeneutic task of taking each of such historical and recent discourses on anarchism as a strategic experimentation with practical and pragmatic intentions. In sketching an ambitious project of rereading intellectual history from an anarchist perspective, Nathan Jun proposes “reading anarchically”—the hermeneutic practice of discovering anarchistic attitudes, ideas, and thoughts in literature, philosophy, and other venues” (115). In a somewhat different context, I will also propose a certain way of reading anarchist and non-anarchist texts anarchistically, contextualizing them in both historical and disciplinary ways, and (re)reading them essentially as a protesting paradigm of troubling the modernization of society and Westernization of the world, not simply to critique them but moreover to imagine alternatives that are yet to come, to disclose other possibilities that are already at work here and now.

**Problematization**

The “troubling” potential of anarchism does not (simply) refer to the tremendous disturbances and dissonances it caused with the propaganda by the deed. It is inadequate to simply listen to the noisy clamor and bad reputation it won in media and public imagination, and it is not helpful at all to take a condescending attitude to anarchism and to explain its discarded state and maverick position by saying that it is a self-caused trouble: the categorical rejection of the parliamentary option, such an interpretation would assert, forced anarchists into a more and more helpless and incapable state, contrary to the ascending social democratic parties in European countries.³ However, does this mean that that the anarchist choice of the non-

---

parliamentary path could never be viable or feasible in any possible way? It is perhaps undeniable that these internal and external factors played no small role in shaping the ways in which we write and talk about anarchism in general and about nineteenth-century anarchism in particular, but to endorse such available narratives could led to underestimating the criticality immanent to anarchism.

In order to better understand the problematic and problematizing nature of anarchism from a more theoretical perspective, it is instructive to examine Foucault's distinction of the history of ideas and what he calls “the history of thought.” In Fearless Speech, Foucault argues that a historian of ideas locates the emergence and development of a specific concept by identifying a new word that corresponds to it, along with other ideas-words: the history of ideas

4 Deleuze paraphrases this opposition by distinguishing history as such (“l’Histoire”) from Foucault’s historical interrogation/intervention which invents new ways of seeing and saying out of it: “Ce que Foucault attend de l'Histoire, c'est cette détermination des visibles et des énonçables à chaque époque, qui dépasse les comportsmet et les mentalités, les idées, puisqu'elle les rend possibles. Mais l'Histoire ne répond que parce que Foucault a su inventer, sans doute en rapport avec les nouvelles conceptions des historiens, une manière proprement philosophique d'interroger, elle-même neuve et qui relance l'Histoire” (“What Foucault takes from History is that determination of visible and articulable features unique to each age which goes beyond any behavior, mentality, or set of ideas, since it makes these things possible. But History responds only because Foucault has managed to invent, no doubt in a way related to the new conceptions of certain historians, a properly philosophical form of interrogation which is itself new and which revives History”; Foucault 56; Foucault 48-49).

In another place, Deleuze introduces an interesting distinction of historical study and historian’s work ("Sur les principaux concepts de Michel Foucault" in Deux régimes de fous). For Deleuze, Foucault’s historical study is not that of a historian but of philosophical quality, while it is not a philosophy of history either. Referring to Foucault’s homage to Heidegger, Deleuze continues that Foucault articulates the question of thinking as contingent but situated stratification: “Ce qui est historique, c'est que toutes les formations stratifiées, faites de strates. Mais a penser, c'est atteindre à une manière on stratifiée, entre les bandelettes ou dans les interstices” (“[the historical] is formations which are stratified, made up of strata. But to think is to reach a non-stratified material, somewhere between the layers, in the interstices”; 226; Two Regimes of Madness 246). However, this historical thinking is both actual and untimely, as Nietzsche puts, and thinking comes from without as it generates from within: “Penser doit venir du dehors à la pensée, en même temps que s'engendrer du dedans, sous les strates et au-delà” (Thinking must come from the outside of thought, and yet at the same time be engendered from within—beneath the strata and beyond them; 226; 246).
is descriptive, passive, and static. On the contrary, what Foucault understands by “history of thought” considers that a certain idea takes place in conjunction with many various power relations and institutions, material conditions and circumstances, and people's practices and behaviors, where an idea arises not simply as a word but as a problem for those who are entangled in such a circumstance and environment in a very specific way. In short, the history of thought disturbs what the history of ideas tend to settle and stabilize, turning the familiar and the silent into a problem: “The history of thought, understood in this way, is the history of the way people begin to take care of something, of the way they become anxious about this or that—for example, about madness, about crime, about sex, about themselves, or about truth” (74).

Put another way, Foucault's question is always not “what is” but “how/where/when/why it is so,” which also means that he is less interested in a problem as such but in how something becomes a problem: “What I tried to do from the beginning was to analyze the process of ‘problematization’—which means: how and why certain things (behavior, phenomena, processes) became a problem” (171). What come to the fore in this shifted focus on process and effect, on multiplicity, contingency, and heterogeneity: it is not certain conducts as such—they could have existed for a long while and they did not suddenly begin to problematize themselves by themselves—but the fact that they could no longer pass without causing disturbances, without being interrogated by and interrogating some other things; what should be thought about here is how their relations with other conducts and the valorizing economy behind them changed and how such changes would in turn transform their meaning and signification.

This process of what had been noncontroversial becoming a trouble to be dealt with, domesticated, contained, cured, excluded, and so on, is creative and eventful. Put another way, no problematization takes place in exactly identical situations or conditions. It is always enacted
by different agents. Each time it is singular and non-repeatable, each time coming up with different solutions, where not only alienated individuals but a collective confront such a disturbed state of things and beings and attempt to come up with a context-specific solution out of available means:

A problematization is always a kind of a creation; but a creation in the sense that, given a certain situation, you cannot infer that this kind of problematization will follow. Given a certain problematization, you can only understand why this kind of answer appears as a reply to some concrete and specific aspect of the world. There is the relation of thought and reality in the process of problematization. And this is the reason why I think that it is possible to give an analysis of a specific problematization as the history of an answer—the original, specific, and singular answer of thought—to a certain situation. (172-73)

What Foucault suggests here is quite comparable to Jameson’s conceptualization of the text as a symbolic act and the subtext as a (re)construction of the historical problematic which the text describes as well as enacts, articulates as well as invents.

In *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson complicates the common understanding of text and context. On the one hand, he argues, after Kenneth Burke, that the text is a socially symbolic act, namely, this act is merely symbolic, compared to a material act, but such a symbolic act is nevertheless still an act which has some real consequence, at least at a symbolic level (66). What Jameson-Burke talks about here is the flipping of the two levels which mutually cancel each other out and complement each other, and it should also be emphasized that these two levels are not distinct in a given text. But how is this symbolic act social? By paraphrasing Lévi-Strauss' interpretation of myth, Jameson continues that the aesthetic act and object are essentially social
and ideological, or political, that aesthetic practices are as it were a cultural solution to a socio-political problem, just as we attempt to resolve a problem in and as an artwork, transposing the real problem into the aesthetic realm, constructing a solution as a narrative, and representing the work as such as a solution (64-65). On the other hand, Jameson argues that every text constructs its own subtext which is being folded within itself, contrary to contexts that are supposed to exist outside of it. But the tricky point here is that this subtext is not available to us and has to be (re)constructed via our reading of the text. For example, for Zola’s Les Rougon-Macquart, the Second Empire is no doubt its historical context; however, the Second Empire Zola’s novels depict in the margins of narratives or even in and as the very narratives is Zola’s invention, or more precisely, Zola’s singular arrangement of already textualized contexts and/or the not-yet textualized Real: “[the literary or aesthetic act] cannot simply allow ‘reality’ to persevere inertly in its own being, outside the text and at distance. It must rather draw the Real into its own texture” (66). As Jameson continues, the paradox of the subtext is that the literary text simultaneously constructs a solution and a problem, a solution to a problem, or a situation that is also a reaction: “the literary work or cultural object, as though for the first time, brings into being that very situation to which it is also, at one and the same time, a reaction” (67). And since it “articulates its own situation and textualizes it,” enfolding that situation into its textuality and narrating a story that is a reaction to it, the reader is required to unfold this very process of textualization which as much invented the subtext as weaved into the narrative (67).

At first sight, one might discern more differences than similarities between them: Jameson theorizes textual enfolding and unfolding of the Real, where answers are, if any, fictional and at best symbolic; on the contrary, Foucault turns to the actual and the effective, where answers are, however creative they might be, real and non-fictional. However, we should
not deceive ourselves by this apparent disagreement concerning real-actual and fictional-symbolic, factual and textual, because what is fundamental is the hermeneutic and creative process of inventing or discovering relations between the real and representations, and as Foucault cautiously adds, it is “the relation of thought and reality” that has to be foregrounded: it is thought, a reflected but material response, whether it appears on paper or in action, that need be closely analyzed, and I am interested in exploring how a problem arises as well as what answers are offered, regardless of their practical feasibility. What entails from this doubly revised notions of text and context and the method of problematization is a high demand on the reader who has to (re)construct a problem in a given circumstance or a subtext of a given text, while appreciating its originary process of problematization or textualization, a process which explains why the historiographical is conceived of as inseparable from the hermeneutic in my whole exploration.

Defining Anarchism

At this point, I would like to present my working definition of anarchism. If, as I have claimed above, nineteenth-century anarchism can be regarded as responsive and reactive, I should be able to provide an answer to the question of “to what does anarchism respond?” Another is what kind of answer it is. In his assessment of anarchism, Nathan Jun suggests that two thematics, anti-authoritarianism and egalitarianism, can be used as criteria to decide whether or not a given text or idea could be considered adequately anarchist regardless of time and place (88). What I add to them, as my project targets the late nineteenth century, is that nineteenth-century anarchism is a modern invention that is critical of self-justifying modernism or modernization, contesting such tenets like standardization, centralization, effectivity and
efficiency over culture and tradition, utility for the sake of utility, production and consumption for their own sake.

This critique of self-justifying modernization has meant that all too often anarchism has been defined as primitive and regressive, categorically dismissive of mechanization and technology. It is seen as a paradigmatic example of Rousseau-esque “back to nature,” whether it is nostalgia for what has perished and has been lost or a utopian return to what should have existed in the far past or far distance. This is exactly how Karl Mannheim and Haydn White articulate anarchism against other three dominant ideologies (conservatism, radicalism, and liberalism). After Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, White lists anarchism as one among the four, each of which serves differently for plotting a (hi)story and arguing for it. Like conservatives, anarchists rely on intuition “as the ground on which a putative 'science' of history might be constructed”; yet, unlike conservatives who are inclined to integrate intuition to the organistic account of society, anarchists go in the opposite direction, being inclined to the emphatic techniques of romanticism (25-26). Anarchists are in favor of change, optimistic not simply about transformation (like liberals and radicals) but also about the rapidity of change (like radicals), believe in the necessity of structural transformation (like radicals), and hope to reconstruct society in a new form, as a community of humanity (unlike radicals who re-establish it on new bases) (24). In terms of temporal orientations, anarchists are retrospective and ahistorical, “inclined to idealize a remote past of natural-human innocence from which men have fallen into the corrupt 'social' state...in turn, project this utopia onto what is effectively a non-temporal plane, viewing it as a possibility of human achievement at any time,” unlike present-oriented conservatives or future-oriented liberals and radicals (25).
This stereotype, or narrative archetype, of anarchism can be found in many iterations in the work of historians and researchers. For instance, Richard D. Sonn foregrounds the disparity of modern anarchism with modern times, reinforcing “anarchist nostalgia for a simpler past.” For Sonn, anarchists are revolutionaries who, unlike the liberals or the Marxists who believe in limitless progress, wish to “revolve’ back to a more harmonious society,” nearly totally rejecting contemporary society and proposing an alternative which fuses “a vision of a utopian future” with “elements of a remembered past” (3). For Sonn, therefore, nineteenth-century anarchists are future-oriented, but seek for the future through the past by imagining that a future to come is a past minus authoritative elements: “their vision of the future resembled the past more than the present, namely, “a past shorn of elites, domination, and religion, composed of free peasants and artisans reaping the fruits of their own labors” (3). By depicting such a temporal attitude in which the present as such is bypassed and the future is prefigured after the image of such past as corrected and improved, Sonn ends up reverting to the nostalgic and regressive paradigm Mannheim and White articulate. Although these commentators can be vindicated to some extent with positive historical evidence, it is my deliberate interpretive decision to disagree with them, because I argue that anarchist futures should not be conceived of as either an idealized past or a denied present.

I find it productive to come back to one of Sonn’s points that anarchists are regressive revolutionaries without becoming reactionary, in order to discuss the question of the present, of the relation of here and now with what has been as well as with what might (not) come. In this respect, Sonn is still right to say that nineteenth-century anarchists are critical of the past and do not dream of recovering the past as such in the present, that their attitude is, as it were, modern without being dogmatically modernist: Kropotkin can thus be characterized as “a modernist who
wished to harness technology to provide abundance for all” (xx). It is this double face of nineteenth-century anarchism, its ambivalent attitude toward the present and the past, toward technological innovation and the past heritage, its critical rejection and reworking of what is and what has been, that need be further complicated in the following pages.

If historical anarchism may be understood in the context of problematization of the present, this is because, I argue, anarchist/ic tendencies and orientations disturb the present, reveal fundamental problems and predicaments of exclusion and hierarchization, and attempt to overcome them in our own time with available means, locally, improvisationally, experimentally. Therefore, I claim that anarchist futures are probably less like a break from the past and the present, for instance, a sudden and total transformation by a revolution; they are rather a continuous development, improving good past customs and practices that are always and already, in one way or another, to some extent and to some degree, anarchist/ic.

***

In this dissertation I will explore anarchist phenomena during this period in a broader, and as it were, literary manner, deliberately expanding the disciplinary territories and investigating the various textual forms of historiographical imagination, narrative reflections on alternative ends and futures, and ethical critique of modernization and utilitarianism, which have not usually been related to anarchist studies. There are two reasons why I describe my project as literary, even if it is not especially interested in examining anarchist characters, plots, and ideas that appear in properly literary texts. In other words, my literary interest in anarchism should be located at the formal or theoretical level rather than at the level of content. First, my methodological approach to late-nineteenth-century anarchism, one which is both inter- and counter-disciplinary will underscore its performative dimensions whose discursive effects are to
be located less in material historical reality than in our historical and narrative imagination, as I
have already attempted with Proudhon’s text above. This should lead us to a certain school of
hermeneutics of reading that opens up questions about the reading subject and the way s/he
makes an account of what s/he reads, not in a personal and private way but in an always and
already politicized manner. My ultimate and hidden goal, one might say, is to come up with an
anarchistic theory of reading. Although the problematics of a political hermeneutics fundamental
to my dissertation, I also propose to explore historiographical problematics that emerge from it,
investigating the ways in which anarchist ideas and themes actively react to historical realities of
modernity and modernization.

The second reason my investigation is literary comes from my attempt to elaborate a
dynamic notion of text, according to which the texts to be discussed in the following pages are
considered not simply reactive but also constructive, managing and negotiating with modernizing
forces that enabled various political achievements and material affluence but also caused new
problems of political oppression and economic exploitation, of religious conservatism and moral
emptiness.

I have already suggested above that one of my aims here is to disclose anarchism’s
contemporaneity and resonance with numerous intellectual tendencies and aesthetic practices
from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. In fact, the present study will attempt to
examine the ways in which anarchist questions of anti-authoritarianism and egalitarianism
intersect with modern problems of state formation and capitalist exploitation, competitive ethics
and utilitarian culture, and to investigate how anarchist themes and motifs in an ensemble of
texts to be discussed below confront them with what alternative visions and prospects. There are
thus two ends to achieve concerning this historiographical side of my project. My goal is not to
make historical cases of intellectual influence or debt between the texts to be discussed, I am not merely interested in excavating anarchist stuff in contemporaneous texts. More fundamentally, I hope to enmesh anarchism into broader historical contexts and to underscore their mutual resonance, in order to articulate anarchist/ic specificities and singularities in such potentially collaborative and cooperative horizons of intellectual exploration and aesthetic imagination.

Common approaches in the history of ideas or ideologies do not serve for this purpose, because contextualization, or at least the special kind of contextualization the present study requires, is always much more complex and complicated than we usually think. Here we should recall the double meaning of Jameson's injunction of “always historicize!” What to be historicized are not only historical objects but also analytical tools with which to approach them, which include, in this research context of anarchist studies, such big “ideas” or terms like freedom, liberty, reason, state, government, and so on. Put another way, we must not “dehistoricize anarchism by approaching its history as one of eternal questions and answers,” as Matthew Adams criticizes the typical approach in political theory (“The Possibilities” 41). Adams continues pages later that in the history of ideas the “taxonomic focus is a familiar feature of writing on anarchism, but the pursuit of the unit-idea can lack historical acuity” (54). Then, the contextualist approach I will take here should be sensitive to “deepening the textual context of anarchist ideas, appreciating the cultural assumptions underpinning political arguments, being more aware of the form of rhetorical interventions and conscious of anarchists' attempts to fashion a distinctive political culture,” as Adams cautions (62). However, by refining my contextualist sensitivity, I should not go so far as to substantiate the context, as if individual texts and singular examples could be fully explained simply by embedding them into outside contexts. My path is the in-between of these two extreme reductions. Now it should be clear that this in-
between realm is never an easy option. It is neither a simple compromise of the two nor a mere average of them, because it demands a certain specific onto-epistemological attitude.

No text can be single-handedly total, nor can it totalize itself in itself. If every text cannot be free from being partial and ideological, that should be understood less as the author's failure than as the fundamental predicament of telling a narrative and writing it as a text. Precisely because of this general problematics of the impossibility of complete comprehension, it is necessary to explore a text along with what it enfolds in itself as well as with what is eluded from its textualization, so that a dialogue with other missing voices would open up, for instance with other class voices, as in Fredric Jameson’s Marxist reading, or with voices of colonial others, as in Edward Said’s contrapuntal reading. Thus, Said asserts that “[i]n reading a text, one must open it out both to what went into it and to what its author excluded” (Culture and Imperialism 66-67). And the great reward of this reconstructive work, according to Jameson, is that “properly used, the concept of the ‘text’ does not...‘reduce’ these [positive] realities to small and manageable written documents of one kind or another, but rather liberates us from the empirical object...by displacing our attention to its constitution as an object and its relationship to the other objects thus constituted” (The Political Unconscious 287).

However, there also exists a significant difference in orientation between Jameson and Said, whose methods of reading are both fundamental to my anarchist project of reading and historiography. On the one hand, Jameson’s reading methodology is more structural and synchronic, or “relational,” which is how Marxism must apprehend classes, contrary to sociology which would substantiate them as fixed and in itself: “the very content of a class ideology is relation, in the sense that its 'values' are always actively in situation with respect to the opposing class, and defined against the latter” (69). On the other hand, Said’s contrapuntal reading moves
to the diachronic, which is both political and institutional. While exploring “what was once forcibly excluded,” Said argues that it is not enough to reconstruct the original historical circumstances of inclusion and exclusion, of writing and reading, however dialogical and inclusive they would become, because, if “[e]ach cultural work is a vision of a moment,” it is with the “various revisions it later provoked,” with the afterlife of it which increases and expands as it survives, that such a vision must be juxtaposed (67). In other words, literary texts would survive their original history and live another history or other stories, which are inseparable from the later destines of imperial and colonial realities, as well as from the previously accumulated readings and interpretations. To read a past text here and now, especially in critically revolting against the coerciveness of what have been handed down to us, can only be multiple interventions whose fronts should be specified each time anew.

Thus, if I am going to read nineteenth-century texts in this relational and contrapuntal manner, it is not simply because the historical exclusion inherent in them is so glaring. No less important is, as Said suggests, that the exclusion has become more and more problematic and get problematized by what has taken place after it in history as in a given discipline, in reality as in discourse, so that we no longer afford to read the classical masterpieces and appreciate their literary quality as if nothing had happened since then, as if nothing existed outside of its text or its own textualization. In this reconsideration of the literary, or and literariness, it should become increasingly clear that from this reconstructive process of representation arises a singularly textualized ensemble out of almost anarchic real relations and networks, out of actual and virtual connections and combinations. And the essential partiality and insufficiency, distortion and exaggeration, absence and lack must be appropriated and appreciated as a critical challenge for the reader, as a creative moment of intervention for us who are concerned with (re)inventing
more open and democratic, more just and inclusive historiographies and interpretations. It then remains inadequate to simply reveal fissures and cracks, holes and blanks in the text: becoming attentive to what is included and excluded, we have to proceed to another problematics of counterbalancing, asking ourselves what ought to have been included, what is and has been inevitably and forcefully excluded, and this restorative—or “untimely,” Nietzsche might say—reading attitude would encourage us to go beyond both the purely textual and the purely contextual readings.

Thus, nineteenth-century anarchism, especially its discursive dimensions, will constitute my main object of study, but I am not always faithful to the (in)famous Derridian statement that “il n'y a pas de hors-texte.” For me, the question is neither the opposition between the textual inside and outside nor the textual that overrides such a boundary, but rather the aesthetic enfolding of the pre-textual into the textual, though such positivist “pre-textual” can be thought about only retrospectively, only by reconstructing it through the already textualized. If my study will take a simultaneously positivist and structuralist path—yet not their average but the mean which does not elide fundamental differences in their methodology and theoretical presuppositions—it is not because I am convinced of the ultimate falsity of the Derridian claim, but rather because of its possible futility. Taking the inevitability of textuality as a departure and not as an end point, I fully embrace Fredric Jameson's “revised formulation” of “Althusser's own insistence on a history as an absent cause”: “history is not a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and...our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious” (20). And it is this process of transformation into

5 Jameson rephrases this idea in a slightly different way pages later: “That history—Althusser's 'absence cause,' Lacan's 'Real'—is not a text, for it is fundamentally non-narrative and
text and narrative that interests me in literary explorations of anarchic, anarchist, and anarchistic orientations and tendencies in the late nineteenth-century West and other places, as well as in their historicization and textualization in academic discourses.

In order to foreground the transformative process from the ontological to the epistemological and the representational—this is the very displacement post-anarchism advocates, as I discuss in the second chapter—and further into the textual and the narrative, it is necessary to reconfigure the relation of the object of reading and the way of reading; and it is even more fundamental to ask whether to make such a reading signify in one single way or multiple different ways, in its original historical contexts and in our context of reading, in other words, to reconsider the relation of how texts are being written and how we read them. Thus, original strategies of writing and representation must be juxtaposed with how we make sense of them by (re)constructing their intended and implied meanings and by constructing our wishful readings in relation to them. What is lingering behind these questions is, perhaps, our desire (why we want to read it this way and not in other ways) and legitimation (why we are allowed/permitted to do so, why such desires are approved if our reading does not necessarily reveal the truth supposedly housed in the original text or intended by the author, but instead attempts to invent new and other ones in in-between spaces and interpretive interstices between writerly intentions and readerly projections, between their meanings and our significations). The current study will not claim to solve this aporetic challenge once for all, but hope to come up with a response which is not ungrounded, or self-consciously self-grounding, thus aware of its own lack of authority and definitiveness.

______________________________

nonrepresentational; what can be added, however, is the proviso that history is inaccessible to us except in textual form, or in other words, that it can be approached only by way of prior (re)textualization” (67).
In this respect, I find myself coming close to what Giovanni Vattimo’s post-Heideggerian hermeneutics calls “weak thought,” and this is not a frivolous reference. Indeed, the anarchic state is fundamental to Vattimo’s and Zabala’s juxtaposition of Luther, Freud, and Kuhn's hermeneutic revolt that transgress the preceding power and authority: “All are not only anarchic for resisting conventions, structures, and principles but also hermeneutics, because they presuppose the possibility of, project of, and right to interpret differently” (86; emphasis added). No less important is the actuality of such an anarchistic revisiting of the hermeneutic paradigm today for two reasons. Philosophically speaking, weak thought is called for at the time of nihilism and the end of metaphysics, in the post-Nietzschean and post-Heideggerian dismantling of the fictionality of the transcendental world. Now we are living in such a time and world in which the recourse to the absolute has become impossible, and this life condition is exactly what Nietzsche’s *Twilight of the Idols* curtly sketches out in the fable of the invention, mystification, and abolishment of “the true world,” on which Heidegger provides meticulous commentary in his Nietzsche lectures. In truth, weak thought is not simply a personal preference of a thinker who hopes to do philosophy without metaphysical certainty and security, without the division and hierarchy of the phenomenal-sensible and the ideal-suprasensible worlds, but moreover a historical necessity, an awareness of the postmodern conditions which had exposed to critique the arrogance of strong thought. Then, the coupling of hermeneutics and weak thought is also a political choice and a practical decision that is necessitated by the present: “In sum, hermeneutics is the only philosophy that reflects the pluralism of postmodern societies” (79). Today,

6 Vattimo and Zabala gesture toward three postmodern thinkers, Schürmann, Lyotard, and Rorty, as paradigmatic in articulating this antifoundational and postmetaphysical attitude: “Schürmann individuated the 'absence of foundations' for practical action after metaphysics, Lyotard defined the 'postmodern' condition, and Rorty exposed 'conversation' as its ethical guiding thread instead of truth” (98).
philosophy can no longer bypass politics, calling into question who interprets, who is allowed to interpret, who decides the truth and meaning of an interpretation. For these two post-Heideggerian communists, the hermeneutic orientation ought to be sutured with democratic ideals, so that “the contingent, free, and perilous nature of interpretation, which excludes any imposition of truth” should be foregrounded (79).

In this conjuncture of postmodernity and politics, of philosophy and hermeneutics, weak thought is not simply a passive acceptance of intellectual conditions that had already called into question strong thought, or Western tradition of metaphysics as a whole, but also an active principle that positively weakens it, raising questions of who (is entitled to) read and think, of who make an account and make sense of it, while at the same time discussing the fundamental question of founding and foundation and trying to think without prior legitimation: “If existence is interpretation, human beings must learn to live without legitimizations and grounding values, that is, within antifoundationalism” (98). In their thinking, hermeneutics and weak thought are made inseparable, out of which emerges the possibility of “politics without truth.” In other words, the right to interpret is not a given, some allowance the powerful kindly confers to us; on the contrary, we have to learn not to accept what the existing authority dictates us to describe, which is essentially a process of unlearning the old ways and learning new ways that must be implemented and experimented. Moreover, weak thought is not simply an active weakening of the previously strong foundations and constituents in Western thought or thinking about the weak: it is not thought of “the dominating classes, who have always worked to conserve and leave unquestioned the established order of the world” but one by the weak (96). Even more importantly, the weak thinks for the weak whose interpretation have been marginalized and made
minor, though this weak thought for the sake of the weak has to take place without that absolute certainty the strong paradigm has assumed.

How can this weakening of the strong by and for the weak be relevant to the present project of constructing an anarchist theory of reading? What this double weakening foregrounds is an anarchic (re)formation of signifying and interpreting economies, but also hermeneutic experimentation which makes a case for “the possibility of, project of, and right to interpret differently.” What Vattimo’s and Zabala’s hermeneutic communism really teaches us is not simply hermeneutic anarchy but also how to get away from it by founding itself groundlessly, a way of finding where we are and elaborating how to practice reading alternatively without being previously legitimated by the existing authority.

It is wrong to claim that anarchist discourses are free from the use of authority or transcendence, despite their apparent predilection for the specific and the concrete, as I have discussed above. I am going to focus on certain absolute claims to divine origins and ideal ends in anarchist discourse, in order to examine their inevitably fictional or at least hypothetical character and to explore their discursive and narrative consequences. What is troubling in such discourse analysis is not the lack of unquestionable authority that justifies ontological claims to the transcendental, but the normative and yet anxious gestures which disguise the lack and projectively or retrospectively substitute it for something other than itself, something more definite and determined, something superior and unquestionable, such as political power, economic force, lawful violence, natural essence, or disciplinary formation. My task here would then be to take a critical step-back from the existing discourses of or on anarchism and to explore their possibly fictitious grounding and actual functioning, instead of believing in the supremacy
of metaphysical fiction and judging to which extent it could stand true against historical realities or natural actualities.

However, such dismantling does not constitute the ultimate end of my anarchist hermeneutic journey. A lesson to learn from the hermeneutic communism of Vattimo and Zabala is that we do not need to feel bad about the absence of the absolute or the very act of self-grounding, because this is common to any discourse which attempts to legitimate itself on its own ground, without going back to certain religious or spiritual authorities. And this perhaps means to become part of secular projects, to organize and arrange our individual and collective lives in somewhat unnatural and counter-natural ways, always extending and expanding human capacities and potentialities beyond their supposedly natural limits and social boundaries imposed on us because of the material and immaterial conditions and circumstances we are being thrown into. What we should be critical of are essentialist gestures that presuppose the transhistorical and metaphysical essences, unassailable religious and spiritual authorities, and self-instituting tautological principles and entities, and then relate our experimental practices back to such origins coercively. If, like other modern, post-Enlightenment discourses, anarchist discourse is not free from the strategic employment of originary authority, then I should try to see how such anarchist narratives put the dominant ones into confusion and anarchy, allowing us to glimpse not only alternative possibilities but also actually existing alternatives themselves.
Chapter One

Anarchist Anxieties: Defining Anarchism, Reading Anarchistically

Therefore I must tell you, first of all, what Anarchism is not.

It is not bombs, disorder, or chaos.

It is not robbery and murder.

It is not a war of each against all.

It is not a return to barbarism or to the wild state of man.

Anarchism is the very opposite of all that. (Berkman. The ABC of Anarchism)

Negativities, Misrepresentations, and Anxieties in Defining Anarchism

“What is anarchism?” is the very question with which texts on anarchism begin. Certainly not all of them start with it, but to offer a definition is a common practice. This seemingly naïve—perhaps unanswerable—question always turns out to be a big trouble, sometimes very hard to respond, even unanswerable. Etymologically speaking, “anarchism” is a negative term (an-anarch-ism, or without authority), and every commentator of anarchism is aware of this initial negativity, sometimes taking advantage of the semantic ambiguity to a different degree and to a different effect. Among others, Benjamin Tucker, a Boston-based, Proudhonian individualist, indulges in playing with the etymological meaning and various connotations in an almost pedantic manner:

7 See, for instance, Berkman (1929), Woodcock (1962/63), and Kinna, Anarchism (2005/09).
Anarchy does not mean simply opposed to the *archos*, or political leader. It means opposed to *arche*. Now, *arche*, in the first instance, means *beginning, origin*. From this it comes to mean *a first principle, an element; then first place, supreme power, sovereignty, dominion, command, authority; and finally a sovereignty, an empire, a realm, a magistracy, a governmental office* (qtd. in Eltzbacher 183)\(^{8}\)

This linguistic playfulness might, however, remain purely rhetorical and reach nowhere, doing nothing other than expressing the writer's verbal virtuosity. However, it can also surface rather inadvertently and in expected places. For instance, Paul Valéry began to write down notes on anarchism in Algeria, and kept writing maverick reflections on it, almost out of context and irrelevant to actual anarchist movements, until his small private notebook was discontinued two years later in 1938.\(^{9}\)

If the troubling nature of defining anarchism comes partly from these etymological characteristics or its internalized linguistic negativity, it is also be due to the amorphous and protean emergence and presence of anarchism in history, which makes it difficult to clearly delineate and categorize it into one single ready-made entity. It is almost an aporetic question whether anarchism refers to ideas or theories, ideals or models, principles or laws, beliefs or world views, hypotheses or descriptions, a truth or the Truth, everyday practices or revolutionary events, individual lifestyles or collective movements, and anarchist commentators disagree over

---

8 At around the turn of the nineteenth century, Tucker contributed a lot to make European anarchist literature available in English as translator, editor, and writer. The list of publications, which are not limited to anarchism in the strict sense but include art and literature, could go long from Chernyshevsky’s *What Is to Be Done?* to Ibsen's plays to Stirner's philosophy of ego to Eltzbacher’s anthology of seven anarchists. About the literary legacy of Tucker, see Weir 146-50. Concerning the US anarchism around this time period James J. Martin’s *Men against the State* is a classics, while Steve J. Shone’s *American Anarchism* is a recent update.

9 The notebook would be published posthumously under the title of *Les Principes d’anarchie pure et appliquée*. 
this point quite dramatically. For Peter Kropotkin, anarchism is a hypothesis of organization (“a principle or theory of life and conduct”), while Rudolf Rocker sees it as a historically locatable intellectual trend (“a definite intellectual current in the life of our time”); Colin Ward considers it to be a socio-political ideology that comes and goes in history (“a social and political ideology which, despite a history of defeat, continually re-emerges in a new guise or in a new country”), while, for Ruth Kinna, it is a doctrine, a program with a clear strategic end (“a doctrine that aims at the liberation of peoples from political domination and economic exploitation by the encouragement of direct or non-governmental action”).

No doubt these definitions are not mutually exclusive. Nor is it impossible to put all of them under the same name of anarchism. In fact, anarchism often responded to this definitional predicament by producing an exhaustive list that accepts everything and rejects nothing, even running the risk of incorporating apparently contradictory terms and tendencies in a Whitmanesque, all-welcoming embrace. What I would like to claim here is that to define anarchism often gets involved with the question of certain ways of speaking, where negative expressions become indispensable, as if it were much easier to decide what it is not than to determine what it is, and this chronic tendency can be observed even in recent attempts of

---

10 “ANARCHISM (from the Gr. av, and aoxn, contrary to authority), the name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government - harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilized being” (KRP 284; published in 1910); “ANARCHISM is a definite intellectual current in the life of our time, whose adherents advocate the abolition of economic monopolies and of all political and social coercive institutions within society (Rocker 1; 1938)”; “Anarchism is a social and political ideology which, despite a history of defeat, continually re-emerges in a new guise or in a new country, so that another chapter has to be added to its chronology, or another dimension to its scope” (Ward i; 2004); “Anarchism is a doctrine that aims at the liberation of peoples from political domination and economic exploitation by the encouragement of direct or non-governmental action” (Kinna, Anarchism 3; 2005/09).
defining anarchism in line with the recent critical turn to ethics. Recently, Simon Critchley invited us to understand anarchism as an ethical attitude rather than a theory and philosophy. What is especially interesting here is not necessarily Critchley’s displaced emphasis on construction and interpretation qua practice but his way of doing it: “Anarchism is not so much a grand unified theory of revolution based on a socio-economic metaphysics and a philosophy of history, as a moral conviction, an ethical disposition that finds expression in practice and as practice,” where social relations between people are “not defined by the authority of the state, the law, and the police, but by free agreement between them” (The Anarchist Turn 4; emphasis added). Critchley's deliberately open definition of anarchism, which is more interpretive and dispositional than metaphysical or substantive, is thus still not free from the negative comparisons.

This back and forth movement between “what is anarchism?” and “what is not anarchism?” is more than etymological or rhetorical. Quite naturally, the question of “what is anarchism?” provokes other questions and complications, where this apparently simple question would get more and more twisted, becoming a node among dense entanglements of genealogies of ideas, histories of movements, relations of governance and resistance. What is at stake here not an impersonal sentence expressed in vacuum, but a contentious statement thrown into an overdetermined discursive battlefield where both speaker and interlocutor are unevenly involved with and committed to what they communicate. For instance, what if to communicate is something contagious, making the speaker infamous and ill reputed? What if negativities are something that are forcefully imposed, as historically accumulated effects?

What complicates the issue of belonging and definition even more is the relation of anarchism and violence, especially that darker period of “the propaganda by the deed” from the
last decades of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, from which the popular
demonization of anarchism and anarchists derives as well as the uneasiness on the side of those
who would have to use the terms of anarchist or anarchism to unforeseeable effects. When
writing a history of anarchism that would become a classics in this field, George Woodcock had
to take pains to clarify the discursive confusion over the topic. Feeling surrounded by various
misunderstandings and forced to be defensive in positively appropriating such infamous and
derogatory terms like “anarchism,” “anarchist,” and “anarchy,” Woodcock attempted to
distinguish anarchism, nihilism, and terrorism from each other and to separate two definitions of
the anarchist that circulated widely in dictionaries. According to Woodcock, one is “a man who
believes that government must die before freedom can live,” while the other, dismissive but “far
more widely spread” definition is “a mere promoter of disorder who offers nothing in place of
the order he destroys,” and Woodcock concludes that “[a]narchy, in popular parlance, is malign
chaos”: “The stereotype of the anarchist is that of the cold-blooded assassin who attacks with
dagger or bomb the symbolic pillars of established society” (11).

Woodcock was right to worry about the semantic confusion of these terms, as their
history of usage is full of twists, where the primary meaning changed from time to time. As a
relative late-comer and because of its negative prefix, “anarchism” is always and already
embedded in the existing contexts and discourses which more often than not valorized it in a
negative way. A cursory look at the changing history of the meaning of the word “anarchism” in
the English language is enough to makes this point. In *Keywords*, Raymond Williams explains

11 As regards the usage and history of the term in the French language, see Maitron 1:13-22.
According to Maitron, the semantic content of “anarchie,” “anarchiste,” and “anarchisme”
fluctuates, depending on writers' political positions. In addition, the terms began to acquire
more precise and specific meanings and references as anarchism became collective
movements in the second half of the nineteenth century. In other words, when Proudhon
originally used these terms in 1840, no anarchist movement existed in France, while the later
that the term oscillates from an overtly negative judgment to a neutral descriptor that refers to the negative state up to a neutral term that refers to the positive state to a positive judgment that radically subverts the negative connotations it is forced to carry. According to Williams, in the middle sixteenth century, “anarchism” was a negative term or a neutral descriptor for disorder or chaos; “anarchists” gradually acquired a more specific meaning similar to “democrats” and “republicans” until, with the French Revolution, the older, general meaning returned, while it also began to acquire a new, positive meaning with Proudhon’s active appropriation of it. In the context of nineteenth-century socialism, “anarchists” designated those who took issues with state socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat, but around the same period, from the late nineteenth century to WWI, violent deeds by individual anarchists took place, which added a differently negative accent. This anarchism as terrorism would persist in later years (37-38). The “strong residual sense of anarchists” as terrorists is therefore quite recent, while the semantic ambiguity of the terms is perennial, almost essential to their historical currency (37-38).

In addition, Woodcock's anxiety is a product of historical contingency. These sentences were written down at an untimely moment: the first years of the 1960s were decades after the defeat in the Spanish Civil War which was widely considered as marking the end of anarchist movements as effective popular political forces in Europe since the mid-nineteenth century, but several years before the sudden renaissance of anarchism in the student movement in the late 1960s, and Woodcock assumed that anarchism would belong to the past that had gone and should not come back. His tone was thus “elegiac,” and one reviewer described the book “rather
felicitously as a threnody,” which the author would approvingly quote in the preface to the later edition (7).

The anxious self-identity in anarchist historiography is nevertheless deeper and more chronic. A generation later, Peter Marshall would reiterate the same anxiety of being misunderstood, as if this uncertainty of definition, self-definition and imposed definition, were the very constituent of anarchism: however popular and widely known anarchism became, this anxiety would persist and would not go way, almost unaffected by the anarchist popular uprising that had taken place since the time of Woodcock. Certainly, Marshall is less anxious than Woodcock, seeing anarchism coming to life again and relaxed enough to enjoy the demonic and criminal taint anarchism has to bear. Marshall rather playfully writes that the company of anarchists are seemingly “the vandal, iconoclast, savage, brute, ruffian, hornet, viper, ogre, ghoul, wild beast, fiend, harpy, and siren” (ix). Marshall can also claim that the negative images of anarchy and anarchists are historically speaking inaccurate, asserting that anarchism is no more violent than other political ideologies and tendencies: these violent acts might be better understood as a desperate reaction to the violent and repressive state action and capitalist reality, as “a spate of spectacular bombings and political assassinations during a period of complete despair,” and the actual terror that recurred in the 1890s was practiced “as a revolutionary strategy” by “only a tiny minority of anarchists” (ix). It is then even more symptomatic that Marshall nevertheless keeps talking about “the specter of anarchy that haunts the judge's bench and the government cabinet,” where anarchy is synonymous with terror, chaos, and nihilism, and

12 Given this somewhat antiquarian and mourning attitude toward what had discontinued, it is not strange that Woodcock was more concerned with the accurate representation of the past history than with discovering its contemporary relevance, more worried about clearing confusions than about revitalizing anarchist thoughts, thus encouraging him to present the truth of anarchism against the popular misconceptions and misrepresentations.
anarchism is “the creed of bomb-throwing desperate does wishing to pull down civilization,” “the destructive passions of man run riot” in the collapse of law and order, and “the abandonment of all moral values and the twilight of reason” (ix). Is this anxiety of misrepresenting and being misrepresented self-incurred paranoia?

It seems that anarchism makes both speaker and interlocutor anxious, as if one had to justify who one is and why one does what one does as much as one had to be recognized by those whom one speaks to. Thus, a scholar who does not identify himself as an anarchist begins his book on history of anarchism by problematizing a tendency “on the part of certain reviewers to claim that anarchism can only properly be understood by people with inside knowledge of the movement,” because that would result in devaluing the status of anarchism as thought or “a purportedly consistent and realistic set of beliefs about man and society,” taking it back to the realm of “an indefinable experience” and therefore making it inaccessible to novices, to non-anarchists, to outsiders, “rather like the taste of pineapple to those who have never eaten the fruit” (Miller i). Criticizing this esoteric attitude, he is nevertheless worried about the legitimacy of his own identity and the betrayal of (the lack of) his own political commitment, thus feeling the need for describing himself as “a market socialist” who is sympathetic to anarchist thoughts and movements. The somewhat religious or spiritual nature of anarchist membership, sectarianism, is definitely one of the reasons which cause this plight of anxiety, but this should not be the sole reason why anarchism is so elusive as to refuse to be fixed in a clear manner. My point is that this anarchist predicament of defining itself is as much internal as external, and that it is necessary to address this problem from both directions.

In this respect, The ABC of Anarchism by Alexander Berkman, which I quoted above as an epigraph to this chapter, is exemplar in encapsulating the anarchist anxieties. Berkman opens
the introduction in a conversational manner, saying “I want to tell you about anarchism” several times. But his frank hope and genuine desire to share his own beliefs and to spread little known ideas more widely suddenly get twisted—“But before I tell you what Anarchism is, I want to tell you what it is not”—because he is conscious of speaking to those who have the wrong notions about them and are not immediately drawn to what they hear, to those who have been exposed to lies propagated by “the capitalistic press” as well as by socialists and bolsheviks; asserting that what people usually know about anarchism is all wrong and misguided, Berkman offers a list of “nots” and concludes it emphatically, “Anarchism is the very opposite of all that” (xv). To be sure, Berkman’s colloquial mode of speaking, of making a concrete list of specifics show the same problem with Proudhon’s hyperbolic speech act, analyzed at the beginning of the introduction, but Berkman’s text also makes clear that anarchist engagement with negative expressions is both strategic and indispensable, inseparable from the anarchist anxiety of being (or having been) misunderstood.

Is there any way to get away from this anxious state? Even if there were, instead of trying such an act of exorcism, it seems to me that we should wonder how much anarchism is constituted by this definitional predicament, so much so that to separate them one from the other would be deadly to both of them.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, anarchism and decadence flourished in a somewhat contiguous way: both anarchists and decadents were willing to affirm their identities for themselves in one way or another, but by doing so they were inexorably involved with the negative evaluation other people imposed on them. Indeed, in this historical conjuncture, alternative values to affirm were often conceivable and representable only in relation to the other’s values or the normative ones decadents hoped to subvert, however indirect, negative, and
tenuous their relation to such values would be. Discussing this “constitutional ambivalence” in decadence, Charles Bernheimer suggests that the negative judgment does not simply come from the outside but is itself integral to it, because this negative evaluation also constitutes what decadence is, and if one completely eliminates such negative characterizations by judging decadence as good through and through, one would end up converting it into something else. (3)

What we can learn from Bernheimer’s warning is that a deliberately corrective attempt to paint anarchism positively and contrast such a “true” representation of anarchism against “false” versions always falls short. Both historically and strategically, both objectively and subjectively, it is important to take into consideration the thickness and ramifications of apparently contradictory discourses on anarchism, because we should be attentive to “semantic mobility” and dynamics, not semantic stability and fixity, in our anarchist/ic discourse analysis of anarchism: “It is not the referential content of the term that conveys its meaning so much as the dynamics of paradox and ambivalence that it sets in motion” (8, 5). Then, in the following pages, I am going to explore such semantic mobility from various directions and with multiple instances, and by doing so, I propose to displace the question of definition from the prescriptive, descriptive, or substantive to the interpretive paradigm, while offering a working definition of anarchism and preparing for the other chapters.

**Performative Irony in Defining Anarchism: Unfreedom of Anarchist Discourse, Or Hostile Others Internalized**

What is indispensable here is not to change dictionary definitions, but to turn our critical attention to larger issues and thicker contexts, accumulated effects and overdetermined consequences, to explore specificities and singular embeddedness each time anew. In this
anarchist convolutedness, one should stop separating the good from the bad, the positive from the negative, the living from the dead, the desirable from the undesirable, only to systematically reject the latter. Perhaps we should begin with recognizing that a definition, a perfectly round definition, might not solve the problem it purports to solve; it would instead produce more problems and raise more questions by provisionally and hypothetically substantiating what is dynamic and moving. However, what need be analyzed thoroughly is probably this discursive proliferation, this dreadful thing that Western civilization has attempted to domesticate with various strategies, which Foucault ingenuously analyzes in different context.13

Only with this cluster of problems in mind can we fully understand the rhetorical irony and the semantic reversal with which Proudhon threw these terms into modern political and economic discourse arguably for the first time in a positive way. It is important to remember, however, that Proudhon’s inaugural statement “I am anarchist” in the last section of *Qu’est-ce que la propriété?* which is especially written as an imaginary dialogue, is neither simply positive nor simply negative, because anarchism in this instance is what others are not. The anarchist position is (re)presented as the last one which can be named only after all the other available names (republican, democrat, monarchist, constitutional, aristocratic, syncretic) are rejected one by one. Even more interestingly, this last name is the one which the speaker throws back to the interlocutor who could not come up with any other possibilities for himself (“what are you then?”); “anarchist” is a speaker's word, while it is the interlocutor, “someone among my young readers,” who prepares the ground for this rhetorical climax:

Quelle forme de gouvernement allons-nous préférer ? - Eh! pouvez-vous le demander, répond sans doute quelqu'un de mes plus jeunes lecteurs ; vous êtes

13 See *L'ordre du discours* 23-38 and *Dits et écrits* 1:839.

What is to be the form of government in the future? I hear some of my younger readers reply: ‘Why, how can you ask such a question? You are a republican.’ ‘A republican! Yes; but that word specifies nothing. Res publica; that is, the public thing. Now, whoever is interested in public affairs—no matter under what form of government—may call himself a republican. Even kings are republicans.’—/

‘Well! You are a democrat?’—‘No.’—‘What! You would have a monarchy.’—‘No.’—‘A constitutionalist?’—‘God forbid!’—‘You are then an aristocrat?’—‘Not at all.’—‘You want a mixed government?’—‘Still less.’—‘What are you, then?’—‘I am an anarchist’’ (Property Is Theft! 133).

But if, as I claim here, one reads this dialogue as a performative speech act, then the question is whether or not the last line is promised to succeed. We should not overlook the possibility that this retort could backfire, because a disbelief and suspicion of the interlocutor is the price the anarchist speaker must pay for this final triumphant declaration.

Indeed, when it is recalled that this seemingly jubilant conversation is scripted by Proudhon himself, the multiple anxieties that haunt it becomes more salient: if the anarchist speaker is an alter-ego, so is the resistant interlocutor who rigorously exhausts other political
positions in collaboration with the speaker up the penultimate stage. Thus, in this dialogue, the appropriated consciousness of the incredulous other is part of the master scenario of anarchist profession, or confession:

- Je vous entends - vous faites de la satire ; ceci est à l'adresse du gouvernement. -

En aucune façon : vous venez d'entendre ma profession de foi sérieuse et mûrement réfléchie ; quoique très ami de l'ordre, je suis, dans toute la force du terme, anarchiste. Écoutez-moi. (421)

“Oh! I understand you; you speak satirically. This is a hit at the government.”—

“By no means. I have just given you my serious and well-considered profession of faith. Although a firm friend of order, I am (in the full force of the term) an anarchist. Listen to me.” (133)

The anxieties and worries inserted into these lines are as much imposed on as immanent. The suspicion and ridicule of the anarchist other is first fantasized and then internalized by the text, which would function to intensify the anarchist anxiety of being misunderstood. And this internalization and self-imposition of the other’s disbelief plays another role of introducing the motif of sincerity and seriousness on the part of the anarchist speaker: the more suspicious the interlocutor is—for him the anarchist speaker’s speech can only be understood as a satire—the more serious the speaker becomes, because the latter means what he says, insisting on being taken literally. From this one can draw a general remark that the discourse on anarchism is inevitably being made responsive to the negative connotations it is forced to carry on, where one cannot simply inaugurate new discourses from scratch with fresh meanings, because the only way to begin is to take up vocabularies of the other who is in one way or another hostile and antagonistic to it and to rehearse the doubtful consciousness of the other.
This somewhat inferior, passive, and unfree condition is fundamental to anarchism. But as I have already suggested above several times, my self-imposed task is not to simply take it a defective discourse and convert such lack and passivity into a positive and fulfilled position, but to explore this passivity in its own right and to excavate the creative and critical positivity of the passivity as such. The genealogy of parrhesia as Foucault delineates in *Fearless Speech* is useful for elaborating an anarchist consciousness of anxiety and uncertainty this way. According to Foucault, parrehesia is to say what is true with strong belief in the truth of what he says, while establishing a specific relation with one’s own life and public criticism. On the one hand, those who speak fearlessly are not afraid of risking their own lives, because of their certainty and knowledge that truth-telling is free and obligatory (19-20). However, on the other hand, and to make this especially interesting here, Foucault puts the truth-sayer “in a position of inferiority with respect to the interlocutor”: “The parrhesiastes is always less powerful than the one with whom he speaks. The parrhesia comes from 'below,' as it were, and is directed toward 'above’” (18). Thus, the fearless speaker is weak and strong, certain and at risk, critical and perilous at one and the same time, much like Proudhon’s anarchist speaker. What becomes clear in both instances, I argue, is that anarchism cannot be defined purely linguistically or internally, independently or in isolation, as it is always a social act which establishes specific relations with the given, the available and the here and now, taking place in contexts that precede that act.

**Anarchism as a Discursive Construct and a Relational Term, or Historical Antagonism with Marxism in Historiography**

One of the particular fuels for Woodcock’s anxiety was the antagonistic relationship between Marxism and anarchism. This schism intensified and became definitive at the turn of the
nineteenth century concerning the means of doing politics, as solitary anarchists and anarchist sympathizers had recourse to what is euphemistically called “propaganda by the deed.” In addition, the success of the Russian Revolution, which would legitimize the Communist Party world-wide, would increase the disintegration of anarchism in Western countries.\textsuperscript{14} Certainly, the life and survival of anarchism is not totally dependent on Marxism, and anarchism can stand on itself, undisturbed by real and theoretical vicissitudes of Marxism. What I would like to focus on here is the ways in which anarchism appears in academic discourse, which may be understood as a negative counterpart of Marxism, or at best its alter-ego which takes charge of what Marxism could not accomplish for itself or is not good at dealing with. Put differently, what is interesting to me is not actual histories of feud between these two camps, but instead their discursive appearances in academic discourse, where anarchism and Marxism, grouped together or separate one from the other, constitute certain stereotypes and models, along with other political theories and ideas. And by exploring them, I would like to find a way to take anarchist anxieties not as a negative or defective state to be corrected, but as a productive and creative moment, without isolating anarchism from other political ideologies or historiographical narratives.

\textsuperscript{14} Antagonistic conflicts between anarchism and Marxism have been narrated in many various ways, by actual participants as well as by later scholars. For anarchist explanations of this split, we should turn to James Guillaume and Max Nettlau, two eminent anarchist historians and archivists. Peter Kropotkin's entry on anarchism in the eleventh edition of \textit{Encyclopaedia Britannica} concisely narrates the nineteenth-century socialist movements from the anarchist perspective. Both Woodcock and Marshall depict the gradual exclusion of anarchist delegates from the First and Second Internationals, the separation of anarchist fractions, and the construction of anarchist international conferences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For Marxist explanations of their dissenting conflicts with anarchists in the First International, including Marx's confrontation with Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Max Stirner, and Mikhail Bakunin, see Thomas. As for international conferences on national security and criminalization of anarchists around this period, see Deflem. Recently the terrorist-anarchist violence has received a renewed interest in the post-9/11 environment which has changed our conception and perception of violence as a means for politics and propaganda; see Wiener.
Discussing the “explanatory affect” the historian hopes to gain by performing “an essentially poetic act,” Hayden White emphasizes “the protoscientific character of historical explanation in general, or the inadequacy of the social sciences” (x, 12). Put differently, the historiographical practice, the act of writing a history, should be regarded as a hegemonic battle of interpretation among “different notions of the nature of historical reality and of the appropriate form that a historical account, considered as a formal argument, ought to take” (13). What entails from this is that the historical explanation seeks for the explanatory affect which goes beyond mere intelligibility or neutrality, bringing historiography into the rhetorical or ethical arena of persuasion and conviction that could defy the truth paradigm.

With this displaced understanding of historiography which demands to be judged by something other than or more than verisimilitude or verifiability, it should be recalled that the antagonism between anarchism and Marxism is both historical and historiographical, namely, that their conflicting relationship is both real and discursive, or more precisely, that their historical hostility is somewhat transposed to the historiographical ground and continues there in other forms. No doubt their opposition is real, and concrete historical facts are not lacking to prove that, from the theoretical disagreements between Marx and the anarchists (Proudhon, Stirner, and Bakunin) to the split in the First International; toward the late nineteenth century, the divide intensified as German Social Democrats and their counterparts in Western countries strategically appropriated the existing political machinery of the nation state and empire, organizing themselves as a legitimate political party and advocating non-violent reform via parliamentary politics, while anarchism opted for direct action, general strike, and syndicalism, for non-parliamentary, extra-legal, extra-statist strategies. However, what interests me here is not this sort of the historically specific, material oppositions, but the ways in which the binary of
anarchism and Marxism plays in forming discourses on radicalism, assigning specific values and significances to each in relation to the other as well as to such other historical and discursive models like White discusses concerning nineteenth-century historiography.

What becomes immediately clear in this discussion is that the opposition between anarchism and Marxism tends to be narrated as a hierarchical one, with one over the other, or one as a negation of the other. One solution could be to try to go beyond this sort of partisan, sectarian attitudes by resolving them in a dialectical manner, but I would like to take a different direction, trying to find a less antagonistic, more collaborative and cooperative way to say and write about them. With this reconciling possibility in mind, I am going to look at several texts by Fredric Jameson, one of the most prominent Marxist critics and theorists, as his treatment of anarchism is typical but still respectful and therefore worth serious attention.

In *Representing Capital*, Jameson suggests the complementary relation of Marxism and anarchism, depicting different relations they construct with *Capital*, while both being the “people of the book [Capital]”: if anarchism foregrounds power and domination as a moral and ethical problem, Marxism is concerned with economics, with analyzing production in its development and transformation (150). Concerning the question of utopia, Jameson also sees different specializations: centralizing Marxism imagines the general plan at the macro level, while decentralizing anarchism fancies about daily life practices at the micro level (*Archaeologies* 32). Overall, Jameson does not categorically dismiss anarchism, but instead assigns to it such problematics as Marxism also works on but from different directions.

15 This same articulation of anarchism for ethical motivation and Marxism for analytical rigor is shared by David Graeber, a leading theorist of new anarchism, but with some significant modifications: “1. Marxism has tended to be a theoretical or analytical discourse about revolutionary strategy./ 2. Anarchism has tended to be an ethical discourse about revolutionary practice” (*Fragments* 6).
However, Jameson's articulation still implies that anarchism is nevertheless assigned the negative side of Marxism that must be dialectically contained and overcome by it. Even though he frankly acknowledges that anarchism raises serious and important problems Marxism should confront, Jameson refuses to accept anarchist solutions (53). This ambivalent appraisal of anarchism is more clearly seen in *The Political Unconscious*, where Jameson associates Marxism with collective projects, while relating anarchism to individual issues. This association is no trivial matter within Jameson’s complicated method of reading, as *The Political Unconscious* makes a plea for interpretation and hermeneutics proper to Marxism which, he insists unflinchingly, ought to point to the collective and allegorical dimension and therefore cannot be anchored to the individualistic level only (276). Interestingly, Freud's conception of wish-fulfillment is exposed to severe criticism for exactly the same reason why anarchism is not a viable option: like anarchism, Freudian psychoanalysis “remains locked in a problematic of the individual subject and the individual psychobiography which is only indirectly useful to us” (51). This particular evaluation is systematic as well as fundamental to Jameson’s theorization of utopian impulses and projects: Jameson appreciates Louis Althusser's theory of ideology, Jacques Lacan's theory of desire, and Northrop Frey's use of the archaic device of anagogy, relating them with each other, precisely for the sake of a collective nature that is absent in anarchist desire or Freudian wish-fulfilment.

What I should emphasize here is that in this historiographical and schematic thinking, “anarchism” is a relational term, defined in relation to and against other terms and therefore should be analyzed relationally, and it seems to me that this is applicable not only to the Marxism-anarchism pair, because this is a general condition for theoretical and historiographical discourse. In other words, the validity, let alone significance, of what they are talking about
concerning anarchism cannot be testified merely against positive facts and details. In this respect, it is no coincidence—and this is not their defect either—that both White and Jameson rarely attribute what they describe as representative characteristics of anarchism to proper names, to individual anarchists or to specific historical events, but rather to social trends and cultural movements depicted in general terms. What I am suggesting here is that despite the apparent differences between them, Jameson’s articulation of “anarchism” is not so different from White’s in that both are trying to construct a schematic counterpart which the other terms cannot dispense with. One might even suggest that the schematic opposition seeks something other than factual accuracy and precision. For instance, the Greimasian semiotic square, which Jameson loves to use in various places, serves to exhaust the logical possibilities in a given ideological framework along with other terms and perhaps for no other reasons, and the Marxism/anarchism opposition may be taken as a useful interpretive grid which nevertheless fails in other ways. It is no surprise, then, that the oppositions are often exaggerated to an extent that almost falsifies historical reality; it is open to question and dispute whether, as White suggests, anarchism is past-oriented and romantic in endeavor, whether anarchism’s relation with society is distant and favors radical and rapid changes, even if many positive examples can be found in history. The initial question of “what is anarchism?” gets doubled but differently, this time not accompanied by “what is not anarchism?” but coupled with “with what is anarchism being related?”

By complicating the primary question this way, the original problem of anarchist anxieties does not disappear; on the contrary, those initial anxieties turn out to be dependent on external but relational constituents which cannot be simply denied or rejected, as they would linger no matter fiercely and definitively we disavow their ties with anarchism (or conversely,
anarchism’s ties with them). What attitude can be constructed, not in order to forget or dispel the anxieties but to confront them in a properly anxious manner?

Jameson’s slogan “always historicize!” might be instructive. For Jameson, it is not simply the historical object that must be historicized through contextualization; ever more importantly, it is the interpretive codes and devices with which we make sense of our object that must be exposed to critical scrutiny, because, however transhistorical those interpretive tools may appear, they are no different from historical objects in that both of them are a historical construct which had at first taken place in certain historically determined contexts and then have been handed down to us (ix). Thus, what is needed here is not to reject the antagonistic dichotomy or intellectual division of labor between Marxism and anarchism. Rather, this very opposition need be historicized, and then taken, quite positively and approvingly, as an interpretive choice, rather than as a passive mirroring of the actual historical situation.

What appeared problematic in Jameson or White can now be approached differently. What should be thought about is not that anarchism is often subordinated to Marxism, but rather that it is always the latter that takes the responsibility of totalizing by containing and overcoming the former, and that the opposite possibility (the anarchist appropriation of Marxism) remains unimaginable. No doubt Jameson’s straw man argument is far better than those sectarian rantings for the sake of polemics abundantly found in Marxist literature (the prime and inaugural example of this genre of writing is arguably Marx’s and Engels’ obsessively insistent diatribe against Max Stirner or Saint Max in *The German Ideology*). What I want to further think about is whether it is possible to imagine different, less hierarchical and less patronizing ways to understand the Marxism-anarchism pair.
Adorno is never truer than today: the total is false. What should not be forgotten in the widening gap between the impossible total theory and the world that is local and global, virtual and real, is that nothing can be all-encompassing. In the ever more heterogeneous, diversifying, multiplying, pluralizing social and intellectual contexts of our time, it is not only preposterous and arrogant but also simply wrong to imagine that a grand theory saves all of us once and for all. We should be brave enough to maintain that syncretism is not a sign of our intellectual looseness or laziness, but rather of our intellectual intensity and flexibility, where we could be a radical thinker not because of the rigidity of thought that accepts no modification in their own narrow and closed autonomy, not because of our staunch adherence to the dogma which always dictates theoretically right but practically ineffective answers, but because of the critical mobility and free improvization that always encourages us to (re)invent proper solutions with available means in given troublesome circumstances. If the Marxism/anarchism division of labor makes us anxious, it might be a sign that we still have an unavowed desire for grand theory, or an anarchist ambition to (re)appropriate Marxism and bring it to a final synthesis. Put another way, if anxieties still remain, we should doubt ourselves and problematize our intellectual and affective disposition, rather than suspecting what supposedly worries us.

Discussing the historical exclusion of anarchism from the mainstream discourse, especially in Britain, David Goodway gives three reasons of anarchism’s failure in attracting educated intellectuals, contrary to Marxism and democratic socialism. 16 First, generally

16 The situation was not much different in the US, though. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, anarchism was largely of immigrants—for instance, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman were Russian immigrants—though there were notable exceptions like American Individualists, descendants of the Transcendentalists, or appropriated individualism (Proudhon, Stirner). See Avrich, *The Anarchist Portraits*, Martin, and Shone. Anarchism somewhat attracted young intellectuals in the 1910s, but anarchist publications did not compete with *The Masses*, a Marxist/Socialist magazine (See Fishbein). See also Stansell, especially the section titled “Emma Goldman and the Modern Public” 120-144. However,
speaking, to become politically radical comes with some cost and risk, which makes one expect that political commitment should pay off, materially or spiritually, immediately or further down the road. However, to become an anarchist was not as rewarding as to become a Marxist or socialist: anarchism would categorically reject the elitist position, whether during current struggles or in a future free society, and the anarchist intellectual is almost oxymoronic.¹⁷ Second, anarchist movements were anti-bourgeois: it was hostile not only to the middle class but also even to bourgeois intellectuals who could have been potential recruits. Third, and perhaps most importantly, “anarchism does not afford the theoretical and mental satisfactions that Marxism especially, but also reformist socialism, have done. It does not fetishize theory or cleverness or intellectual ability. Its appeal has been as much, if not more, emotional than rational” (Anarchist Seeds 8). But the first question to be asked is whether or not anarchism must be recognized and valorized by academe. Or to raise the same question differently, what is the problem with translating anarchism into academic discourse, not necessarily for the sake of intelligibility but for the sake of disciplinary authorization and legitimation?

Here, David Graeber's remark on anarchist anonymity is very telling: different schools of anarchism have been “named either after some kind of practice, or most often, organizational principle,” such as Anarcho-Syndicalists, Anarcho-Communists, Insurrectionists, Cooperativists, ultimately speaking, anarchism did not penetrate into US academia either, whether in the early twentieth century or in the post-war era. In a sense, American academia did not have star players of anarchism. This does not mean that the US did not have any star players of anarchism (Noam Chomsky and Murray Bookchin immediately come to mind), but they did not influence the humanities and the social sciences like French Theorists did. We may say, as we discuss below, that the arrival of “post-anarchism” in the 1990s and 2000s makes anarchism a rewarding study object because of its theoretical elaboration and refinement, though this is still open to question and debate.

¹⁷ For comparison, consider the middle class nature of the Fabian Society that promoted the idea of social engineering and management by professionals and technocrats or the privileged role assigned to the political avant-garde in Leninism.
Individualists, Platformists, and so on (Fragments 5). The same naming principle is at work in Marxism only when it comes close to anarchistic programs, like Autonomism or Council Communism (5). What separates Marxism from anarchism as historical projects—and as discursive practices—is the great eminence of representative Great Thinkers in the former. As Graeber suggests, one reason why Marxism works so well in the academy is that like other academic fields where scholars strive for dominance with their own names, Marxism plays a similar game of fame and influence: intellectual tendencies and revolutionary strategies are crowned with the names of legendary figures, with proper names turned into common nouns and adjectives (Marxist, Leninist, Maoist, Trotskyist, Gramscian...) and they could easily slide from professional revolutionaries to university professors, like from Gramscian to Althusserian. And this academic competition for fame rewards unending interpretations of masters and their texts which would become both sources for and the origins of a proliferation of discourses, regulated and controlled within certain determinate limits and predictable boundaries. 

Given the pitfall of privileging Great Thinkers, it is understandable why recent anarchist studies has turned to excavate minor and marginalized figures even within anarchist traditions, paying a special but perhaps long-delayed due attention to collective and collaborative practices.

18 Graeber makes a similar discussion in “Anarchism, Academia, and the Avant-garde” in Contemporary Anarchist Studies 103-112. Although Graeber is one of the leading theorists of new anarchism, he is rarely related to post-anarchism, which might be explained by the disciplinary differences between them. Whereas post-anarchists are of the humanities (philosophy, political philosophy, cultural studies, critical theory), Graeber comes from social sciences, and he is a professional anthropologist whose major field is Madagascar. In addition, Graeber is a practice-oriented activist, while post-anarchists are usually theorists whose task is to analyze and explain contemporary events and happenings rather than to directly change them. In a sense, these two new tendencies in anarchism are mutually indifferent, as if neither of them needed the other.

19 See Lotringer; Hardts and Virno; and Holloway, Change the World and Crack Capitalism.

20 In L’ordre du discours, Foucault discusses the production and reproduction of discourses, articulating their laws or and principles (23-38).
that have been forgotten or neglected, and weaving social and cultural histories of anarchism in transnational and global manners. This restorative move is certainly very productive and has been tried by many able historians. Thus, the problematics of anarchist anxieties need to be thought about in relation to other names and ideas with which it has been related for better or worse, willingly or unwillingly.

I have taken up White’s and Jameson's Marxist and structuralist framing of the anarchist position. My purpose was not to condemn the strategic appropriation of anarchism by other disciplines, but to foreground the discursive mobility of anarchism and negative connotations it is coerced to carry. To talk about anarchism is nothing but a mediated linguistic and discursive performance, like any other discourses that originated at some point of history in specific socio-historical circumstances. However, in the case of anarchism, there exist more discontinuities and interruptions, sudden leaps and arbitrary connections than in other cases, because it is not an intellectual tradition fostered by established institutions, assimilated by academia, and handed

21 About the recent historical works conducted in this vein, see Levy. See also Matthew Adams “The Possibilities of Anarchist History: Rethinking the Canon and Writing History,” concerning theoretical questions of writing anarchist history as social and contextual narratives. Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism by Michael Schmidt and Lucian van der Walt is unique in that they try to exclusively focus on collective practices by militants and union members and intentionally exclude other individualistic dimensions. The question of anarchist canon and canonization will be further discussed in the next chapter.

22 To name only a handful, Goyens (2007); Kissack (2008), Meser-Kruse (2012), Bantman (2013). For more theoretical and comprehensive investigations on Non-Western anarchisms, see Jason Adams, “Non-Western Anarchisms: Rethinking the Global Context” and Süreyyya Evren, “Alpine Anarchist Meets Süreyya Evren” and “Postanarchism and the 3rd World.” These attempt may be regarded as filling in the blank the past research did not touch upon, but if this is the case, then it should be remembered the ways in which subaltern studies have already complicated such a redempive historiographical project. In a word, if transformation should occur, that cannot be merely quantitative (more inclusion, more comprehension) but qualitative (different inclusion, different comprehension) and structural (problematization of the very structure of inclusion and exclusion). The question of anarchism and subaltern studies will be discussed again in Chapter Four.
down through their sanctioned paths. Contrary to such institutionalized traditions where it is somewhat self-evident what one is required to read to be qualified as, say, a genuine Marxist, anarchism remains less canonical and systematic; and precisely because of this very lack and absence of the strong center, intellectual as well as institutional, center-less anarchism is often candidly more sectarian than other centering traditions that could regulate such dogmatic tendencies, being vulnerable to reiterations and improvisations.

Foundation-less, de- and re-founding anarchist freedom thus comes with a price. The fundamental question is what relations to construct with past anarchist traditions, while such traditions are something we have to articulate anew in each act of relating because of their non-institutional nature. That the identity of anarchism can never be assumed constant and invariable across time and place, across different discursive fields and disciplines should now be understood as the very condition of anarchism: the name and term of anarchism as an index is very unreliable and precarious, not simply because of its inherent polysemy but also because of embedded and entangled relations with other names and terms, other ideas and practices.

**Anarchism as an Ethical Practice, Rhetorical Performance, and Referential Specificity**

By emphasizing that historiographical thought is grounded by the protoscientific and aesthetic underpinning, White displaces the truth paradigm, simultaneously ushering in other parameters, one of which is an ethical concern. It seems to me that anarchists develop various strategies of persuasion with ethical considerations in mind, on the one hand, and in line with particularist and minitualist tendencies that are almost internal to them on the other. In this section, I am going to discuss the enmeshment of these two tendencies, taking them as a useful marker to differentiate as well as regroup anarchist/ic trends and orientations, or those which are
addressed, rightly or wrongly, by the name of “anarchism.” Here, I would like to focus on
Simon Critchley’s ethical “turn” to anarchism in conjunction with Peter Kropotkin’s ethical
persuasion in order to underscore another anarchist repertoire of dialogic performativity, or
anecdotal persuasion, which might be understood as one way to counterbalance the anarchist
anxieties, provided that it is only one way among others.\textsuperscript{23}

By depicting our time as in the state of “motivational deficit,” Critchley seeks to think
about the possibility of democracy in a post-Levinasian, post-Derridian, poststructuralist vein.
For Critchley, politics must now be redefined as an ethically motivated dissenting practice in
interstitial spaces within the state, instead of disinterested and power-driven science, the cunning
of reason, or technocratic engineering and management: “politics is the manifestation of
dissensus, the cultivation of an anarchic multiplicity that calls into question the authority and
legitimacy of the state” (\textit{Infinitely Demanding} 13). The political agent and subjectivity to be
constructed in this anarchic meta-politics is not the governing sovereign subject, but the
governed subaltern of conscience and responsibility, almost dutifully but still non-coercively
committed to “an unfulfillable demand” and traversed by “the heteronomous experience of the
other’s demand” (11). In this way, Critchley comes close to anarchism by considering ethical
demands which are, as it were, predicated neither on logic or deductive truth, nor on science or
inductive truth, but on “moral recommendation, even exhortation, an appeal to the individual
reader from an individual writer” (10).

However, this ethical appeal and the sense of commitment, something affectively and
physically disturbing and eruptive beyond analytical knowledge and logical certainty is not a
new phenomenon, and on the contrary, fundamental to anarchist ways of saying and writing.

\textsuperscript{23} In a sense, this part should be read in conjunction with my analysis of Proudhon’s hyperbolic
list of specificities in the introduction.
Concerning this ethical style, Peter Kropotkin's celebrated essay, “An Appeal to the Young,” one of the most widely read and translated among other influential writings of his, is paradigmatic among classical anarchism, being the best example of such an intimate and anecdotal persuasion in the anarchist tradition. As James C Scott states, strategies of identification and sympathy through particularity, or one might say, naturalistic representations of daily life details and amplification of reality effects, is “a working assumption of journalism poetry, and charitable work”: it is not by virtue of “larger abstractions” like “the Unemployed, the Hungry, the Persecuted, the Jews” but by virtue of portrayals with “gripping details” like “a woman who has lost her job and is living in her car, or a refugee family on the run through the forest living on roots and tubers” that “you are likely to engage the sympathy of strangers” (Two Cheers 132). Scott continues, “All victims cannot easily represent one victim, but one victim can often stand for a whole class of victims” (132).

Originally addressed to young men and women with promising careers in front of them and intended to raise their consciousness toward social justice and solidarity, Kropotkin’s text is full of such gripping descriptive details which make the narrative vivid and alive, typical but concrete, common but singular:

Tomorrow a man in a worker’s blouse will call you to visit a sick person. He will lead you into one of those alleys where neighbors can almost shake hands over the heads of the passers-by; you will climb in foetid air and by the shivering light of a lantern up two, three, four, or five flights of stairs covered in slippery filth, and in a dark, cold room you will find the invalid, lying on a straw pallet and covered in dirty rags. Pale, anaemic children, shivering under their tatters, look at you through great, wide-open eyes. The husband has worked all his life twelve or
thirteen hours a day on any jobs he could get; now he has been out of work for three months. Unemployment is not unusual in his trade; every year it happens periodically; but normally, when the man was idle, the woman would take casual work—washing your shirts, perhaps, and earning a dollar or so a day; but now she has been bedridden for two months, destitution rears its hideous face before the family. (WR 45)

Here, the message is only too clear: when you are knowledgeable and capable of helping others, why do you not help them, why can you be satisfied with selfishly enjoying your own desire and pleasure, while keeping yourself blind to social misery and unhappiness you witness in your workplace on a daily basis? How can you forget their predicaments and retreat into your own private space, reasoning that you have done what your profession expects you to do? Kropotkin insists that science for the sake of science is as absurd as the selfish pursuit and monopoly of material properties, because scientific findings are of no use when society is not structured to enhance their benefits to all the members of society, and this is why we have to change the social structure as well as why it is not enough to deal with local cases separately and individually.

Kropotkin's dialogical argument makes a forceful demand on the interlocutor to make an either/or decision, leaving no middle position which allows him to keep enjoying his social privileges, while reasoning that he works for social justice indirectly: why he can be blind to that the current social structure prevents such indirect contribution from having a real impact on it, or only qualitatively and passively:

But now you interrupt me. “If abstract science is a luxury,” you ask, “and the practice of medicine a sham, if law is injustice and technical advances are instruments of exploitation; if education is defeated by the self-interest of the
educators and if art, lacking a revolutionary ideal, can only degenerate, what is there left for me to do?"

And my answer is this. “An immense task awaits which can only attract you, a task in which action will accord completely with conscience, a task that can win over the most noble natures and the most vigorous characters.”

“What is this task,” you ask. I propose to tell you.

Either you compromise constantly with your conscience and end up one fine day saying: “To Hell with humanity, so long as I can gain and profit from all the advantages, and the people are stupid enough to let me do so!” Or you take your place on the side of the socialists and work with them for the complete transformation of society. Such is the inevitable conclusion of the analysis we have made; and such will be the logical decision which all intelligent people will inevitably reach if only they reason wisely and resist the sophisms whispered in their ears by their bourgeois education and the self-interested views of those around them. (54-55)

Apparently, emphasis is put on knowledge and logic, on reason and argumentation. One might rightly wonder if Kropotkin's argument is too much rational, or even rationalist, because he seemingly presupposes knowledge (if you know that science is a luxury, law is unjust, and so on, then you would join the socialist cause), where commitment is a result of impersonal reasoning, a kind of “logical conclusion.” However, I would like to argue that this rhetorical dialogue is more dependent on an ethical force and decision (“your conscience”): how can you silence your conscience and indulge in self-sufficiency all the time, Kropotkin asks. It is against such cold calculation, against such acquired indifference and learned ignorance that Kropotkin’s text offers
vivid descriptions whose appeal is more visceral and affective, more sympathetic and identifying as Scott would say.

Ever more importantly, this dialogical, conversational, and naturalistically descriptive essay is filled with the performative force. From the very beginning, Kropotkin imagines his interlocutor in a quite specific manner, which in one way or another determines how his argument and persuasion would proceed, thus already transforming the reader after the figure of imagined audience the author is going to activate and bring to life:

I assume you are about eighteen or twenty; that you are finishing your apprenticeship or your studies; that you are about to enter into life. I imagine you have a mind detached from the superstitious people have tried to inculcate in you; you’re in no fear of the Devil and you do not listen to the rantings of priests and parsons. Furthermore I am sure you are not one of those popinjays, the sad products of a society in decline, who parade in the streets with their Mexican trousers and their monkey faces and who already, at their age, are dominated by the appetite for pleasures at any price. I assume, on the contrary, that your heart is in the right place, and it is because of this that I am speaking to you. (44)

It is precisely in this special emphasis on the situatedness of anarchist discourse despite its seeming abstract and general atmosphere that Kropotkin’s ethical determination intersects with Critchley’s intersubjective moral recommendation and ethical experience in our postmodern conditions.

This anarchist strategy of real/istic anecdotes and episodes, this predilection for naturalist specificity and particularity, this conversational representation of the ethical demand, might be compared to the abstract and hypothetical parable common to the right wing version of
anarchism which has been referred to by such various names like anarcho-capitalism, market anarchism, libertarianism, individualism. But it is exactly here that the former must be made distinct from the latter, not only because their political orientations are different but also because their performative consequences are almost the opposite of each other. The latter strategy, coupled with analytical methods, is often taken up by political scientists and political economists. In Anarchy Unbound: Why Self-Governance Works Better Than You Think, Peter T. Lesson, professor of economics, employs what he calls “analytic narratives” which “necessarily involves abstraction from much descriptive detail to make an intelligible analysis possible” (10). But this also means that such abstracted tales simply dismiss those details which are irrelevant to the economic logic the author has in mind, details from which emerges no explanatory value other than what Roland Barthes calls “reality effects.” Thus, these abstract narratives begin in a very schematic, minimal way: “Consider two societies: one populated by highly patient individuals, the other populated by highly impatient ones. Because highly patient individuals discount the earnings from interacting in the future with others minimally, the threat of losing the earnings from interacting in the future with even a single person if they cheat that person today may be enough to lead the former society's members to behave cooperatively...” (15).

Contrary to the staged dialogues in Kropotkin’s text, this genre of thought experiment is performed in a closed, virtual, and simulated space, being governed by the rules and logic which are perfectly under the control of the experimenter. In The Problem of Political Authority: An Examination of the Right to Coerce and the Duty to Obey, Michael Huemer, political

24 Above I argued that it is not productive to separate the good from the bad in anarchism, as we should examine its semantic mobility in its entirety. Why then do I try to excommunicate anarcho-capitalism? One reason is that their performative effects and consequences are significantly different. But one can also argue that anarcho-capitalism would not pass the test of the simultaneous, nonexclusive, and unconditional commitment to anti-authoritarianism and egalitarianism, as I specified in paraphrasing Nathan Jun’s suggestion in the introduction.
philosopher, opens the first chapter with “a short political story”: “You live in a small village with a crime problem. Vandals roam the village, stealing and destroying people’s property. No one seems to be doing anything about it. So one day, you and your family decide to put a stop to it. You take your guns and go looking for vandals. Periodically, you catch one, take him back to your house at gunpoint, and lock him in the basement. You provide the prisoners with food so they don’t starve, but you plan to keep them locked in the basement for a few years to teach them a lesson” (3). However, David Graeber tells us that it is exactly what are left out in this sort of

25 Historically speaking, this conservative line of thought in anarchism, individual liberty secured by economic autonomy in a market, which originated from Proudhon, was followed by Benjamin Tucker in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and taken up by neo-conservative, neo-liberal, small government supporters in the late twentieth century, for instance, Robert Nozick. About this anarcho-capitalism or market anarchism (free market without government), see Anarchism/Minarchism edited by Roderick T. Long and Tibor R. Machan. Sometimes this line of anarchism is related to individualism and individualistic tendencies which invite severe and heated criticism from the opposite spectrum, communist or communitarian anarchism. In this respect, the fierce debate between Hakim Bay and Murray Bookchin is classical. To be sure it does injustice to individual anarchists to say that they are merely a fraction of neoliberalism and have nothing to do with the genuinely anarchistic endeavors. Yet, there is a big debate about whether individualist anarchism could be allowed to take part in communist anarchism (and this ambiguous inclusion/exclusion principle is mutual), and a standard answer to circumvent this individual/community dichotomy is that there are two different lines of anarchism, two different directions, and different ways of valorizing freedom and harmony, individuality and collectivity. But to simply say this is no solution, which only confuses various boundaries between philosophical individualism (Stirner, Nietzsche), pro-market economic libertarianism, self-governance, and so on. There would be various ways to articulate them (ex. market economy, wage system, capitalism, police, social security, and so on), but I would like to suggest that the fundamental stake lies in whether one can approve Bakuninist understanding of human relation and freedom, namely, one's freedom is possible only when others are equally free: “one becomes really free only when, and in proportion as, all others are free” (KRP 295). It then seems to me that the majority of market anarchism and anarcho-capitalism does not pass this test. For this matter, see also Bottici. Paraphrasing Bakunin, Bottici argues that “Freedom implies recognition, to be recognized, and to recognize the other as free” and continues that this mutual recognition could occur only through “the mediation of the imaginary signification of society” (15). For Bottici, autonomy and freedom are not synonymous, for freedom requires autonomy, while being autonomous is not necessarily free. See also Max Stirner edited by Newman, concerning the recent revival of Max Stirner and philosophical reexamination of individualist anarchism.
reductive and too purposeful parables, for instance, concrete attributes and previously accumulated relations of people and places, that really matter in our real world where the capitalist reduction to quantity and economic interests is not (yet) complete: “we'd really have to know a bit more about Joshua and Henry. Who are they? Are they related? If so, how? They appear to live in a small community? Any two people who have been living their lives in the same small community will have some sort of complicated history with each other. Are they friends, rivals, allies, lovers, enemies, or several of these things at once?” (Debt 34).26

What possibility of ethics could take place in this positional predicament and indeterminacy where what is good and right is not necessarily indeterminable but at least needs be particularized in each instance anew? I think that it must be accompanied by awareness of being not in a vertical and voluntarily autonomous relation with the transcendental One, but in a horizontal and involuntarily heteronomous relation with others: you have already been called to respond to others, and are always and already in a position to respond to it. Obviously, this post-Levinasian, heteronomous and secular ethics resonates with Judith Butler’s ethical thinking in Giving an Account of Oneself.27 Basically, Critchely argues that as an ethical practice politics in our days cannot presume any ready-made notion of autonomy and must therefore be attentive to real contingencies, heterogeneity, heteronomy, or what he calls “hetero-affectivity” from which political subjectivities are to be differentiated each time and in each instance:

On my view, ethics is the experience of an infinite demand at the heart of my subjectivity, a demand that undoes me and requires me to do more, not in the

26 For a more detailed discussion on this matter, see “The Myth of Barter” in Debt 22-41.
27 Butler is one of the contributors to The Anarchist Turn of which Critchley is one of the editors. It should be added, however, that in that anthology Butler does not discuss ethical anarchism as such but about the Israel/Palestine question and possibilities of non-statist solutions and anarchist activities.
name of some sovereign authority, but in the namelessness of a powerless exposure, a vulnerability, a responsive responsibility, a humorous self-division. Politics is not the naked operation of power or an ethics-free agonism, it is an ethical practice that is driven by a response to situated injustices and wrongs.

(132)

It is from this sense of situatedness that one has to start, while it is not merely limited to who you actually are, as other situations, other framings, other fictions could be unfreely taken up and freely imposed on.

Anxious Geneses and Genealogies in Anarchist Historiography

The disagreement among anarchist commentators as to how anarchism should actualize itself (a principle of life, a historical trend or intellectual current, a socio-political ideology, a liberatory doctrine or program) might be partly explained by different disciplinary emphases. Historians tend to regard it as material phenomena appearing in certain historical periods and geographical places, provisionally accepting what are widely considered anarchist or those who claimed themselves anarchists. 28 Contrary to this passively descriptive approach, political science and philosophy extract a set of principles and themes that appear among a handful of historically representative anarchists. 29 This abstraction oscillates between induction and deduction, between historical and ahistorical, because it relies on a particular set of supposedly

28 For instance, see Maitron for this historian’s approach. Schmidt also provides a very descriptive, somewhat tautological definition of anarchist movements as they appeared in the nineteenth-century Western history.

29 In this regard, the following definition by Crowder is typical: “My leading idea is that the classical tradition is united by a theory of freedom...The central, defining argument of classical anarchism is that freedom is inviolable, that the State destroys freedom and ought therefore to be abolished, and that a stateless society characterized by freedom is a real possibility” (4).
representative anarchist thinkers, yet often deliberately disregards their chronological order. Compared to these descriptive and abstract definitions, the post-anarchist inquiry is theoretical and epistemological.³⁰ Where the former two methods would make a list of properly anarchist characteristics—this list could go quite long and almost disintegrate in this ever-expanding comprehension that includes, but is not limited to, anti-statism, anti-authoritarianism, self-government, voluntary consensus and non-coercion, individual freedom, perfectionism, scientism, rationalism, naturalism, egalitarianism, freedom, individualism—post-anarchism would contend that anarchism is a meta-position on which various ideologies and options intersect. Saul Newman succinctly states that his aim is to “affirm that anarchism's place as the very horizon of radical politics” (The Politics of Postanarchism 2).

There is another big disagreement over how far and distant the beginning of anarchism can be traced back. To be sure, some consensus exists concerning when and where anarchism originated as a historical phenomenon which embraced the term in a self-conscious manner: it is a product of the eighteenth and nineteenth century in the West, a progeny of the French Revolution, or “illegitimate children of the Enlightenment,” as Alexander McKinley ingenuously puts, referring to French anarchists from 1880 to 1914.³¹ As a political theory or ideology,

³⁰ “Broadly speaking, then, the aim of this work is to explore the logic of the place of power in various political discourse and ideas, and to develop a way of thinking about resistance that does not reaffirm domination. It could be seen as an exercise in an anti-authoritarian thought because it tries to resist the temptation of place. It resists, in other words, the desire to find an essential point of resistance, because this will inevitably form itself into a structure or discourse of authority...Moreover, anarchism is, as I will argue, a philosophy of power. It is, fundamentally, an unmasking of power” (Newman, From Bakunin to Lacan 6);

³¹ “The anarchist movement is a product of the nineteenth century. It is, in part, at least, the result of the impact of machines and industry on a peasant or artisan society. It throve on the myth of the revolution as it was developed after 1789; yet, at the same time, it was the failure of political revolutions and constitutional reforms to satisfy economic and social needs which led the anarchists to challenge the methods and the goals of the revolutionaries themselves” (Joll ix); “We may trace the origins of anarchism to the outbreak of the French Revolution” (Miller 3); “anarchism as an historical movement could not have emerged before the
anarchism began in the era of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and as a popular political movement, it developed primarily in nineteenth-century Western countries. In this respect, anarchism is a modern, Western phenomenon, regardless of its endorsement or rejection of the West and modernity. However, some commentators extend their retrospective and interpretive gaze beyond the eighteenth century, turning their eyes to other places and times.

Historically speaking, anarchists have favored the all-embracing gesture which would be quick to pick up any historical cases and geographical instances that are tangentially relevant to anarchism under all too welcoming criteria; they would claim that that anarchism in truth originated in distant sites, as if anarchy were inherent in humanity and therefore ubiquitous, both in the West and in the non-West. What I am suggesting here is that much like the question of definition of anarchism, this question of geneses and genealogy in anarchist history and anarchist historiography can be understood less as a matter of historical truth than as that of interpretive and ideological claims, less as problem-solving than as problem-making. Indeed, I would like to ask how one could justify such a comprehending gesture, how one could assume similarities and

ninetieth century, nor outside of Europe...Of all the new ideologies that emerged in the nineteenth century, anarchism maintained the greatest fidelity to the Enlightenment’s distinction between natural and civil laws...” (Sonn xiv); “Historically, anarchism arose...as a radical answer to the question 'What were wrong?' that followed the ultimate outcome of the French Revolution” (Ward 1); “Anarchism did not rise as a primordial rebel state of mind as far back as Lao Tzu in ancient China or Zeno in ancient Greece...nor was it the child of declining artisanal classes facing extinction by modern modes of production...On the contrary, it grew within the seedbed of organized trade unions as a modern, internationalist, revolutionary socialist, and militant current with a division of socialism-from-below, in opposition to classical Marxism's imposition of socialism-from-above” (Schmidt 3).

32 See for instance Crowder, Joll, Mill, and Sonn.

33 This Western-centered historiography of anarchism has been criticized from various directions. For instance, Michael Schmidt proposes to see the early twentieth century as not a slow decline of anarchism’s influence and its ultimate end in the Spanish Civil War, as standard historical accounts narrate, but as an ever-increasing expansion toward non-Western worlds where anarchism had remained influential popular power. Süreyyya Evren also criticizes the Westernization of the anarchist canon. However, the facts that such de-Westernizing attempts have been made prove the domination of the Western model.
analogies, resemblances and continuities among disparate and discontinuous examples across
time and place. What should be asked here is not simply whether such a definitive genealogy and
origin does exist or not, but also what is at stake in positing such a narrative as definitive,
because, I argue, it is always an anxious and uncertain performative act to declare a relation
where none seems to exist.

Edward Said’s distinction of origin and beginning helps us explore this point. In
*Beginnings*, Said proposes that beginnings are secular, uncertain, and reiterative differentiating,
while origins are divine, authoritative, and identical because of their theological certainty and
security. Put differently, beginning is beginning-*again* which is always a historical act, practiced
with such linguistic means and sources as available at a given historical moment: “beginning is
*making or producing difference*...difference which is the result of combining the already-familiar
with the fertile novelty of human work in language” (xvii). What I am proposing is to read
anarchist searches for distant or ubiquitous origins as a secular act of beginning again, also
analyzing the intentions and effects of such beginning attempts.

The indiscriminating practice of discovering anarchistic tendencies and orientations
everywhere is arguably inaugurated by Peter Kropotkin when he wrote an entry on anarchism for
Encyclopedia Britannica, where he suggests that anarchist expressions could be found “since the
times of Lao-tsze,” even if they were not received with sympathy among scholars because of
their “non-scholastic and popular origin” (*KRP* 287). This initiative sensitivity would be taken up
many times, most notably many decades later by Peter Marshall who acknowledges his great

34 To this differentiation of origin from beginning is added Foucault’s differentiation of origin
via Neitzsche’s genealogical method in “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire.” The great
Nietzschean point in *Genealogy of Morals* is that the origin cannot be used as an explanatory
principle, because history is a succession of different agents and different intentions, where,
while some remain the same, other old means are appropriated for new ends and newly
invented means are employed for old ends (*Basic Writings of Nietzsche* 513).
debt to Kropotkin's genealogy of anarchism that already goes “as far back as Lao Tzu in the ancient world.” For Marshall, it is wrong to limit our scope to the modern West, because anarchism is not that which “suddenly appear[ed] in the nineteenth century only when someone decided to call himself an anarchist”: anarchism should have existed before the name had been invented and applied (xiv).

What is remarkable about Marshall’s account is that he frankly admits that he is “keen to establish the legitimate claims of an anarchist tradition” with his genealogical appropriation of disparate and distant examples which retraces anarchist history to its primary scene (xiv). One way to defend this genealogical gesture toward the origin is that whether the origin is characterized as already out there or something to be invented, real or fictional, physical or metaphysical, this is a means of (self-)legitimation by relating itself to something older and higher as well as to something different and existing elsewhere. Indeed, this genealogical style might be argued as internal to the history of anarchism, or more precisely, anarchisms’ historical attempts to historicize itself. For the sake of expediency, one might distinguish “anarchist” from “anarchistic,” those who assumed the name self-consciously from those who didn’t and onto whom we would impose that name: “anarchist” is an identity from within, while “anarchistic” is a label from without.35 However, this working distinction fluctuates at the very moment one establishes it, as the self-sameness of anarchism has not been legitimated by institutional authority, and every anarchist practice, historical or historiographical, past or present, turns out to be an interpretive act which is inevitably concerned with the validity of its own interpretations, its own genealogies, its own origins.

35 This distinction is commonly used in anarchist studies these years. For instance, Nathan Jun refers to this articulation, proposing “reading anarchistically” (115).
Kropotkin’s paradigmatic attempt to historicize anarchism, to produce an anarchist historiography, along with the supposedly “scientific,” ahistorical categorization of seven representative anarchist figures by Paul Eltzbacher, in the early twentieth century, may be useful to explore this point. If Kropotkin’s historicization of anarchist history goes beyond the modern time and reaches the ancient Greek and China, collecting examples of anarchistic expressions and manifestations from the earlier centuries to the medieval eras to the contemporary world, and if Kropoktin’s geographical and anthropological explorations and reflections allow him to look beyond the West and the Western paradigm, even beyond human society toward an evolutionary perspective, it is partly to counterbalance the anthrologization in Great Anarchists: Ideas and Teachings of Seven Major Thinkers by a German legal scholar, Paul Eltzbacher—first published in 1900 and then translated into English in 1907. If Kropotkin’s genealogically canonizing tendency would thereafter influence anarchists and anarchist historians, Eltzbacher’s “scientific” will to classify anarchist ideas and thinkers would be handed down to political scientists and political philosophers of later generations who would examine anarchism with supposedly objective but essentially predatory curiosity, ending up simplifying it for the sake of clarity and then condemning it for the lack of what their disciplines consider as essential (for instance, coherence, consistency, non-contradiction, rigor, logic, practicality, and so on). Contrary to

36 Kropotkin first defines anarchist society as organized freely and voluntarily, mutably and harmoniously, without coercion or government, for the sake of production and consumption as well as for the satisfaction of needs and aspirations of “a civilized being,” and then maintains that the true progress lies in this direction of decentralization and not in the other direction of state formation and capitalism. Just after indicating these two competing tendencies in human history, Kropotkin makes a bold claim that this anarchist conception and tendency of society “have always existed in mankind, in opposition to the governing hierarchic conception and tendency—now the one and not the other taking the upper hand at different periods of history” (KRP 287). About this tendency to overcome the West in Kropotkin’s geographical, anthropological, and biological thinking, see Chapter Four. 37 Concerning the problem with this scientific approach to anarchism, Gustav Landauer's letter to Eltzbacher still sounds true today: “You, like all men of science, overestimate the word
such clarifying dissection, Kropotkin proposes to combine several lines of thinking, historical, anthropological, and biological, thus discovering not yet existing ties and connections between anarchism and philosophy, or simply invents relations where there are no positive and objective evidence other than their actual resemblance and common interest, appropriating those who do or did not regard themselves as anarchists into the anarchist tradition.

But then it should be asked, whether, when one puts seemingly disparate ideas and tendencies together across time and place, one has to presuppose certain transhistorical and metaphysical types or models, to consider that actual historical examples are inferior approximations to such Platonic ideals. Perhaps Woodcock is more cautious than Marshall in this respect, insisting on the distinction between the transhistorical matrix (“faith in the essential decency of man, a desire for individual freedom, an intolerance of domination”) and their historical specifications, between the invariable and the variable, between fundamental themes and their specific variations which take form of a movement and a creed: “The core attitudes can certainly be found echoing back through history at least to the ancient Greeks. But anarchism as a developed, articulate, and clearly identifiable trend appears only in the modern ear of conscious social and political revolutions” (37). Two questions may arise: one is what such core attitudes should be and the other is how to think about the relation between these two terms, core and trend.

In discussing Woodcock’s theorization, I suggested three ways to understand it (matrix-individuation, variable-invariable, theme-variation), and I would like to further elaborate the third model. What interests me here is not to begin with a definitive theme represented in a

and fail to see what is essential, namely, the unspeakable, the mood, that which is not easily measured, identified, and categorized. I do not care much for scientific classification. After everything has been diligently divided, it will inevitably mingle and blend again anyway” (302-3).
metaphysical and transcendental manner and then discover their historical actualizations as imperfect variations, but rather to examine variations in their specificity and singularity, as variations without one single, original theme, in which the primary theme is more like our (re)construction, recollected only by examining those variations and their differences. In other words, it is always variations that should interest us, whose ultimate purpose is not to come back to the original theme. To be sure the present study will find itself drawn back to discussions on the thematic more than on variations, but in the final analysis, I am less interested in determining and delineating what it is scientifically and objectively true, but in asking what we hope to explore in thinking about what our essence and nature can be and ought to be, and not in their isolation, but in non-coercive conjunctions with other variations, out of which we may produce impossible but still indispensable fictions for our collective, ethical, and aesthetic life.

Above, I argued that Kropotkin’s genealogical appropriation that discovers, or even invents, ties and relations where no positive ones existed, and this might be exactly what Nathan Jun means by “reading anarchistically.” According to Jun, anarchistic hermeneutics seeks “to demonstrate the ‘anarchistic’ potential of thinkers we don't normally think of as anarchist—including many who lack any obvious relation to the historical tradition,” but not in order to recruit such thinkers into anarchist membership, but to explore “meaningfully ‘anarchistic’ (i.e. radically antiauthoritarian and egalitarian) attitudes, thoughts, and opinions in their writing” (91).

Therefore, if anarchist geneses or genealogies hope to be a meaningful project of becoming related and relating rather than a merely self-justifying, tautological gesture, then it should not

---

38 We borrow this notion of variation without a theme from Theodore Adorno, or Jameson’s rephrasing of Adorno's *Philosophy of Modern Music*: “For the well-nigh infinite virtuosity of the variational process itself (we often indeed begin with a variation, and only later on discover the theme as such, in its official or "original" form) at length leads to a kind of musical "critique of origins," that is to say, to the nagging doubt as to whether there ever was such a thing as the initial theme in the first place” (*The Hegel Variations* 24).
strive to substantiate certain names or figures, but explore practices, dispositions, tendencies, orientations, sensitivities, endeavors, and so on. When Jun argues that anarchist philosophy is “a matter of degree rather than kind,” believing that “anarchism represents a range of intersecting attitudes, beliefs, and opinions rather than a comprehensive doctrine or ‘fixed, self-enclosed social system’,” I think that he proposes two displacements (88, 87). On the one hand, he proposes to move from substantives to adjectives, from anarchists or anarchism to anarchist and anarchistic. On the other hand, he suggests focusing on tendencies and orientations rather than on positions, something moving and dynamic rather than something fixed and static. This double reorientation clearly echoes with Kropotkin’s recommendation to do “an analysis of tendencies that are at work already” and not of “a priori desiderata” (KRP 285).

Concerning the first question, Jun’s suggestion sounds very productive once again: “anarchism may be understood as a synergistic fusion of radical antiauthoritarianism and radical egalitarianism” (88; emphasis added). What he insists on is the moral nature and the unconditionality of these two orientations: “unqualified moral opposition” to coercive and authoritative relations and institutions, “an active moral commitment” to abolishing and replacing on the one hand, and “unqualified moral opposition to all forms of arbitrary and unnatural political, social, economic, sexual, and cultural inequality” (86-87; emphasis added). However, what seems ever more significant is that Jun emphasizes double commitment to both of them. Indeed, the key to this formulation is the conjunct “and”: it is not an opportunistic, syncretic, or alternating application of the two, but a non-exclusive and simultaneous paraxis of both of them. Thus, Jun continues that the properly anarchistic tendency must pass this test of “a general inclination toward both anti-authoritarianism and egalitarianism” (90).

***
I propose to translate these dual conditions into my problematics in the following way: anarchist/ic orientations are comparable to one's imagined sense and relation with the whole, with all, every, and each, where the part tries to think about the whole not as an abstract entity, nor through such representative figures like political leaders and national heroes or through artificially invented socio-political institutions like the state, but as an actually existing ensemble of concrete individuals, as a horizontal, multi-layered, transversal, and rhizomic networking of each member where every living existence is unique and singular, however replaceable and exchangeable their effective functions could be and however identical and equal their juridical rights should be. Anarchist/ic tendencies may then be understood as locally improvising, flexibly adaptive, and infinitely adjustable ways to arrange and organize one's own and collective life along these agential orientations. In my parlance, anarchism is therefore understood as concrete and imagined caring of oneself and all, as non-exclusivity, as universal happiness which is not dependent on sacrifice and exploitation of others, however remote and unrelated to you such others could be.

I would like to read—which might mean to discover and invent in my context—something anarchist and anarchistic not only in non-iterative, unique, singular acts at exceptional and non-repeatable moments—the most representative example of this category is a revolution—but also and rather in habitual and customary praxes, in casual and usual dispositions and attitudes in our not so eventful daily life situations and circumstances. My suggestion, and to actualize utopian virtualities and potentialities, is that the anarchist/ic should be sought for and constructed in common and even banal customs and practices, not only in special and exceptional decisions but in ordinary choices, not only in transitional phases and nomadic spaces but also in sedentary and local sites.
Chapter Two

Anarchistic Disciplines: Revisiting Past Anarchism after Post-Anarchism

If thoughts are free, I am their slave; I have no power over them, and am dominated by them. But I want to have the thought, want to be full of thoughts, but at the same time I want to be thoughtless, and instead of freedom of thought, I preserve for myself thoughtlessness. (Stirner. The Ego and Its Own Property.)

Current Conditions of Anarchist Studies, or An Anarchist Turn

Recently anarchism has received renewed attention from at least two different camps. On the one hand, a new school of critical theory called “post-anarchism” has taken up anarchistic thematics and problematics, finding them quite suitable for a poststructuralism and postmodernism that seeks for properly political projects and programs that are still missing, something that goes hand in hand with its anti-foundationalism in which we do not concede to lukewarm relativism and ultimately to defeatist conservatism or nihilism, but are instead ethically and radically motivated by democratic ideals.39 On the other hand, anti-globalization, anti-neoliberalism, and the Occupy movement are eager to examine and elaborate alternatives to the actually existing machinery of neoliberalism and global capitalism, of social organization and environmental exploitation. As the title of a recent anthology succinctly puts, an “anarchist turn” is coming.

39 Arguably Todd May, Saul Newman, and Lewis Call are most prominent post-anarchists, to whom should be added is Duane Rousselle, one of the founding editors of Anarchist Development in Cultural Studies.
However, some disagree about when such a turn actually took place. Jacob Blumenfeld, one of the editors of *The Anarchist Turn*, asserts that the Occupy movement was the key to this unexpected resurgence of anarchism: “In May 2011, arguing for an 'anarchist turn’ in the United States was something of a scandal. A year later, it is already banal. This radical shift can be explained with reference to one verb: Occupy” (238). *Contemporary Anarchist Studies* suggests that the double revival of anarchism as a political movement, as a political thought that fuels actual movements and as a legitimate subject for scholarly research, began with the anti-globalization protest in Seattle in 1999 (xvii).

What I want to emphasize here, instead of settling the exact date of the new beginning for anarchist studies, is the sense of urgency and actuality, of collaboration and solidarity across academia and activism that is keenly felt in a handful of other anthologies and publications over the past ten years or so. In *New Perspectives on Anarchism* edited by Nathan J. Jun and Shane Wahl and published in 2010, Todd May writes: “Anarchism is back on the scene” (1). *Post-Anarchism: A Reader* appeared in 2011; its coverage is as wide as to include path-breaking essays on post-anarchism originally published in the 1990s, their critical receptions by fellow anarchists in later years, and post-anarchist applications to contemporary cultural issues. *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies (ADCS)*, “an international, peer-reviewed, open-access journal devoted to the study of new and emerging perspectives in anarchist thought and practice from or through a cultural studies perspective,” launched in 2010, has quickly become a new platform for interdisciplinary scholars and activists who are committed to revisit anarchism in novel and refreshing ways, free from (yet without ignoring) the inheritance and accumulation of past anarchist studies conducted in traditional British veins.⁴⁰

---

It is far from self-evident, however, whether contemporary anarchism is continuous with the past one. Some anarchist researchers and activists, though positively taking up the name of anarchism or anarchist, are not much concerned with establishing strong ties with past anarchist traditions. By characterizing today’s anarchist activism as a “political culture,” Uri Gordon is not bothered with theoretical debates only for the sake of theoretical elaboration; he frankly suggests, speaking from concrete fields of activism, that contemporary anarchism has only a tenuous relation with the anarchist movements in the previous centuries which “had effectively been wiped off the political scene by the end of the Second World War”: “the roots of today’s anarchist networks can be found in the processes of intersection and fusion among radical social movements since the 1960s, whose paths had never been overtly anarchist” (5). Gordon adds that today’s anarchism has been enriched by such rich exchanges with not overtly anarchist movements whose focuses are, for instance, ecological, anti-nuclear, anti-war, feminist, racial, LGBT, animal liberation, and so on (5). Is it then worth our trouble to worry about our political identity in relation to the past, especially when we are so busy fighting against real challenges in the present world, that is, when we should be engaged with actual problems in this world and not merely with debates within a parochial academia. Isn’t it a sign of paranoiac thinking that one has to establish one’s intellectual identity in relation to the past and in a legitimate, authentic manner?

Although Gordon might curtly say yes to the last question, the poststructural and postmodernist school of anarchism called “post-anarchism” would respond to it differently, because it (re)establishes as much as it retains certain ties with past anarchism, constructing and foregrounding different genealogies and other problematics that have not been fully explored in traditional anarchist studies. It is arguably Andrew Koch’s “Poststructuralism and the
Epistemological Basis of Anarchism” that inaugurated what would later be called post-
anarchism, promoting a critical shift or displacement from “the modernist focus on ontology”
(“what is human nature?”), so prominent in the mainstream nineteenth-century anarchism, to the
epistemological and representational questioning of static and fixed identity (“how have we
come to this belief about human nature?”) (339).

One of Koch’s contentions is to criticize the Enlightenment, positivist, scientific, and
communitarian dimensions in nineteenth-century anarchism. By exposing Godwin, Kropotkin,
and Proudhon to severe criticism, Koch dismantles the way they rely on the Enlightenment
doctrines of stable human characteristics. What Koch constructs against this rationalist
genealogy of anarchism are philosophical and individualistic threads that run through classical
anarchism, another anarchist genealogy which is not entirely anti-Enlightenment but thoroughly
critical of it: Max Stirner’s critique of self or ego comes to the center, which is in turn related to
Nietzsche’s critique of language, and both of them are ultimately joined with the poststructuralist
critique of Enlightenment epistemology. However, Koch’s argument does not simply replace the
rationalist genealogy with a poststructural one, because his point is not to decide which set of
axioms is true, but to question the very ground which authorizes a certain set as true and others
as false, to “decenter the understanding of politics because [this epistemological focus] suggests
heteromorphous arenas for the production of truth” (339). Plurality and contingency take over
essence and universality in Koch’s argument, and this reorientation of theoretical thinking and
critical language leads to a systematic dismissal of essentialism and truth claims and an equally
systematic endorsement of discursive and institutional analysis of knowledge and power. Koch
thus reveals the essentially mediated and entangled political relations such axioms have with
language and grammar, with power and institution, suggesting that anarchism is “the only
justifiable political stance because it defends the pluralism that results from individuated meaning in discourse” (346).

Politicization of poststructuralism is neither new nor rare. Gianni Vattimo's “weak thought” is such a politicizing attempt, as is Simon Critchley’s meta-ethical, meta-political attempt to come up with a properly political project in the postmodern condition of the disappearance and devaluation of the master narrative and metaphysical normativity, and both of these may be somewhat inspired by anarchist-related themes and ideas.41 In their late explorations, both Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault explored politico-ethical questions: Derrida reflected on the possibility of democracy along the lines of responsibility and hospitality, of others and strangers, most notably in Politics of Friendship and On Hospitality; Foucault’s later volumes of The History of Sexuality and lectures at the College de France investigated ancient Greek and Roman thoughts and conducts, considering one's relation with oneself in relation to society and power and drawing a genealogy of critical attitude against historical actuality, where he made a case for constant activation, elaboration, and reinvention of the aesthetics and ethics of creative self-fashioning that is not dictated by knowledge and truth, simultaneously seeking for a way of living that might not be “true” but still good to oneself. In Gilles Deleuze, we find critiques of surveillance society, whereas Jean-François Lyotard insisted on the imcommensurability of differences not for the sake of annihilating politics but suggest the necessity of it precisely because of this aporetic reality.42 Revived interest in communism in recent years may be another sign of these politicizing tendencies, as best exemplified by L’Idée du communisme, an anthology edited by Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek. In addition, Jacques

41 See Introduction and Chapter One.
Rancière’s thoughts on radical exchangeability and democratic possibilities can fit into this context very well. What, therefore, differentiates those post-anarchists who combine postructuralist thinking with anarchist ideas from these already political poststructuralists?

What is curious about post-anarchism’s political engagement is that it is often narrated as a story of discovery in which anarchism suddenly turns out to be a thought appropriate for poststructuralism. This narrative of a happy encounter would be repeated many times in post-anarchist writings. In a sense, poststructural or postmodern appropriation of anarchist(ic) ideas and orientations in post-anarchism might sound opportunistic or unilateral, as if it were poststructuralist thoughts that needed anarchist ideas and not the other way around. After drawing several different genealogies from nineteenth-century thinkers to poststructuralists (from Nietzsche to Foucault/Deleuze, from Freud to Lacan to Irigaray/Butler/Grosz, and from Durkheim to Mauss/Bataille to Baudrillard), and characterizing anarchism as “by its very nature skeptical of fixed structures” and therefore very fluid and flexible as a theory, Lewis Call concludes that anarchism is “a political philosophy which seems perfectly well suited to the postmodern world” (Postmodern Anarchism 11). Todd May's anecdote is even more telling and almost paradigmatic:

This book began as a conversation on a train headed from Pittsburgh to Washington to attend the Eastern Division meetings of the American Philosophical Association. I was trying to explain to a friend, Mark Lance, what the political theory of poststructuralism was all about. He listened more patiently than he should have and then said, 'It sounds like anarchism to me.' (The Political Philosophy ix).

43 Rancière develops these thoughts in various articles, interviews, and books. See, for instance, Dissensus.
Here, it is always post-structuralism or postmodernism that comes first, with anarchism as a belated discovery. It may be re-narrated in the following way: poststructuralists and postmodernists needed anarchism to complement the lack of a properly post-essentialist and anti-foundationalist politics, political theory, and political philosophy, while the latter did not necessarily seek for the former's help. The relation of anarchism and poststructuralism or postmodernism is not mutual, or it is complementary only in one direction.

By saying this, I do not imply that post-anarchist engagement with nineteenth-century anarchism is only superficial. To be sure, their genealogies and readings of classical anarchist texts are as problematic as Gordon’s frank disregard for the past tradition, and they have been much criticized precisely because of their arbitrary selection of classical anarchist theorists and texts, their re-canonization of the Western, white male tradition, abstract treatment of historical texts, and so on.  

One of the typical criticisms is that post-anarchism first accepts a group of

44 For a general overview of the variegated discussions over the validity and legitimacy of post-anarchism as such, see, first of all, *Post-Anarchism: A Reader*, edited by Duane Rousselle and Süreyyya Evren, which collects the now classical Koch's essay and Hakim Bay's influential “Post-Anarchism Anarchy,” as well as several critical commentaries on post-anarchism. *Anarchist Development in Cultural Studies* 1 (2010), “Post-Anarchism Today,” is another place to get started, as it showcases where post-anarchism had reached after two decades of debate and elaboration. As for typical critical responses to the poststructuralist and postmodernist take on anarchism, see *Post-Anarchism* 168-80. I find Süreyyya Evren's critical comments on postanarchism most instructive and productive. Duane Rousselle's attitude toward post-anarchism shows some ambiguity and obscurity because of complex relations he establishes with it: on the one hand, Rousselle fully embraces this critical turn from essence to representation, from truth claim to power and politics, from science to aesthetics, but on the other hand, his ambition to go beyond the epistemological and relativist trap of post-anarchism is only too palpable, and in this respect, unlike Todd or Call, he tries to go back to the ontological problematics after the epistemological detour, yet without reintroducing the old ontological essentialism. Rousselle’s *After Post-Anarchism* is in-progress and unsuccessful, while the introductory commentary in “Postanarchism and its Critics: A Conversation with Saul Newman” is one of the best overviews of the theoretical development of post-anarchism over the past twenty years. About the theoretical problems of post-anarchism's treatment of the anarchist canon, the introduction Kinna and Evren co-authored for the *ADCS* special issue, titled “Blasting Canon,” is very helpful.
several nineteenth-century white male anarchists in the mainstream as the sole representative of classical anarchism and then accuses them of essentialism, foundationalism, rationalism, so that a strawman version of classical anarchism is attacked as the ideal target for post-structuralism and postmodernism.\(^45\) This criticism is legitimate and post-anarchist readings should be exposed to due criticism. However, what is also undeniable is that Koch's work, and post-anarchist elaborations that take up his suggestions in one way or another, still invite us to reexamine canonical nineteenth-century anarchists, as it were, against the grain. This chapter attempts to reexamine post-anarchist readings of classical anarchist texts, not in order to give a different verdict on post-the anarchist interpretations of them, but in order to develop certain alternative ways to read past anarchist texts without dismissing post-anarchist contributions and complications, and ultimately to develop certain anarchist/ic theories of reading, of “reading anarchistically” as Nathan Jun ingeniously puts.

**Wrong Readings and Reading Wrong Texts: Several Problems of the Post-Anarchist Reading of Classical Anarchism**

Before developing such an anarchist/ic theories of hermeneutics out of post-anarchist readings, I have to address their explicit problems, especially their deliberate grouping and characterization of classical or nineteenth-century anarchism. In sum, the problem is not simply that their readings are wrong, but more fundamentally that they are reading the wrong texts, which may be dissected into three distinct yet interrelated problems. The first problem is their neglect of generic issues and historically specific contexts. After briefly gesturing toward the historic dispute between Marx and Bakunin during the first years of the International Working

\(^45\) For instance, see Cohn and Wilbur.
Men's Association, Todd May appears almost unconcerned with anarchist history or the chronology of the texts he discusses (45-48). Newman or Call is no better than Koch or May, and Rousselle is no exception to this indifference to the historical specificities of past anarchist texts.46

Two other problems come from the second error of reading wrong texts. On the one hand, what they read closely are not classical anarchist texts but poststructural ones; to be more precise and to do justice to the post-anarchists, their close reading of past anarchist texts is a springboard for closely reading other texts and discourses. On the other hand, and more fundamentally, those post-anarchists uncritically accept the anarchist canon which should have been questioned and subverted in the first place. Mathew Adams maintains that the already

46 Karatani Kōjin’s more contextualizing yet theoretical approach to the philosophical debates between Marx and Proudhon, Stirner, and Bakunin may be recommended as an alternative: “What I would like to say once again is that we should not see them through the opposition of Marxists and anarchism. Within the Marxist context, Marx and Engels are taken interchangeable, because ‘Marxism’ is Engel's invention. Within the anarchist context, Stirner, Proudhon, and Bakunin are equated despite their individual differences. However, the identity of those anarchists is nothing but a fiction posited against ‘Marxism.’ Insofar as we think in such a fictional framework, our thinking can only be futile. At best we end up repeating such a slogan like ‘the synthesis of Marxism and anarchism.’ The truth is that actual relations of Marx, Engels, Proudhon, Bakunin, and so on are interwoven and entangled networks of difference and identity” (my trans.; Teihon Karatani Kōjin Shu (The Collected Works of Kōjin Karatani) 3:265). Moreover, Karatani gives a more reconciling reading of them, suggesting their shared interests beneath the apparent disagreements (Transcritique 165-184). However, it should also be indicated that Karatani’s argument is located in the mid-nineteenth century, while my historiographical project targets the late nineteenth century. About the Marxism/anarchism debate in the latter context, Kristian Ross offers a fresh view In Communal Luxury by looking at the ways in which the Paris Commune would become a shared legacy and inspirational source for ex-Communards and later generations alike. Russian local communities and anthropological investigations are another such converging site for Marxism and anarchism in the context of late-nineteenth-century Europe. See ed. Shanin, Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and “the Peripheries of Capitalism.”

47 However, to be fair to these post-anarchists, it should be mentioned that this disregard for the historicity of anarchist texts is common to other disciplines, from political science to political philosophy to critical theory, where what matters is not historical attributes of a given text but its content, its seemingly transhistorical or non-historical, namely, eternal essence.
limited selection of the seven sages in the classical treatment of nineteenth-century anarchism by Paul Eltzbacher has become even more selective in post-anarchism, for instance, with Tucker and Tolstoy frequently dropped from consideration. Adams further argues that the coverage of the other five figures (Godwin, Proudhon, Stirner, Bakunin, and Kropotkin) varies not according to the theoretical importance of their individual thought but simply due to the availability of their English translations, which results in an uneven and distorted association of an anarchist thinker with only one or a few texts that do not always properly represent the complexity and multiplicity of the said thinker, like Proudhon reduced to *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?:* “Lip service is paid to the idea that anarchism is a mutable political tradition along the lines that 'anarchism is a diverse series of philosophies and political strategies' [as Newman says], but the inquisition is primarily leveled at a recognizably select group of thinkers” (“The Possibilities” 44). In the introduction to *ADCS’s* special issue on anarchist canon, titled “Blasting Canon,” Ruth Kinna and Süreyyya Evren conclude that post-anarchism “failed to capture complexity, fluidity, and creativity of anarchist practices” and “contributed to the reification of a highly partial reading of nineteenth century traditions” (2).

Two remedies have been prescribed in order to cure this “postanarchist reduction of classical anarchism” (Evren, “Notes” 1). One is to reexamine a post-anarchist genealogy of the anarchist canon. Evren and Kinna propose to revisit Eltzbacher's classical selection of the seven anarchists, because it “has undoubtedly contributed to canonical thinking and to perception that anarchism might be defined exclusively with reference to the ideas of a few great men” (4). To paraphrase their suggestion, it is necessary to think about how what would later become a canon was created in the first place, instead of simply asking which texts should be included and which
others could be excluded in a non-historical manner. Reflecting on this critical rethinking of the very process of canonization, Evren raises important questions:

[H]ow did the anarchist history writing developed? When and how were the main anarchist writers selected? Who were the fathers of the 'fathers of anarchy'? Were there different tendencies in describing the main body of 'classical anarchism' and which tendency dominated the resulting history and how? How were the classical anarchists represented? Can we trace any hierarchy in these histories: were they modernist in their approach; can we trace any kind of discrimination? (1)

If genealogical investigation into the historical formation of the anarchist canon as handed down to us would dismantle the hierarchical power structure inherent in it, then that should also help us come up with a different set of texts but by means of different principles of selection and inclusion. Evren thus contends that this undoing and redoing of anarchist canon cannot simply mean more texts from the same set of white male anarchists, but must include other texts by other writers; the fundamental question is whether or not “anarchism” must be limited to nineteenth-century classical anarchism. Should this narrowly delineated masculine European anarchism be the sole legitimate reference and starting point for comparison? Why not compare “Emma Goldman with Helene Cixous and Irigaray, Voltarine de Cleyre with Butler, and Flores Magon with Homi Bhabah?” (“Alpine Anarchist” 3). Evren concludes that we must try various comparisons and genealogies “without eurocentrism, without hidden patriarchies, without seeing the political theory as more politically valuable and seminal than arts or acts,” so that we should move toward “pananarchism,” breaking down boundaries and limitations and without substituting a particular modern political machinery for authority, hierarchy, representation,
domination in general (3-4). To borrow Evren’s intriguing phrase, “‘queering’ anarchy” is our urgent task, and we have to change our repertoires altogether (3).

However, this chapter will not move in the direction of such. Instead of further addressing the second and third problems of post-anarchists’ reading wrong texts, which Evren has already done very convincingly, I would like to come back to the first problem of their wrong readings and move toward rereading those canonical, “classical” anarchists. My interpretive task here is neither to reiterate the rather facile post-anarchist critique of the supposed essentialism in nineteenth-century anarchism, nor to reinforce the orthodoxy of essential human goodness in the mainstream anarchist texts and to preserve their canonical status as if the post-anarchist critique of them never existed. If what Süreyyya Evren describes as “the introductory period” when the difference and distance between “classical” and “post” had to be (over)emphasized and exaggerated, is past it is no longer necessary to caricature nineteenth-century anarchism in order to make a case for post-anarchism, nor is it needed to caricature post-anarchism in order to defend classical anarchism either. I therefore do not think it necessary to intensify the antagonism or incommensurability between the older and the new anarchisms; rather, I propose to open up commensurable spaces between them. In this respect, I totally agree with Duane Rousselle’s ingenuous statement that classical anarchism as such is in one way or another critical of essentialist presuppositions, being “always already postanarchism” (“Postanarchism” 74).

Anarchist Essentialism Revisted, or Reappropriating Post-Anarchism and Rereading Past Anarchism
There is abundant evidence that the introductory period is over, that the anarchist canon has expanded in a productive manner, correcting somewhat situation Arnold deplored concerning the uneven availability of nineteenth-century anarchist literature in English, and that close (re)readings of it flourished. Thanks to Saul Newman's rereading and reevaluation of Max Stirner, this much neglected, anathemized egoist philosopher finally began to receive due scholarly attention.48 Edited by Iain McKay, new anthologies of Proudhon and Kropotkin appeared, both of which are arguably most comprehensive readers ever published in English—800 page-long *Property is Theft!: A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology* appeared in 2011, 700 page-long *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology* in 2014.49 An extensive collection of Errico Malatesta appeared in English in 2014, while the publication of his complete works is also under way.50 Unjustly neglected in the Anglo-Saxon context, the writings of Gustave Landauer finally became easily accessible in 2010.51 *Anarchy, Geography, Modernity: Selecting Writings of Elisée Reclus* was reissued by PM Press in 2013. After many years of silence, the third volume of *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years* appeared in 2012 and the final forth volume will become available very soon.52

Dividing post-anarchism’s critical trajectory into three phases, epistemological or meta-ethical, subjectivist, and ontological, Rousselle argues that we are now entering the third period

49 See also McKay's two bibliographical articles appeared in *Anarchist Studies*: “Sages and Movements: An Incomplete Peter Kropotkin Bibliography” and “Kropotkin, Woodcock and Les Temps Nouveaux.”
50 Malatesta is one of the last Italian disciples of Bakunin who, like his Russian master, traveled back and forth within Europe, even to Latin America. See *An Errico Malatesta Reader*.
51 Landauer is a contemporary of Kropotkin and Malatesta and a German translator of many important anarchistic texts, including Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*, Wilde's “The Soul of Man under Socialism,” Whitman's poetry, La Boétie's *Discours de la servitude volontaire*.
52 Emma Goldman studies also received a renewed attention in recent years. In 2007, *Feminist Interpretation of Emma Goldman*, edited by Penny A. Weiss and Loretta Kensinger, appeared. See also Ferguson.
and thus no longer as much anxious about our identity and legitimacy, about the issue of
canonization and denomination ("Postanarchism" 78-79). According to Rousselle, the first
period, most notably represented by Koch and May, is characterized by epistemological and
ethical concerns—where Foucault, Deleuze, and Lyotard are frequent references. The second
period keeps working on ethics and politics, even as it confronts the epistemological impasse of
relativism that the first period failed to resolve, and the question of subjectivity: Newman’s first
book, From Bakunin to Lacan, is most representative of this period. The coming third period
will, Rousselle ambitiously proclaims, tackle “the possibility of a non-representative ontology”
and “a non-epistemological and yet also non-representative postanarchism” (79).

It is still debatable whether or not we have reached the third period. The truth is that we
still oscillate between the second and the third phases. Or perhaps it is truer, and ultimately more
productive to say that we are no longer trapped in one single phase and constrained by one single
project, that multiple projects are happening simultaneously, in many various sites and from
many different directions. This is why, while situating my hermeneutic project of constructing an
anarchist theory of reading within post-anarchism, I do not feel any need to embrace post-
anarchist tendencies and orientations in their entirety. It seems to me that whatever it actually
means, the post-anarchist appropriation of past anarchism cannot be taken as a true and accurate
representation of the latter and therefore should better be seen as a strategic (mis)reading of
them; indeed, isn’t their real stake to extract certain political motifs from past traditions and then
elaborate them for urgent political issues of our days? In an interview with Rousselle, Saul
Newman claims that what post-anarchism does in (re)reading past anarchist texts and
establishing certain relations with them is not to articulate a period or phase and mark its
For Newman, the prefix of “post” in “post-anarchism” is not temporal but rather spatial, or timeless like Freud's unconscious:

Postanarchism has no periodization. It is not a specific phase within anarchist thought, nor is it a distinct political theory...it opens up a space of problematization, inquiry and deconstruction within anarchism—and indeed within radical political thought more broadly—allowing a rethinking of key categories, concepts, identities and strategies, through the constitutive tension between the political and the anti-political. It is something like the unconscious of anarchism. (Rousselle, “Postanarchism” 90).

In this sense, the critical repertoires of post-anarchism should not be understood as an aggressive and unfriendly refutation of past anarchist texts. Rather, it could better be seen as an enumeration of the symptoms and pitfalls one could fall into in raising political questions and in imagining alternative social orders with such premises like the pairing of an exclusively oppressive power and a naturally benign human essence.

53 Interestingly enough, this remark overtly rejects Rousselle's periodization of post-anarchism. 54 In The Politics of Postanarchism, Newman expresses a similar view in a slightly different way, this time relating postanarchism to Derridian deconstruction. In both places, Newman clearly states that “post-” is not of temporal succession (before/after) but of spacial displacement and co-existence (inside/outside, limit/beyond): “Postanarchism is not a specific form of politics; it offers no actual programme or directives. It is not even a particular theory of politics as such. Nor should it be seen as an abandonment or movement beyond anarchism; it does not signify a 'being after' anarchism. On the contrary, postanarchism is a project of radicalizing and renewing the politics of anarchism—of thinking anarchism as a politics. Let us understand postanarchism as a kind of deconstruction...postanarchim is not a transgression or a movement beyond the terms of anarchism; it does not leave anarchism behind but, instead, works within it as a constant engagement with its limits, invoking a moment of an outside in order to rethink and transform these limits. In doing so, it modifies the discursive field of anarchism without actually abandoning it” (4-5)
The provocative contention that post-anarchism misreads past anarchism should not lead to discounting its critical contributions altogether. In this respect, I completely agree with Matthew Adams' verdict that post-anarchists' critique of the remains of the Enlightenment humanism in classical anarchism points to the possibility that “something is salvageable from this wreck” (“The Possibilities” 43). There are still many things to learn even from its somewhat exaggerated dismantling of the alleged underpinning of human essence in nineteenth-century anarchism. What the post-anarchists teach us is not just that past anarchist discourses have critical errors, since these could have been revealed without post-anarchism. What should be learned from it instead?

**Post-Anarchism as Disciplinary Formation: Problems of Ideologization and Philosophization**

There is something that is hard to salvage from the wreck. Understood as a newly constructed interdisciplinary discipline, post-anarchism seems to hold certain disciplinary or institutional ambitions like any other disciplines, and this issue need a critical examination. As I have already discussed in the previous chapter, defining anarchism is nebulous, because defining practices cannot but oscillate among various categories and discourses, and it is often pre-existing disciplinary norms and expectations that forcefully dissolve the ambiguity for their institutional interests. To be sure, without domesticating the amorphous, the fluctuating, and the resistant in anarchist states and phenomena and putting them into the stable and articulated disciplinary mold, post-anarchism could not have achieved what it did so splendidly. Perhaps a disciplinary violence need be exerted and justified because of what it has done, including its simplification and reduction, exaggeration and exclusion.
However, it should never be forgotten that the majority of classical anarchist texts were produced outside of academia and the mainstream, which have made them unfit for academic scrutiny and rigor from the very beginning. When Kropotkin wrote a history of anarchism, he was fully aware of this non-scholarly state which marked anarchism from the very beginning: “At the same time it evidently found its expression in the writings of some thinkers, since the times of Lao-tsze, although, owing to its non-scholastic and popular origin, it obviously found less sympathy among the scholars than the opposed tendency” (KRP 287). I do not mean that it is wrong to put such non-academic anarchist stuff into the existing disciplinary territory and generic confines, whether that is metaphysics, political philosophy, political science, or whatever else. What is problematic is that when one territorializes anarchism as an academic discipline, one often ends up reversing the order between anarchism and a given discipline, seeing anarchism as a sub-category of it, where anarchism would then lose its own multiplicity and plurality, its messiness and unsystematicity, being purified and refined through the disciplinary approval and authorization which, for instance, “presupposes a certain timelessness in Western philosophy” and treats texts “as self-sufficient source” (Adams, “The Possibilities” 41). When one looks at the texts by May, Newman, and Rousselle, and to a lesser degree, those by Call, one should immediately notice that each of them is not free from certain disciplinary and generic ambitions. In the final analysis, it is not anarchism but something other than it that functions as a central principle of organization, as if anarchism were secondary or only a topic to be framed and processed by certain legitimate sets of analytical tools and critical languages. For May, it is political philosophy and for Rousselle it is philosophy; for Newman, it is politics, while for Call, it is postmodernism. The perennial problem of dehistorization in post-anarchism might be what it inherited from those authentic disciplines that, while making anarchism more decent and
respectable, more academic and legitimate, end up “dehistoriciz[ing] anarchism by approaching its history as one of eternal questions and answers” (Adams 41).

If it is problematic to too firmly situate anarchism into the existing disciplinary, it is no less risky to make anarchism stand on its own ground, to turn it into a dogmatic anarchism, into a coherent set of ideas and principles which, once constructed and completed, would in turn bind us and dictate our ways of feeling and thinking in a normative and coercive way. Here, Jean-Luc Nancy’s warning about the ideological effect of -ism is instructive. In discussing etymological and semantic richness and openness of the word “communisme” in a somewhat Heideggerian manner—communisme, être-ensemble, Mitsein, co- of communisme as avec and être ensemble, co- of collectivité as external and côté à côté, co- of communisme as autre—Jean-Luc Nancy says that “communisme est le speech act de l'existence en tant qu'elle est ontologiquement être-en-commun” (“communism is the speech act of existence in that it is ontologically being-in-common”; my trans.; “Communisme, le mot” in L’Idée du communisme 206). After emphasizing this performative force of commun-ism that opens common space and foregrounds our ontological being togetherness and common-ness with others, without any prior authorization, and therefore constituting the very condition for politics, Nancy nevertheless interrogates the ideologizing danger inherent in turning an idea into -ism: “Tout suffixe de cette forme implique un système de représentation et une forme d'idéologisation” (“all the suffix of this form implies a system of representation and a form of ideologization”; my trans.; 208).

What should be taken from Nancy’s reflection on communism? It is certainly not to toy with the etymological ambiguity and mobility of an-anarch-ism, as, for instance, Benjamin Tucker or Paul Valéry did.55 What need be thought about is what he calls “a form of

55 See Chapter One.
ideologization.” Quoting Davide Turcato, Carl Levy contends: “Anarchism as ism is not only rational...it is rationalist” (8). According to Adams, such rationalist, rationalizing tendencies are exactly the error anarchist studies committed in the past: “That analyses of anarchism published between the 1970s and mid-1990s were primarily concerned with positioning anarchism in relation to more established political ideologies and strived to uncover anarchism's contribution to the grander questions of human existence, the effect has been to perpetuate the canonical approach, rather than appreciate the vicissitudes of its history” (38). Anarchism itself turns out to be a problem and not an uncontroversial entity, since the linguistic force and performative effect of -ism leads to the construction of an ideology that deserves such a name.

When anarchism must be carefully examined and deconstructed, the same is the case with the term “anarchy” which has become part of critical vocabulary over recent years. It may even be argued that “anarchy” has enjoyed a critical appraisal more than “anarchism,” especially in post-anarchism-informed theoretical discussions, though this tendency could also be traced far back beyond the narrow context of post-anarchism. Wherever the origin of this reappraisal of anarchy would be located, one thing is uncontroversial: the theme and idea of anarchy is accompanied with a strongly philosophizing will, a philosophical questioning that proceeds politics. And this meta-political understanding of anarchy definitely derives from Emmanuel Levinas, whose oft-quoted passage is worth quoting at length. The passage appears in a footnote in Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence:

La notion d'anarchie telle que nous l'introduisons ici, précède le sens politique (ou anti-politique) qu'on lui prête populairement. Elle ne peut pas—sous peine de se démentir—être posée comme principe (au sense où l'entendent les anarchistes).

L'anarchie ne peut pas être souveraine comme l'arché. Elle ne peut que troubler—
The notion of anarchy we are introducing here has a meaning prior to the political (or antipolitical) meaning currently attributed to it. It would be self-contradictory to set it up as a principle (in the sense that anarchists understand it). Anarchy cannot be sovereign, like an arche. It can only disturb the State—but in a radical way, making possible moments of negation without any affirmation. The State then cannot set itself up as a Whole. But, on the other hand, anarchy cannot be stated. Yet disorder has an irreducible meaning, as refusal of synthesis. (Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence 194n3).

Understood in this way, anarchy gets separated from the dismissive sense of political disorder. Anarchy is no longer a lack to be filled in, an absence to be made present, an imperfection to be mended. Now it is (re)constituted as some sort of degree zero, a pure troublemaker which evacuates the existing position without offering any alternative to replace it, a positive refusal to synthesis and totality. This meta-conception of anarchy is also elaborated by Reiner Schürmann in Le Principe d'anarchie: Heidegger et la question de l'agir. Here, the question of anarchy becomes even more philosophical, as anarchy is a problem for philosophy as well as for history of philosophy. Schürmann’s argument thus points to the question of thinking in general by following Heidegger’s problematization of Western philosophy. 56 With this question of anarchy

56 “L'anarchie dont il sera question est le nom pour une histoire qui a affecté le fondement de l'agir, histoire où cèdent les assises et où l'on s'aperçoit que le principe de cohésion, qu'il soit autoritaire ou rationnel, n'est plus qu'un espace blanc sans pouvoir législateur sur la vie. L'anarchie dit le destin qui fait dépérir les principes auxquels les Occidentaux ont rapporté,
raised in a non-political, or meta-political manner, Schürmann brings us back to the German tradition of phenomenology and ontology, from Levinas to Heidegger.  

This meta-political notion of anarchy, the arch-moment of signification or a site of indistinction and non-differentiation where the primary articulation has not yet taken place, elaborated by Levinas and Schürmann, and exemplified by Critchley’s texts, has gained currency in recent critical discourse. Why is this turn to anarchy problematic? No doubt this may be taken positively as a moment of appropriation of the discipline of philosophy by anarchism, in which the concept of anarchy, that much despised state and notion in political science and political philosophy, gets transformed into a legitimate subject for philosophical investigation. Also, this conception of meta-anarchy may serve as an analytical tool to stretch our thought experiment and to radicalize our imagination about beginnings and origins, about signification and differentiation. However, it should always be asked whether it is anarchism that has to become philosophical or it is philosophy that has to become anarchist. These two may turn out to be:

Depuis Platon, leurs faits et gestes pour les y ancrer, les soustraire au changement et au doute. C’est la production rationnelle de cet ancrage—la tâche la plus grave traditionnellement assignée aux philosophes—qui devient impossible avec Heidegger” (“The anarchy that will be at issue here is the name of a history affecting the ground or foundation of action, a history where the bedrock yields and where it becomes obvious that the principle of cohesion, be it authoritarian or ‘rational,’ is no longer anything more than a blank space deprived of legislative, normative, power. Anarchy expresses a destiny of decline, the decay of the standards to which Westerners since Plato have related their acts and deeds in order to anchor them there and to withdraw them from change and doubt. It is the rational production of that anchorage—the most serious task traditionally assigned to philosophers—that becomes impossible with Heidegger”; 16-17; Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy 6-7).

57 See “What Can I Do?” in an Archaeological-Genealogical History” and “What Must I Do?” at the End of Metaphysics: Ethical Norms and the Hypothesis of a Historical Closure.” In “Se consituter soi-même comme sujet anarchique,” Schürmann reads the last works of Foucault in foregrounding the problematic of anarchy and subject formation. For this matter, see also Wakefield.

58 For this meta-understanding of anarchy which designates not the actual disorderly state of things and beings, as commonly understood in political philosophy (for instance, in Hobbes), but instead the not yet stratified matrix of signification, see Abensour.
be the same in the final analysis, but one should not forget if one is doing philosophy or doing anarchism, as one’s self-awareness of disciplinary belonging affects one’s way of saying and writing, and that is not a minor or trivial issue at all.

Traditionally speaking, anarchist practices and discourses have been relegated to a deliberately low status, compared to sonorous high theories or metaphysical subtleties, rigorous hard sciences or professional social sciences, esoteric humanities or religion. Anarchist literature has been produced for a wider but minor public with varying degrees of education, and never or very rarely for educated intellectuals and erudite specialists. It is perilous to simply juxtapose anarchist texts with mainstream political treaties when they had been produced in almost diametrically opposite circumstances and addressed to widely different audiences. Without properly understanding the material and intellectual conditions of the production of anarchist discourse, we would end up reiterating the dismissal and neglect anarchism suffered in mainstream political science and political philosophy, which would consider that anarchist eccentricities are nothing but psychological phenomena: “Anarchists are often presented by academic commentators as estranged mavericks among political thinkers, amusing eccentrics who, for reasons more psychologically than philosophically interesting, have rejected all precedents and traditions of political thought” (Crowder 2). But if it is inappropriate to psychologize anarchists, it is equally so to turn them into martyred heroes and to fetishize anarchist texts simply because of who produced and printed them, how they were circulated, where they were distributed, and so on. Decades ago, David Goodway worried about such a worshiping tendency of converting anarchist historiography into antiquarian hagiographies (For Anarchism 6).

In “Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm,” Carlo Ginzburg narrates the emergence of
the conjectural paradigm across multiple genres and disciplines in the late nineteenth century, from aesthetics to psychoanalysis to detective fiction to criminology; there, it is not articulated rules and quantified knowledges, but “instinct, insight, intuition” that got activated, and Ginzburg suggests that this conjectural practice of retrospective and symptomatic reading might have originated with hunting techniques in the prehistoric age. On the last page of the essay, Ginzburg offers two notions of intuition, high and low: high intuition is suprasensible, irrational, and epiphanic revelation, frequent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while low instinct, Ginzburg’s true object, is “based on the senses” and equipped with “the flexible rigor”: whereas high intuition is an exclusive property for the elite few, low intuition “can be found throughout the entire world, with no limits of geography, history, ethnicity, sex, or class,” practiced by many various peoples, both educated or uneducated, which “binds the human animal closely to other animal species” (124-25). Isn't it in this low and experiential wisdom that anarchism's strengths and weaknesses might and ought to be found? If this is the case, then it may be wrong to leave behind this sensuous and experiential, wide-spread and transversal realm and retreat into such a refined and distilled notion of anarchy. I do not suggest that meta-anarchy is useless. My point is that an exclusive, even ideological, focus on anarchism or anarchy would be fatal, cutting a tie with the past and with the durational, with what has been practiced without being theorized.

If disciplinary framing and ideologization are somewhat inevitable, some sort of necessary evil, then its double-edged nature should be clearly recognized: it is both burdensome and legitimating, because it appropriates anarchist topics in a somewhat patronizing manner so that they would become respectable and worthy of a serious scrutiny and theoretical elaboration, but that comes at a price. It may be instructive to relate this disciplinary framing or ideological substantiation to what Freud means by “secondary revision,” where the original contents, latent
or manifest, are made legible and acceptable, so that they would become appropriate in a given representative regime under censorship. Something must be sacrificed so that it would be represented, but what if this sacrificed part is fundamental? Once we enter a hegemonic disciplinary battlefield of interpretation, our perspectives are exposed to heteronomous orders which we could not undo by our own wills. We can make ours as we like, but at a certain risk of becoming illegitimate and inauthentic in given discursive and disciplinary circumstances. We need, therefore, to be cognizant of this determining mediation and careful not to let it take an upper hand over us; otherwise, we would end up reiterating disciplinary premises and uncritically packaging past anarchism into something quite different from them.

**Salvageable from the Wreck: Post-Anarchist Reading of Classical Anarchism as a Form of Justification**

The real benefit of the post-anarchist critique of classical anarchism, I argue, is that it reveals what kinds of discursive units nineteenth-century anarchism activates, how they could function within a certain textual space, and most importantly, how they could become problematic once we suspend our belief in ontological entities like “human nature,” “human essence,” “humanity” whose existence is dependent on extra-textual certainty or on the wishful and performative, namely, not something that already is out there but something that we have to make happen and activate. In order to explicate my point, I come back to Todd May’s distinction between tactic and strategy and then reexamine his critical appropriation and revision of classical anarchism.

In Todd May’s discussion, strategic thinking is related to Marxism, because “a strategic political philosophy involves a unitary analysis that aims toward a single goal” and “pictures its
world as a set of concentric circles, with the core or base problematic lying at the center, and the
derivative problematics surrounding it at various distances,” and for May, Marxism is an
exemplar case of this end-oriented, centralizing philosophy (10). On the contrary, tactical
political philosophy considers that there is no such center but many different sites, no unilateral
flow from the center but various interplays among those sites; in this decentralizing thinking,
politics does not privilege any of those specific sites and cannot be reduced to any of them either,
where the vanguard position is made not only useless but also impossible. May argues that this
tactically-oriented political philosophy, especially delineated by Foucault, Deleuze, and Lyotard
among poststructuralist thinkers, has a forerunner in political philosophy, namely, anarchism:
both poststructuralism and traditional anarchism admit the ubiquitous presence and working of
power, thus developing multiple struggles and resistances at many points that do not rely on
representational political intervention (12-13). Colin Ward’s words May quotes are quite telling
in this regard: “There is no final struggle, only a series of partisan struggles on a variety of
fronts” (54).

However, May continues that classical anarchism is not totally free from the strategic
political philosophy: strategic thinking and tactical thinking coexist in classical anarchism, which
produces an ambivalent tension in whether, for instance, decentralization is a strategic goal or a
tactical multiplication (60-61). In addition, the classical paradigm is not usable as such, because,
although it is right to have a decentralized notion of power that is at work everywhere, it still
holds on to a unitary notion of human nature, thus keeping the remains of essentialism. However,
May further complicates this discussion by suggesting that the anarchist notion of power is no
less problematic than that of human nature, both of which are tied to different kinds of
essentialism, leading to erroneous conclusions and practices. On the one hand, classical
anarchism considers that omnipresently defused power is exclusively oppressive: power is always and everywhere negative, from which derives an extreme solution that power must be annihilated and forever abolished. On the other hand, it depicts human nature as benign, which results in a wrongly optimistic conclusion: “the human essence is good; therefore, there is no need for the exercise of power” (13). For May, the trouble is a tautological narrative that comes out of the combination of these two forms of essentialism:

At the core of much of the anarchist project is the assumption, first, that human beings have a nature or essence; and, second, that that essence is good or benign, in the sense that it possesses the characteristics that enable one to live justly with others in society...Anarchism, then, is imbued with a type of essentialism or naturalism that forms the foundation of its thought. People are naturally good if the obstacles to that goodness are removed—specifically, the twin evils of representation and power—then they will realize and express that goodness in their activity. (63)

Then, May's critical project is to revise the remnant of unitary thinking in classical anarchism, replacing its a priori assumption of the exclusively suppressive power with “the positivity or creativity of power,” simultaneously maintaining that practices are “the proper unit of analysis” (87). In other words, he proposes the possibility of exerting power in a positive and non-coercive manner, deconstructing the stark dichotomy of good nature and bad power, and at the same time, directing ourselves to tactical practices that are not reduced to unitary strategic ends.

One might be able to verify the anarchist claims to power and human nature, whether they are depicted as good or bad, creative or repressive. It should be possible to address these questions, philosophically or sociologically, speculatively or positively, historically or
scientifically, physically or psychologically, individually or collectively. However, what interests me here is not their possible truth or verifiability as such, but rather their discursive effects and functions, or the narrative co-ordination which generates, for instance, a circular scenario of struggle: power is repressive, but the human has an essence which is eternally good, and therefore the human is capable of resisting even when power oppresses us, because, however repressed by power, our essence is nevertheless good and capable of resisting oppressive power. I am more interested in observing with what nineteenth-century anarchism's reliance on benign human nature is related to, in exploring how they are being put together with what other constituents and into what aesthetic structure. In other words, I am going to examine certain ways of discursive or narrative justification: “The point of anarchism's resort to the idea of a benign human essence is to be able to justify its resistance to power” (May 63; emphasis added).

Certainly, when May writes that “anarchism's humanist naturalism” is only a justification for the resistance to power, he might have intended it as a rebuke, criticizing the necessity of such a theoretical construct as an outcome of the unitary, exclusively repressive definition of power (64). It is important to note, however, that by drawing our attention to this humanist and naturalist justification, May suggests that it does not stem from “theoretical laziness on the part of anarchists” (65). Rather, the opposite might be true, as it is a result of intellectual efforts on their part to make a theoretical narrative more meaningful and convincing. Thus, May continues to discuss what constituents would be required in a certain theoretical narrative, what kinds of discursive design and argumentative architecture such a speculative fiction would call for. In this way, May enables us to see that “the assumption that power is exclusively suppressive in its operation” can be countered only with an equally exclusive assumption on human nature (65).
May’s somewhat cynical explanation of nineteenth-century anarchist discourse may be juxtaposed with Woodcock’s rather unguarded and mediated confession of faith, both of which foreground, though in a quite different manner, the potentially wishful or performative aspect of anarchist discourse. Indeed, Woodcock’s statement suggests that the ground on which anarchist ideas stand is a belief or a strategy meant seriously, while the anarchist stake is much less general and more particular: “All anarchists, I think, would accept the proposition that man naturally contains within him all the attributes which make him capable of living in freedom and social concord. They may not believe that man is naturally good, but they believe very fervently that man is naturally social” (*Anarchism* 22; emphasis added). I would like to use this passage by Woodcock to displace May’s contention that “almost all anarchists rely on a unitary concept of human essence: the human essence is good” (13). Here, the difference is subtle, but it is nevertheless significant. First, it is one thing to claim that man is naturally good and it is another to say that one believes that man is so. The former requires a scientific verification—facts, numbers, data, and so on—while the latter does not, since it is registered at a different level of discourse. In other words, as a belief it is not part of knowledge production, but can stand fast when scientifically refuted. Its utility and effectivity could and should thus be found elsewhere. Second, a belief that man is good is not the same as a belief that man is social and, because of natural sociality and sociability, capable of doing good. Put another way, to be social is not by definition equal to being good, and far less deterministic and contingent than natural goodness.59 At any rate, what I would like to emphasize here is that the two themes May relates to each are neither absolute nor definitive, and it is always indispensable to attend to textual and discursive specificities, even if a given text appears to do nothing but reiterate a conventional set of ready-

59 This distinction and its ultimate consequence will be further discussed in Chapter Four.
made motifs, because my theoretical and methodological premise is that each text is a singular enfolding of discursive conventions and material contexts, of literary languages and rhetorical tropes, whose unfolding requires more than a just close reading.\textsuperscript{60} In the following pages, I will take such anarchist assumptions and premises as a means of producing an explanatory affect in given discursive circumstances, and further analyze in conjunctures and intersections with what other discourses they are at work.

**Thought Experiment on the Fictional and Freedom of Thought from Verification: Has Vaihinger’s Philosophy of As If and Max Stirner’s Becoming Thoughtless**

If post-anarchism initially proposed to shift our attention from the ontological truth claim to the epistemological and representational logic or meta-ethics, and if one of my critical tasks here is to construct methods or theories of reading classical anarchism differently, after such a theoretical reorientation and with the help of Todd May’s discussion, then it would be indispensable to examine the fictional—yet neither simply false nor cunningly falsifying—implication in classical anarchist discourse. And in order to further complicate the idea of the fictional, I will turn to the philosophy of the \textit{as if} elaborated by Hans Vaihinger. Vaihinger is not particularly anarchist(ic), yet he is contemporaneous with the intellectual tendencies at the turn of the nineteenth century which call into question dogmatic positivism and seek for different epistemological orders. In other words, my interest in Vaihinger is as much theoretical as it is historical.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{60} I discussed this dynamic conception of the text and the importance of reading in the introduction.

\textsuperscript{61} Concerning the historical background of Vaihinger’s as if philosophy, one should consult an autobiographical account of his intellectual formation in the section titled “Autobiographical General Introduction” xxiii-xlviii.
Vaihinger provides a useful distinction of hypothesis and fiction, though they are often confounded with each other. For Vaihinger, the hypothesis is that which has to be verified, and, once verified, becomes something different from what it was before. And the either/or determination is always forcibly imposed on it: once proven false, the hypothesis becomes useless and must immediately be thrown away; but when proven true, it becomes a theory and remains so until it will be refuted by other hypotheses and theories. Put differently, the hypothetical is temporal and transitory, tested against reality and susceptible to being replaced by other ones, because verification is its sole and ultimate end. Compared to this essentially future-oriented, reality-testing hypothesis, continues Vaihinger, fiction is tautological and self-sufficient: “the hypothesis looks forward to being definitely established,” while “fiction is a mere auxiliary construct, a circuitous approach, a scaffolding afterwards to be demolished” (88). If the hypothesis belongs to the paradigm of verification and discovery, fiction belongs to the paradigm of justification and invention. In a word, a hypothesis is experiential, while fiction is aesthetic. For instance, what is usually understood by “natural laws” is something to be discovered, thus belonging to the hypothetical realm, while machines are what are invented, thus being part of the fictional realm (88).

Vaihinger sticks to the initial opposition of hypothesis and fiction. However, Vaihinger also continues that his main contention is not to sharply distinguish hypothesis from fiction and then to valorize one over the other, as if the fictional were bad and only the hypothetical were worth our serious consideration. On the contrary, he emphasizes the essentially speculative nature of our explanatory attempt, whether it is scientific or logical, linguistic or philosophical, because whether something becomes a hypothesis or a fiction depends on the different purposes and usages such explanation would assume. Two points can be drawn from this consideration of
the potential continuity of hypothesis and fiction. First, the hypothetical and the fictional are both essential to our intellect and thinking, and second, their sole difference is “[t]he principle of the rules of hypothetical method is the probability of the conceptual constructs, that of fictional method is their expediency” (89). Thus, the differences of hypothesis and fiction is to be found in their ultimate verity or falsity—a hypothesis might be either true or false, whereas a fiction can only be false—and in their pragmatic, explanatory value that is temporary and susceptible to revision and modification: the hypothetical explanation would be measured against reality and for the sake of the truth, while the fictional explanation is measured against expediency and according to our purposes.

What Vaihinger further develops from this pragmatic utility of fiction is “the philosophy of as if,” or “thought proper to a fiction” (92). With conditional expressions in Western languages, such like “as if,” “comme si,” “als ob,” one can refer to something unreal or impossible, and moreover, we can subsequently built more thoughts on such a fictional construct. Contrary to the hypothetical method, as if thinking predicated on the fictional does

---

62 The linguistic ambiguity and its performative freedom of the conditional is thoroughly discussed in “Ifs and Cans” in Philosophical Papers by J. L. Austin. Derrida also takes up this as if theme in Kant’s discussion on universal history in a speech titled Le droit à la philosophie du point de vue cosmopolitique, delivered at UNESCO in 1991. In After Babel, George Steiner considers the question of language and truth (and falsity), maintaining that the turn of the nineteenth century witnessed a linguistic turn in the truth paradigm, namely, a paradigm shift from an “‘outward,’ hypostatized concept of truth” which is accessible to us, whether it is via sensual perception, intellect, intuition, or revelation, to “a view of truth as a property of logical form and of language” (216). For Steiner, this is not simply a matter of linguistics or literary studies, because he relates mankind’s capability to tell a lie with the language’s capabilities of using conditionals, subjunctives, hypotheticals, counter-factual assertions (224-227). Thus, Steiner concludes that by virtue of language we can refuse to accept the world and reality as they are: “Language is the main instrument of man’s refusal to accept the world as it is” (228). In passing I add that in Errata, an autobiographical account of his own life, Steiner confesses that he thinks of himself as a “Platonic anarchist” (135). To be sure, this statement contains a big ambiguity, because what he means by it is to go against Aristotle’s exhortation and to assume abstention from politics. He asserts that he does not lack compulsion or courage to enter politics, but he might better be seen as a minimalist in
not directly lead to the production of knowledge and truth, because its orientation is less objective, collective, and public rather than subjective, individual, and private; and therefore it could be independent from or unconcerned with objective verification. What Vaihinger underscores in this discussion of the speculative freedom of fictional thinking is not its imaginative and imaginary nature, not its private usage, but its public use for certain practical purposes that merely practical and realistic thinking cannot realize: “For us the essential element in a fiction is not the fact of its being a conscious deviation from reality, a mere piece of imagination—but we stress the useful nature of this deviation” (99).

Fiction is that which remains tautological, because it cannot explain its own meta-ground, or if it can do so, then it already begins to move away from the realm of the fictional: “Fictions are and must remain circuitous and indirect mental paths, which cannot, because they conduct us to our goal, be regarded as really valid or free from logical contradiction” (106). But then one might wonder once again if, like fictional thinking, as if thinking is completely unrelated to knowledge production, or to raise the same question differently, if its expediency and pragmatic utility are purely subjective and thus have no public or collective function. If the logical fallacy as if thinking might incur does not prevent Vaihinger from dismissing it altogether, it is because Vaihinger is so certain of the “importance of fictions for the theory of knowledge” (107). Indeed, he re-articulates the capacity of thought, suggesting that thought not only deals with what is in reality, but more importantly, that it is capable of dealing with what is thought of, even when this

that he does not expect much from politics, willing to support “whatever social order [which] is capable of reducing, even marginally, the aggregate of hatred and of pain in the human circumstances...[thus] allows privacy and excellence breathing-space” (135). Therefore, Steiner’s anarchism is not to say conservative, neoliberal, or anarcho-capitalist, but passively individualistic and lacking in the active principle of community; it seeks only for the increase of privacy, a right to be let alone, a certain relation with oneself and not with other people or properties. This question of individualism and individuality will be further discussed in Chapter Four.
thought-of does not yet exist or there is no chance that it would actualize in any future: “At any rate we must leave behind us the naïve belief that what is thought of really exists, that the forms and methods of thought can be rediscovered in the world of fact” (161).

Vaihinger's as if philosophy marks a paradigm shift from the true and the ontological to the useful and the purposiveness, toward a purpose which is not naturally inherent but humanly invented, in which Vaihinger’s thought takes up the theme of human endeavor and artificiality that runs from Kant to Nietzsche, as our world cannot be understood but still can be known: for Vaihinger, Kant is an quintessential thinker who explores the ambiguity of natural purposefulness in *The Critique of Judgment*, while Nietzsche provocatively examines the extra-moral necessity of lying (171). Because of the fundamental enigma and agnostic nature of the world, any attempt to truly understand it inevitably gets convoluted with the untrue and the fictional, challenging the limit of intelligibility but also going beyond it from other perspectives and toward other directions, for instance, by positing something impossible as if it were possible and something absent as if it were present, by suspending the ontological truth of a certain claim to reality and the world and yet taking it as if it were true anyway.

In this way, Vaihinger liberates thought from the burden of reality, simultaneously warning us of the danger of replacing speculative fiction with reality itself, because it is to confound the consciously false or practical lying with the genuinely false or malicious

---

63 Vaihinger discusses Kant and Nietzsche extensively, and these two German philosophers are two of the major references throughout *The Philosophy of “As If”*. See especially Part II, where Vaihinger discusses the as if tendencies in modern Western philosophy.

64 One might draw a parallel between these Kantian and Nietzschean discussions on sensual perception and its epistemological limits and Vico’s consideration of historical studies. Like Kant and Nietzsche, but centuries before, Vico maintains that the natural world cannot be understood, because it is God’s creation that is beyond our reach. However, Vico continues that history can be both known and understood because it is human creation, because it is us who have created history.
falsification: “Only we must not put any philosophical system in the place of reality, led away by the fact that it seems to us enchanting, ideal, glorious, and noble” (161). In The Sense of an Ending, Frank Kermode takes up Vaihinger’s idea of fiction, contrasting it with myth. While Vaihinger displaces the question of truth from verification to justification, from discovery to invention, Kermode offers a different articulation by foregrounding the question of falsity. In truth, what interests Kermode is fiction’s self-reflexivity that it is self-conscious of being false. The trouble is then not that fiction is false but that it can misrecognize itself as true: when fictions forget their own fictionality and lose their self-reflectivity, they degrade into myths, and the material consequence of this naiveté and forgetfulness could be very grave, like the degenerated fiction or myth of anti-Semitism held by the Third Reich. For Kermode, myth is an agent of stability that demands absolute consent, while fiction is an agent of change that requires conditional assent (39). Fiction can remain so only by being self-critical and keeping itself unsettled and unsettling. In a similar vein, Vaihinger also concludes, “we must be neither dogmatic nor skeptical, but critical” (162). If it is too restricting to tether our thought to the tyranny of reality, of what is already real and actual, it is equally frivolous to completely dissociate it from the other, letting our thought freely enjoy its fancies and caprices.

It is in this problematics of thought and reality, of thinkable and possible/impossible that Max Stirner’s The Ego and His Own intersects with Vaihinger. Stirner’s reflection is suspended between the Kantian ambiguity of natural purpose and artificial purposiveness and Nietzschean declaration of life forces and will to power. Stirner contends that it is our illusion that “man” has a calling. For him, even an exercise of forces cannot be considered as an end or calling, because it is what we do and cannot but do always and everywhere, because of our biological or social constitution. In a word, forces are not what one has to and ought to manifest, but something
which manifests itself regardless of, in spite of, and even against our intentions: “forces [Kräfte] always of themselves show themselves operative, the command to use them would be superfluous and senseless. To use his forces is not man's calling [Beruf] and task, but is his act [Tat], real and extant at all times. Force is only a simpler word for manifestation of force” (327). In this way, Stirner rejects taking biological necessities for human ends.

However, this dismissal does not mean that a properly human calling should be discovered elsewhere, whether it is the Hegelian Spirit or Feuerbachian Humanity. Stirner exposes to critique the capacity for thinking, warning us of misrecognizing the relation between the thinkable and the possible. For Stirner, it is a grave mistake to equate the thinkable with the possible, even if the opposite may be true, that is, if the possible is thinkable. Stirner continues that it is thinkable that man might become rational, but from this it does not follow that this will become possible: the mere fact that we can think about the possibility of humanity’s becoming rational is no assurance that such a possibility will surely be realized and actualized. However, a far bigger danger exists here: this inferential chain from the thinkable to the possible could go to extremes, replacing the possible with the ought-to, which ultimately leads to the calling (330). One can think about a rational man, which can then be misrecognized as possible (one can be rational); this possibility could slide to the duty and obligation (one ought to be rational, because one is naturally capable of becoming so), which further displaces to the ultimate end for humanity (the rational being).

Against this compulsory, dogmatic, and idealizing becoming of what one ought to be, Stirner opposes our non-necessity to “become what we do not like to become” (331). His suggestion is, contrary to what one might expect, not becoming beastly, not a mere surrender to beastly instincts and desires (332). What Stirner recommends is to be guided by my own thinking
and my own sensuality, not by the free thinking or by the sensuality (339). Stirner provocatively suggests that the appropriation of such definite thought makes one thoughtless:

If thoughts are free, I am their slave; I have no power over them, and am dominated by them. But I want to have the thought, want to be full of thoughts, but at the same time I want to be thoughtless, and instead of freedom of thought, I preserve for myself thoughtlessness...He who cannot get rid of a thought is so far only man, is a thrall of language, this human institution, this treasury of human thoughts. (345)

Of course, this is not an outright refusal of thinking, not an invitation to anti-intellectualism or intuitionism. Nothing is farther from Stirner’s critique of the ideology of thinking. As he demolishes the uncritically inherited thought and language, he also opens up spaces for individual creation with this unflinching critique of the universal and the general by which the singular-corporeal has been mediated and possessed. The trouble is not whether such universals and generals like “man,” “good,” “reason,” are enough noble or good, but that those universals are owned by ideas which are not mine. Thus I am in danger of being possessed by them once I begin to accept them as my calling and my end.

Here, I do not attempt to further radicalize this individualistic and individualizing, rather than selfish, creativity and subjectivity. Saul Newman and several other scholars have done so in the recent anthology on Stirner, following Koch's juxtaposition of Stirner with Nietzsche in their critique of the representative regime but, contrary to Koch’s epistemological turn, moving toward the ontological problematics, as Rousselle would insistently propose. By taking up the problematics of fiction and myth Vaihinger and Kermode elaborate, I read Stirner’s critique of being possessed as dismantling the fictionality of the universal and the general, as revealing their
degeneration into myths. However, what Vaihinger also teaches us is the indispensability of fiction for our life, especially when we hope to go beyond the limits of intelligibility without simply leaving them behind and falling into blind irrationality. My question, then, is whether, by criticizing the existing fictions, or what Stirner calls “spooks,” of God and Humanity in Hegel and Feuerbach, Stirner also ends up inventing his own fiction of the Ego that is the unutterable and the unspeakable, some sort of corporeal and concrete existence prior to or apart from linguistic articulation and mediation, a better and more expedient fiction.65

Here, I would like to consider the relationship of knowledge with thought and aesthetics or ethics. What to be targeted is not the very existence of (the fiction of) duty and obligation as such, but their individual or collective formation and desirability in relation to certain ends we conceive for ourselves. We have to ask ourselves by what we have to/ought to/want to construct our conducts and behaviors, our ways of living and experiencing, whether it is according to the scientific knowledge of the natural and social world as it is, to logic and reason that establishes itself with its own principles in a self-sufficient and self-satisfying manner, to customs and ideologies collectives have inherited from the previous generations, or instead to aesthetic or ethical thought that might deviate from reality or the taken-for-granted, yet still dwell on real heterogeneities and contingencies, seeking for ways to change this world for our liking. It is in

65 In the last chapter of Spectres of Marx, entitled “Apparition of the Inapparent: The Phenomenological ‘Conjuring Trick’,” Derrida discusses spectrology in Stirner through Marx’s critique of Saint Max in The German Ideology. According to Derrida’s reading, Marx’s attack on Stirner boils down to the inadequacy of Stirner’s immediate (which means, in the Hegelese, inappropriate, naive, and false) exorcization of the ghostly and reappropriation of life into the corporeal: “It is not enough to destroy as if with a spell, in an instant, the ‘corporeallity’ (Leibhaftigkeit) of the ghosts in order to reincorporate them alive. This magic of immediacy, which would give life back to the specters by simple transition from exterior to interior body, from the objective to the subjective, in the simple auto-affection of the ‘I-Me,’ ‘creator and owner’ of these thoughts, that is what Stirner seems to recommend” (161).
this context that Foucault's suggestion of dissociating analysis from ethics and questioning the
determined, causal tie between them that materialism presupposes becomes truly significant:

For centuries we have been convinced that between our ethics, our personal
ethics, our everyday life, and the great political and social and economic
structures, there were analytical relations, and that we couldn't change anything,
for instance, in our sex life or our family life, without ruining our economy, our
democracy, and so on. I think we have to get rid of this idea of an analytical or
necessary link between ethics and other social or economic or political structures.

(The Foucault Reader 350)

Of course, this statement should not be taken as suggesting that material conditions do not matter
and that we could construct an ethical or aesthetic life apart from and free from economic and
political circumstances. No doubt, our material and spiritual life are inexorably tangled up with
the historical givens and accumulations. Yet even as we are constituted by them, we are also
always changing our relations with existing historical givens and inventing new ones. To blindly
insist on freedom of will and consciousness is perilous, as it could lead to overestimating our
creativity and imagination, which is why classical Marxism criticized anarchism so fiercely.
Derrida paraphrases Marx’s warning to Stirner whose closeness to Marx caused the obsessively
repetitive gestures of distanciation on the part of Marx and Engels: “the egological conversion is
not enough, nor is the change in the direction of a gaze, nor a putting into parentheses, nor the
phenomenological reduction; one must work—practically, actually. One must think work and
work at it. Work is necessary” (163).

Quite ironically, anarchist voluntarism could result in privileging what is already
available: to construct a temporarily autonomous zone out of what is already being offered to us
in the present is to retreat from real material problems in this word, to fail in transforming the
world, in inventing materials and resources anew and making accessible the previously
unavailable, whether they are material or immaterial, properties or ideas, privileges or customs.
Such subjectivist, voluntarist traps must be avoided: overestimation of consciousness over
materiality, when combined with simple rearrangement and redistribution of the available and
the ready-made, can end up preserving the whole structure of exploitation and domination.

However, as Foucault rightly complains, we should be free from too strict an imposition
of materialist determinism in order to open up spaces for ethical and aesthetic invention and
creation via the construction of consciousness and subjectivity, via giving style to our individual
and collective life through praxis and daily work, or via inventing different fictions with a full
consciousness of their fictionality and inventedness. Such refashioning of one’s life is impossible
without certain material conditions, but as Stirner might suggest, it does not follow from this
materialist criticism that once such material conditions are met, liberatory aesthetics and ethics of
living automatically arises. If, as Marx exhorts, work is necessary to transform the world, that
work is not limited to the material world, and must include the immaterial and the ideological,
the mythical and the fictional. Post-anarchist reappropriations of past anarchism should be made
useful for this purpose. As Vaihinger suggests, “The 'As if’ world...the world of the 'unreal' is
just as important as the world of the so-called real or actual (in the ordinary sense of the word);
indeed it is far more important for ethics and aesthetics. This aesthetic and ethical world of 'As
if,' the world of the unreal, becomes finally for us a world of values” (xlvii).66

66 In *The Sense of an Ending*, Frank Kermode suggests to expand the scope of the as if
problematic from philosophy, science, logic, and mathematics to literature in general, and
this is partly what I would attempt in the next chapter on Emile Zola.
Above, I defined my interpretive task not as testing the truth of post-anarchist readings of past anarchism or in parsing them into the usable and the unusable, but in rereading the classical paradigm by deliberately locating it in this consciously-false, fictional, speculative, and as-if order. Nineteenth-century anarchists meant their arguments seriously and genuinely, advancing them more as hypotheses to be verified than as fictions to be invented and justified, those which remain suspended and tautological, groundless or only self-grounding. Retrospectively, it turns out that part of their contentions are wrong or become old-fashioned, because their argumentation was, for better or more, of their time and their social class, of the literary genres and disciplinary standards in which they were writing. One can still try to separate what is still valid and true from what is made invalid and false, to evaluate their estimations and predictions from our present perspective. Yet, what we should do, and moreover, what I believe is more productive, is to focus on their textual constructs and examine their aesthetic architectures and ethical endeavors as well as the ways in which they take advantage of the existing authorities of science and knowledge. Thus, ultimately speaking, our theoretical and methodological standpoint, as Vaihinger succinctly puts, should become “positivist idealism or idealistic positivism” (xlvii).
Chapter Three

Émile Zola’s Ends of Naturalist Historical Representation: Wishful Narrative

Conclusions in *Le Docteur Pascal* and *Les Rougon-Macquart*

[L]a science est incapable de repeupler le ciel qu'elle a vidé, de rendre le bonheur triomphant aux âmes dont elle a ravagé la paix naïve. (Zola. [A Speech addressed at l'Association générale des étudiants de Paris])

A ce tournant d'une époque surmenée de science, inquiète des ruines qu'elle avait faites, prise d'effroi devant le siècle nouveau, avec l'envie affolée de ne pas aller plus loin et de se rejeter en arrière, elle filait l'heureux équilibre, la passion du vrai élargie par le souci de l'inconnu. Si les savants sectaires fermaient l'horizon pour s'en tenir strictement aux phénomènes, il lui était permis, à elle, bonne créature simple, de faire la part de ce qu'elle ne savait pas, de ce qu'elle ne saurait jamais. (Zola. *Le Docteur Pascal*.)

**Triple Ends of *Le Docteur Pascal*: Historicity of *Les Rougon-Macquart* as Historical Novels, or Fictional Interventions and Narrative Inventions**

With the publication of the twentieth volume *Le Docteur Pascal* in 1893, *Les Rougon-Macquart* finally came to an end. More than two decades passed since the first episode, *La Fortune des Rougon*, which the preface subtitled “les Origines,” began to appear in serial form at the time of the Franco-Prussian War (RM 1:4). As early as in 1868, Émile Zola conceived the
idea of writing a group of tales whose narrative unity would derive from the biological ties of a family embedded into the socio-historical contexts of the Second Empire. The original plan was more compact in size than the final outcome. The rather modest proposal of a ten-volume cycle—two novels published each year and a completed project in five years—evolved into as many as twelve and finally twenty books, and these ever-increasing volumes became almost burdensome to the author, so much so that he ended up hoping he would finish the cycle as quickly as possible. He wrote to Jacques van Santen Kolff in July 8, 1892: “J'ai hâte de me remettre au travail pour que ma terrible série soit enfin terminée dans un an” (“I hastened to put myself to work so that my terrible series would finally be terminated in a year”; Cor 7:289).

The last volume was intended as the epitome of the whole series, as a conclusion to the gigantic literary project that was conceived of in the last years of the Second Empire without yet knowing of the coming end of the regime, and that kept developing during the era of the Third Republic in a supposedly scientific manner—“L’hérédité a ses lois, comme la pesanteur./ Je tâcherai de trouver et de suivre, en résolvant la double question des tempéraments et des milieux, le fil qui conduit mathématiquement d’un homme à un autre homme” (“Like gravity, heredity has its own laws./ I will try to find and pursue, in solving the double question of temperament and environment, the thread that leads mathematically from one person to another”; RM 1:5).

Indeed, the protagonist of the last novel is a doctor-historian who kept studying his family members and recorded their medical cases over decades: in the novel, he would endeavor to solve the essential enigma of life, inducing a general theory of heredity out of the empirical cases.

All the English translations of the French quotations in this chapter are mine, otherwise indicated. Zola expressed the same desire to finish the series when first four chapters of Le Docteur Pascal were written. Zola wrote to van Santen Kolff that he was already thinking about the next series and its first installment, while keenly aware that he could not launch a new project without finishing the Rougon-Macquart series which had occupied him for too long a time (Cor 7:359).
and dreaming of curing humanity from diseases. However, his scholarly and humanitarian aspiration would be exposed to multiple dangers conspired by women: his mother does not want to publicize the shameful history of their family, his niece revolts against his scientific education, and his old maid is worried about her master’s sacrilege, and they would harass the aging doctor to give up science and surrender to worldly matters and religious salvation. The protagonist would resist them and finally win the love of the youthful niece, who would give birth to a baby and dream of an uncertain but perhaps prosperous future that would await him, while another inheritance of the doctor, his research manuscripts, would be destroyed by the mother and the maid after his tragic death. Thus, the last novel centers on the privileged scientist-chronicler male protagonist and the question of science and life. In the opening lines of the _ébauche_, or the first rough sketch of the work, Zola says to himself: “Je voudrais, avec le Docteur Pascal, résumer toute la signification philosophique de la série” ("With Doctor Pascal I'd like to summarize the whole philosophical significance of the series"; *RM* 5:1580). In January 25, 1893, Zola wrote to van Santen Kolff that the final volume would be a philosophical and scientific summary of the entire series: “J'ai toujours voulu finir par une sorte de résumé, où l'idée scientifique et l'idée philosophique de l'ensemble seraient nettement indiquées. C'est en somme une conclusion générale” (“I always hoped to finish with a sort of resume, where the scientific idea and the philosophical idea of the ensemble would be clearly indicated. It is in sum a general conclusion”; *Cor* 7:358). The same letter continues, very schematically, that _Le Docteur Pascal_ would narrate a three-fold end: “C'est bien la fin des Rougon-Macquart que j'écris, historiquement, scientifiquement et philosophiquement. Voilà trois vilains adverbes, mais ils disent avec netteté ce que je veux dire” (“This is the end of the Rougon-Macquart which I write, historically, scientifically, and philosophically. Here are three ugly adverbs, but they say with clarity what I
want to say”; *Cor* 7:359). But what does Zola exactly mean by these three ends: historical, scientific, and philosophical? What conclusion is summarized and indicated here?

***

Historians have praised the documentary quality of *Les Rougon-Macquart*. David Schalk suggests that seemingly less sociological volumes like *Le Docteur Pascal* could be an invaluable resource to investigate nineteenth-century Europe: if one properly explores the multi-layered contexts into which Zola’s works are embedded, then one is capable of studying various facets of textual contexts, whether they are historical or discursive, diachronic or synchronic, disciplinary or generic. Criticizing the fact that “[h]istorians have tended to see Zola's texts merely as vivid secondary sources for changes in nineteenth-century society, sections of which can be used to provide flavor and human interest to broader, empirical arguments,” William Gallois suggests

---

68 This is not the first time that Zola referred to his literary ambition that his fiction simultaneously sits upon the historical, philosophical, and scientific grounds. In one of the preparatory notes at the earliest stage of *Les Rougon-Macquart* series, Zola compares his future literary project with Balzac's *Comédie humaine*, yet suggesting that his work does not employ the Balzacian method of reappearance of characters and that the unity of his series would instead derive from scientifically representing one single family that are put into certain socio-historical sites (*RM* 5:1737). The prefaces to *La Fortune des Rougon* and *Une Page d'amour* state the same idea in a much more didactic manner. The provocative, manifesto-like statement in the preface to the first volume surprised and worried Flaubert, who replied to Zola in a letter that the poetics of the work should be hidden, for it could be dangerous to express the artist's intention too overtly: “Je n'en blâme que la préface. Selon moi, elle gâte votre oeuvre qui est si impartiale et si haute. Vous y dites votre secret, ce qui est trop candide, chose que dans ma poétique (à moi) un romancier n'a pas le droit de faire [I blame only the preface. In my opinion, it is harmful to your work that is so impartial and so high. There you say your secret, that which is too candied, something which in my own poetics a novelist has no right to do]” (qtd in *RM* 1:1541).

69 See “Tying up the Loose Ends of an Epoch: Zola's *Docteur Pascal,*” However, Schalk is more simple-minded in “Zola and History.” There, he simply disregards the aesthetic quality of *Les Trois Villes* and *Les Quatre Évangiles*, the last two cycles, which are almost unanimously dismissed as inferior to the early and the mature works. Schalk suggests that even if they “may represent a diminishment of artistic talent in a critical sense,” they are still quite valuable “from a historical perspective,” because they are “carefully researched and amply documented” in a “naturalistic, deterministic and realistic” manner (83).
that we appreciate Zola’s “historical argument and the unity of the cycle as a history of ideas” (68). However, what both Schalk and Gallois miss, despite their theoretical and methodological complications, is the great ambiguity of “Histoire naturelle et sociale d’une famille sous le Second Empire” as historical novels.

It is often pointed out that Zola commits anachronistic errors in several volumes. According to Eduardo Febles, the miners' strike in *Germinal* is based on “the violently repressed demonstrations at La Ricamarie (June 1869) and at Aubin (October 1869),” which are both still within the temporal framework of the Second Empire, but Zola was also inspired by “the 1884 labor unrest at Anzin which he experienced first hand,” which overtly exceeds it; in addition, though set in 1866-67, the novel refers to dynamite which was not invented until 1868 (35, 37n8). Zola’s “socialism” shows similar superimpositions, leaving ambiguous whether it belongs to the last decade of the Second Empire, as the cycle apparently claims, or to the 1870s and 80s, which the naturalist writer observed at first hand; for instance, the socialist characters in *Germinal* and the discussions about agriculture and international trade in *La Terre* are informed by Jules Guesde, an ex-communard who turned to anarchism and ended up becoming a vulgarizer of Marxism in France, whom Zola interviewed a few times in preparing for these volumes. What open up here are gaps and fissures between what history tells and what fiction

---

70 Mitterand, *Zola: L’Histoire et la fiction* 29. Becker, *Les saut dans les étoiles* 116-18. What is not well noticed, it seems to me, is that the finalized versions often efface precise references to exact dates and years, despite the preparatory notes register them clearly. For instance, in such notes as usually called “plan général” or “plan détaillé,” which outline chapter division, Zola overtly indicates the date and duration of each chapter. According to those notes, the first chapter of *Le Docteur Pascal* is set in July 1872 and the last in July or August 1874 (*RM* 5:1604-6). However, these years are not mentioned in the finished text, while it indicates the passing of time as seasonal changes.

71 See McCormick.
narrates, between what the novels officially claim to present (the Second Empire) and what they cannot but implicate (the Third Republic), and it is unlikely that the author was unaware of them.

Isn’t it more productive to argue that the naturalist author takes advantage of these temporal disparities as a creative moment to superimpose two histories or referents, the past and the present, the Second Empire and the Third Republic? I would like to argue that Zola intentionally confounded them with each other, effacing the latter as much as he re-inscribed it into the former, both of which would become fictional, while still being tied to the historical. Put differently, the historical dimension of Zola’s novels is not simply referential in multiple ways, but also mediated by multiple intentions and traversed by cracks and fissures, and it is exactly into this porous imbrication of the historical and the fictional that Zola would insert other narrative ends that are not wholly contained by the avowed ones. Zola’s narrative contention, it seems to me, is to negotiate such territories and boundaries like history and story, science and fiction, past and present, present and future, fact and wish, in order to go beyond the merely historical or referential and toward something imaginary, wishful, or even utopian, yet without completely transgressing the naturalist logic of the historical novel.

Indeed, Zola was not simply concerned with mimetic precision, which would put into question the historian’s claims. Colette Becker quotes Zola’s boastful comment that he is not

72 About this sort of effacement which paradoxically underscores the process of historical registration, see Barbara Johnson’s discussion on Mallarmé’s treatment of the Panama scandal (57-67). Given that Zola and Mallarmé are contemporaries, it is no coincidence that Zola’s L’Argent also takes up the same scandal whose social impact was huge. Apparently they did not correspond regularly, their relation remained distant, and their differences were numerous from the scale of commercial success to their literary circles to their aesthetic taste. When Zola sent his books to Mallarmé, the latter returned cordial but brief letters. However, their unexpected closeness is detected in their rather sympathetic response to the anarchist-terrorist violence in the early 1890s, in their peculiar interest in anarchism. I will discuss Zola’s relation with anarchism below. About Mallarmé’s relation with anarchism, see Eisenzweig and Kristeva. About Zola-Mallarmé relationship, see Nanna Thompson.
interested in merely copying details, because the material truth is only “un tremplin pour s’élever plus haut” ("a springboard to jump higher"): “Je ne suis pas un archéologique qui dissèque les monuments, je ne suis qu’un artiste. Je regarde et j’observe pour créer, non pour copier. Ce qui m’importe ce n’est pas l’exactitude pédante des détails, c’est l’impression synthétique” (“I am not an archaeologist who dissects the monuments. I am an artist. I look and I observe in order to create, not in order to copy. What is important to me is not the pedantic precision of details, but the synthetic impression”; qtd. in *Les saut* 114). 

If, in the fictional universe of *Les Rougon-Macquart*, the social and the historical are not a passive background, the physiological and the hereditary are not deterministic as eternal, permanent, and transhistorical forces either. From Zola’s preparatory notes for the series, one can observe how Zola’s historical sense intensified as his literary project unfolded along multiple lines and ensembles, from the materialist flatness or two-dimensionality of temperament and surrounding-circumstance we find in the 1868 preface to the second edition of *Thérèse Raquin*, to the mutual shaping of the biological and the modern articulated in “Notes générales sur la marche de l’œuvre.” Gilles Deleuze's great contribution to Zola criticism is to complicate the biological notions of temperament and instinct, taking them for more than scientific, more than a mere borrowing from contemporary science. According to Deleuze, Zola’s notion of instinct is much richer and concrete, or even “une notion de roman” (*Logique du sens* 374). In Zola, 

---

73 See also an oft-quoted letter to Henry Céard in which Zola asserts that he lies for the sake of truth, based on exact observation, in order to jump to stars (Cor 5:193).
74 Concerning these preparatory notes for *Les Rougon-Macquart*, see “Appendice” in *RM* 5:1667-76. Mitterand offers a few different hypotheses on the chronological order of these notes, but the lack of positive evidence makes it difficult to settle it definitively. See *Zola: l’histoire et la fiction* 13-38 and *Le roman à l’œuvre* 13-21).
75 Deleuze thus emphasizes that this biological-literary device is, contrary to the common criticism of the deterministic nature of naturalism, less repressive than creative: the crack is “le dieu épique pour l’histoire des instincts” (“the epic god for the history of instincts”; 386). For Deleuze, Zola's fiction is in the final analysis predicated on epos and not on logic, which
instincts are transformed into certain propensities, tendencies, orientations, and dispositions, which, being physiologically specific but unspecified in socio-historically terms, indicate certain genres of life; however, each volume always differentiates, particularizes, and actualizes the generic into the singular by making a narrative account of such singular encounters of such biologically constituted characters with concrete socio-historical objects.

It may be argued then that Zola experiments with science and history both precisely and imprecisely. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that being inexact is itself a way of being precise, because, when certain things cannot be designated and grasped by approximation, “amexactitude” (“inexactitude”) or “expressions anexactes” (“inexact expressions”) could be the only exact path to them (*Mille Plateaux* 13). Analyzing the mythopoetic layer in Zola’s novels, Naomi Schor argues how “the striking imprecision and vagueness of the temporal indications” enables the author to dislocate common places and infuse mythological implications into them (9). What I propose here is that Zola employs such a technique of imprecision and inexactitude not simply for mythological amplification, but also for other purposes. Zola’s literary problem can be formulated in the following way: on the one hand, how to develop historical narratives without breaking the historical logic proper to the genre of the historical novel conceived in scientific or experimental terms, without completely destroying referential functions? On the other hand, how to do so without simply refusing potentially pessimistic and ugly truths about

---

76 This mythopoetic reading of Zola has been done quite extensively by several leading Zola scholars like Philip Walker and Jean Borie.
bestiality of humanity, drawn from a scientific understanding of living organisms? In a word, the question is how to be historical and more than historical, be scientific and more than scientific, acknowledging such lower, bodily and corporeal drives, the impulsive and the instinctive which nineteenth-century positivism, medical science, and the theory of heredity and evolution revealed only too clearly, but without completely being determined by such scientific articulations. How could Zola propose a literary solution to these questions?

Le Docteur Pascal is the final sequel to the previous nineteen volumes, the last conclusion which enfolds and unfolds the whole history of the degenerating family tainted with hereditary defects, where the author also reveals the theoretical foundations for the entire series, and this self-referential tendency renders this volume closer to a meta-fiction paradigm. But it does not simply refer back to the past or to past volumes, whether it is the Second Empire the cycle narrativizes or the Third Republic during which Zola keeps writing it. In Le Docteur Pascal, the end of the cycle, 1873 (the narrative time), is suddenly channeled to 1893 (the time of narration), where the text resonates with various echoes of the turn-of-the-century problematics, especially their negative sides such as physical and mental degeneration, aesthetic decadence, Schopenhauerian pessimism, mysticism and religious conservatism, decreasing

---

77 As Mitterand suggests, the “experimental” nature of Zola’s fiction is double: one is the sense Zola intended in that infamous essay, “Le Roman expérimental,” or an “observation provoqué [provoked observation]” in a laboratory and its application to literature, and the other is a literary experiment on the page (Le Docteur Pascal 44-45). Susan Harrow explores the latter, literary meaning of experiment, examining “the supposed discrepancy between thematic modernity (embraced by Zola) and the practice of literary modernism (assumed to be absent in Zola's writing)” (5). Harrow quite persuasively argues that Zola's modernism can be found not only in content but also in form, for instance, in disjunctive narrative economy, aesthetic description of affect, representation of the individual and social body. For Harrow, the thematic modernity in Zola's work that shows his ambivalent attitude to modernization corresponds to Zola's stylistic modernity, because what Zola does is not only “registering the claims and the pressures of modernity” but also “reworking them critically and imaginatively,” thus “vitalizing perceptions and exploring indeterminacy” (210).
population and effeminization of race and nation, impatience and dissatisfaction with science and progress.\footnote{Max Nordau's best-seller, \emph{Degeneration}, includes a chapter on Zola and realism, accusing him of sensualism, plagiarism, mediocrity, and so on. See Pick, “Zola's Prognosis” in \emph{Faces of Degeneration} 74-97. For the general historical background of \emph{Le Docteur Pascal}, Schober 54-57 and Mitterand, \emph{Fiction and Modernity} 123-28. Zola’s secularist critique of catholicism is discussed in \emph{Zola et les historiens} 45-75.} The text does not refer so much to either of the historical realities independently as it constructs a singular ensemble of these two histories and stories, and it is through these literary and fictional conjunctures of different times and tendencies that certain wishful thoughts and utopian images arise. My interpretive task in this chapter, then, is to explicate such wishful and utopian emergences in the last volume of \emph{Les Rougon-Macquart} by enmeshing them into anarchist subtexts and contexts. However, while proposing such an anarchist reading of \emph{Le Docteur Pascal}, I am also trying to elaborate an anarchist theory of reading, or anarchist hermeneutics, in which the reader problematizes the existing signifying hierarchy of language and discourse, institutional demands and disciplinary requirements, taking \emph{Le Docteur Pascal} as a paradigmatic case for constructing such a theory of reading.

\textbf{Beyond Pascal-Zola’s Authority: Altruistic, Autobiographical, and Scientific}

Pascal Rougon plays the title role of the twentieth and last volume of \emph{Les Rougon-Macquart}. Among the whole family, Pascal appears most qualified to represent the three-fold end (historical, scientific, philosophical), as he is a disinterested observer and chronicler, an experimental scientist, and an altruistic dreamer.\footnote{Pascal Rougon first appears in the first volume, witnessing his parents’ shameful deeds as orchestrated by his elder brother, Eugène Rougon, a supporter of Napoleon III. What is to be sacrificed in such a conspiratorial plan is Silvère Mouretan, an ardent and credulous, passionate but uneducated republican boy, who falls prey to Antoine Macquart, who envies the bourgeois status of the Rougon family. In \emph{La Fortune}, Pascal plays no significant role in this initial rivalry and conspiracy between the two families, remaining a mere witness. Pascal reappears several times in later volumes, but again only as a minor character. Although} In the \textit{ébauche}, Zola wonders how to make...
Pascal “très bon, très altruiste, plein de pitié pour l’humanité souffrante” (“very nice, very altruistic, full of pity for suffering humanity”; *RM* 5:1586). Zola’s letter to van Santen Kolff is unambiguous: “Et toujours, également, Pascal a été, dans ma pensée, le héros de ce dernier roman” (“And always, equally, Pascal has been, in my thought, the hero of this last novel”; *Cor* 7:358).

Endorsing Zola’s original plan, Zola scholars have regarded Pascal as both privileged and exceptional. For Colette Becker, Pascal is “the most accomplished among those by whom Zola punctuated his work” (“Autofiction” 60). Henri Mitterand writes that Pascal is “le seul personnage qui ne soit pas taré” (“the sole character who is not tainted”), “le seul désintéressé, parmi ceux qui sont en mesure de conquérir la fortune” (“the sole disinterested, among those who are capable of conquering the fortune”) and “le seul qui soit un homme d’étude et de science” (“the sole character who is a man of study and science”; *RM* 5:1570). David Baguley makes some reservations only to bring the protagonist into the mythological realm, where the intellectual hero is elevated to the regenerating solar god (*Zola et les genres* 118). Bertrand-Jennings similarly idolizes Pascal, relating him to Christ the savior and redeemer who sacrifices himself for the life of others (105).

80 In another place, Mitterand suggests that Pascal is not at all heroic, because he is “an anti-hero of modern science,” “the last, somewhat mythical, representative of the ordinary medicine of the nineteenth century, an ineffactual medicine” that can do nothing but assist the natural cure or death of a patient (*Fiction and Modernity* 127). But like Baguley, Mitterand makes this reservation only to praise Zola’s literary ingenuity of amplifying “elemental imaginary and poetic tendencies” (129). Concerning Zola’s use of medieval and baroque imagination, see Butor and Hemmings.
Moreover, Pascal speaks for Zola, thinking about life science and philosophy which, in Zola's opinion, concludes the whole cycle. Mitterand succinctly states that Pascal is “la projection de Zola [the projection of Zola]” (RM 5:1570). In another place, Mitterand provocatively declares, pushing this representative relation one step further: “Pascal Rougon? Non, Pascal Zola” (Zola. Tome II 1102). One might, therefore, go so far as to argue that Pascal is Zola's conclusion to the Rougon-Macquart cycle. In truth, Zola’s ébauche states that Pascal should not only express but also incarnate the philosophical significance of the series, embodying the deep message of the series:

Mais surtout incarner dans le docteur ce que je veux faire exprimer à toute ma série. Il connaît la vie, il en a fouillé, il en a dit toute l'abomination ; et il ne l'en aime pas moins : l'amour de la vie, de la santé, de la sainte énergie, de la force...Il faut que ce soit un cantique à la vie, un cri de santé quand même, d'espoir en l'avenir. (RM 5:1586)

---

81 Pierre Sandoz in L'Œuvre is another candidate for the character-author equation. Sandoz mirrors Zola’s writing career from journalist to novelist, while verbally reiterating Zola's attack on metaphysics and psychology and support for physiology and hereditary science: “Hein? étudier l'homme tel qu'il est, non plus leur pantin métaphysique, mais l'homme physiologique, déterminé par le milieu, agissant sous le jeu de tous ses organes” (“Huh? Study man as he is, no more their metaphysical marionette, but the physiological man, determined by the environment, acting under the operation of all his organs”; RM 4:161). Sandoz’s combination of literature with science and democracy is also comparable to Zola's famous equation of naturalism with republicanism (OC 10:1380). However, this Zola-esque character is neither a protagonist nor a Rougon-Macquart member, while Pascal is both of them. Also, Pascal ends up writing Les Rougon-Macquart without knowing it, thus acquiring a meta-fictional status, whereas Sandoz remains only a diegetic character who does not disturb the boundaries of fiction and reality, of fiction and meta-fiction.

82 Another autobiographical reason why Pascal is his alter-ego or even Zola himself: “Pascal” became Zola's alias when he voluntarily exiled in England after his rhetorical feast against the Anti-Dreyfusards in “J'accuse!” incurred a sentence of twelve month's imprisonment. When Zola had to register in a hotel in London, alone, the name he used was no other than “M. Pascal” (Zola, Notes from Exile 28-29).
But especially incarnates in the doctor what I want to express in the whole series. He knows life, he dug into it, he said all the abomination of it; and he doesn’t love it any less: love of life, of health, of sound energy, of force…This should be a canticle to life, a cry of health despite all, of hope in the future.\textsuperscript{83}

In sum, Pascal is a privileged character, both distanced and committed, intellectual and informed, who elevates the doctor closer to the position of the naturalist author: Pascal is as much a diegetic character as a meta-character. In addition, Pascal’s thoughts on life and work, which constitute a significantly large portion of the novel, are unmistakably Zola’s.

\textit{Le Docteur Pascal} would voice Pascal’s will to extract a general law of heredity out of the individual case studies, his dream of weaving a genesis of the whole humanity beyond the genealogy of one single family and curing humanity from the diseases and evils of the anxious, impulsive, and crazy modern age: “Quelle fresque immense à peindre, quelle comédie et quelle

\textsuperscript{83} What complicates the question of authority, and what is probably particular (not to say unique) to Zola studies, is the existence of Zola’s manuscripts which enable us to reconstruct his writing process step by step. For a long while, the Pléiade edition (1960-67) had been nearly the sole source for those manuscripts, even though only the 1868-69 notes were included in their entirety, as an appendix to volume V \textit{(RM 5:1669-1782)}. A few volumes of manuscripts have been accessible since then, among others, \textit{Carnets d'enquêtes}, edited by Mitterand and published in 1986 and a three-volume collection, \textit{Les Manuscrits et les dessins de Zola}, once again edited by Mitterand and published in 2002, the centenary year of Zola's death. Around the same time, \textit{La Fabrique des Rougon-Macquart}, directed by Colette Becker in collaboration with Véronique Lavielle, began to publish all the preparatory documents for the Rougon-Macquart series. Now, the entire manuscripts and preparatory notes are made electronically available for free at Gallica (\textit{http://gallica.bnf.fr/}). A big question with these manuscripts is whether or not what the author originally intended in earlier manuscripts should be taken as definitive and used to legitimate a certain reading. No doubt, genesis studies can explicate in a positivist manner the sources and the processes of their transformation into final texts. However, it is not self-evident whether or not these manuscripts should acquire the status of the origin which fully explains the final product. My claim is that the final, literary effects cannot be logically deduced from the source material. Whatever definite opinions the author states in preparatory notes, the process of literary transformation from notes and plans to narratives must be closely analyzed each time anew, as each process is singular and non-iterative.
tragédie humaines colossales à écrire, avec l'hérédité, qui est la Genèse même des familles, des sociétés et du monde!” (“What giant fresco to paint, what prodigious human comedy and tragedy to write, with heredity, which is the very Genesis of the families, the societies, and the world!”; RM 5:1008). From Pascal’s perspective, _Le Docteur Pascal_ can be read as a therapeutic remedy to the miseries in the preceding volumes, with a somewhat optimistic, somewhat utopian implication: science is not simply a tool for analysis and diagnosis but also a means for transformation and re-creation, and Pascal devotes his entire life to this noble cause of regenerating humanity and embracing life forces in their totality. Should we then conclude that Pascal, including his theoretical discourse on science and history, are the end of the whole series?

But what such a reading forgets is that the novel does not end with Pascal’s ultimate triumph. Today, it is an open secret that the last volume is based on Zola’s hidden love affair with Jeanne Rozerot, a young housemaid, with whom he had two children. Apart from the official dedication which is printed on the published edition, there is another dedication, a handwritten one found only in the copy the author presented to the girl, which unmistakably reveals the private dimension of _Le Docteur Pascal_: Rozerot is Clotilde, and therefore Pascal is Zola. A contemporary reviewer complained that the incestuous love episode between the aging 

84 See Decaux.
85 “À ma bien-aimée Jeanne,—à ma Clotilde, qui m'a donné le royal festin de sa jeunesse et qui m'a rendu mes trente ans, en me faisant le cadeau de ma Denise et de mon Jacques, les deux chers enfants pour qui j'ai écrit ce livre, afin qu'ils sachent, en le lisant un jour, combien j'ai adoré leur mère et de quelle respectueuse tendresse ils devront lui payer plus tard le bonheur dont elle m'a consolé, dans mes grands chagrins” (“To my dearly beloved Jeanne—to my Clotilde, who has given me the royal feast of her youth and who has taken me back to my thirties, presenting me with the gift of my Denise and my Jacques, two dear kids for whom I have written this book, so that they will know, when they read it one day, how much I have adored their mother and with what respectful tenderness they should repay her later for the happiness with which she has consoled me in my great sorrows; _Album Zola_ 257, RM 5:1573). Here, I quote the translation by Monica Lebron and David Baguley with minor
scientist-uncle and the young maiden-niece was not only unlikely but also abominable, lacking in convincing psychological explanations.\(^{86}\) But Zola was perhaps not discouraged by such opinions, as he had good reasons to believe that the story was not only realistic and likely, but real and true. Given this autobiographical parallel and the controversial status of their relations—the Pascal-Clotilde couple is incestuous, while the Zola-Rozerot couple is extramarital—*Le Docteur Pascal* might be understood as Zola’s wishfulfillment story, though, since his wish had already been fulfilled in reality, the narrative would not fabricate a wishful fantasy about masculinity and sexual conquest, but rather invent a narrative excuse that would justify their illegitimate and unapproved bond.

However, if *Le Docteur Pascal* should be read as Pascal’s and Zola’s story, one has to conclude that Zola produced an extremely ironic conclusion, as if denying the importance of science and history, as if suggesting the final triumph of historical revisionism, fueled by personal ambitions, over scientific truth: Pascal dies a tragic death, not once but twice. He dies without seeing his beloved Clotilde after they part because of financial devastation and after she goes to Paris to nurse her effeminate, degenerating, wealth brother. Pascal also dies without seeing their baby born. And his life-long research, piles of his notes and documents, his scientific theories of heredity and life, are all thrown into fire by Félicité Rougon, his tyrannical mother, who does not want to hand down a shameful family history to later generations, effacing any material and textual evidence that records it and overwriting it by building a hospital that would crown their family name. The very last paragraph of the final volume stages three figures, a lively and prospective baby whose biological stigma is yet unknown, a serenely suckling mother

---

\(^{86}\) See *Le Docteur Pascal*, edited by Jean Borie, 425-33. About the question of the family in nineteenth-century French society, see Nicholas White.
who is still hopeful about the future of their baby, and a triumphant grandmother who founds a monument for fabricating the fictitious glory of the Rougon family:

De nouveau, les cuivres lointains éclatèrent en fanfares. Ce devait être l'apothéose, la minute où la grand'mère Félicité, avec sa truelle d'argent, posait la première pierre du monument élevé à la gloire des Rougon. Le grand ciel bleu, que réjouissaient les gaiétés du dimanche, était en fête. Et, dans le tiède silence, dans la paix solitaire de la salle de travail, Clotilde souriait à l'enfant, qui tétait toujours, son petit bras en l'air, tout droit, dressé comme un drapeau d'appel à la vie. (RM 5:1220)

Again the distant brasses blew in fanfares. This must be the apotheosis, the minute when the grandmother Félicité, with her silver trowel, placed the first stone of the monument build to the glory of the Rougons. Appreciated by the jovialities of Sunday, the great blue sky was in festivity. And, in the warm silence, in the solitary peace of the study room, Clotilde was smiling at the baby, who was suckling all the time, his little arm in the air, upright, raised like a flag that calls to life.

But Pascal does not appear in these lines. And the very last sentence, the very last word is praise for life, allegorically represented by the baby’s hand raised upright.

I propose therefore that we should question the reliance on the authority of Zola-Pascal. In “Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?” Michel Foucault problematizes the author function as a principle of economy, or thrift, which stratifies the anarchic chaos of signs and regulates the potentially free-flowing signification, so that the stable meaning would be produced in a safe manner (Dits et écrits 1:839). To follow the author’s cues and to take Pascal for an authoritative spokesperson is
a legitimate interpretation, an official option too, but to equate Pascal with the author and to reduce the novel to this conjunction is to suppress other meanings and possibilities the novel could have actualized or has already actualized in some minor ways. What is lost by privileging the Zola-Pascal connection. My question is whether it is possible to take a more anarchistic path, aiming at different conjunctions and focusing on the narrative dimension of the novel and the cycle, resisting the explicit authority of the author and the authorial figure?

In this respect, Michel Serres' celebrated reading of the series in Feux et signaux de brume is both instructive and disappointing. Freely translating Le Docteur Pascal and a few other books, Serres extracts Pascal's overt theory of heredity and medicine; but at the same time, Serres relates the narrative's figurative logic of the natural elements to the law of thermodynamics that is operative but remains covert in the series. Serres thus discovers in Zola's texts what Zola might not have clearly intended, but what the texts nevertheless activate and actualize, namely, “the epic of entropy”: “Rien ne dit mieux que les Rougon-Macquart l’écrasement, le gaspillage, la dissémination, la perte, l’irréversible jusant vers la mort-désordre; la déchéance, l’épuisement, la dégénérescence” (“nothing says better than the Rougon-Macquart crash, consumption, dissemination, loss, irreversible ebb to death-disorder; decline, exhaustion, degeneration”; 78). However, the problem is that as Serres paraphrases and retells the story, the last volume becomes more than a récit or story, transformed into a “treaties” on “genetics, genealogy, and genesis.” According to Serres, Mendel, Nietzsche, and Freud correspond to these three fields, respectively, which constitute Pascal the protagonist, the experimental scientist, and the chronicler (129). Serres ends up reaffirming Pascal’s authority and privileging the

---

87 This “entropic” interpretation has been well discussed. Indeed, David Baguley subtitles his path-breaking, refreshing generic approach to naturalism and history of naturalist literature “The Entropic Vision.” See Naturalist Fiction: The Entropic Vision, especially the last chapter which has the same title with the subtitle.
philosophical and scientific resonances and correspondences of Le Docteur Pascal over its literariness and fictionality.

Georg Lukacs is perhaps right to complain that unlike realist predecessors like Balzac and Dickens, Zola’s novels do not have memorable characters (Studies in European Realism 92). 88 Lukacs’ pro-realist and anti-modernist worry is the atomization of descriptive details: as description dominates over narration more and more from naturalism to symbolism to modernism, narrative details get reified, falling apart from the trajectory of the plot, which results in the loss of interpenetration and reciprocity of description and narration, of characters and things, of actions and conditions. With an excessive amount of such disintegrated details, continues Lukacs, characters can no longer be a dialectical center of synthesis, or even a site of convergence that is traversed by extreme forces and antagonistic terms (Writer and Critic 139). Zola’s failure has two reasons: his rejection of romantic leaps in epic plots and his rejection of larger-than-life figures, namely, dialectical characters in whom singularity and type are synthesized. Lukacs’ final verdict is that Zola ended up using merely mechanically average characters and putting them simply into an uninterrupted stream of random events (Studies in European Realism 91).

What Lukacs misses is that the site of synthesis in Zola, if it exists, is not crystallized in such privileged individuals or their special deeds. If Zola's novels do not have memorable heroes, isn’t perhaps because even simple and ordinary lives, experienced closely, are no less intense and eventful than epic figures fraught with contradictions? Shouldn’t Zola’s literary

88 Despite this negative assessment, Lukacs is not entirely dismissive of Zola, contrary to his Marxist predecessors like Engels and Lafargue. See Birchall and Marx and Engels, MECW 48:167-68. However, it appears that for Lukacs, the Zola of “J’accuse!” could still be a model intellectual as a Voltairian figure (Studies in European Realism 95). About Lukacs and Zola, see also Jacques Pelletier.
ingenuity be sought, therefore, in his invention of singular ensembles of mediocre characters placed into socio-historically specific circumstances, or what Lukacs calls negatively “a kaledoscopic chaos”? (Writer and Critic 133) It is simply unproductive to read supposedly “mechanical average” characters independently, or understand some of them as privileged characters who overtly speak for Zola.

In this regard, Mitterand is absolutely right to maintain that “[e]ach character, taken separately, is really only a silhouette or even a caricature, and the character's documentary significance extends no great distance” (Fiction and Modernity 20). What matters is the interrelation between characters, not their individual positions or their belongings to certain groups and ideologies, but “a set of oppositions” or “correlations” those characters constitute. What Mitterand reminds us several times is that we should not immediately move away from the textual to the external world the text appears to point towards, because each character is “fundamentally a textual system” (20). Mitterand insists on the textual mediation which is neither transparent nor simple, making us always attentive to the original narrative texture, where characters are inexorably embedded in diegetic surroundings and proceedings, whether within one single volume or across multiple volumes.

89 Mitterand continues a few pages later: “we cannot impose upon the text an external grid of classification such as the opposition between bourgeois and proletariat. If we do in fact use these terms, it will only be a posteriori, because there is no more appropriate terminology available to designate the oppositions located in the text through our analysis of its discursive variations” (22). If one takes this suggestion literally, it would turn out that many essays, even those by leading Zola scholars, fall short at one point or another. For instance, Ronnie Butler’s “La Révolution française, pointe de départ des Rougon-Macquart” and Aimé Guedj’s “Les révolutionaires de Zola,” two oft-quoted essays on Zola’s revolutionary characters, could be a prey to the above criticism, despite their rigor and comprehension. The point is not whether or not one should use existing vocabularies, but that one should avoid substantiating them and taking them independently from individual texts.

90 In another place, Mitterand expands this second point toward a more sociological direction, arguing that what Zola represents again and again is—probably contrary to Lukacs’ criticism of reification by description, I would add—what today’s parlance may name “l’écosystème”
With this deliberate displacement towards narrativity and textuality, interrelatedness and embeddedness, as well as the question of authorial authority in mind, I take the path of what Barthes calls “structuration.” If the Barthes of “the structural analysis of narrative” is concerned with disclosing the objectively existing, scientifically locatable structure of a given text, one that is supposed to exist out there independently from the analyzing reader, the Barthes of *S/Z* problematizes such a static and impersonal notion of structure. The Nietzschean Barthes foregrounds the significance of interpretation, in which the active participation of and transformation by the interpreting reader comes to the fore: “Il s'agit en effet, non de manifester une structure, mais autant que possible de produire une structuration” (“what indeed matters is not to manifest a structure, but to produce a structuration as much as we can”; 27). Put differently, the Nietzschean Barthes suggests that the structure of a text is not objectively locked within a given text and that we have to (re)invent it, as much subjectively as objectively, by freely structuring codes and signs offered in and by that text. The question is therefore no longer to find the true and right answer that should exist almost in a transcendental and non-historical manner, but to create one anew by combining certain articulated codes and organizing them in ordered but open-ended ways, toward heteronomy and plurality.  

Jean Borie contends that Zola's literary value lies not necessarily in the documentary quality that copies the social world objectively, but in that his texts are themselves an enterprise (*Zola et les mythes* 53). What both Mitterand and Borie emphasize is that Zola’s circumstances are not a merely mimetic referent but a literary invention. Deleuze makes a similar argument, but toward a different direction. Deleuze argues that although both realism and naturalism are concerned with mimetic representations of social circumstances and environments, the latter is also driven by another, different motivation of going beyond material and geographical specificity: “[Zola] had the idea of making real milieux run in parallel with originary worlds. In each of his books, he describes a precise milieu, but he also exhausts it, and restores it to the originary world” (*Cinema I* 124).
I am not going to seek for “an absolutely free state, in which fiction would be put at the disposal of everyone and would develop without passing through something like a necessary or constraining figure,” that anarchistic state Foucault stages as a performative act, and yet withdraws at the very moment when he articulates it (The Foucault Reader 119). Nor do I intend to appropriate signification and meaning into a purely subjective economy. Rather, it is to (re)discover such plural and alternative constituents and to structure them in a way the author might have intended yet without actualizing it explicitly, thus leaving it open for readers to come to (re)construct it. Then, my question is how to read the Rougon-Macquart cycle freely but not arbitrarily with Le Docteur Pascal as a point of intervention. Also, if the authority of Zola-Pascal is to be displaced, what other authority, or at least, what other organizing theme or pattern might take care of that emptied center? I am going to tackle this question by thinking about what Vittorio Frigerio calls “l’image d’un Zola anarchiste qui s’ignore” (“the image of an anarchist Zola which he doesn't know himself”; 28).

Anarchistic Derangement and Disturbance in Zola and His Time

In Émile Zola au pays de l’anarchie, Vittorio Frigerio offers a good selection of the turn-of-the-century anarchists' articles that are directly on Zola or indirectly relevant to the naturalist quel pluriel il est fait” (“to interpret a text is not to give it a meaning (somewhat founded, somewhat free), but on the contrary to appreciate of what plural constituents it is made”; 11). Concerning this performative act of saying and denying simultaneously, of introducing and withdrawing at one and the same time, see Judith Butler, “What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault’s Virtue” in The Judith Butler Reader 302-22. In closely reading Foucault’s utterances in the lecture titled “Qu’est-ce-que la critique?”, especially ones in the Q&A section, where Foucault speaks of the originary freedom as if it were a slip of the tongue, Butler examines how such a practice of speaking “posits a value which it does not know how to ground or to secure for itself, posits it anyway, and thereby shows that a certain intelligibility exceeds the limits on intelligibility that power-knowledge has already set” (319).
novelist. According to Frigerio’s informative preface, anarchists in late-nineteenth-century France posthumously sent homages and tributes to Zola, seeing in him “un sympathisant indépendant, un compagnon de route, une puissance, en tout cas, avec laquelle il faut compter et dont l'influence considérable auprès de l'opinion peut contribuer à une évolution sociale fondamentalement libertaire” (“an independent sympathizer, a companion, a power, in any case, whom one should take into consideration and whose considerable influence on the public opinion can contribute to a social evolution that is fundamentally libertarian”; 45). However, this retrospective admiration does not mean that Zola was an anarchist. Frigerio suggests that Zola's knowledge of anarchism remained second-hand at the best, and he seemed to have read only one text by Kropotkin, “L'Anarchie,” very quickly around 1898 when preparing for *Paris* (20).

Zola scholars tend to discount Zola's interest in socialism. In an interview article which appeared in *La Lanterne*, January 8, 1887, Zola says that he is not interested in socialist doctrines but in “les aspirations de la foule vers un idéal de justice [the popular aspiration for an ideal of justice],” and still identifies himself as a socialist in that he believes that society must experience a “bouleversement profound” (“profound upheaval”).

93 Referring to this interview, *Dictionnaire d'Émile Zola* concludes, rather disparagingly, that Zola's socialism is “un socialisme de coeur, qui se satisfait, depuis son adolescence, de grands mots porteurs, tels: liberté, justice, fraternité, paix. De plus en plus effrayé par les tensions qui agitent la société de son temps, il se réfugie dans l'utopie d'une réforme sociale effectuée en douceur, par la progrès et l'intelligence” (“a socialism of heart, which, since his adolescence, is satisfied with carrying such sonorous words

______________________________
93 “Et pourtant, je suis profondément socialiste, car je crois que ce siècle ne finira pas ou, tout du moins, que le siècle suivant ne commencera pas sans un bouleversement profond de la société. Ce sont les faits, les aspirations de la foule vers un idéal de justice qui m'intéressent [And yet, I’m profoundly socialist, because I believe this century won’t finish, or at least the next century won’t begin, without a profound social upheaval. This is the facts, the popular aspiration for an ideal of justice that interests me]” (qtd in *Dictionnaire d'Émile Zola* 393)
as freedom, justice, fraternity, peace. More and more afraid of the tensions that agitate the society of his time, he retreats into the utopia of a social reform that is achieved peacefully, by means of progress and intelligence”; 394). But is Zola’s sincerity, his interest and belief in “the popular aspiration for an ideal of justice” dubious and ultimately vacuous, as they are a product of romantic enthusiasm or of reformist cowardice?

It seems to me that this affective stance onto social evil and justice is precisely the way in which Zola grasps social questions, and it is through this rigorously affective, somewhat romantic path that utopian images and possibilities emerge in Zola’s texts. In truth, this sympathetic attitude toward political radicals persists in Zola from the early 1880s, when he wrote an essay on Russian nihilists (“La République en Russie,” which appeared in La Figaro in March 21, 1881), through the mid-1880s (at the time of Germinal where Souvarine, a Russian nihilist-anarchist, a disciple and believer of Bakuninist creative destruction, explodes a mine with a bomb), to the early 1890s (at the time of Le Docteur Pascal). In the last decade of the nineteenth century haunted by anarchist violence, Zola responded to an interviewer, rather provocatively, that the anarchists were “sincères” and therefore should be compared to “poètes.” 94 But what does Zola really mean by these words?

The anarchist problematics of this period have been discussed only partially both in Zola scholarship and in literary studies. With more sophisticated approaches than merely focusing on anarchist characters in literary texts, anarchist influences and resonances have been discovered in

---

94 La Figaro (April 25, 1892). A strangely truncated excerpt of this article is collected in Entretiens avec Zola 90-91. Here, I quote from the original Figaro article which is available online at Gallica. Eduardo Febles provides a chronology of major anarchist attacks in France from 1892 to 94 (12-13). The bombs by Ravachol, Vaillant, and Emile Henry are well-known. According to Eugen Weber, these violent deeds discontinued after the lois scélérates passed after Present Carnot’s assassination and the executions of the anarchist criminals (115-120). Concerning anarchist movement in France in general, Jean Maitron's book, Le Mouvement anarchiste en France, is a classics. For a recent scholarship, see Bouhey.
such cultural intercourses like translations and little magazines, whereas anarchist violence has been explored in relation to the (im)possibility of representation, most notably by Julia Kristeva and Uri Eisenzweig.\textsuperscript{95} However, these scholarly discussions tended to misrepresent anarchism by foregrounding the question of representing what resists being signified, or by paying too much attention to the violent aspect of anarchism which is only a minor fraction of diverse, multiple, heterogeneous, and rhizomatic anarchist thoughts and practices at that time. These partial approaches, too formal or too sensationalist, failed to consider constructive and imaginative, even if not quite practical, endeavors and aspirations, passions and affects in the turn-of-the-century anarchism. Recently, Eduardo Febles’ \textit{Explosive Narratives} takes up Eisenzweig’s discussion of anarchist violence and representation, exploring overtly anarchist motifs in Zola’s novels, but his understanding of anarchism is essentially second-hand and ends up repeating those biases. Here, I would like to explore other ways that do not reduce anarchism to such aggressive images of terror and bombing, revisiting Zola’s commentary on anarchists, found in interviews and journalistic pieces, in order to discover “the image of an anarchist Zola which he doesn't know himself” (Frigerio 28).

The short interview, conducted by Jean Carrère, which appeared in \textit{La Figaro}, April 25, 1892, is worth our full attention despite its brevity, because it summarizes Zola’s peculiar idea of anarchism as not irrelevant to his own idea of social reformation and regeneration. At the beginning of the interview, Zola divides anarchists into two groups: one includes those who are trouble-makers for the sake of trouble, and it is police's business to deal with such people; but the other is made up of sincere people who are really troubled by the existing inequality and

\textsuperscript{95} The relationship between anarchism and symbolism/modernism was once a flourishing research field and several important works appeared from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s. See Chapter One.
injustice, unable to be blind to social evils that had been disclosed only too clearly. And it is this second group that interests him.

For Zola, these sincere anarchists are not a modern phenomenon. They are as old as, for example, evil and pain, all of which emerged with human society itself. And they should be understood as an angry reaction to the social order whose conventions function to block natural potentials: as the social order inevitably produces wrongs, so arise “hommes simples, épris du songe d'un bonheur sans mélange...sincèrement convaincus de la possibilité d'un paradis terrestre” (“simple men, enthusiastic about the fancy of a pure happiness...sincerely convinced by the possibility of an earthly paradise”). However, continues Zola, their genuine desires and impulses become ever more intense and ardent at this very historical moment, because now we are “à la fin des civilisations, au moment où un monde à son déclin va faire place à un monde nouveau” (“at the end of the civilizations, at the moment when a world in decline goes to give way to a new world”). Put another way, the present is a time of trouble where social evils and wrongs are no longer hidden and social conventions exert harmful influences.\(^\text{96}\)

In this historical conjuncture, those sincere and simple people are so much “bléssés, dans leur âme véritablement bonne” (“hurt, in their truly kind soul”) that they would become so “des déséquilibrés” (“the imbalanced”). For them, the fundamental failure of the present society is found in the social structure itself. They are both impatient and disinterested, but not simply sentimental or irrational, as their dispositional derangement is not immanent or merely

\(^{96}\) Zola famously described the modern times as troublesome, making it central to Les Rougon-Macquart: “Le moment est trouble. C'est le trouble du moment que je peins” (“The moment is trouble. It is the trouble of the moment that I depict”; Les Manuscrits et les dessins de Zola: Les Racines d'une œuvre 272). But the significant difference is that at that time he was thinking about the Second Empire that still kept going, while here it is definitely about the turn of the century that includes the sense of end [fin] and decline, as much as that of hope to something new and the new century.
psychological, but as it were social and historical, being a result of and reaction to the world of here and now. About a decade ago, Zola characterized Russian nihilists in a similar way, depicting them as neither perverse nor mad, but instead intelligent enough to recognize the societal predicaments in Russia. And so are these anarchists, these daydreamers of an unalloyed happiness, “les chercherus de mieux” (“those who search for the best”).

The trouble is that both nihilists and anarchists are neither malicious nor silly: their use of desperate and violent means is a result of sound observation and serious consideration, and the more sincere they are and the more beautiful their vision is, the more unbridgeable the gap between their dream and their observed reality, as well as their willingness to use whatever means would become more fierce. Precisely because of the realistic observation of Russian conditions and the desperate realization of the absence of a practical means of political mobilization—the dispersed population of uneducated, superstitious, and religious peasants were totally unprepared for political reforms—the nihilists were drawn to the mystic, apocalyptic, Bakuninate way of creative destruction. Similarly, the sincerity of those anarchists would only intensify their radicality. Those imbalanced searchers are so afflicted by the discrepancy between the present state of the things and their anonymous and disinterested desire of human happiness, as to take a somewhat primitivist, Rousseau-esque either/or position, either the absolute necessity of destruction or the perpetuation of the evil: “Et plus leur rêve était beau, plus leur désir de bonheur humain était intense, plus ardemment ils proclamaient la nécessité de démolir” (“And the more beautiful their dream was, the more intense their desire of humane happiness, the more ardently they proclaimed the necessity of destruction”).

Therefore, Zola continues that

97 Yet, it should be emphasize that Zola does not think that man in the natural state is good: destruction is inevitable, and however hopeful it could be, its ultimate consequence remains uncertain. In this sense, I should have said Bakuninate rather than Rousseau-esque.
their constructive passion and desire would only produce social cacophony, being directed to an intransigent path: “tuer l'effet en tuant la cause, c'est-à-dire supprimer le mal en supprimant la société qui l'engenre” (“kill the effect in killing the cause, that is, suppress the evil in suppressing the society which generates it”). Zola seems to say that what is wrong with these anarchists is not their hearts but their strategies.

Now, we might better understand why Zola characterizes these anarchist desires as “l'éternelle poésie noire.” According to the naturalist novelist, the ominous darkness of their aspirational dream resides not in their utopian impulse for human happiness, or “une bonté impulsive et inconsciente” (“an impulsive and unconscious goodness”), but in the ways in which they wish to achieve it in this earthly world, too rapidly, too hastily, too recklessly, going against the way of the world and believing that the world should surrender to their poetry. The trouble for Zola as for the whole society is that however impatient and aggressive, this “impulsive and unconscious goodness” cannot simply be rejected, not only because their aspiration is real and visceral, but also because they are not entirely wrong and their vision is not wholly bad. How then does Zola propose to suture this ever-widening gap between dream and reality, when he does not disagree with the dreamer's diagnosis of the modern time and yet rejects their apocalyptic prescription?

Given his rather sympathetic attitude to the nihilists and the anarchists, Zola’s solutions are quite disappointing, as they are only deduced from the naturalist and positivist orthodoxy. In the earlier essay on Russia, Zola maintains that politics must become an applied science, freed from personal preference, and that the question of government must be addressed disinterestedly and objectively, because, since they are not malleable materials, things and beings can neither be disposed by your arbitrary will not exist in conformity with you romantic fancies; like gardeners
who are not completely free to design a garden and have to work with what is available under certain unchangeable conditions, having therefore to concede to natural laws and figure out the best way in a given situation, the naturalist must take into account the existing circumstances, their facts, tendencies, and laws, and see what option is best available. Thus, Zola’s criticism of the anarchists boils down to their erroneous use or abuse of scientific authority (factual error) and to their failure in recognizing that their violent means were unfit for their purposes at that historical moment (strategic mistake). Zola’s conclusion is that the anarchists were short-sighted, unable to see that reality was unripe for their endeavors, something they might have understood, with properly scientific reason and sound patience: we could not skip stages (“brûler les étapes”) to immediately arrive at the desired end, for each step must be guided by “une poussée fatale” (“a fatal push”). But then, what should we do with anarchist impatience, with their emotional and visceral impulses which are also undeniable facts and therefore true and genuine in their own right? How can science be a remedy to such an affective state? In order to further explore this question, it is necessary to look at other texts that are also contemporaneous with Les Docteur Pascal.

Zola’s Vitalism, or Three-Fold Faith in Life Forces, Positivism, and Ethics of Work

Zola delivered a speech at l'Association générale des étudiants de Paris, just after he finished writing Le Docteur Pascal, which Henri Mitterand says is “le meilleur commentaire du Docteur Pascal” (“the best commentary on Le Docteur Pascal”; RM 5:1609). Taking up Zola’s own words, Le Gaulois, a Parisian newspaper, reports this lecture as “un raccourci du dernier chapitre du Docteur Pascal, qui n'est, lui aussi, qu'un long cri d'amour en l'honneur de la science” (“a brief of the last chapter of Le Docteur Pascal, which is itself nothing but a long cry of love in
honor of science”; *RM* 5:1609). Here, Zola’s words are exactly Pascal’s, as if he had transcribed phrases and sentences from the novel, and the naturalist author speaks in an autobiographical, often confessional manner, relating his adoration of life to his unflinching support for positivist science and then connecting both of them to his faith in work.

Several tendencies and orientations overlap and intersect. Zola’s faith in ever-reproducing and ever-regenerating life goes beyond human affairs, encompassing both “les choses et les êtres” (“beings and things”) and leading to his ethics of work that functions as a sound regulator in this anarchic ocean of life forces which the scientific attitude confronts infinitely and endlessly (*RM* 5:1615). If Zola's vitalism or unflinching faith in life forces and indiscriminate love of living organisms and their phenomena is his worldview, his faith in work is his ethics, while positivism, induction, and hereditary science are analytical and productive tools with which work works upon life and the world. Or, Zola’s three-fold faith can be mapped out in a slightly different way as follows: natural life or anarchic life forces continuously reproduce themselves beyond good and evil, positivist science or gradual and endless

---

98 Mitterand quotes the whole speech in the note section of the Pléiade edition, which suggests how important he thinks this text is, given that he rarely cites longer notes and texts in their entirety. The same text is collected in *OC* 10:677-83. It seems to me that this text resonates with another text Zola wrote for younger audience, not simply because they are both addressed to young people, but also because each of them discusses the problems of science. In “Lettre à la jeunesse,” written in 1879, Zola talks about the problem of the unknown, whether it is an unexplored territory that shall be conquered later or a romantic retreat where one dreams freely, and Zola condemns Renan to the latter category, while praising Claude Bernard for taking the first path (*OC* 10:1215). In the same text, Zola argues that science and poetry are continuous: “La science est donc, à vrai dire, de la poésie expliquée; le savant est un poète qui remplace les hypothèse de l'imagination par l'étude exacte des chose et des êtres” (“science is therefore, to tell the truth, of explained poetry: the scholar is a poet who replaces hypotheses with imagination by exact study of things and beings”; *OC* 10:1222). In other words, Zola does not object to the continuity of science and poetry, but to their confusion or misrecognition. Renan’s error is not necessarily that he retreated into the romantic position, but rather that he nevertheless claimed to be scientific despite such a unscientific, poetic retreat. Like he criticizes the anarchists for their misuse or abuse of science, Zola criticizes Renan for his illegitimate and false use of scientific authority.
enhancement of knowledge, and work, a regulating yet encouraging habit in front of infinite forces and never-ending tasks, all of which are progressively directional without definitive ends.

With the anarchist vocabulary and problematics above, this triple conjunction might be translated in the following way: science has tried to appropriate life forces for a long time, but it has now become undeniable that they are overflowing and overwhelming and that science cannot grasp them once and for all. Impatient people can no longer bear this eternally suspended state of anxiety brought upon them by science in its shattering of religious certainty, because they have become aware of the unbridgeable gap between reality and science, between elusive life forces and ever failing comprehension, between unending knowing and impossible understanding. Because they lose their balance these impatient people would recklessly flee from reason to intuition, religion, mysticism, or whatever would promise an immediate access to the enigma of our life and existence. Confronted with the devastating desperation of such sincere people, hardcore positivists nevertheless stay committed to the old way, patiently continuing the slow and gradual acquisition of knowledge all the while accepting that it will never attain omnipotence; at the same time, those secular intellectuals propose a private and humble way to manage this general disturbance, namely, to have your life and world organized by regularly working on them.

Zola thus frankly admits the contemporary disillusionment with science, conceding that science could no longer be inspirational and that its slow and gradual progress could not win over immediate and instantaneous intuition or revelation. What Zola problematizes here is not necessarily the youth’s proclivity for Schopenhauerian pessimism. If the youth had lost positivist certainty, if they were drawn to the whimsical and the fanciful, refusing to bear the burden of the disenchanted reality and embracing the ignorant happiness of believing, the blame was on
science’s incapacity, or its postponed, yet unaccomplished promise: “la science est incapable de repeupler le ciel qu'elle a vidé, de rendre le bonheur triomphe aux âmes dont elle a ravagé la paix naïve” (“science is incapable of repopulating the sky it has emptied, of giving back the triumphant happiness to the souls whose naive peace it had devastated”; *RG* 5:1612). In other words, science had disclosed disturbing gaps between the known and the unknown, the knowable and the unknowable, smashing religious comfort, while offering no alternative.

Zola’s solution to the youth’s spiritual disorientation and intellectual regression to mysticism is similar to his response to anarchist derangement, but much more elaborated and thorough. Following Ernest Renan, Zola (re)confirms his positivist and rationalist belief in human progress, but bravely concedes that scientific truths would always fall short, failing to bring about happiness:

*L’avenir de l’humanité est dans le progrès de la raison par la science. La seul instrument de connaissance est la science inductive...La poursuite de la vérité par la science est l'idéal divin que l'homme doit se proposer. Tout est illusion et vanité, sauf le trésor de vérités scientifiques lentement acquises et qui ne se

---

99 Zola’s observation of this spiritual emptiness at the turn of the nineteenth century is comparable to Nietzsche’s diagnosis of ascetic ideals in nineteenth-century Europe, discussed in *Genealogy of Morals*: one prefers to will something, or even will “nothing,” rather than does not will at all, rather than stop willing: “[human will] needs a goal—and it will rather will nothingness than not will...any meaning is better than none at all; the ascetic ideal was in every sense the ‘faute de mieux’ par excellence so far” (*Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, 533, 598). What is criticized in both Zola and Nietzsche is the presupposition and assumption of the existence of another world other than this world, and the valorization of something metaphysical or transcendental over the material and the sensuous. The problem here is not simply what reality is, but more significantly what relations and attitudes we should construct with and against reality. Both Zola and Nietzsche suggest that the way-out from this duality must be sought for in this earthly world: this world must be our affair, and no other space is for our living and thinking.
perdront plus jamais. Augmentées par la suite, elles donneront à l'homme un pouvoir incalculable, et la sérénité, sinon le bonheur. \(RM\ 5:1600\)

The future of humanity is in the progress of reason by science. The sole instrument of cognition is inductive science...The pursuit of truth by science is the divine ideal that humanity must posit to/for themselves. Everything is illusory and vain, except for the treasury of gradually acquired scientific truths that will never be lost. Augmented thereafter, those truths give humanity an incalculable power, and serenity, not to say happiness.\(^{100}\)

A decade ago, he could have imposed on the public an almost threatening either/or choice: “Le République sera naturaliste ou elle ne sera pas [The Republic will be naturalist, or it will not exist]” \(OC\ 10:1380\). Now, Zola admits twice that a dogmatic or “sectaire [sectarian]” (re)assertion of positivism as in his youth cannot be a solution to the anxious uncertainty of the youth around him \(RM\ 5:1611, 14\). Despite his certainty that his naturalist, scientific, and democratic orientation should usher in the next century, he understood that science alone could not be enough and that we can never reach the state of omnipotence, Zola thus moves away from the determinist rigor, and as Rita Schober points out, enters a personal and subjective realm (59).

To become subjective and personal does not mean to disregard public truth, however. Rather, it seems that Zola deliberately displaces his epistemological position from inductive certainty to a weaker, uncertain horizon, not because he realizes that his positivist perspective is untrue or unreliable, but because he feels that no perspective can be claimed absolute in itself.

\(^{100}\) Zola was greatly influenced by Vagüé’s essay, “Après M. Renan,” which appeared in the November 15, 1892 issue of \La Revue des deux mondes\, shortly after Renan’s death. Zola carefully read it and copied Vagüé's conclusion on Renan, developing his own thoughts in the last pages of the ébauche, which would constitute “le credo de Pascal” and become the “résumé philosophique de toute ma série.” For a closer and more extensive examination of Zola's engagement with Renan's texts, see Anfray.
and that one needs other grounds to justify one’s own perspective, unless one has recourse to metaphysical or theological authority. Here, Zola attempts to combine sound agnosticism with scientific enlightenment without diluting both. For him, the will to knowledge or knowing will is something mankind raises to/for himself: it is both, compulsory as well as self-imposed (“l’homme doit se proposer” (emphasis added)), just as the positivism expressed here is aware of its own groundlessness and therefore of the necessity of self-grounding, and such grounding comes not necessarily from already acquired scientific truths, but from their pursuit as such which would become “l'idéal divin” (“the divine ideal”) of humanity. According to Renan-Zola, the future of humanity lies in the constant advancement of science and reason that ever increases our knowledge, even if this gradual progression does not bring about a utopia itself but only its approximation, or more precisely, a never-ending, open-ended march and search for it.

But how could we keep ourselves committed to this infinite and endless task, if and when such a task does not bring about easily recognizable material gains or spiritual satisfaction? What keeps us courageous enough to live without absolute certainty about our end, or only with an end which we justify merely by positing it and trying to actualize it? The last section of the ébauche titled “Credo de Renan, d'après Vagüé” maintains that it is faith in life that connects science to philosophy and to ethics as well as to aesthetic production. For Zola, life is not merely a phenomena governed by natural laws, which can be objectively observed and scientifically explained, but rather the primary force among others. But at the same time, it is not simply life as such that interests Zola; it is rather specific forms of life, articulated by hereditary science and foregrounded by narratives of reproduction and continuation that are important to Zola’s thinking. Zola's vitalistic philosophy therefore considers that life is the most fundamental
construct, whereas heredity is “un mouvement communiqué” (“a communicated movement”) which functions both as a scientific theory and as an artistic instrument (RM 5:1610).

What I am suggesting here is that in Zola, hereditary science works as a supreme fiction that is both a principle of description and explanation and that of creation and transformation, traversing fiction and reality alike, as much bridging them as allowing the latter to intervene into the former. Hereditary science explicates the resemblances and differences, the closeness and distance of different people, while functioning as an aesthetic principle of unification, a guiding thread that synthesizes disparate volumes into an intertwined ensemble, an aggregate that cannot be considered unified series unless the logic of heredity establishes and then justifies the ontological connectedness of fictional characters. But it also intervenes, corrects, and even perfects, not necessarily in the real world but at least in the fictional one, especially when it emerges not simply as the architecture of the fictional world but as the very material with which to work on within it, and this very possibility of transformation lures Pascal into dreaming of becoming an agent bringing about universal cure and happiness.101

The speech and the ébauche thus summarize Les Rougon-Macquart from the philosophic and scientific perspective. What is left unresolved in this formulation is the tension between

101 Although it is often forgotten by those Zola scholars who endorse Pascal’s authority, it is noteworthy that Pascal’s ultimate conclusion is not to become god-like by possessing hereditary science and transforming humanity into a stronger race. Indeed, as the narrative goes on, Pascal gives up such a reformist path of intervention, considering it too arrogant and egoistic. However, this abnegation does not lead to Schopenhauerian contemplation and quietist conformism either: Pascal cannot completely abandon the dream of humanity’s ultimate progress and realization of universal happiness, just as Zola never gives up such a hope with inductive science, and there is a significant difference between simply letting life live and die on the one hand and being willing to know the way of life and say it explicitly even if this will to knowledge and expression results in no practical consequence, or even in hurting popular sentiments and disturbing their serenity and complacency on the other. As I have already argued above, it is the passion for the endless pursuit of utopian life and living which Le Docteur Pascal justifies by making a narrative account of Pascal’s indefatigable, courageous, and heroic exploration, even if it would result in multiple failures.
inductive science and our existence, between knowledge-truth and happiness: science might be useful and indispensable, but it is not the goal or ideal in itself; it makes us wise, but knowledge and wisdom is one thing and happiness is another, and they cannot be automatically bridged by the scientific method alone. The reporter does justice to the speech by describing it as a “cri” (“cri”), because Zola’s speech ends with an exclamation, a plea to the young audience: “Le travail! Messieurs, mais songez donc qu’il est l’unique loi du monde, le régulateur qui mène la matière organisée à sa fin inconnue!” (“Work! Gentlemen, but then just imagine that’s the sole law of the world, the regulator which gets the material organized to its unknown end!”; RM 5:1615). However, what is obvious in this passage is that this is less an affirmation of truth, but rather a performative entreaty: Zola asks the audience to imagine differently—“songez donc...” (“imagine that...”)—and repeats “ne...que” (“nothing but...”) and “ne pas d’autre...que” (“no other...than”) to make us believe as if there were no alternative.102 If the gap sounds ever resolved here, that is done only rhetorically, perhaps too quickly and too easily. And it is exactly this unresolvable tension between life and work, between the act of wishing and the wishful content, that Zola's novels attempt to resolve at the narrative level, because what has to be staged there is not merely an intellectual and epistemological understanding of nature and the world, of society and history, but something more than the sensuous and physical content that can be contained within purely scientific discourse, more than the rational content which can be expressed in public speech with one single voice and one single perspective. If fiction is a

102 The passage continues as follows: “La vie n'a pas d'autre sens, pas d'autre raison d'être, nous n'apparaissons chacun que pour donner notre somme de labeur et disparaître. On ne peut définir la vie autrement que par ce mouvement communiqué qu'elle reçoit et qu'elle légue, et qui n'est en somme que du travail, pour la grande œuvre finale, au fond des âges” (“Life has no other meaning or no other reason to be, and each of us appears only to give our sum of labor and to disappear. One cannot define life unless by this communicated movement which life receives and transmits, and life is in sum nothing but work, for the sake of great final work, at the bottom of the ages”; RM 5:1615; emphasis added).
privileged genre, isn’t it because it is singularly inhabited by plural voices and multiple perspectives, which allows for other kinds of resolution which are less definite and more undetermined, or “inexact” in a rigorous way, for instance, a “contrepoint savant” ("knowledgeable counterpoint") that is not a mere mixture of voices, as Serres suggests (85).

**Other Characters, Other Stories, Other Voices: Registration of Plurality and Anthropological Fiction of Friendship**

In the previous section on Zola’s commentary on science, philosophy, and ethics, I pointed out the discrepancies between infinite life forces and the impossible task of catching up with them, between anarchic actualities and regulative work, which remain unbridged unless by rhetorical speech acts. In the interview on the anarchists, Zola tackled the same problematic, relating it to the state of being out of tune because of their sincerity and not being able to bear actually existing evils. Although there is a significant difference—the interview on anarchism embraces positivist and inductive science as a remedy or at least as a corrective, while the speech shows a much cautious attitude toward it—what is common to these two texts is the affective acknowledgment that something is still missing, that this something might remain lost forever, and that we nevertheless strive to attain it.

For a long while, Zola condemned the romantics who insisted on bringing reality closer to their impossible fancies, even as he did not concede to the Bakuninite solution of creative destruction, even in some of *Les Rougon-Macquarts*. In the second half of *Les Rougon-Macquart*, the narrative conclusions appear to take a more and more dramatic turn to apocalyptic annihilation with the demise of the empire, which is either allegorically represented as in *Germinal* (the explosion of a mine) and *L’Argent* (bankruptcy), or literally dovetailed with the
Franco-Prussian War. Thus, the endings of several novels overlap with the beginning of the war, as in *Nana* (Nana’s decaying body inside a room, military marches on a street) and *La Bête humaine* (the blind rushing of a train loaded with French soldiers going to Prussia). And *La Débâcle*, the penultimate volume, narrates the war and closes with the burning of the Paris Commune, an ending that is comparable to the closing of Richard Wagner’s *Die Götterdämmerung*, in which a new world arises out of the old ashes. But then, does all of this mean that Zola’s narratives ultimately give up scientific rationality and embrace an apocalyptic collapse, or an entropic vision as Serres and Baguley argue? My claim is that to emphasize such apocalyptic ends and entropic visions is to miss other narratives, more constructive, more hopeful ones about life forces and regeneration which run through the cycle. My last question is therefore the following: how does Zola approach and resolve the anarchist predicament of affective derangement, anxious aspiration, and motivational uncertainty within and as a narrative in the fictional universe of *Les Rougon-Macquart*?

Rita Schober argues that Zola's appropriation of religious rhetoric in *Le Docteur Pascal* is an inadequate response to the socio-historical problems which Zola's intellect failed to penetrate: instead of tackling a fundamental question of the relation of nature and society, natural history and human history, evolution and revolution, Zola too easily flees to “la prédication d’idéaux sympathiques” (“the predication of sympathetic ideals”; 74). Jean Borie and Françoise Gaillard go so far as to problematize the ideological implication of nineteenth-century science itself. Gaillard argues that by appropriating the contemporary scientific discourse on heredity, Zola became complicit with its political conservatism, inadvertently reinforcing the status quo: the problem lies in that the scientific discourse on heredity would legitimate biological differences, valorize them in a hierarchical manner, and authorize the political hierarchy replicated on the
scientifically established biological order, in an even more repressive and deterministic way than
the order of the Ancien Régime whose authority derived from tradition and religion (192-94).
Jean Borie makes a similar argument concerning the politically repressive function of science,
but he also points out the continuity between these two types of biological hierarchy, even
suggesting that the idea of original sin was reinforced by science. Is this really the case?
Aren’t there any other ways to read Zola’s novelist appropriation of hereditary science
differently, to discover certain liberating forces that would subvert the existing biological and
political hierarchy?

In Zola and the Bourgeoisie, Brian Nelson discusses the “profoundly bourgeois” nature
of Les Rougon-Macquart, in spite of bourgeois hatred for Zola’s iconoclastic representation of
bourgeois life and regardless of Zola’s apparently sympathetic attitude toward the proletariat
(192). For Nelson, Zola’s fiction is “an attempt to reconcile the themes of Darwinism and social
responsibility,” whose disjunction is constructed by the optimism of “positivist ideology” and
scientific management and by “the anarchic nature of a society based on the survival of the
fittest” (24). Nelson concludes that Zola’s solution is found in such bourgeois ideal like
bureaucracy, elitist leadership, social engineering, authoritative paternalism, moderate
reformism, and embodied by “a kind of inspired technocrate seeking to organize and to
rationalize rather than to bring about violent revolutionary change” (191). This bourgeois reading

103 Jean Borie also argues that in the Ancient Regime, positive privileges were inherited,
while post-Revolutionary scientific discourse foregrounded the defects of families, giving a
scientific foundation for such negative inheritance: if the Ancient Regime is dependent on the
theological logic of the original sin, the same logic is still operative in hereditary science:
“c’est la Science même qui rétablit plus solidement que jamais le principe de l’héritéité de la
faute” (“it is science as such that establishes ever more securely the principle of heredity of
sin”; Mythologies de l’héritéité au XIXe siècle 16). In Zola et les mythes, Borie discusses how
the theme and narrative of the original sin is operative in Les Rougon-Macquart (59). About
mythological reading of Zola, see also Naomi Schor, Zola’s Crowds 18.
is legitimate, and perhaps even more so, when one takes into consideration Zola’s later, overtly utopian novels which point to elitist social reformation (and never to popular revolution, as ambiguously represented in *Germinal*). However, instead of employing such a retrospective interpretation that would valorize earlier novels in relation to later ones, I would like a more chronological or intrinsic reading of *Les Rougon-Macquart*, not simply because I prefer such a reading, but also because I think that it is fundamental to an anarchistic theory of reading to ask what kind of authority or signifying economy is to be prioritized and for what reasons.\footnote{104}

Chronologically speaking, *Le Docteur Pascal* takes place after the apocalyptic historical end depicted in the previous volumes, and the actual history recedes to the background.\footnote{105}

\footnote{104} I do not oppose “intrinsic” to “extrinsic,” because the text is by definition always and already open to the extra-textual, containing a subtext to be (re)constructed out of a close reading of the text, which ultimately brings us back to questions of contexts, of referentiality and textualization, and therefore any reading cannot completely suppress “extrinsic” elements (see Introduction). What I mean by “intrinsic” is more of a question of genealogy and authority, origin and explanatory power, namely, where does a justification of our reading come from, whether it is from the very text we are reading or something else.

\footnote{105} Pascale Krumm argues that *Le Docteur Pascal* is like a supplement in the Derridian sense of the word, namely, both an additional extra and an indispensable complement. However, Krumm overestimates the narrative coherence of *Les Rougon-Macquart* by foregrounding the chronological progression from *Nana* to *La Débâcle*: “Dans la l’esprit de continuité et du point de vue de la logique narrative, *La Débâcle* devrait immédiatement suivre *Nana*, ou plus justement, *Nana* devrait être le dix-huitième roman de la série [In the spirit of continuity and from the viewpoint of the narrative logic, *La Débâcle* must immediately follow *Nana*, or more precisely, *Nana* must be the eighteenth volume of the series]” (228). However, this reading is problematic for at least three reasons. First, Krumm forgets that such other volumes like *La Terre* and *La Bête humaine* also point to the Franco-Prussian War, the beginning of the end of the series, and in this respect *La Terre* is more continuous with *La Débâcle* in that both novels have the same protagonist, Jean Macquart, who is the only character who truly serves as the main focal point of narration and the narrative agent in two volumes. Second, Krumm fails to consider the reiterative nature of the cycle, where the volumes do not progress from one to the other in a linear manner, but instead cover the same period multiple times, depicting different social circumstances and geographical places; for instance, the first half of Napoleon III’s regime is narrated by *La Curée* (urban planning and real estate speculation), *Le Ventre de Paris* (commerce and the market), *Son Excellence Eugène Rougon* (politics), while the second half by *Nana* (prostitution), *Au Bonheur des dames* (department stores and mass consumerism), *L’Œuvre* (art and art business), *La Bête humaine* (trains and criminal investigation), *La Débâcle* (the Franco-Prussian War and the
However, the last volume also rehearses such an apocalyptic event at different levels, having protagonists getting through subversive states of anxieties and uncertainties. What I have suggested so far was to read the Rougon-Macquart series, and especially the twentieth volume, as Zola's response to the anarchist problematics regarding the passionate impatience with social misery, disarrangement and equilibrium, idealism and science. It is worth mentioning how close Clotilde's daydreaming about the possible future justice for her and Pascal’s comes close to the desperate anarchist craving for justice, which appears at the very end of the twentieth volume:

Que serait-il, quand elle l’aurait fait grand et fort, en se donnant toute ? Un savant qui enseignerait au monde un peu de la vérité éternelle, un capitaine qui apporterait de la gloire à son pays, ou mieux encore un de ces pasteurs de peuple qui apaisent les passions et font régner la justice ? Elle le voyait très beau, très bon, très puissant. (RM 5:1218)

What would he become, when she would bring him up big and strong, giving all she could give to him? A scholar who would teach to the world a little bit of eternal truth, a captain who bring glory to his country, or better, one of the pastors of people who appease the fassions and make justice reign? She saw him very fine, very kind, very mighty.106

---

106 Schor suggests to read this passage with Derridian problematic of writing and speaking, but our reading does not take such a direction (73-74).
My point is that with Zola's works, the question of anarchism is represented not merely in terms of nihilist and anarchist characters like Souvarine in *Germinal*, of revolutionary practices like insurrections, labor strikes, popular mobilization, but rather in terms of aspirations and wishes of something better and best. In this regard, I suggest that both Pascal and Clotilde are anarchists, or become so, as each of them would become out of balance, with Clotilde possessed by such fixed ideas like mysticism and blissful happiness, and Pascal by self-doubt regarding his hereditary constitution as well as by the impossible wish of regenerating the family and the whole humanity. But what is more remarkable is that both Clotilde and Pascal break away from such possessed states, mutually helping the other in the anarchist state and striking a proper balance within and between themselves.

Does this mean that we should take the anarchistic reverie and its overcoming as the final conclusion of the last volume? Or that we should take the baby of Pascal and Clotilde as the ultimate end of the whole cycle, like a happy culmination of those two ex-anarchists? Annette Clamor’s argument that Pascal (positivist science) is a thesis and Clotilde (religious mysticism) an antithesis is too schematic (140). This sort of interpretation simply forgets that Clotilde is

---

107 For revolutionary characters in Zola’s novels, see Guedj.
108 If Pascal is supposed to represent the best qualities in the family, as I have discussed above, Clotilde appears to carry the opposite characteristics of Pascal, not in the sense that Clotilde is an evil and demonic character like her relatives Angélique or Jeanne, but rather because Clotilde embodies other tendencies and orientations in the last decades of the nineteenth century, for instance, mysticism, religious conservatism, disillusionment of science, pessimism, irrationality and intuition. Another tendency Clotilde represents is decadence or aesthetic symbolism, as her sketches of flowers move away from mimetic representation to chimeric imagination. See also Beizer, Boschian-Campaner, Krumm, Thompson. What I am suggesting here is that even if Clotilde is an antithesis of Pascal, this is still too vague a claim. If Pascal is an aggregate of multiple tendencies and orientations that are representative of the late nineteenth century as well as of the cycle, so is Clotilde, and moreover, her case is even more complex than Pascal’s, because she is much closer to the late-nineteenth-century complex than Pascal who is an embodiment of the mid-century positivism, Claude Bernard, or the Ernest Renan as he depicts in the preparatory note.
not the complete opposite of Pascal but a divergence from him, that Clotilde is always and already Pascal’s disciple who assists the master’s work. However, this pseudo-Hegelian discussion makes it easier to see that the baby might be the synthesis of these two tendencies: love unites two extremes, out of which born is a new messiah, a redeemer who might speak for all the people to come and for a new century. It is tempting, and to some extent, legitimate, to enshrine the motherly and mothering figure which embodies regeneration of life. Rita Schober maintains that the book closes with “une mère heureuse qui allaite son enfant” (“a happy mother who suckles her baby”), which is “le symbole par excellence du triomphe de la vie” (“the symbol per excellence of the victory of life”;70). However, if Pascal-Zola’s authority should be contested, why do we accept Clotilde-baby’s?

With this deliberate focus on Clotilde and the baby, the problem of foregrounding Pascal’s story in Le Docteur Pascal becomes clear, and now we can clearly hear that the book resonates with other voices and other wishes which are no less audible than Pascal’s. What should be taken into consideration is the distance between the protagonists and the narrator, as Pascal is in no way identical to the narrator who could enmesh its voice with those of other

---

109 Troubled by the increasing gap between unsystematic scientific education by Pascal and religious education by Martine and Félicité, Clotilde confesses her inner suffering to Pascal: “Je ne suis pas une savante. Cependant, tu m'as appris beaucoup, et j'ai moi-même appris davantage, en vivant avec toi. D'ailleurs, ce sont des choses que je sens” (“I'm not a scholar, but you taught me a lot, and I learned more by myself in living with you. Anyway, this is what I’m feeling”; RM 5:989).

110 The reading that babies are the solution becomes even more convincing when one sees Le Docteur Pascal less as the final volume of the Rougon-Macquart series than as a beginning of the later utopian cycles where the questions of national degeneration and population decrease come to the fore at various levels in a much more problematic way, as Andrew J. Counter rightly argues in “Zola's Fin-de-siècle Reproductive Politics.” While Zola’s literary appropriation of conception and child-bearing certainly works to rehabilitate the child “as a legitimate aesthetic subject,” the same procedure functions to elevate heterosexuality to the norm, where any other gender identities, from homosexuality to celibacy to new women to priest to impotent decadents to childless couples, are condemned as sterile and against nature because of their failing to conform to Zola's ideal of reproductive politics (204, 206).
characters or speak independently of any of them. Pascal is the central viewpoint from which the narrative unfolds, but Clotilde plays a similar role, and even takes over Pascal’s status as a narrative focalizer after Pascal’s death. This shift of narrative focalization in the last chapters explains is well observed by Janet Beizer, who argues that *Le Docteur Pascal* is Clotilde’s story in a two-fold way, namely, a story that talks about Clotilde and one Clotilde tells (56). Indeed, up until Chapter 12, when Pascal dies, the larger portion of the novel is narrated with Pascal as a focalizer. But already in Chapter 4, Clotilde voices her anarchist derangement, aggrieved by the impotent science which destroys the serenity of faith without providing any alternative consolation. And the last two chapters, especially the very last chapter, is wholly narrated from

---

111 However, it may be argued that the narrator’s gaze is inevitably masculine, taking Clotilde as a sexual object to be conquered, and in this regard, the anonymous narrator overlaps with Pascal, even where narration does not assume any specific point of view of fictional characters. See Catherine Boschian-Campaner.

112 “Son esprit, nourri de science, partait des vérités prouvées, mais d'un tel bond, qu'elle sautait du coup en plein ciel des légendes” (“Her spirit, nurtured by science, departed from proven truths, but with such a leap, it dived into legends all at once”; *RM* 5:985); “En tout cas, continua-t-elle, la science a fait table rase, la terre est nue, le ciel est vide, et qu'est-ce que tu veux que je devienne, même si tu innocentes la science des espoirs que j'ai conçus?… Je ne puis pourtant pas vivre sans certitude et sans bonheur. Sur quel terrain solide vais-je bâtir ma maison, du moment qu'on a démoli le vieux monde et qu'on se presse si peu de construire le nouveau? Toute la cité antique a craqué, dans cette catastrophe de l'examen et de l'analyse; et il n'en reste rien qu'une population affolée battant les ruines, ne sachant sur quelle pierre poser sa tête, campant sous l'orage, exigeant le refuge solide et définitif, où elle pourra recommencer la vie…. Il ne faut donc pas s'étonner de notre découragement ni de notre impatience. Nous ne pouvons plus attendre. Puisque la science, trop lente, fait faillite, nous préférons nous rejeter en arrière, oui! dans les croyances d'autrefois, qui, pendant des siècles, ont suffi au bonheur du monde” (“In any case, continued she, science has deleted everything, making the earth bare, the sky empty, and what do you expect me to become, even if you excuse that science is not responsible for the hopes I have had about it?… but I cannot live without certainty and without happiness. Where in this solid land am I going to build my house, after people demolished the old world and try very little to construct the new one? All the ancient city has been cracked, in this catastrophe of examination and analysis; and nothing is left other than people in panic who wander in the ruins, not knowing on what stone to rest their heads, camping in a storm, demanding the solid and definitive refuge, where they can start life anew… so, we should not be surprised at our discouragement or our impatience. We cannot wait any longer. Science failed because it's too slow, so we would want to throw ourselves backward, yes! into the faiths of old days, which, over centuries, has
the viewpoint of and with the voice of Clotilde who recollects what occurred, situated in Pascal’s 
study room transformed into a nursing room, with the emptied drawers, once packed with 
Pascal’s documents, now filled with the baby’s linens.

*Le Docteur Pascal* can therefore be read as a story of the young niece being enlightened 
and giving her youthful body as a gift to the aging master who corrected her hereditary defects 
through sound upbringing: the fanciful Clotilde's wild aspirations, her anarchist endeavors, as it 
were, begin to experience dissatisfaction due to the impotence of science that could not bring 
about happiness all at once. She is then drawn to and disturbed by the promise of immediate and 
instantaneous bliss which mystical abnegation preaches. But she overcomes it by virtue of 

____________________

113 In this respect, the contrast between Clotilde and Martine, the old housemaid, is 
significant. If Clotilde’s turn to religion or mysticism is, at it were, an intellectual and post-
Enlightenment phenomenon, Martine’s religious devotion is genuine, not mediated by 
science, thus representing the pre-modern, superstitious mindset. Zola sets up various 
parallels and oppositions in this novel as he does in others volumes, and Clotilde-Martine 
relation is quite complicated in that both of them love Pascal, which would put them in 
discord, so much so that Martine would quit her job and live a retired life after Pascal’s death. 
For the rivalry between Clotilde and Martine, see also Kaminskas. However, what is also 
significant, in terms of the narrative logic of giving and receiving—*Les Rougon-Macquart* 
articulates three basic orientations, egoistic and voracious taking, honest and self-complacent 
exchange, and generous and self-destructive giving, which are operative in political and 
economic activities as in private love affairs—Martine’s avarice is perhaps a peculiar 
combination of the first and third orientations which at last attain the state of sterility. The 
text slyly adds that the money Martine has accumulated would has no inheritor, thus closing 
the circuit of giving and taking: “Martine, elle, vivait à Sainte-Marthe, dans un trou perdu, si 
chichement, qu’elle devait encore faire des économies, sur les rentes de son petit trésor. On ne 
lui connaissait point d’héritier, à qui profiterait donc cette fureur d’avarice? (“Martine lived in 
Sainte-Marthe, in a deserted place, so penuriously that she must still make savings out of her 
small incomes. Nothing is known about her heir, and then, who would benefit from this fury 
of avarice?”; *RM 5*:1205). In this narrative economy, Clotilde’s giving of her virginity is 
extraordinary and extravagant, as it defies both selfish egotism and selfless altruism, both 
economic calculation and mere irrationalism, both refusal of sympathy and indiscriminate 
sympathy. *Le Docteur Pascal* can be understood as elevation of the third orientation to a 
higher stage where generous gifting or free giving would not become self-destructive or self-
possessive, whether it is practiced between interpersonal relations (Pascal-Clotilde’s mutual 
love and respect) or at a larger, broader level (Pascal’s utopian dream of universal happiness).
Pascal the educator who possesses or conquers her, first intellectually, and then sexually, as she
in turn saves Pascal from intellectual doubt and folly, rejuvenating the aging master from sexual
impotence. And Clotilde at last gives birth to a child, becoming a dynamic fusion of imagination
and reason, impulse and will, other-worldly and earthly, unknowable and not yet known. What
the last volume finally offers is a dual cure, Pascal's rejuvenation and regained virility after a
long period of cowardice and abstention and Clotilde's ultimate release from anarchist dark
poetry, or inclinations to the chimerical and the mystical.

Another reading is possible: Le Docteur Pascal is Félicité’s story. Just as Pascal dies
twice, first physically and humbly, second metaphorically and madly, Pascal’s utopian wish of
regenerating humanity would also be thwarted twice. First serenely, because Pascal himself
would give it up, believing in life itself which should reproduce and regenerate by itself. The
second abortion is, like Pascal’s second death, a violent act, conspired and executed by Félicité
Rougon. From the beginning of the story, Félicité teams up with Clotilde and Martine, a devout
old housemaid, to destroy his manuscripts that are, to her eyes, a proof of the family's shameful
sins and crimes. Having experienced the social ascent and descent which the Second Empire
allowed her and her husband to enjoy and suffer—indeed, one can read the fortune of the

114 Clotilde's learning and recovery is truly remarkable, because nowhere in Les Rougon-
Macquart does this sort of disciplining of physiological appetites and impulses succeed:
almost all the other Rougon-Macquart characters tragically fall prey to uncontrollable pushes
and desires, instincts and forces, regardless of their conscious or unconscious efforts to resist
them. In this respect, it is interesting to examine what narratives Zola assigns to Clotilde’s
relatives, the other daughters of the Rougon-Macquart family. Angélique fails to domesticate
demonic impulses and fairy-tale like fancies; instead she lets them grow full-fledged in the
serene and quiet circumstance of a church town, and dies blissfully at the midst of the
wedding ceremony (Rêve). Brought up in streets of Paris, Nana instinctively learns to revenge
men who prey on women; but in this process of conquering a decaying bourgeois society, she
also gets consumed by it dying; she dies a corrupting death, hearing soldi3ers shouting “To
Berlin!” (Nana); secluded in a small, bleak, and poor fisher town, Pauline lives as an
autodidactic and self-sacrificial celibate, giving up her own happiness and giving her
properties to other people without receiving any return from them (La Joie de vivre).
Rougon family in Plassans as an allegory of Napoleon III's fate from the coup d'état to the fall in Sedan—and now that the regime fell and her husband died, Félicité holds no other desire than to leave behind a glorified history of the family, so that both their shameful ancestor and relatives and their sinful deeds would be erased from public memory and then forgotten altogether. What is ironic in the narrative trajectory of the last volume, when seen as the philosophical culmination of all the other volumes, is that the execution of Pascal’s intellectual heritage is the final outcome. Pascal’s intellectual testament, a theory of homeostasis and placebo, is delivered to a young doctor and friend while Pascal is still alive, but his papers are not inherited by Clotilde or their baby, with Pascal’s final scientific and philosophical conclusion eternally lost. And as if endorsing and fulfilling Félicité’s wish, the book narrates the ends of three living examples of the family’s shame, the root or the insane origin (Tante Dide), the degenerated kid or the dead-end.

115 In the fictional universe of *Les Rougon-Macquart*, governed by the heredity law, it is fundamental what would be transmitted from one character to another, and this should be expanded to non-physiological, non-biological matters. Then, it is significant that Pascal’s heritage would become incomplete and divided: Ramond, a young doctor, is the last interlocutor of Pascal’s scientific conclusion, to whom Pascal intended to give his unfinished work, and Clotilde keeps their ashes and leftovers in which only the genealogical tree escaped Félicité’s fierce destruction; and Félicité gives up the due share of Pascal’s money, leaving all of them to Clotilde and their baby, while she is determined not to leave her money to none of her relatives, donating it all for the construction of the hospital. Ramond replied to the dying master, “je tâcherai d’être digne de votre héritage” (“I’ll try to be worthy of your inheritance”; *RM* 5:1178). But it turns out that he could not reconstruct the last talk anything but the mere outline of the last talk (*RM* 5:1214-15). In a sense, it is only the reader who inherits Pascal’s “toute une médication nouvelle” (“a brand new medication”) in its entirety, including his theory of perpetual movement, or a world-saving homeostatic theory of establishing a dynamic equilibrium between what one receives and what one emits: “il voyait de nouveau le monde sauvé dans cet équilibre parfait, autant de travail rendu que de sensation reçue, le branle du monde rétabli dans son labeur éternel” (“once again he saw the world saved in this perfect balance, returning work as much as one perceives, with the world’s swing re-established in its eternal work”; *RM* 5:1178). This experimental medicine and biological theory is no doubt Pascal’s final scientific conclusion, but this cannot be considered the scientific end of the novel, let alone the whole cycle, which corroborates my point that Pascal should not be equated with the end or ends of the novel and the cycle. About the historicity and contemporaneity of these treatments and ideas, see *RM* 5:1660-63.

155
(Charles), and the drunken fat guy (Antoine Macquart). The last chapter closes with the entire town cordially celebrating Félicité’s generosity.

_Le Docteur Pascal_ thus has three stories of three characters intersect with each other, Pascal’s martyrdom and cure, Félicité’s conspiracy and revisionist victory, and Clotilde’s education and reproduction, without definitely prioritizing one over the other. We should thus not substantiate individual characters into distinct types or unalloyed ideas, as it is in their interactions and imbrications that are at stake. But the question remains: whether are any of their voices privileged over the others? Above, I suggested that the admiration for life literally puts an end to the last sentence. What Mitterand seems to forget to mention in discussing the multiple interrelatedness of characters and environments as a textual system is the interaction of the narrator and characters. In the final work of the cycle, both the characters and the narrator are concerned with the family and their destiny, silencing the voices of the others and imposing their own end: Pascal's insistence on the intellectual courage and scientific obligation of “know everything and say everything” beyond good and evil, beyond vice and shame; Félicité's revisionist ambition to glorify their family which is one with her determined will to destroy what she does not approve; and Clotilde's anxious aspiration for the chimerical and the unknown which is an intuitive or affective pursuit of that which goes beyond science and reason(ing). Does the narrative voice endorse any of them in an explicit manner? Correcting Henry James’ accusation of Zola’s unmethodical and inconsistent use of the point of view, Jameson suggests that for Zola, the point of view is not purely “a technical problem and necessity” as in James and

---

116 Since its initial publication, _Le Docteur Pascal_ remains a book for specialists due to its meta-fictional constitution which almost requires the reader to reread the whole series. But these death scenes have been almost unanimously appreciated, including Antoine’s spontaneous combustion. For example, see Butor. See also Carol concerning this case as a medical myth.
that the seeming “slovenliness” of the omnipotent narrator is actually “Zola's shrewdness” (The Antinomies of Realism 51). Or, as Harrowing ingenuously puts, “Zola's polymorphous style produces the blurring of positions, the merging of perspectives, and forms of dissolution, ellipsis and abstraction” (61). What should be explored here, therefore, is not simply to indicate that the novel resonates with multiple voices or to identify and articulate them, but to examine the ways in which these voices are mixed up without becoming completely fused into each other by means of the narrator’s intervention, or intrusion.

With this in mind we should revisit the last chapter, a paragraph that appears toward the very end of the book, where Clotilde seems to conclude the whole narrative as well as the whole series, with Pascal’s genealogical tree at hand, recollecting her own hereditary nature and nurtural corrections, and reflecting on the conversations she had with Pascal about the usefulness and uselessness of science that enlightens us but also deprives us of faithful certainty and spiritual security. What interests me here, however, is not necessarily the obvious content of Clotilde’s remembrance—this is no doubt Clotilde’s account of Pascal’s philosophical end, or brave life that continues beyond good and evil—but what the text performs at this last moment is the enmeshment of the narrative voice into that of the character’s and the eruption and explosion of the other voice, the narrator’s which had been, as Lukacs criticizes the aloofness of naturalist writers, an aloof and disinterested witness:

Clotilde avait eu un regard involontaire sur l'Arbre des ancêtres, déployé près d'elle. Oui! la menace était là, tant de crimes, tant de boue, parmi tant de larmes et

117 Jameson argues that this shrewdness enables the text to take “on another, more psychoanalytic form” (51). Here, I am not going to investigate the psychoanalytic implication of Zola’s works. For this matter, see Jean Borie’s classical work on the psychoanalytic reading of Zola, Zola et les mythes. Concerning the question of the narrative point of view and its ideological underpinning, see Febles.
tant de bonté souffrante! Un si extraordinaire mélange de l'excellent et du pire, une humanité en raccourci, avec toutes ses tares et toutes ses luttes! C'était à se demander si, d'un coup de foudre, il n'aurait pas mieux valu balayer, cette fourmilière gâtée et misérable. Et, après tant de Rougon terribles, après tant de Macquart abominables, il en naissait encore un, la vie ne craignait pas d'en créer un de plus, dans le défi brave de son éternité. Elle poursuivait son œuvre, se propageait selon ses lois, indifférente aux hypothèses, en marche pour son labeur infini. Au risque de faire des monstres, il fallait bien qu'elle créât, puisque, malgré les malades et les fous qu'elle crée, elle ne se lasse pas de créer, avec l'espoir sans doute que les bien portants et les anges viendront un jour. La vie, la vie qui coule en torrent, qui continue et recommence, vers l'achèvement ignoré! la vie où nous baignons, la vie aux courants infinis et contraires, toujours mouvante et immense, comme une mer sans bornes! (RM 5: 1219)

Clotilde had had an involuntary glance at the ancestral tree spread beside her. Yes! The menace was there—so many crimes, so much filth, among so many tears and so much suffering goodness! So extraordinary a mixture of the best and the worst, a truncated humanity with all his defects and all his fights! One would ask oneself if it had been much better to sweep away this spoiled and miserable ant-hill. And, after so many terrible Rougon people, after so many abominable Macquart people, another baby was born, life was not afraid of creating one more in the brave defiance of its own eternity. Taking the risk of producing monsters, life had to create, because despite the sick and the mad people life creates, life does not tire of creating life in hopes that the healthy people and angels would come one day.
Life, life that flows in torrents, continues and starts again, toward the unknown achievement! Life where we bathe, life with infinite and contrary currents, always moving and immense, like a boundless sea!

Here, the narrative voice gradually takes up Clotilde’s inner voice with exclamations. It is difficult to decide whether these lines should be read as free direct speech or as the direct intervention of the narrative voice. The last two sentences, where the tense switches to the present, are yet still unlocatable, as the content itself, including the vocabulary and phrasing, could have been spoken by Clotilde. At this critical moment, the text is thus interrupted by the elevated incantation of life, which is as much constative as performative, as much defining what life is as wishing what life ought to be. However, just because these eruptive sentences appear within the novelistic discourse where the text registers and superimposes multiple voices, the final authority is eternally be suspended: if this is only Clotilde’s exclamations, then it is nothing but one voice among others; if this is the narrator’s, that makes no difference. But if both are the case, and yet we are still incapable of separating one of them from the other and unable to ascribe the lines to either of them, what then? Instead of letting the reader choose which one is plausible, isn’t it more interesting to think that the text is rather entreating the reader to appreciate such multiplicity and simultaneity?

***

However, is this undecidability, this plural registration of multiple voices the literary conclusion of Les Rougon-Macquart? The narrative trajectory of Le Docteur Pascal inscribes various kinds of ambiguities, while being traversed by multiple failures and tragic consequences, from the deaths of Pascal’s patients to that of Pascal himself to the consumption of his papers. If the last volume is “l’impossible quête de l’équilibre” (“the impossible quest for equilibrium”), as
Colette Becker ingenuously names, it seems to me that the pursuit of balance, or the overcoming of anarchist derangement, can be detected at both content and form levels in the previous volumes too.\(^{118}\) For instance, the penultimate volume, *La Débâcle*, fully experimented such possibilities of stabilization, with two almost schematically opposite protagonists, a young and degenerated bourgeois and a middle-aged uneducated peasant, though the plot is even farther from a happy ending than *Le Docteur Pascal*. Despite the deep divide between their sociohistorical orientations (young/old, urbain/rural, educate/uneducated, bourgeois/worker, degenerated/robust, effeminite/viril, selfish/altruistic, progressive/conservative, pro-Commune/anti-Commune), the narrative tells stories of hardship in battlefields and prisons, in which the antagonistic two become almost like twins; however, the narrative end breaks such a possibility it has built up page after page with one single tragic climax, where the experienced peasant would accidentally kill the bourgeois youth in an inflammatory Paris, which makes the reconciliation eternally impossible.

It almost appears that *Les Rougon-Macquart* is incapable of, or simply uninterested in, inventing a perfect scenario where every problem disappears. However, isn’t it perhaps truer to say that the cycle’s literary mission is not to write a happy ending but to inscribe such possibilities, hopeful but yet unknown and still uncertain, across several voices and textual layers, across discursive genres and disciplinary territories. The narrational penetration through free indirect speech might be one of such means, as I have just analyzed, but I would like to suggest that other means exist. For this purpose, it is indispensable to turn not to the ultimate end of the story, but what occurs in the middle, somewhat utopian moments of generosity, sympathy, kindness, sharing, love, friendship that the naturalist novelist invented and inserted as literary

\(^{118}\) This is the subtitle Becker gives to her brief analysis of Le Docteur Pascal, “*Le Docteur Pascal: Autofiction.*”
tales that are marginal and only temporary, because they would be denied by narrative closures that come later on, as affective fictions that seemingly defy the bestiality of biological forces and are yet not outside of the hereditary logic of *Les Rougon Macquart*.

I am claiming that Zola’s literary cycle does more than simply praise a life that continues infinitely and anarchistically, projecting such a performative speech onto a time to come. Zola began the Rougon-Macquart series by considering it as a closed circle. However, what the final volume repeatedly suggests is that the narrative could not totalize itself, failing to include “tout [all and everything]” and thus inevitably leaving unsaid and unconnected so many things. Pascal cannot but regret that his genealogical tree omits the influence of other blood coming from outside of the Rougon-Macquart family. However, while this recognition of exclusion immediately threatens the narrative unity of the biological family, it also suddenly expands to another direction, because it is discovered that what is omitted and excluded outside in theory is still inside, and it enables Pascal to slide from the family story to the history of humanity as a whole:

Mais il ne faut jamais désespérer, les familles sont l'éternel devenir. Elles plongent, au-delà de l'ancêtre commun, à travers les couches insondables des races qui ont vécu, jusqu'au premier être; et elles pousseront sans fin, elles s'étaleront, se ramifieront à l'infini, au fond des âges futurs…. Regarde notre Arbre: il ne compte que cinq générations, il n'a pas même l'importance d'un brin d'herbe, au milieu de la forêt humaine, colossale et noire, dont les peuples sont les grands chênes séculaires. Seulement, songe à ses racines immenses qui tiennent tout le sol, songe à l'épanouissement continu de ses feuilles hautes qui se mêlent aux autres feuilles, à la mer sans cesse roulante des cimes, sons l'éternel souffle fécondant de la vie….
Eh bien! l'espoir est là, dans la reconstitution journalière de la race par le sang nouveau qui lui vient du dehors. Chaque mariage apporte d'autres éléments, bons ou mauvais, dont l'effet est quand même d'empêcher la dégénérescence mathématique et progressive. Les brèches sont réparées, les tares s'effacent, un équilibre fatal se rétablit au bout de quelques générations, et c'est l'homme moyen qui finit toujours par en sortir, l'humanité vague, obstinée à son labeur mystérieux, en marche vers son but ignoré. \(RM 5:1017-18\)

But don’t despair, for families are eternal becoming. They plunge, beyond the common ancestry, across the immeasurable layers of races that have lived, down to the first being; and they will pop up without end, spread themselves, brunch out infinitely, deep inside the future ages….Look at our genealogy: it counts only five generations, it doesn’t even have the importance of a plant fiber, among the colossal and dark forest of humanity, of which peoples are centuries-old great oaks. Just think about their immense roots that hold the whole earth, think about the continuous blossom of their high leaves that mix themselves with other leaves, in the ever-rolling sea of treetops, under the eternal and fertile breath of life….Ah, yes! Hope is there, in the daily reconstitution of race by new blood that comes from outside. Every marriage brings in other elements, good or bad, the effect of which nevertheless blocks rampant and progressive degeneration. Cracks are repaired, defects disappear, a fatal balance will be re-established in several generations, and it’s the middle man that always ends up walking away from them, he is the indeterminate humanity, adamant in one’s own mysterious labor, marching toward one’s unknown end.

162
Thus, the natural and social history of the family under the Second Empire is immediately channeled to the prehistoric beginning, or “the first being” and then to the future being that is still unknown. In this respect, it is useful to point out that both Mitterand and Borie foreground the anthropological dimension in *Les Rougon-Macquart* (*Fiction and Modernity* 135, *Zola et les mythes* 60). What especially interests me about their arguments is that for Mitterand as for Borie, Zola’s anthropology is less biological or scientific than mythical and poetic. However, I would like to argue that this is not a complete transformation of the biological or scientific into the mythical or poetic: Zola makes the biological mythic, the scientific poetic, predicating the latter on the former, like Clotilde, “bonne créature simple” (“good simple creature”), who derives from Pascal or scientific education but goes beyond where the scholar hesitates, aspiring what science cannot yet reveal and seeking for what might not be known forever (*RM* 5:1212).

Our final question is whether or not this mythical anthropology (Borie) or anthropo-mythical naturalism (Mitterand) is trapped in the Christian archetype of the original sin and the Darwinian or Freudian caveman who is aggressive and barbaric, haunted by the death drive. By privileging *La Bête humain*, Borie reinforces such narratives of sin and violence the Western civilization is based upon (58-170). However, I would like to insist that *Les Rougon-Macquart* resonates with another image of the first humanity who is capable of mutual aid, love, and sympathy, Zola’s *as if* moments and impulses:

Maurice s'abandonna à son bras, se laissa emporter comme un enfant. Jamais bras de femme ne lui avait tenu aussi chaud au cœur. Dans l'écroulement de tout, au milieu de cette misère extrême, avec la mort en face, cela était pour lui d'un réconfort délicieux, de sentir un être l'aimer et le soigner; et peut-être l'idée que ce cœur tout à lui était celui d'un simple, d'un paysan resté près de la terre, dont il
avait eu d'abord la répugnance, ajoutait-elle maintenant à sa gratitude une douceur infinie. N'était-ce point la fraternité des premiers jours du monde, l'amitié avant toute culture et toutes classes, cette amitié de deux hommes unis et confondus, dans leur commun besoin d'assistance, devant la menace de la nature ennemie? Il entendait battre son humanité dans la poitrine de Jean, et il était fier pour lui-même de le sentir plus fort, le secourant, se dévouant; tandis que Jean, sans analyser sa sensation, goûtait une joie à protéger chez son ami cette grâce, cette intelligence, restées en lui rudimentaires. Depuis la mort violente de sa femme, emportée dans un affreux drame, il se croyait sans cœur, il avait juré de ne plus jamais en voir, de ces créatures dont on souffre tant, même quand elles ne sont pas mauvaises. Et l'amitié leur devenait à tous deux comme un élargissement: on avait beau ne pas s'embrasser, on se touchait à fond, on était l'un dans l'autre, si différent que l'on fût, sur cette terrible route de Remilly, l'un soutenant l'autre, ne faisant plus qu'un être de pitié et de souffrance. (RM 5:152)

Maurice leaned against Jean’s arm, and let himself be led like a child. No woman’s arm had ever given him such a warm glow. With everything collapsing around him, in the midst of utter misery, with death staring him in the face, it brought him a delicious sense of comfort to feel someone loving him and looking after him; and perhaps the idea that the heart which was all his own belonged to a simply man, a peasant who’d kept close to the earth—someone who’d at first repulsed him—now added unutterable sweetness to his sense of gratitude. Wasn’t this the brotherly love that existed in those first days of the world, the friendship which rose above all culture, all class, the friendship of two men, united as a
single soul by their mutual need for help, confronted by hostile Nature? He could hear his humanity beating in Jean’s breast, and he was proud for himself, feeling it beat more strongly, giving him succor and devotion; while Jean, without analyzing what he felt, was full of joy, protecting his friend’s grace and intelligence—qualities which in him had remained rudimentary. Ever since the violent death of his wife, snatched from him by a terrible tragedy, he’d thought he’d a heart of stone, and had sworn never again to look upon the creatures who bring so much suffering, even when they aren’t bad in themselves. And for both men, this friendship grew into a sort of expansion of the soul: they didn’t embrace, yet they touched deep inside, they were one and the same, however different they might be, upon that terrible road to Remilly, one supporting the other, merged now into a single being, full of suffering and pity. (La Débâcle 128)

Is this primary, pre-cultural friendship a mere wishful fiction? Can we find a biological basis for this biological or anthropological mutual aid that goes beyond gender and sex, beyond education and class antagonism? One may rightly doubt so, and Zola’s boastful claim to the scientific foundation of his natural and social narratives seems to request it. However, what Les Rougon-Macquart also performs as a literary text is that it invents such fictional stories about our biological possibilities and potentialities, as if they were truly our alternatives and essences, whose justification would yet be found not necessarily in scientific evidence but in literary persuasion which makes us believe, simultaneously putting us in the state of critique which keeps reminding us that it might be (merely) a fiction, always with question marks which are nevertheless not a sign of disbelief or suspicion, but of vigilance and invitation, an open and
welcome invitation to break up the closure and finitude, toward more hopeful, more wishful lives we can invent and work on infinitely, aesthetically, and ethically, as if that were real and true.
Chapter Four

Peter Kropotkin's Naturalist Ethics: Anarchist Hermeneutics of Already Existing Communist Feelings and Practices

But if these same Europeans were to tell a savage that people, extremely amiable, fond of their own children, and so impressionable that they cry when they see a misfortune simulated on the stage, are living in Europe within a stone's throw from dens in which children die from sheer want of food, the savage, too, would not understand them. (Kropotkin. Mutual Aid.)

Take Kropotkin Seriously: General Problems of Scientific Objectivity and Naturalist Ethics

Who takes Peter Kropotkin’s theory of mutual aid seriously? Originally serialized in The Nineteenth Century, an establishment magazine in Britain, from 1890 to 1896, and published in book form in 1902, Mutual Aid is an anti-Social Darwinian—yet properly and truly Darwinian, so claims the Russian anarchist—discussion of how cooperation and collaboration, rather than or more than deadly struggle and competition, serve for progressive ends from the evolutionary point of view.119 When the book was republished at the brink of WWI, Kropotkin admitted in a

119 Concerning the reception and influence of Darwin and Darwinism, see Engels and Glick, Glick, and Kohn. In these standard publications on this topic, Kropotkin receives only very cursory references, either in the context of Russian reception or in that of a counter-tendency to Huxley’s bellicose interpretation (or both), even though he is not completely neglected. However, we also know that Kropotkin was not alone in presenting a non-gladiatorial view of nature, seeing nature differently and proposing a less antagonistic moral deduced from it. See La Vergata and Levine.
newly added preface that while his first idea, mutual aid as an important progressive element in
evolution, had succeeded in being recognized by biologists and modern thinkers, his second idea,
which is the latter half of his thesis, namely, “the importance of [sociability and social instinct] in
the history of Man, for the growth of his progressive social institutions” did not (viii).
Condemning state leaders for promoting mutual destruction and war-calamity “organized from
above,” Kropotkin was nevertheless still hopeful, seeing “thousands of those manifestations of
spontaneous mutual aid” being practiced in and across the civilized nations whose daily life had
been put into a close contact, despite or due to the current war conditions: Russian peasant
women would hand foods to German and Austrian war prisoners and the wounded would be
nursed without distinction. Kropotkin asserted that “such an immense amount of voluntary,
freely organized labor and energy,” these unmistakable facts of the popular desire of “becoming
neighbor’s help,” were “the seeds of new forms of life,” because “in the midst of the misery and
agony which this war has flung over the world, there is still room for the belief that the
constructive forces of men being nevertheless at work” (ix). In this way, Kropotkin expressed his
sincere desire that his book once again would correct the public misunderstanding of the much
abused phrase, “struggle for existence,” which had provided an excuse for the national rivalry
and the ultimate extermination of the other, hoping to promote the under-rated Darwin’s teaching
of “sociability and social instinct in animals for the well-being of the species” (viii).

There is no doubt about Kropotkin’s sincerity, and it is perhaps both noble and
preposterous to try to stop the war and change the direction of civilization with a single book.
Yet, it is one thing that Kropotkin’s endeavor is laudable and it is another whether his means for
it is legitimate and convincing. One might then ask whether the anarchist author is qualified
enough to appropriate scientific evidence for political causes, while also doubting whether his
political intervention into science could be anything other than amateurish and unprofessional at best. Doesn’t Kropotkin’s political commitment to communist anarchism distort the scientific truth that should be neutral and disinterested? Stephen Jay Gould’s comment summarizes this prejudice on the part of scientists or historians of science concerning Kropotkin’s credentials and the plausibility of his theory of mutual aid:

I confess that I have always viewed Kropotkin as daftly idiosyncratic, if undeniably well meaning. He is always so presented in standard courses on evolutionary biology – as one of those soft and woolly thinkers who let hope and sentimentality get in the way of analytic toughness and a willingness to accept nature as she is, warts and all. After all, he was a man of strange politics and unworkable ideals, wrenched from the context of his youth, a stranger in a strange land. Moreover, his portrayal of Darwin so matched his social ideals (mutual aid naturally given as a product of evolution without need for central authority) that one could only see personal hope rather than scientific accuracy in his accounts.\footnote{In Demandishing the Impossible? Human Nature and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Social Anarchism, David Morland keeps asking whether or not Kropotkin’s anarchist engagement}

\footnote{It is beyond my reach to verify whether or not Kropotkin’s evolutionary theory is valid as a scientific hypothesis on purely technical grounds. Therefore, I simply quote Gould’s verdict that Kropotkin’s thesis could pass the critical scrutiny of a modern biologist and still stand as a legitimate hypothesis with a few minor revisions. According to Gould, one of the major mistake is Kropotkin’s misunderstanding of the basic unit of natural selection: Kropotkin considers that a collective or a species is the primary beneficiary of mutual aid, but “in Darwin’s world of explanation,” individual organisms are the recipient of mutual aid benefits. Put another way, Kropotkin sometimes speaks of mutual aid as selected for the benefit of the entire population or species, but this way of thinking is “foreign to classic Darwinian logic (where organisms work, albeit unconsciously, for their own benefit in terms of genes passed to future generations).”}
functions to disregard unfavorable examples and to overestimate those which support his idea of mutual aid as a factor of evolution. This accusation has a long history, and even comes from inside, from those who respect him as a leading theorist of anarchism. Ten years after Kropotkin passed away in the Revolutionary Russia of 1922, Errico Malatesta, one of the last Italian disciples of Bakunin, confessed that he was worried about Kropotkin’s heavy reliance on and defective employment of science; some years later, Roger Baldwin, a founder of the ACLU, reiterated the same concern of Kropotkin’s dubious scientism in the first anthology of Kropotkin’s writings (Morland 128-29). This questioning might push one to suspect that this is a classic case of political abuse of scientific knowledge. Doesn’t Kropotkin overemphasize altruistic examples over aggressive pursuits of self-interest, in order to justify his own utopian dream of harmoniously arranged and arranging living organisms? Doesn’t Kropotkin’s thinking, based on his somewhat benign conceptualization of nature, move in a problematic way from the realm of what is to that of what ought to be, from the descriptive to the prescriptive or normative? Should and must we act cooperatively and behave sympathetically, because culture is merely a continuation and realization of natural tendencies and orientations? Doesn’t he commit the double error of first moralizing nature (nature as cooperative) and then drawing a moral lesson from such a moralized nature (cooperation as a natural ethics)?

In “Kropotkin and Huxley,” Ruth Kinna succinctly sums up the modern interpretation of Kropotkin’s theory of mutual aid, articulating two charges leveled at him: the partiality of his not properly objective method and the naturalism of his approach. In The Invention of Altruism: Making Moral Meanings in Victorian Britain, Thomas Dixon maintains that three broad categories of “tak[ing] ethical and political morals away from their reading of the book of nature” emerged around the turn of the nineteenth century (274). The first, and Dixon includes
Kropotkin here, “thought that nature was essentially cooperative, and that cooperation was the policy that humanity should pursue” (274). The second substituted competition for cooperation. And the third considered that both cooperation and competition were at work, which should be complemented by eugenics, because, as Francis Galton ingeniously put, we have to work “both through nature and by nurture” (qtd in 275). It seems to me, however, that Dixon does injustice to Kropotkin by misrecognizing that he advocates the first version of altruism, while Kropotkin clearly admits the dual existence of cooperation and competition, suggesting a different way of seeing their co-working and their different functioning instead of denying the existence of one for the sake of privileging the other.

However, Dixon’s error might not be intentional and simply due to the lack of proper attention. It is indeed not without reason that in Dixon’s extensive research on the Victorian formation of moral discourse, Kropotkin’s thought is not carefully examined, since he has not been treated seriously in modern biology. It is probably both legitimate and justifiable to dismiss Kropotkin’s anarchist reflection on science and nature, on modern society and history, since it is barely authorized by institutional power or disciplinary authority. However, by doing so, one does not only misunderstand him but also silently endorse the existing intellectual order, marginalizing other knowledges and arguments produced elsewhere. What becomes clear, when one reconstructs Kropotkin’s biographical trajectory of exile life from Russia to France to Britain and back to Russia, with years spent in Siberia and Manchuria as well as in Russian and French prisons, is the transnational and global nature of the anarchist movements at the turn of the nineteenth century, in which Kropotkin is less an exception than a representative of necessarily nomadic and compulsorily sedentary tendencies. It was the golden age of political

121 Any biographical study of Kropotkin owes tremendously to Kropotkin’s autobiography, Memoirs of a Revolutionary, originally written for The Atlantic Monthly, from 1898 to 1899.
radicalism in a productively inchoate state when coalitions and collaborations across institutional divides were still possible, and anarchists especially tended to emerge in institutional interstices and margins, through peripheral and minor paths, even from unexpected parts and places of society, compared to the more and more institutionalizing Marxism in the nascent nation-state which both legitimated and authorized certain types and processes over others.122

What should be kept in mind here is this somewhat illegitimate intellectual formation which stigmatized anarchism as much as it distinguished it from other types of knowledge production. My point is not to turn it into a legitimate one by entreating the authority for recognition. On the contrary, I hope to salvage its potential forces of critique and protest: precisely because of their marginality, anarchist ideas would bring mainstream opinions and the dominant structure of thinking and feeling into trouble, revealing their coercive essences and repressive habits. My basic claim is therefore that it is far from adequate to assess Kropotkin’s

The standard biography of Peter Kropotkin is still The Anarchist Prince: A Biographical Study of Peter Kropotkin by Woodcock and Avakumovic, published in 1950. A quarter-century later, Martin Miller’s Kropotkin was published by the Chicago University Press, which is a more scholarly, modern update to Woodcock’s and Aakumovic’s. Caroline Cahm’s scholarly work on Kropotkin’s early life, Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism 1872-1886, published by the Cambridge University Press, makes a thorough account of Kropotkin’s initial encounter with anarchism and his commitment to anarchist movements of Western Europe up until the beginning of his subsequent exile in Britain. The later phase of Kropotkin’s exile years is partially covered in Anarchistes en exil: correspondance inédite de Pierre Kropotine à Marie Goldsmith 1897-1917, edited by Michael Confino. Brian Morris’s Kropotkin: The Politics of Community, and Iain McKay’s massive anthology, Direct Struggle against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology, are both not particularly biographical, but offer an intellectual biography of the Russian anarchist in a comprehensive manner. Recently, Lee Alan Dugatkin, professor of biology, published a biographical sketch of Kropotkin in line with history of science and politics (The Prince of Evolution: Peter Kropotkin’s Adventures in Science and Politics), and René Berthier also attempts a scientific approach to Kropotkin’s life and work in his later years.

122 For this matter, see Levy’s excellent overview of recent historical studies on this transnational anarchism in “Social Histories of Anarchism,” where he invites us to imagine an “Anarchist Atlantic” at the “transnational turn in global history” which “the study of anarchist and labor cosmopolitanism during the era of globalization before 1914” should make visible (26).
theory of mutual aid as purely and exclusively biological, as Gould and other modern biologists tend to regard it. Nor is it sufficient to take it simply as an anthropocentric or human ethics, as political scientists and philosophers would do, because Kropotkin’s stake lies exactly in detecting an ever-expanding tendency of mutual aid from the biological realm to the human realm, from the past to the present, in which the latter goes beyond the naturally imposed limitation yet without completely uprooting itself from where it derived. As Jean-Christophe Aganot rightly concludes, Kropotkin’s natural philosophy is itself a social philosophy (127). Put differently, what Kropotkin seeks to do with such moral thinkers like August Comte, Joseph-Pierre Proudhon, Herbert Spencer, and Jean-Marie Guyau, as well as with Charles Darwin, is “base—not reduce—moral concepts on the ‘concrete facts of life’” (Morris, “Kropotkin’s Ethical Naturalism” 431). Then, it is the very distinction of science and politics that we have to reconsider with Kropotkin’s thinking on the continuity and discontinuity of nature and culture, on the possibility of grounding humanist ethics on natural capacities, and on the predicament of modernity and centralization in state formation. Kropotkin’s stake lies in exploring a possibility of grounding ethics in natural facts and existing instances, without having recourse to suprasensible and transcendental entities, without metaphysical fictions that have no footing on material and sensible realities.

If Kropotkin’s writings have critically troubling forces, it is not simply because they make counter-claims to the dominant paradigm and structure of thinking and feeling, for instance, of a benign nature against the “gladiatorial” nature as Thomas Huxley famously described it; more importantly, it is because they underscore the existence and presence of alternative paradigms and structures which are, however wishful and utopian they appear in
themselves and at this moment, already and always at work here and now, in an imperfect, incomplete, and messy manner.

In this respect, it is meaningful to relate Kropotkin’s practical and wishful reading of history and reality with Ernest Bloch’s future-oriented hermeneutics. According to Bloch, the utopian stuff is not external to reality, but immanent to it, everywhere and always present in our daily life, and this epistemological attitude to and ontological redefinition of reality encourage us to move away from the Hegelian and Heideggerian mood of anxiety and to assume the mode of hope, not simply as an emotional attitude but also as a cognitive act, in order to develop not-yet-consciousness which is especially tuned to grasping something yet to emerge, something novel appearing in the front. What Bloch keeps reminding us with this systematic reorientation is the closeness and ordinariness of utopian possibilities, which wait for us to perceive them and make them come forth:

*Concrete utopia stands on the horizon of every reality; real possibility surrounds the open dialectical tendencies and latencies to the very last.* By these the unconcluded motion of unconcluded matter—and motion is, in that profound phrase of Aristotle, “uncompleted entelechy”—is arch-realistically pervaded (223).

Bloch thus maintains that the utopian potential does not point to something distant in time and place. As he formulates in an impressive manner, the most properly utopian content is to be found not in some faraway place or the gone past that which is no longer existing, but in one’s own homeland, the here and now that is not such mere and simple immediacy as Hegel criticizes, but that which is “finally mediated, illuminated and fulfilled, fulfilled happily and adequately” (16). It is this will to (re)discover what is to come in our common living that this chapter would
like to further intensify, and my claim is that this utopian hermeneutics is being exemplified by Kropotkin’s interpretive attitude of perceiving the omnipresence of mutual aid feelings and practices even in apparently belligerent circumstances and of making an account of them almost against the grain of history and reality.

What Kropotkin makes us realize, as in the preface to Mutual Aid which I analyzed above, is therefore that mutual aid is neither a lost paradise that existed in the past and elsewhere, a distant goal that will be realized in some divine future where all human beings become angels, nor a transcendental ideal that cannot be reached and thus inevitably fail. Rather, it is common and ordinary praxes whose utopian and revolutionary potentiality still remains unearthed and unexplored, and therefore it is a task for anarchistic hermeneutics to (re)invent such a liberating method of seeing and reading nature and the world, an alternative way of feeling and thinking sympathetically, of acting and relating in solidarity which would ultimately transform us and our environment as much as our relations with nature and the world, with the past, the present, and the future.

Disciplinary Stakes, or Essentialism Revisited: Scientific Interpretation of Decentralized Nature, and Anarchist Problematization of Ifs

Let us come back to the initial question of “who takes Kropotkin seriously?” in a more specific way: which disciplines have been in his favor and which have not? The Russian anarchist has recently received the due scholarly attention he deserves, both within and without academia. After The Altruism Equation (2006), which narrates seven scientists’ search for the origins of goodness, Lee Alan Dugatkin, a Professor of Biology, published a short biographical study on Kropotkin’s scientific work (2011). In 2009, Réfractions, a French anarchist journal,
issued a special number on Kropotkin’s theory of mutual aid. Philippe Pelletier investigated anarchist geography around the turn of the nineteenth century, examining Kropotkin along with Élisée Reclus and Leon Metchnikoff in Géographie et anarchie (2013). Renaud Garcia’s more than six hundred page-long dissertation, Nature humaine et anarchie: la pensée de Pierre Kropotkine, presented in 2012, provides arguably the most comprehensive and up-to-date assessment of Kropotkin’s thought, thickly describing both biographical and historical contexts and relating them to intellectual trends relevant to our time in order to disclose the actuality of Kropotkin’s thought rather than take it as an antiquarian eccentricity. In 2015, Matthew Adams’ Kropotkin, Read, and the Intellectual History of British Anarchism appeared, which offers a British genealogy of anarchist politics and aesthetics, while Peter Ryley’s Making Another World Possible: Anarchism, Anti-Capitalism, and Ecology in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Britain, published in 2013, provides a different account of British intellectual history from the intersection of anarchism and ecological thought. McKay’s gigantic volume, Direct

123 Élisée Reclus had already been rescued from obl ivion many years ago. John Clark and Camille Martin edited and translated a selection of Reclus’ writings under the title of Anarchy, Geography, Modernity, which originally appeared in 2005 and reissued in 2013. Marie Fleming’s biographical study on Reclus, The Geography of Freedom: The Odyssey of Élisée Reclus (1988) and her earlier work, The Anarchist Way to Socialism: Elisée Reclus and Nineteenth-Century European Anarchism (1979) are definitely a precursor of the recent revival of anarchist geography. In this respect, it is important to point out that Antipode already foregrounded this conjuncture of anarchism and geography back in 1978, where Myrna Margulies Breitbart juxtaposed Kropotkin’s text on geographical education and Bookchin’s essay on ecology along with scholarly pieces on Reclus and other related issues. More than a generation later, Antipode once again picked up the same problematics of anarchism and geography in 2012. See also David Harvey’s manifesto, “On the History and Present Condition of Geography: An Historical Materialist Manifesto,” originally published in Professional Geography 36(1) in 1984 and now collected in Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography. By exploring the influence of the Paris Commune across European countries, Kristin Ross recently focused on geographical texts of Kropotkin and Reclus in Communal Luxury (2015). About the historical condition of geography in early-twentieth-century France, see Elisée Reclus—Paul Vidal de la Blanche (2009). As regards Metchnikoff, see James D. White; Sho Konishi, “Reopening the ‘Opening of Japan’” and Anarchist Modernity.
Struggle against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology, appeared in 2014, which, based on his extensive archival research, salvaged many short pieces that had been unavailable in English, and this collection certainly marks a milestone in anarchist studies over recent years.124

Despite all these scholarly and non-scholarly achievements, there is still a peculiar neglect Kropotkin studies suffer. These reconsiderations of Kropotkin’s texts and practices, made in rather traditionally anarchist veins or in properly disciplinary contexts like geography, history of science, or historiography, are nearly independent from the recent theoretical turn to anarchism in critical theory, which in turn remains rather indifferent to Kropotkin’s evolutionary thinking on organisms and their communal lives. The philosophical bypassing of Kropotkin is glaring in Petit lexique philosophique de l’anarchisme by Daniel Colson. While encompassing anarchist terms and themes from Proudhon to Deleuze, yet going beyond the anarchist canon and extending to more philosophical directions, Colson tries to “deviner les affinités secrètes” (“discern the secret affinities”) among Spinoza, Leibniz, Stirner, Proudhon, Bakunin, Tarde, Nietzsche, Bergson, Foucault, Simondon, Deleuze and others (my trans.; 11). What is puzzling in this portable handbook is the absence of Kropotkin and his idea of mutual aid—nowhere does Colson explain this omission—and the bibliographical section even fails to list any of Kropotkin’s works.

Dismissing Kropotkin is not a new phenomenon, which can be observed in other disciplinary approaches on classical anarchism. George Crowder’s Classical Anarchism, for example, discusses Bakunin and Kropotkin in the same chapter, examining them always in tandem and only as two different descents of Rousseau, Godwin, and Proudhon, as if anarchism

---

124 McKay provides invaluable lists of Kropotkin’s publications in “Sages and Movements: An Incomplete Peter Kropotkin Bibliography” and “Kropotkin, Woodcock, and Les Temps Nouveaux.”
in the late nineteenth century could be reduced back to its supposed origin of the European Enlightenment. However, what we discern in the post-anarchist critique of nineteenth-century anarchism is even more problematic: Kropotkin is scapegoated as a representative of essentialism. Andrew Koch targeted the remains of the Enlightenment that presupposes human essence and perfection, in which Kropotkin is chosen as embodying such an essentialist tendency along with Godwin and Proudhon (329-30). Lewis Call singles out Kropotkin as an example of classical anarchism that is “haunted by a rationalist semiotics which seriously limits its radical potential” (Postmodern Anarchism 16). For Call, Kropotkin’s problem lies in that his conceptualization of anarchism is done “only in purely scientific terms,” being trapped in “the rationalist linguistic structures” which are “substantially equivalent to those of bourgeois science, which in turn grow out of the European Enlightenment” (16). More cautious than Call, Saul Newman suggests that the leading nineteenth-century anarchists do not simply insist on “a one-sided or naively benign concept of human nature” (The Politics of Postanarchism 39).

Nevertheless, Newman continues that even if they acknowledge egotistic aspects of human nature, they still hold “a kind of social essentialism...the idea that society embodies a rationality and a morality which is immanent, whose laws and processes are scientifically observable” (39).

However, what these post-anarchists intended by this anti-essentialist critique of classical anarchism in general and Kropotkin in particular is not to throw away the anarchist inheritance once and for all, but rather to salvage what is alive and savable in them. Duane Rousselle often claims that classical anarchism is always and already post-anarchism, especially in its ethical kernel, and that the relationship of post-anarchism with classical anarchism should not be considered wholly antagonistic (After Post-Anarchism 4). Rousselle’s, and post-anarchism’s complaint against Kropotkin or classical anarchism at large then boils down to the question of
how to save space for speculation against empiricism, just as Lacan fought against the scientific
reduction of the psych {151}. Put another way, Rousselle’s criticism is a plea for philosophy
that there is something more than empirical facts or verifiable data, something which cannot be
reduced to them and must therefore be grasped otherwise: we have to avoid an uncritical slide or
naive slippage from the descriptive to the prescriptive in naturalist ethics, empiricism, and
descriptionism (161).

However, unlike Call or Newman who seems satisfied with reiterating the standard
critique of classical anarchism and quickly turns to poststructuralist thinkers or other genealogies
of anarchism—they may be charged, as Matthew Adams argues, with dehistoricizing Kropotkin
in order to save his political legacy—Rousselle makes an important contribution by responding
to Brian Morris’ attack on the post-anarchist readings of Kropotkin. {126} Morris’s contextual

125 It is remarkable that when the epistemological turn in anarchist studies resulted in
foregrounding the individualist and linguistic problematics from Stirner to Nietzsche to
structuralists and post-structuralists, it is the Hegelian genealogy rather than the Kantian one
in classical anarchism that was favored by philosophizing post-anarchism. And this
ultimately led to reappraisal of Bakunin and not Kropotkin. Saul Newman’s first book,
prefaced by Ernest Laclau, is very telling in itself: From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-
Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power. See also Bargu.

126 Adams also discusses the different takes on science in Marx and Kropotkin: Marx used
science as a means of dominating the workers’ movement with its “halo of scientific
infallibility,” while for Kropotkin science is a method of reading and interpreting nature and
history, “a means of testing theories and sifting evidence, rather than transposing the
conclusions of natural philosophy into sociology” (58). In passing, I add that Kropotkin’s
science is natural science like biology, geography, geology, with a constant back and forth
movement of induction and deduction, rather than mathematical one which is more deductive
and speculative. René Berthier argues that Kropotkin’s science is a method or a theory, while
for Lenin and many Marxists, it is itself science (63n2). Lenin goes so far as to consider that
science “ne relève plus d’une démarche critique au cours de laquelle les hypothèses se
confront, elle est l’application d’un dogma, voire son imposition par la terreur” (“no longer
belongs to a critical procedure in the course of which hypotheses are tested one against the
other; it is application of a dogma, moreover, its imposition by terror”; my trans.; 62). In this
way, Marxism’s science could be even more authoritative and dogmatic than any hard
sciences could ever be, where a scientific solution would be legitimated as one single truth
and established as the orthodoxy that is infallible, but it should also be noted that Engels and
Kautsky, and not Marx, are responsible for this scientification of Marxism (127).
reading would suggest that essentialism is found not in Kropotkin’s thinking as such, but in the postmodern conflation of Kropotkin’s evolutionary conception of human nature with a metaphysical understanding of it, thus inviting us to redefine sociability not as the Platonic essence that is eternal and supranatural, but as an evolutionary entity that transforms over time (149-151). What Rousselle underscores after Morris’ displacement and redefinition of human nature is a tension or oscillation in Kropotkin’s writing on ethics. By applying the Freudian hermeneutic technique of explaining the dream structure as double-layered, Rousselle argues that on the one hand, Kropotkin’s texts struggle to articulate the manifest content of ethics, making normative statements about our behavior and conduct, but on the other hand, they also strive to reconsider, dismantle, and subvert the dominant paradigm of ethics at his time, namely, the (social) Darwinian theory of evolution, which constitutes the latent content of Kropotkin’s ethical thinking (153). In this respect, Matthew Adams is right to remind us of the disparity in Kropotkin’s texts between the language of positivism and “a sense of flux, an emphasis on the temporary nature of stability, and a broad anti-essentialism” (Kropotkin, Read 57).

A lesson to learn from Morris, Rousselle, and Adams is not to be deceived by the smooth surface of Kropotkin’s positivist language which are often filled with mechanistic metaphors and normative claims. His writings cannot be considered a transparent medium, and it is necessary to raise rhetorical and literary questions about his word choice, anecdotal persuasion, performative dialogue, and so on. What is often forgotten in the typical criticism of Kropotkin’s biological and ethical thinking, especially translated into modern debates over egoism and altruism in evolutionary science, is that Kropotkin rarely uses the word “altruism,” although, according to Dixon, the term was “the fashionable watchword of the day, on the lips of many a campaigner and social reformer” and associated with “various forms of socialist and collectivist political and
economic thought” (9). The most significant term in Kropotkin’s discussion is “mutual aid,” which is in turn associated with social instincts and moral feelings, with sociability and solidarity, as well as with intra-species cooperation and the struggle against environment and circumstance, all of which are relational terms in one way or another. Marianne Enckell points out that Élisée Reclus, a French anarchist geographer and ex-communard in exile, suggested that Kropotkin should use *entr’aide* as the title of the French edition: Kropotkin’s book popularized the noun form of the verb “s’entr’aider” or “s’entr’aider” which had been used since the seventeenth century (5).

What insight can be drawn from this peculiar choice of the rather unpopular term? What does Kropoktin do with it? Emphasis should be put on “entre [between, among]” or mutuality and reciprocity of organisms and not on one’s one-way attitude to the other as in the case of altruism where the individuality or even individualism of organisms are presupposed. Indeed, what Kropotkin’s evolutionary thinking foregrounds is not mere kindness or tenderness of animals and mankind, but the precedence of social and communal life in the life of organisms, which he shows by traversing such multiple realms and disciplines like biology, anthropology, history, and sociology, from the distant past to the actual present, from Siberia to the contemporary Europe. In a word, Kropotkin’s mutual aid is intersubjective and collective from the very beginning, in which the question of individuality and individualization must be considered as something evolutionary *and* historical that emerges and evolves over time, in

127 In “The Ethical Need for the Present Day,” Kropotkin argues that the consideration of reciprocity is inferior to self-sacrifice, which may sound to contradict what I have just said (221-22). I will come back to the question of sacrifice and reciprocity below. Here, I note that even in *Ethics*, “altruism” is not a vocabulary of Kropotkin, and presented with quotation marks as Comte’s or Spencer’s term.
relation to natural habits, social customs, and cultural practices of mutual aid that expand and complicate as time goes on.

Paying close attention to Kropotkin’s word choice and way of writing, I would like to focus on a passage in Modern Science and Anarchism which many commentators, including Errico Malatesta, single out as very problematic in that it reveals the mechanistic core of Kropotkin’s positivism, determinism, and fatalism:

Anarchism is a conception of the Universe based on the mechanical interpretation of phenomena, which comprises the whole of Nature, including the life of human societies and their economic, political, and moral problems. Its method is that of natural sciences, and every conclusion it comes to must be verified by this method if it pretends to be scientific. (EE 51)

Interestingly, Malatesta frankly admits his ignorance in quoting the first sentence—“I confess that I have never succeeded in understanding what this means”—but nevertheless cites it and criticizes Kropotkin’s theoretical tendency to fatalism and optimism, endorsed by his scientific understanding of nature and history (517). Malatesta even suggests that while criticizing “the historical fatalism of the Marxist,” Kropotkin commits the same mistake of endorsing “the mechanical fatalism which is much more paralyzing” (516).

René Berthier is also critical of Kropotkin’s scientism, but he makes an obvious mistake of misreading “interpretation” for “interpenetration” (126n2).

Does this passage betray Kropotkin’s scientism? Berthier’s misquote might appear trivial, but its theoretical consequence is grave, for “interpenetration” would erroneously foreground the

128 When he criticized historical fatalism in Kropotkin, Malatesta might have been thinking about Kropotkin’s influence on Italian anarchists who had become less committed to direct actions and concrete movements. See Pernicone.
ontological truth claim (what is the universe?) and thus make a much strong statement out of this weaker, methodological presupposition (how we (ought to) understand the universe?). This boundary might be tenuous and porous, one which Kropotkin himself seems to elide from time to time. In *Modern Science and Anarchism* as in “Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal,” Kropotkin asserts that anarchism is just one of the many manifestations of the scientific evolution in the modern centuries. However, for Kropotkin, philosophy means a materialist, physiologic Welanschauung, an epistemological explanation, as Michael Confino rightly suggests. In truth, Kropotkin’s worldview, or cosmology, maintains that with the scientific paradigm shift in the nineteenth century, the static view of the order gave way to dynamic equilibrium at both the macrocosmic and the microcosmic levels, from astronomy to physics to physiology to psychology: “infinitely tiny bodies” and “infinitely small atoms” constitute “an agglomeration, a colony of millions of separate individuals” with neither absolute center nor preconceived harmony (*FW* 100, 101). More importantly, Kropotkin affirms unambiguously that this dynamic understanding of the world and the universe is “a new view” and “a new interpretation”: “the facts are not new, but the way of looking at them is in course of evolution” (105, 102; emphasis added).

In the footnote attached to this deceiving passage, Kropotkin adds that “kinetic” might have been substituted for “mechanical.” What he intended by this word choice is not perfectly clear, as “kinetic” does not appear in any of his other major writings. But it is certain that Kropotkin conceives of nature and the world as dynamic and moving, and therefore unpredictable, almost contrary to the still, predictable, law-governed universe comprised of

---

129 *Anarchistes en exil* 38. Confino adds that Kropotkin’s materialism is quite different from the Marxist version. Concerning various versions of materialism in the nineteenth-century philosophical context, including Kropotkin’s and Marxism’s, see Garcia 65-113.
inanimate parts. Here, Kropotkin offers an immanent explanation of natural and cultural phenomena, which does not rely on such a notion of causality as is retrospectively invented and then projected back to what has already taken place, as if the latter derived from such an origin. Kropotkin does not deny causality, but he does not take it for a transcendental, deductive principle of explanation which can predict what will occur next. To be sure, Kropotkin’s scientific worldview remained somewhat Newtonian to his last days, which means that he failed to catch up with the relativist paradigm in the early twentieth century. As Renard Garcia remarks, Kropotkin’s inductive method is destined to be a product of his time, no more or less than that (75). But Garcia also adds that for Kropotkin, the natural law drawn from an inductive process does not enable us to predict what to come, and that there is always a room for the uncertain, the probable, and the undetermined, which leads to, if I borrow Garcia’s beautiful phrase, the construction of “un système ouvert sur la fécondité et l’imprévisibilité” (“a system open to fecundity and improvisibility”; my trans.; 77).

No less important than these often overlooked emphases on interpretation and a way of seeing and making sense as well as on the significance of the unpredictable and the uncertain in Kropotkin’s thinking is the passage that appears just after the one quoted above: “Its tendency is to work out a synthetic philosophy which will take in all facts of Nature, including the life of societies, without, however, falling into the errors of Comte and Spencer, which were due to reasons already pointed out” (EE 51-52). Kropotkin’s ambition of synthetic philosophy and his will to comprehension and totalization are unmistakable, but what is more interesting to me here is his deliberate differentiation from Comte and Spencer: how we can think about nature and

130 In a footnote, Garcia remarks that the Russian term “mir” signifies both “world” and “universe,” which might provide a justification for applying the method of natural science to socio-historical matters (77n20).
socio-historical reality without having recourse to transcendental presuppositions or big words, without regressing from positivist sobriety to metaphysical exaltation, from the materialist language to sonorous but vacuous phrases, whether they are the Creator, a mystical vital force, an immortal soul, humanity, “struggle for existence.”

What Kropotkin develops in his rather idiosyncratic historiography of the dual development of science and anarchism, of decentralization and dethronement of the anthropocene in modern times, is therefore a positivist method which considers that “every law of nature has a conditional character” and that this should be effective in whatever realm, whether it is a natural phenomenon or cultural one, economic or political, psychological or physical, historical or religious: “Always, there is an if—a condition to be fulfilled” (92). In foregrounding this conditional nature of the laws inductive processes articulate, Kropotkin’s thought does not seek to master them; nor does it believe that we could reach desired results by satisfying such and such conditions. Instead, he turns this conditional thinking to the existing theories of political economy, asking what kinds of “ifs” are being presupposed there and how

131 Kropotkin’s criticism of Bergson’s *L’Évolution créatrice* should be read in this context. In “La croisade contre la science de M. Bergson,” which was originally published in *Risveglio*, an Italian magazine and then republished in *Le Temps nouveaux* in 1913, revised and slightly augmented, Kropotkin is probably unjust to Bergson, too quickly accusing the French philosopher of intuitionism and irrationalism and misunderstanding his point about intellectual division of labor or specialization (intellect for the dissected parts and intuition for the dynamic whole). However, one misreads Kropotkin by, as Ruth Kinna does, relating this criticism of Bergson only to his visceral aversion to individualism (“Kropotkin’s Theory of Mutual Aid in Historical Context” 268-70). If, as Kinna argues, Kropotkin is consistently critical of individualism, whether it is Stirnerian, Nietzschean, or Bergsonian, which appeared bourgeois phenomena to his eyes—in this regard, Kropotkin uncannily resonates with Max Nordau, the infamous author of *Degeneration*—Kropotkin is consistent in another sense: he inveighs Bergson for the same reason he attacks Comte and Spencer, namely, Bergson’s reliance on “assemblages de mots,” analogies, and metaphors (3). At any rate, Kropotkin’s rejection of Bergson’s method does not represent the whole gradation of the anarchist attitude to Bergson. Indeed, some anarchists read Bergson along with Stirner and Nietzsche, from all of whom Kropotkin took a distance. Concerning the anarchist reception of Bergson, see Allan Antliff, “Revolutionary Immanence: Bergson among the Anarchists.”
problematic those conditions are, for instance, why the state must be the primary condition and the unquestionable authority: “Up till now, the academic economists have always simply enumerated what happens under such conditions, without specifying and analyzing the conditions themselves. Even if they were mentioned, they were forgotten immediately, to be spoken of no more” (92). And it is exactly this something immediately forgotten and no more spoken of that Kropotkin invites us to scrutinize. In this way, Kropotkin’s scientific method is inexorably entangled with political questions, not simply because he applies it to socio-economic matters, taking them as no different than natural phenomena, but more importantly and more fundamentally because, by doing so, he calls into question the very foundation on which the modern state was built with its taken-for-granted political economy, morality of egoistic individualism, and predatory exploitation.

In “Science and Anarchism: Kropotkin Revisited,” Karl Rogers pursues this point of science’s heterogeneity and impurity, arguing that we have to question not only the scientific status of a given hypothesis, but also the very foundation of science which is inseparable from the supposedly non-scientific components. By expanding on Karl Polanyi’s discussion of the

132 In this respect, Williamson M. Evers’ libertarian criticism of Kropotkin is completely off the point and to the point. It inadvertently reveals why Kropotkin’s economic theory, and any anarchist variations by extension, are unacceptable to economists. Evers’ attack is legitimate insofar as one accepts such libertarian presuppositions like the validity of a labor contract, the legitimacy of the hierarchical division of labor, the inevitable erosion of democracy and the emergence of oligarchy, and so on. But why they must be recognized as the very foundation of economic life? Why do we justify the past calamity by which so called primitive accumulations had been achieved and ushered in the present economic disparity and class division? Why don’t producers have a right to what they produce? Why democratic negotiation must give way to the reign of a few? At the very bottom of these questions is a specific notion of political liberty, or non-interference with another’s life, individual freedom to choose the desired way of living, and defense of individual rights against others’ violation (230-231). However, what if, as Kropotkin questions, we begin with troubling these presuppositions themselves, what if we start with other presuppositions and toward other directions?
convolutedness of scientific methodology with intuitive perception on the one hand and with “the dictates of his or her education, training, and intellectual conscience, from within a scientific community of already established scientists” on the other, Rogers connects Polanyi’s social philosophy of science to Kropotkin’s scientific anarchism (11). For Rogers, Polanyi and Kropotkin agree to the necessity of, through the “appeal to the sovereignty of the individual intellectual conscience,” declaring independence from our inevitable primary belonging to already existing scientific communities and their dogmatic requirements of devotion, because that is the only way to open a free discussion (14). What should follow from this rethinking of the division of science and politics and that of science and non-science is not uncritical faithfulness to the socially approved meaning of science, but instead a critical contestation of the very grounding on which certain practices would be recognized as scientific. My point is therefore that if Kropotkin appears to apply scientific methods beyond the natural world and treat the human one in exactly the same way, it is not because Kropotkin believes in the sovereignty of science over other realms and disciplines. For Kropotkin, it is the existing separation and division that must be first of all problematized and contested for the sake of the messy heterogeneity, so that an alternative articulation with alternative orientations would be invented and introduced. 133

133 In this respect, it is useful to refer to Álvaro Girón’s argument that Kropotkin failed to synthesize Darwinism with Lamarckism. Girón continues, however, that this aborted attempt of neo-Lamarckian appropriation of Darwinism is more complicated an issue than a simple disprove, because “Kropotkin’s failure cannot be explained in terms of the conventional story of the victory of good Science (Darwinism) over bad Science (Lamarckism)” (210). According to Girón, it is not merely that Kropotkin’s hypothesis proved scientifically false due to its inconsistency and lack of proper evidence; the truth is that “[d]eep changes in and out of the biologists’ community” had made impossible such a synthesis that was yet not impossible before them, both scientifically and politically (210). Therefore, Girón concludes that “the kropotkinian proposal of widening Darwinism to reintroduce Lamarckism was a political anachronism” at the time when Lamarckism was scientifically refuted by neo-Darwinism and Mendelism and the bourgeoisie lost the liberal faith in self-organization and
By underlining the ideological underpinning of scientific practices and economic affairs, I am not going to take the absolutist position of postmodern relativism that no universal truth is possible. My point is that Kropotkin is not an exception in processing scientific evidence through a seemingly politically motivated lens. Instead, Kropotkin forces us to see how science is from science, which was taken over by protectionism and imperialism and the cult of violence and irrationality (212; emphasis added). Although Girón mentions this only in passing, it is important to note that Kropotkin was fully aware of the danger of political appropriation of evolutionary theory, especially when it would be employed by the state. At the International Eugenics Congress in 1912, Kropotkin questioned the right to sterilize the “unfit,” while insisting on the environmental influence on organisms as much as on genetic ones. His presentation, “The Sterilization of the Unfit” would subsequently appear in Emma Goldman’s magazine, *Mother Earth*. Here, for the lack of space, I cannot examine the validity of Girón’s claim that Kropotkin’s second attempt of synthesizing Darwinism with Lamarckism in the 1900s and 1910s political and scientific contexts was unsuccessful, becoming more and more anachronistic and nostalgic about his first attempt of uniting Darwinism with socialism against Malthusianism in the second half of the nineteenth century (213). Therefore, I would like to make three brief suggestions. First, there is an abundant amount of literature on “the eclipse of Darwinism” around this post-Darwinian and pre-Mendelian period, and for this matter we should consult Peter Bowler’s works, among others *The Eclipse of Darwinism* and *The Non-Darwinian Revolution*. Second, it appears to me more important to have a more flexible concept of “environment,” in which the agent and the environment are not separate entities, but one is being constituted by and constituting the other in a mutual manner. Kropotkin’s Lamarckism, if any, is primarily about the question of how the environment acting on living organisms and how they adapt to it and only secondarily about the inheritance of acquired characteristics (see EE). As R. C. Lewontin persuasively argues in *The Doctrine of DNA: Biology as Ideology*, we have to throw away two extreme views of organism-environment relationship which are both wrong (total independence of DNA from the external world and holistic relatedness of every and all); we should take a third view that “sees the entire world neither as an indissoluble whole nor with the equally incorrect, but currently dominant, view that at every level the world is made up of bits and pieces that can be isolated and that have properties that can be studied in isolation” but invites us to see “the full richness of interaction in nature” (15). Third, and most controversially, I think it much less self-evident whether or not Kropotkin’s reflection on Lamarckism and criticism of neo-Darwinism can be read as a political treaties in the same way *Mutual Aid* can be so. While *Mutual Aid* is interdisciplinary, consciously encompassing biology, anthropology, historiography, and sociology, these pieces on the direct action of the environment are almost exclusively biological as well as very technical. To be sure, the stake is consistent from *Mutual Aid* to the later writings: closely to (re)read Darwin, to save him from the abusive political and ideological associations, and to liberate the utopian potentials. In addition, Kropotkin’s word choice, the “direct action” of the environment has a political implication, which might be read as gesturing toward syndicalist strategies of owning the means of production in workplaces. However, such political connotations remain only allusive.
the very beginning inexorably engaged with the political, especially when scientific hypotheses and findings are susceptible to political uses and abuses, for instance, biology turning into eugenics, geography disguised as means of imperialist exploitation, and this fundamental relationship of scientific knowledge with political usage that must be undone and redone. To further deepen this problematic, the next section takes up Kropotkin’s pedagogical reflection on geography.

Decentering the West: Ethnographic Dialogue, Geographical Pedagogy, and Subaltern Historiography

In “The Correspondence between Élisée Reclus and Pëtr Kropotkin as a Source for the History of Geography,” Federico Ferretti relates the ways in which these anarchist geographers succeeded in making geographical publications a profitable enterprise by constructing a transnational network of collaborators and contributors who teamed up and worked together in a mutually aiding manner (218). However, this publication project with Hachette is not purely for money, as it is their imperative that the “simple necessity of earning their daily bread” does not sacrifice “the hope for a genuinely popular education” (220). In fact, Reclus’ *Nouvelle géographie universelle*, as Ferretti states, is predicated on “the anarchist commitment to the principle of ‘geography of all’” (218). Material pragmatism is thus one with pedagogical idealism, and their anarchist geography is not only critical of the political appropriation and imperialistic exploitation of colonial knowledge, but also points to a definite mission, a wish to “spread the knowledge of non-European people within Europe itself, in order to promote mutual respect,” because, continues Feretti, it was clear to these two anarchists, especially to Reclus, that “Europe was no longer the center of the world” (220).
When it comes to decenter the West, Kropotkin rivals Reclus in various ways. As Daniel Todes convincingly argues, *Mutual Aid* can be read as a Russian response to Darwin’s theory of evolution which attempts to dissociate from Darwin’s theory of evolution the Malthusian principle of tying together the scarcity in food production with the natural condition of promiscuity and overpopulation. In this regard, Kropotkin represents the typical Russian attitude, problematizing the British connection between political economy and biology and depoliticizing Darwin’s theory, but also repoliticizing it with different associations and assumptions of affluent production and underpopulation. Following the Russian tradition, Kropotkin suggests looking at nature differently, or looking at a different nature, and imagining and conceiving of different relations between organisms and environments, among organisms in relation to environments.\(^{134}\)

Kropotkin’s primary scene of the natural environment is quite Russian. Contrary to Darwin’s or Wallace’s nature which is tropical, abundant, and overpopulated, Kropotkin’s nature is the severe and under-populated Eastern Siberia and Northern Manchuria which he witnessed and experienced during his geographical journeys (Todes, 130, 142).\(^{135}\) It is therefore a strategic

---

\(^{134}\) Todes argues that one of Kropotkin’s contentions is to attend “the cross-cultural transmission of metaphors in scientific thought” (*Darwin without Malthus* 20). Indeed, Kropotkin begins his argument by questioning the British catachresis of “struggle for existence.” Contrary to British Darwinists who take it literally and abuses it, Kropotkin proposes to restore the metaphoric meaning Darwin originally intended. In this way, Kropotkin distinguishes three levels of struggles (inter-species struggles, intra-species ones, and struggles between organisms and natural environments).

\(^{135}\) In a letter to Marie Goldsmith, Kropotkin writes: “Russian zoologists investigated enormous continental regions in the temperate zone, where the struggle of the species against natural conditions... is more obvious; while Wallace and Darwin primarily studied the coastal zones of tropical lands, where overcrowding is more noticeable. In the continental regions that we visited there is a paucity of animal population; overcrowding is possible there, but only temporarily” (qtd in Todes, “Darwin’s Malthusian Metaphor and Russian Evolutionary Thought, 1859-1917” 546). This multi-year expedition and its accomplishments made him one of the most brilliant and acclaimed geographers and geologists of his generation, opening a door to the promising academic career as a secretary of the Geographic Society, but at the last moment he declined the offer and decided to commit himself to a precarious political career.
choice that *Mutual Aid* opens with a vivid and impressive description of such natural environments, immediately transposing the reader to a different nature than the ones Darwin experienced in the Galapagos Islands and Wallace in the Malay Archipelago.\(^\text{136}\)

Kropotkin is quite explicit about his great debt to the Russian zoologist Karl Kessler, whose lecture, “On the Law of Mutual Aid,” provided the basic framework of argument in which the law of mutual struggle is opposed against that of mutual aid (*MA* xiii). Kropotkin would also take up Kessler’s emphasis on *The Descent of Man* rather than on *The Origin of Species*, by means of which he would try to defend Darwin against what he claims are misunderstandings and misreadings of Darwin’s theory of evolution both in *Mutual Aid* and in his later writings on Lamarck.\(^\text{137}\) However, Kropotkin does more than reiterate Kessler, proposing a different

\(^{136}\) Todes points out that Kropotkin’s argument could be problematic when one takes seriously his claim that mutual aid is a factor for evolution, because Kropotkin barely explains how mutual aid serves for speciation: Kropotkin’s argument reveals that “cooperation preserved rather than altered species” (136; emphasis added). Certainly Todes is correct to say that Kropotkin’s actual argument dwells on the use of cooperation for survival in relation to the development of intelligence and ethics. According to Todes, Russian explanations of mutual aid are, generally speaking, “an ecological conception” rather than an “evolutionary theory,” but Kropotkin faced a challenge to translate the former into the latter in the British context where the stake was evolution; and this British demand would force Kropotkin to think about how to fit the Russian ecological account to the evolutionary problem it was not prepared to deal with (136). As I have already suggested above, I think that it is to misunderstand the potential critical impulse in *Mutual Aid* to reduce its discussion to purely biological grounds, as it is misleading to narrowly equate evolution with speciation. For Kropotkin, mutual aid is not specific to some animals or to some stages of human evolution, but omnipresent and universal, observed wherever and whenever, with different degrees and intensities. As this chapter shows below, his critical point lies in exploring evolution in terms of progressive expansion of mutual aid feelings and practices beyond natural and social limits. In this respect, unlike Darwin’s, Kropotkin’s evolutionary argument is teleological. But then, it should immediately be added that Kropotkin already shifts from the strictly evolutionary ground to the cultural one where mankind is not simply determined by natural conditions and natural givens but transforms itself by its own, not quite natural or overtly unnatural, man-made principles. Then, Kropotkin’s telos, or that of humanity in Kropotkin’s thinking, is less biological than fictional in the sense I discussed in chapter two.

\(^{137}\) Concerning this distinction of the first Darwin of *The Origin* and the second Darwin of *The Descent* and the importance of the second, see Patrick Tort, “Ouverture: la seconde révolution darwinienne” and “L’Effet réversif de l’évolution: Fondements de
approach to the question of mutual aid. Referring to the available literature on the topic, Kropotkin clearly distinguishes his thinking from the predecessors’, criticizing their reliance on too narrow or too broad abstract categories like “parent feelings” (Kessler) and “love” (Büchner, Drummond, Sutherland) that would reduce mutual aid to particular cases of a specific mental and physical activity—let us recall his criticism of modern philosophy as relying on pompous but vacuous words—while Kropotkin aims to stretch it toward the general phenomenon by seeing it as derived from sociality and sociability. It is important to point out that Kropotkin’s depoliticizing of Darwin is therefore neither simply scientific nor cultural, but both, and linguistic too. As Todes rightly argues, one of Kropotkin’s contentions is to attend to “the cross-cultural transmission of metaphors in scientific thought” (Darwin without Malthus 20). Thus, Kropotkin begins his argument by questioning the British catachresis of “struggle for existence.” Contrary to British Darwinists who take it literally and abuses it, Kropotkin proposes to restore the metaphoric meaning Darwin originally intended. In this way, Kropotkin distinguishes three levels of struggles (inter-species struggles, intra-species ones, and struggles between organisms and natural environments).

In the previous section, I have discussed Kropotkin’s all-encompassing cosmological view of nature, or Weltanschauung, where individualizing atoms interact, relate with each other, and organize themselves in the state of dynamic equilibrium. As Brian Morris argues, Kropotkin’s decentralizing critique has several targets: it does not only refuse to take the West for the center, but also refuses to take the human as the center of the planet, going so far as to question the centrality of the earth in the whole universe (114, 125). However, it is not enough
to point out this general shift, because Kropotkin’s critique of the West goes deeper: it does not simply relativizes the Western values, but more importantly, disturbs and subverts the hierarchy of the supposedly superior Western morality over the so-called barbaric behaviors and customs of the primitive and the savage, revealing how demoralizing the non-contradictorily selfinterested Western morality would be when juxtaposed with the contradictory co-existence of mutual aid and barbaric cruelty in primitive society:

West European men of science, when coming across these facts, are absolutely unable to stand them; they can not reconcile them with a high development of tribal morality, and they prefer to cast a doubt upon the exactitude of absolutely reliable observers, instead of trying to explain the parallel existence of the two sets of facts: a high tribal morality together with the abandonment of the parents and infanticide. But if these same Europeans were to tell a savage that people, extremely amiable, fond of their own children, and so impressionable that they cry when they see a misfortune simulated on the stage, are living in Europe within a stone's throw from dens in which children die from sheer want of food, the savage, too, would not understand them. (85-86)

Here, the safe and secure position of the Western observer suddenly collapses, being exposed to the interrogating savage and then made an object of observation, vulnerable and unanswerable. What is really troubling here is not that the Western man of science cannot understand the tribal life of the savage. On the contrary, the trouble is the inscrutability of the Western society to the savage and the sudden realization on the Westerner’s side that Western society is no less inscrutable to the Western man himself, unless he embraces the immorality of its morality,

of his time,, Morris contends that Kropotkin’s “naturalistic philosophy of nature” is ahead of time, expressing “in embryonic form” ecological sensitivity (123).
namely, the justified indifference to the neighbor’s pain and suffering, that liberal principle of non-intervention and non-interference with others.

Kropotkin stands somewhere between the Westerner and the savage. Although he locates himself on the side of the West, as the possessive of “our” shows, he does not share Western morality. But at the same time, he does not idealize the other’s position, because, however laudable their mentality would be in terms of helping other fellows, tribal people cannot take a distance from tribal solidarity. What arises here is the mutual blindness of the European and the savage, which is collective and structural, rather than individual. Put differently, the problem does not lie in individual psychology, not in that one is not kind and sympathetic enough, but in the collective mindset which would make the other’s unintelligible, unless one is willing to put yourself into the other’s life world and to share their lives together or to learn their moral motivation (86). Here, I should immediately add that for Kropotkin, the savage is neither a fictionalized ideal as in Rousseau, nor a critical device as in Diderot, where the non-Western is nothing but the other of the West. On the one hand, Kropotkin deconstructs the dominant discourse of nineteenth-century anthropology which orders the civilized and the non-civilized in a hierarchical manner, shattering the Western conceit of moral superiority to the primitive and

George Crowder maintains that nineteenth-century anarchism derives from the Enlightenment philosophy and that Rousseau’s influence, along with Godwin’s, is substantial. Álvaro Girón wonders whether or not Kropotkin’s thought is “dangerously dependent on the myth of the original—natural—goodness of the human kind, something that made it the most likely candidate to be dismissed as a form of «political rousseanism»” (196). However, Kropotkin does not share the Rousseau-esque nostalgia for the natural state, severely criticizing Rousseau’s error of “excluding the beak and claw fight” from his thinking, while no naturalist can miss to notice the existence of such fights in animal life. For Kropotkin, Rousseau and Huxley are two paradigmatic examples in which exaggeration goes to extremes, whether it is the gladiatorial nature as in Huxley or “love, peace, and harmony destroyed by the accession of man” as in Rousseau (Mutual Aid 4). Kropotkin refers to Diderot’s Supplément au voyage de Bougainville once in the Britannica entry on anarchism. See also Alexander McKinley, Illegitimate Children of the Enlightenment, concerning anarchist relationship with French philosophers in the age of the Enlightenment.
the savage. But on the other hand, Kropotkin does not embrace cultural relativism which would try to respect each culture as following its own value system and thus assert that no culture has a right to criticize others’. For Kropotkin, every human society belongs to the same species which is in turn a part of the general evolutionary process of expanding sociality and sociability.

It is significant that this critical attitude of decentering the West, coupled with questioning of the co-relation of technological development and moral progress, is already found in one of the first articles Kropotkin wrote for the British audience, “What Geography Ought to Be,” published in the December 1885 issue of *The Nineteenth Century*. When, in the obituary article which appeared in *The Geographical Journal* in 1921, John Scott Keltie, an active member of the Royal Geographical Society, praised Kropotkin’s various contributions to geography from the theory of the structural lines of Asia to the glaciology of Finland and Central Europe to the Russian geographical articles in the eleventh edition of the *Britannica*, he did not forget to mention this education reform plan, originally conceived as a response to the Society’s

---

140 According to Priscilla Metcalf, Kropotkin’s relation with *The Nineteenth Century* dates back to 1883 and continues even after his return to the post-revolution Russia: the first articles he wrote for it without personally knowing James Knowles, the editor of the magazine, are about Russian prisons and geographical matters, which reflect Kropotkin’s national and intellectual background—Kropotkin had direct experiences of imprisonment in Russia and France and participated in an geographical expedition to Siberia for several years—rather than the political one; later introduced to the editor by H. M. Hyndman, the leading socialist in Britain who supposedly served as an intermediate, Kropotkin took over the “Recent Science” column in 1892, defunct since 1880 after neither Knowles nor Thomas Huxley had time for it, and would be in charge of it until 1908 (324-25). About Knowles and the magazine, see also Berry. Overall, the British reception of Kropotkin was cordial and respectful, and Kropotkin’s dramatic life won the public approval. However, the irony is that Kropotkin was well received not because of his anarchist ideas or political career, but *despite of and regardless of it* and due largely to what he disavowed and disowned by his own will: as Haia Shapayer-Makov observes, it is his “royal blood, a romantic aura, charisma, social status, and academic fame” that motivated “men and women of high social standing [to] seek his company and overlook his political affiliation” (“The Reception of Peter Kropotkin in Britain, 1886-1917” 379). See also Shapayer-Makov, “Anarchism in British Public Opinion 1880-1914.”
Report on Geographical Education (318).\textsuperscript{141} It should be added, however, that even Keltie did not misunderstand Kropotkin’s political commitment. For Keltie, it is unfortunate that “Kropotkin had never again an opportunity of doing active work in the field of scientific exploration” once he delved into political struggles, and that he “became more and more absorbed in the promotion of his socialistic or rather anarchist views” (318-19). In short, it is simply regrettable that “his absorption in these [anarchist aspirations] seriously diminished the services which otherwise he might have rendered to Geography” (317). What is missed here, and what is especially important to my discussion, is precisely such anarchist accents that run through this essay on geographical education. Indeed, Kropotkin’s ultimate aim is thoroughly political, as he aims at dissociating child education from nationalistic arrogance and imperialistic exploitation. Kropotkin’s anarchist ideas are inseparable from the ideal both geography and geographical education should seek for, which is to call into question the existing utilitarian contract between knowledge and politics, between science and the state.\textsuperscript{142}

In his pedagogical reflection and practical plan for reforming child education, Kropotkin argues for a general and systematic reform of scientific education in which geography would become more useful and relevant, yet not in a way that would serve for “so-called ‘practical’

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{141} Gerry Kearns explains that Kropotkin’s anti-imperialist, anarchist pedagogy counters to Halford Mackinder’s militarist and imperialist education in “The Geographical Pivot of history.” Concerning Kropotkin’s contribution to geography and his relation with the British intellectual world, see also Myrna Margulies Breitbart, “Peter Kropotkin, the Anarchist Geographer.” Although he was on good terms with some representative people in the Royal Geographical Society—Keltie was one of such people—Kropotkin “declined the honor of being elected an official ‘fellow’ of the group” (Breitbart 143). Kearns surmises that Kropotkin’s hesitation probably came from the fact that the Society was under royal patronage, which he could not accept as an anarchist (340).
\item \textsuperscript{142} It is in this intersection inherent to geography that David Harvey sees anarchism’s utopian potentiality. Harvey refers to Reclus and Kropotkin, suggesting how geographical literature “can express hopes and aspirations...can become the vehicle to express utopian visions and practical plans for the creation of alternative geographies” (4).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
interests of colonization and warfare” (6). On the one hand, Kropotkin emphasizes the great attraction geography could induce in children, from love of nature to adventure and exploration, in which “deeply-going scientific reasoning” would grow with “the help of a greatly-developed imaginative power” of which children have a plenty (7). But on the other hand, and more importantly, Kropotkin underscores how geographical knowledge of nature and the other could serve for different purposes, dissipating our prejudices and relativizing our own values against our “ignorance, presumption, and egotism”: the equality of every nationality and “the immense likeness which exists among the laboring classes of all nationalities” is what geography brings to the fore by studying particular differences and correcting our popular misunderstanding of them (7).

However, Kropotkin’s educational reorientation is not limited to this negative end of correcting the existing errors that are as much intellectual as they are moral and political. Kropotkin continues that our geographical understanding should not simply stay within Europe or the civilized: it must stretch to all over the world, whether it is about the savage, the primitive, or the lower class, in order to annihilate the ideological ground of conquering and enslaving other nations because of their said inferiority. In short, natural science, and geography in particular, should advocate for “a comparative description of all human inhabitants of the Earth,” not for the sake of justifying our domination over them, but for the sake of discovering the commonness of our existence across place; and by studying the natural given both spatially and historically, including their natural transformations and human working on them, we have to understand how the earth comes to be constituted as it is, discovering the laws of distribution over time, from natural landscape to animal species, from material conditions to cultural practices, from relationship of human with nature to human interaction (11).
In order to achieve this goal, continues Kropotkin, geography, a descriptive practice, and geology, a law-discovering practice, would need to collaborate with such other disciplines like anthropology, ethnography, history, philology, literature, and so on. His anarchist pedagogy is both historical and spatial, both synchronic and diachronic, resonating with the contemporary intellectual and societal tendencies and yet going beyond national circumstances and interests; in truth, it must go beyond where one is born into and move toward the empirically universal horizon where mutual sympathy and understanding deconstructs the hierarchy of culture and nationality. Kearns notes that Kropotkin’s geographical thinking is historical, because, “[f]or Kropotkin, the environment had a history,” which means that natural landscapes transformed by themselves as much as they have been transformed by human activity, while human transformation were results of adaptation to environmental changes (343). What should be foregrounded here is therefore the temporal and processual dimension, or, in my parlance, a genealogical orientation.143

If Kropotkin is a professional geographer with the direct experience of fieldwork, however marginal his institutional status, Kropotkin the historian has suffered and still suffers from much deeper neglect. Nevertheless, this is not simply because of the more amateuristic quality of his historical work, but more fundamentally because of his theoretical and

143 Here is the list of topics and fields Kropotkin suggests for non-imperialistic geographical education: “The distribution of human families and their distinctive features and the modification undergone by these features under various climates; the geographical distribution of races, beliefs, customs, and forms of property, and their close dependency upon geographical conditions; the accommodation of man to the nature that surrounds him, and the mutual influence of both; the migrations of stems, in so far as they are dependent upon geological causes; the aspirations and dreams of various races, in so far as they are influenced by the phenomena of nature; the laws of distribution of human settlements in each country, displayed by the persistency of settlements at the very same places since the Stone Age until our own times and the raising of cities and the conditions of their development; the geographical subdivision of territories into natural manufacturing ‘basins,’ notwithstanding the obstacles opposed by political frontiers” (11).
methodological decision in which the amateur historian defies the institutional and disciplinary norm and expectation. Claiming that anarchism is and ought to be a political and popular movement, Kropotkin overtly rejects the Carlylean method of taking representative figures as historical agents and instead advocates a historiography of people. Kropotkin applies this methodological principle to his independent research on the French Revolution, and in his understanding, this is a historic task anarchists have to take on, because their very name derives from the Revolution:

But the **popular** history of the Revolution remains still to be told. The part played by the **people** of the country places and towns in the Revolution has never been studied and narrated in its entirety. Of the two currents which made the Revolution, the current of **thought** is known; but the other, the current of **popular action**, has not even been sketched. It is for us, the descendants of those called by their contemporaries the 'anarchists,' to study the popular current, and to try to reconstruct at least its main features. (*The Great French Revolution* 4)

---

144 Edward Said argues that contrary to Foucault’s idea of professional intellectual or Gramsci’s idea of organic intellectual who stand for a particular interest group to which he belongs or owes, the intellectual should be deliberately amateuristic so that he could take a critical attitude to the question of loyalty and attachment. For Said, the problem is not that we belong to certain groups and are concerned with particular interests and the solution is not to deny such almost inevitable ties to our institutions and communities; rather, the problem arises when such particular commitments prevent us from seeing the potential universality of a particular issue and prioritizing our interests over their interests as well as over the universal ones (*Representations of the Intellectual* 65-83).

145 For Kropotkin, this micro-interest in the popular is both epistemological and strategic, both methodological and ethical, historiographical and actual, as this sensitivity to the popular, to the minute, to the everyday life, is fundamental to anarchist communism: “And yet, as soon as the every-day life of man during the historical period is submitted to a closer analysis and so it has been, of late, by many patient students of very early institutions—it appears at once under quite a different aspect. Leaving aside the preconceived ideas of most historians and their pronounced predilection for the dramatic aspects of history, we see that the very documents they habitually peruse are such as to exaggerate the part of human life given to struggles and to underrate its peaceful moods. The bright and sunny days are lost
Anarchist historiography, suggests Kropotkin, should be a continuation of Michelet-esque history of the people on the one hand, and an economic analysis of political history on the other. The latter, methodological focus on the economic is certainly comparable to Marxist historical materialism. But what interests me is Kropotkin’s emphasis on the popular element in sight of in the gales and storms. Even in our own time, the cumbersome records which we prepare for the future historian, in our Press, our law courts, our Government offices, and even in our fiction and poetry, suffer from the same one-sidedness. They hand down to posterity the most minute descriptions of every war, every battle and skirmish, every contest and act of violence, every kind of individual suffering; but they hardly bear any trace of the countless acts of mutual support and devotion which every one of us knows from his own experience; they hardly take notice of what makes the very essence of our daily life—our social instincts and manners. No wonder, then, if the records of the past were so imperfect. The annalists of old never failed to chronicle the petty wars and calamities which harassed their contemporaries; but they paid no attention whatever to the life of the masses, although the masses chiefly used to toil peacefully while the few indulged in fighting. The epic poems, the inscriptions on monuments, the treaties of peace—nearly all historical documents bear the same character; they deal with breaches of peace, not with peace itself. So that the best-intentioned historian unconsciously draws a distorted picture of the times he endeavours to depict; and, to restore the real proportion between conflict and union, we are now bound to enter into a minute analysis of thousands of small facts and faint indications accidentally preserved in the relics of the past; to interpret them with the aid of comparative ethnology; and, after having heard so much about what used to divide men, to reconstruct stone by stone the institutions which used to unite them” (MA 96-97). Kropotkin’s appreciation of what remain unnnarrated in official documents, of approaching past history with the aid of comparative ethnology might be understood as prefiguring the methodology of the Annales School.

146 Kropotkin’s study of the French Revolution was contemporaneous with that of Jean Jaurès, a leader of French Marxism and socialism and a philosopher and historian within the French academe whose materialist analysis of the French Revolution would later influence French Marxist historians. Compared to Jaurès’, Kropotkin’s historiographical research was independent and not affiliated with the national universities that had begun to appear in the late nineteenth century. According to Alexandre Gordon and Evguéni Starostine, who offer a detailed comparative analysis, both Jaurès and Kropotkin chose to focus on the economic factor. However, there are significant differences, as they have quite different theories about the normative direction history should have taken. Although both of them embrace the evolutionist narrative of history, Jaurès follows the orthodox Marxist scenario from the bourgeois revolution to the socialist one (7). However, this fateful tendency to state formation in Marxism is exactly what Kropotkin rejects as an end of history, arguing that it is the state’s violence, the extra-economic force, that implemented and maintained capitalism and the market (10-11). Thus, Jaurès appreciates the bourgeois nature of the Revolution, while Kropotkin considers the peasant as the revolutionary force in line with the Russian conditions and tradition (12).
historiography. Emphasizing the decentralizing momentum in Kropotkin, Garcia suggests that in Kropotkin’s thinking, history belongs not to heroes but to people, not simply to great events but to daily practices of long duration (332-34). Adams considers Kropotkin’s work of the French Revolution as “[a]n early pioneer of ‘history from below’” (61). Slatter suggests that the productive way to read Kropotkin’s historical work, despite its inadequacies, is to take it not as “an exhaustive history” but as “what would now be called a ‘counter-history,’ that is an attempt to correct an accepted account with new or previously ignored material” (274). If one would look for a good companion for Kropotkin’s historiographical study, it should be found not in Marxist studies but rather in subaltern studies and anthropology. Thus, I suggest that we see Kropotkin’s historiography as a precursor to subaltern studies, since both of them attempt to complement blanks in the orthodox historiography. However, even more importantly, Kropotkin’s texts, historiographical or not, aims at more than restoration or complementation, pointing to more discursive and critical, more subversive and structural directions.147

147 Some clarifications may be needed to support this claim, as subaltern studies have passed through several stages of development and transformation. According to Gyan Prakash’s useful account, subaltern studies have been rift by multiple impossibilities, while revolting against nationalism (counter-orientalism), colonialism (elitism), and Marxism (economic determination): the initial desire of discovering and restoring the subaltern subject and consciousness outside of the dominant structure of history and discourse ended up substantiating subalteranity and led to self-contradiction, because subalternity, by definition, signifies the impossibility of autonomy, and because, once restored, it is no longer subaltern; and this aporetic nature of the restorative project and the ontological definition of the subaltern would intensify the tension between the substantive project and the structuralist or discursive project, from which arose a different conception of subalteranity as “a position of critique, as a recalcitrant difference that arises not outside but inside elite discourses to exert pressure on forces and forms that subordinate it” (“Subaltern Studies” 1481). If, as Prakash convincingly narrates, subaltern studies shifted from the substantive to the discursive ground, from the ontological to the critical project, the conceptualization of subalteranity also shifted accordingly, and it can no longer be considered as simply positivist existence or purely discursive presence, but as the very emergence and displacement in dominant discourses, or “counterhegemonic possibilities not as inviolable otherness from the outside but from within the functioning of power, forcing contradictions and dislocations in the dominant discourse and providing sources of an immanent critique” (“The Impossibility”
In this second respect (subalternity as problematization of the dominant discourse from within, a critical practice, and questioning of the West and its conceptual vocabulary and toolkit), I claim that Kropotkin’s historiography better resonates with subaltern studies in a more significant manner, as both of them aspire to problematize the orthodox historiography from inside and from below with the anonymous and the collective as a genuine and legitimate historical and political agent, but also go beyond the ontological orientation in themselves by conceiving history at different scales and with different categories.  

288). And this displaced conception of subalternity that puts into question the dominant discourse leads to critique in its own right, because it carries with itself “an awareness that I must fail to satisfy the discipline’s desire for completeness and positivist reconstruction,” “open[ning] possibilities for history-writing as a critical practice” (294). Another consequence of this critical thrust in subaltern studies is critique of the modern West, because the West is one of the representative frameworks of the dominant discourses, endowed with such privileged values like reason, nation, progress, and so on. Thus, drawing on the Guha’s critique of the category of “prepolitical,” Dipesh Chakrabarty suggests to “pluralize the history of power in global modernity” and “separate it from any universalist narratives of capital” (14).

148 Kropotkin was able to suggest at the high time of the evolutionary, unilinear theory of civilization that human history should have had multiple beginnings, starting several times anew. See Adams, “Kropotkin: Evolution, Revolutionary Change and the End of History.” However, I should not exaggerate Kropotkin’s critical impulse, because, ultimately speaking, he is not free from the nineteenth-century evolutionary scheme. What Garcia says about Kropotkin’s scientific view is applicable to Kropotkin’s historical view too. Perhaps, it might be more correct to say that Kropotkin visualizes simultaneous appearances of civilization across places, their independent and interrelated development, and the ultimate domination of the Western paradigm in modern times after Darwin’s genealogical tree where many variations diversify from roots, evolve separately as well as converge at an irregular pace and with breaks and interruptions, but ultimately only a handful survive over time: “We certainly must abandon the idea of representing human history as an uninterrupted chain of development from the prehistoric Stone Age to the present time. The development of human societies was not continuous. It was started several times anew — in India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, Scandinavia, and in Western Europe, beginning each time with the primitive tribe and then the village community. But if we consider each of these lines separately, we certainly find in each of them, and especially in the development of Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire, a continual widening of the conception of mutual support and mutual protection, from the clan to the tribe, the nation, and finally to the international union of nations” (“EN” 217-18). At any rate, I should point out that even if this historiography assumes a universalizing narrative, it is not at all predicated on the Enlightenment, rationalist tradition like reason and freedom, or the capitalist scenario;
Anarchist Ifs or “the Right to Well-Being: Well-Being for All!”: Affluence and Interrelatedness as Natural and Historical Condition of Communal Living

What are anarchist alternatives? What could be genuinely anarchist ends? What are properly anarchist “ifs,” if they are neither the neutral and disinterested truth of science nor the interest of the state, capital, religion, or such hierarchical structures of power and domination, of coercive governance and maintenance? Does Kropotkin reject any such “if,” because he insists on dwelling on strictly materialist grounds? Or, on the contrary, is the anarchist “if” a somewhat wishful presupposition, one that overtly militates against the harsh and pitiless reality?

That Kropotkin thinks about ethics without suprasensible and transcendental supports does not mean that his ethical reflection is limited to and bound by what has already existed or is now existing. But neither does it mean either that his ethical imagination goes wild so as to dream up something definitely improbable or impossible. Kropotkin’s subtly lies in that he is radical without going to such extremes. On the one hand, Kropotkin maintains that general mutual aid feelings and practices are originally predicated on our natural capacities and potentialities and that in this regard mutual aid is not against nature.149 But on the other hand, he

149 “The moral sense is a natural faculty in us like the sense of smell or of touch” (FW 141; emphasis added). It is very important to note that discussing morality, Kropotkin rephrases it in various ways, for instance, moral sense, moral feelings, moral activities, moral conception, and so on. And with these distinction, he suggests that it is one thing that the moral sense is innate to man but it is another whether man behaves in a moral manner all the time. In other words, it is one thing that the sense of good and evil is innate—which Kropotkin claims, after Adam Smith and Charles Darwin, as much as based on Russian zoologists and biologists and his own experiences in Siberia and Manchuria—but it is completely another whether or not man is good in itself and always behaves in a good manner. In this respect, Kropotkin makes
also suggests that mutual aid in the natural state is neither ideal nor sufficient, because it is incapable of overcoming naturally imposed limits and therefore need to be worked out consciously. For Kropotkin, “life in common” is simultaneously a biological fact, an evolutionary consequence, and a historical condition; it is neither an abstract structure or metaphysical norm nor something imposed against our will (FW 151). Indeed, Kropotkin considers that this biological and evolutionary condition has been reinforced thanks to modern technological tendencies which relate us with each other in an ever closer, more integrating, and mutually dependent manner. Thus, Kropotkin contends that the organic convolutedness of individual and communal existence has become a modern situation in which mutual dependence has accelerated, expanded, and intensified in every realm of life, from production to distribution to consumption: “All is interdependent in a civilized society” (CB 50).150

Above, I indicated that Kropotkin’s—and by extension, a Russian—theory of mutual aid is not simply a protest against social Darwinism, embodied by Thomas Huxley in an exemplar manner, but also dissociates Darwin’s theory of evolution from the Malthusian principle of scarcity and impoverishment. Kropotkin responds to this problem in a dual manner, because a subtler, as it were weaker argument concerning morality by moral sensitivity as a primary faculty. Kropotkin’s question is how to base ethics on nature, in which he tries to argue how the sense of good and bad is inherent in nature. While he criticizes those who instead rely on transcendental devices like reason, he also rejects those who says that only the evil is immanent to nature. Kropotkin wonders that if one admits that evil is natural, then one has to equally admit the existence of supreme good that motivates us despite of our inborn evilness, unless one argues for the complete immorality of humanity; in this way, those Darwinians would end up speaking for the supra-natural origin of morality, which simply contradicts the naturalist, secular argument of Darwin’s theory of evolution (“EN” 214-15).

And it is with this ever-expanding tendency of mutual independence in mind that Kropotkin maintains that the commune of the nineteenth century differs from that of Middle Ages: the latter enclosed within its wall, whereas the former “seeks to extend itself, to universalize itself” (CB 85). Historical changes raise a fundamental challenge to biological faculties and instinctive practices which are still capable of adjusting themselves to new circumstances for the same purpose of communal happiness. Concerning Kropotkin’s sketch of communes to come, see “The Commune” in WR 81-89.
Kropotkin advocates for affluence that is both individual and collective, both immaterial and material. On the one hand, he maintains that our existence, physical and intellectual, is abundant and overflowing. Relying on Jean-Marie Guyau, a French moral philosopher who supposedly influenced Nietzsche, Kropotkin maintains that biologically speaking we have more life force than we can consume for ourselves and that this ontological excess demands us to exercise it for others, not because we want to do good to them, but because this very excess, that which has no use for us, cannot but manifest and flow by itself, towards others and for them, as a gift and without asking a return for what we give (*FW* 149-50). In other words, to exist is to express, and moreover to exuberate beyond calculation. To lend a hand to others is never a charity but a necessity, just like “[t]he plant cannot prevent itself from flowering” (149).

On the other hand, he maintains that we are capable of producing enough material resources with scientific methods of cultivation, for instance, the use of fertilizer and intensive agriculture, and also of distributing those resources in such a way that the needs of all will be satisfied. If, biologically speaking, we do produce more than we can consume for ourselves, our civilization has already reached such a technological stage where we could satisfy the needs

---

151 In this understanding of life force, Kropotkin comes very close to Stirner’s theory of force. See Chapter Two.
152 Kropotkin would call this study of how to satisfy the needs of all the community members as “physiology of society,” contrary to what the mainstream economists would call political economy (*CB* 159). Matthew Adams explains that two fundamental features of anarchist society sketched in *The Conquest of Bread*: one is that labor must not be disagreeable and the other is that no coercion must be exercised (“Kropotkin’s Radical Communalism” 159). It is in this former problematic concerning the quality of labor that Kropotkin’s thought intersects with William Morris’s (concerning Morris’s idea of “attractive labor,” see, for instance, “Useful Work and versus Useless Toil” in *CWWM* 23:98-120. Adam also indicates that Kropotkin’s argument of economic reorganization implies “aesthetic rebirth,” which is also in line with Morris’s aesthetic economic thought (167). However, it should be conceded Kropotkin’s discussion on luxury falls short and remains only formal, where to Kropoktin’s anarchist communism need to be grafted to Morris’s socialist aesthetics. About anarchist genealogy of economic thought in the nineteenth century, see Knowles.
of all of us and where want and scarcity would become a past affair (CB 162). And if we nevertheless fail to achieve this goal of universal physiological satisfaction, continues Kropotkin, it is simply because the present system is “the frightful waste of human energy” and surplus serves not for satisfying the needs of all but for exploitation, and “our middle-class civilization” is built upon the sacrifice of “inferior races and countries with less advanced industrial systems” (161, 72).

With this biological and material possibility and reality of abundance and affluence under the modern conditions of living and production in mind, Kropotkin insists that cooperative and collaborative tendencies and orientations are more than a categorical imperative, more than a speculative fiction imposed on us, or that they no longer need to remain so. In this respect, it is interesting to see why Kropotkin both agrees and disagrees with Kant. On the one hand, Kropotkin criticizes Kant for failings to provide the reason why we have to obey such duties and obligations, if not for its “social utility” (“EN” 221). What Kropotkin finds ironic in Kant is that the utilitarian notion of utility, the very thing Kant excluded from ethical consideration, cannot but come back to his moral discussion, despite the fact that the moral law as Kant understands it must be free from such pragmatic concerns. Kant’s mistake, Kropotkin suggests, is not necessarily that he does not explain why the categorical imperative must be followed—Kant would say that we must follow it because reason dictates it and says that it is truly universal—but rather that Kant was forced to rely on a pure fiction of reason which has no material underpinning and thus he founded the categorical imperative in merely formal terms.

---

153 Kropotkin comes back to the same point in “The Morality of Nature,” an essay published a year after “The Ethical Need of the Present Day” (411). Both “The Ethical Need of the Present Day” and “The Morality of Nature,” which are in one way or another direct sequels to Mutual Aid, would be collected into Kropotkin’s last, unfinished work, Ethics.
unless it was by means of its social utility (221). Does Kropotkin’s criticism of Kant imply the categorical rejection of utility or efficiency? Although anarchism is often related to primitivism and to a nostalgia for the lost world, one cannot emphasize enough that Kropotkin is a modernist in that scientific and technological progresses could and should serve for human ends: he advocates for intensive production in which cooperation among producers would increase productivity with a better, more efficient organization and arrangement (“The Scientific Bases” 245-47).

But on the other hand, Kropotkin embraces the content of Kantian ethics which is one with (the sense of) justice and equity, where each and everyone must be taken care of without any exception; in seeking to negotiate egoistic and communitarian tendencies, Kropotkin...

154 Relationship between Kropotkin’s anarchism and utilitarianism is complicated, but the following sentences in “Anarchist Morality” should serve as a guiding thread: “There is some truth in the Utilitarian explanation. But it is not the whole truth. Therefore, let us go further” (FW 138). Overall, Kropotkin appreciates Mill’s version over Bentham’s, because Mill complicates the measure of pleasure by taking into quality and aesthetics, while Bentham’s idea of morality remains arithmetic and quantitative, as the Russian editor indicates (Ethics 242). Kropotkin’s dissatisfaction with Mill comes down to two points. First, he finds Mills’ theory of liberty, or the principle of non-interference inadequate, because it misses the concept of justice or equity (240-41). In other words, Mill lacks a positive principle of uniting liberal individuals into a collective and encouraging each for the sake of all. But the second reason is more fundamental. In The Conquest of Bread, Kropotkin protests against the modern tendency of quantification, especially with money as the sole measurement. For one thing, such indiscriminate quantification does injustice to infinite varieties and multiplicities of beings and things. For another, and more problematically, it gives a double illusion that everything is not only quantifiable, but more problematically, that it must be quantified in an exact manner, making us believe that exchange is and must be exact in reciprocity. The consequences are dire, because this forcefully equalizing thinking would result in a system in which we behave in a thrift and restrictive manner: we behave in a narrowly pragmatic way (“giving only to receive”), evaluating our activities only in terms of “debt and credit” (155). It is precisely against such a world, or world view where every relation is reduced to economic exchange of equal monetary value that Kropotkin proposes an infinitely independent and convoluted life world where mutual aid is nothing but a common occurrence.

155 See also Fields, Factories, and Workshops in which he proposes specific modes of production that are intensive and efficient, decentralized and international.
radicalizes the utilitarian principle, suggesting that “to direct the individual forces as to get from
them the greatest benefit for the welfare of all” (“EN” 220). Kropotkin phrases this anarchist
translation of the utilitarian principle in several different ways with some minor variations:
“producing the greatest amount of goods necessary to the well-being of all, with the least
possible waste of human energy” or “giving society the greatest amount of useful products with
the least waste of human energy” (CB 89, 129). In “The Scientific Bases of Anarchy,” published
in 1887, one of the early texts written for The Nineteenth Century and especially for the British
audience with a strong emphasis on Herbert Spencer and anarchistic potentials in Spencer’s
thinking, Kropotkin writes “the greatest possible sum of life and happiness for each and all”
(243). Toward the end of the same essay, Kropotkin concludes: “The means of production and of
satisfaction of all needs of society, having been created by the common efforts of all, must be at
the disposal of all” (252). It is precisely in these “much more immediate and practical questions
of who has access to what sorts of things and under what conditions” that David Graeber
suggests that his whole reflections on the communist principle of “from each according to their
abilities, to each according to their needs” derive less from Marx’s Critique of the Gotha
Programme than from Kropotkin’s Mutual Aid (Debt 95, 404n9).

Here, one can clearly detect a significant shift from “to each according to one’s work” to
“to each according to one’s needs,” in which Kropoktin’s critique of quantification, protest
against the reduction of human relationship to monetary value, and conception of the popular and
anonymous as a genuine historical agent reinforce one another. Kropotkin argues that one has a

---

156 I would suggest that Kropotkin’s questioning of Kant prefigures a postcolonial critique of
the Enlightenment, problematizing that Kantian universalism is in truth predicated on the
exclusion of certain groups of mankind from the definition of man. For Kropotkin, justice is
possible only with equality, and equality must mean “equity.” (FW 142). Put differently,
where people are not treated as “equals,” justice is only a fake.
right to live and exist and can claim goods for subsistence even if one is unable to work or works only a little, because one need them; the quantitative and proportionate thinking (one may take in proportion to one’s work and contribution) must be rejected, because our communal life as such is interdependence and interrelatedness and because these tendencies have been intensified in modernity where one cannot exactly calculate one’s share and contribution. Given that it is simply impossible to measure one’s relevance to past accumulations and their contributions to the present, how can you precisely measure your share when the tools and machines you use are past inventions, results of collective practices and experiments that were named after those who happened to succeed in materializing communal efforts: “All belongs to all. All things are for all men, since all men have need of them...All things for all...all for all…No more of such vague formulae as ‘The right to work,’ or ‘To each the whole result of his labor.’ What we proclaim is the Right to Well-Being: Well-Being for All!” (CB 19-20).157

This special emphasis on “all” is consistent from one of the earliest anarchist texts by Kropotkin and well noticed by his fellow anarchist geographer, Élisée Reclus who wrote a preface to Words of a Rebel: “The author asks only one thing of you, to share for a brief while his ideal, the welfare of all, not that of a privileged few” (WR 17; emphasis added). This caring for all, in Kropotkin’s opinion, should not remain abstract and must be predicated on concrete relationships one enters into, contrary to religious beliefs that require duties to some unknown being, as well as on the modern consciousness and positive principle that one’s welfare is no longer possible in isolation and that it is dependent on that of all the other people, of the human race as a whole (31). Kropotkin’s great proposition is that the welfare of all is not a hindrance to individual freedom, but on the contrary it is “a groundwork for the fullest development of the

157 This point is truly a leitmotif that resonates throughout The Conquest of Bread. See, for instance, 28-30, 32-35, 87, 94-96, 132, 152-55, 160.
personality” (“EN” 224). Kropotkin thus refuses the utilitarian compromise that the minority should concede to the majority, that the maximization of profit and benefit should justify the minimum harm and damage to a small number of community members. Ursula Le Guin’s short story, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” articulates this aporetic situation in a paradigmatic way, depicting the anarchist position of refusing any institutionalized sacrifice, even if the sacrificed victim had no human existence and has been degraded to such a beastly state that its recovery from it would be nearly unimaginable and its rescue would result in the whole collapse of a community with almost no benefit to anyone, including that kid who seems to take charge of all the burden of the community by means of which every community member is to be endowed with the sense of guilt and obligation to the happiness of the whole community.158

Ethical Progress as Overcoming of Natural and Historical Limits: Moral Education, Free Giving, and Everyday Communism

What then would Kropotkin say about sacrifice, about what one has to give up for the benefit of all? Kropotkin seems to praise self-sacrifice as the highest form of ethical conduct, which reading the English translator of Ethics endorses (Ethics 5). However, in Kropotkin’s argument, actual examples of self-sacrifice are taken as evidence, not as a model or norm, that organisms are capable of caring for more than their own survival and their own interest, including the welfare of others and even of the whole collective or community of which they are a part (“EN” 225-26). Thus, while indicating that abundant examples of self-sacrifice can be observed in animals, in savages, in primitives, in the Middle Ages, and in modernity alike, he

proposes that it is neither love, sympathy, nor self-sacrifice that constitutes the basis of society in humanity: according to him, it is “the conscience—be it only at the stage of an instinct—of human solidarity,” or “the unconscious recognition of the force that is borrowed by each man from the practice of mutual aid; of the close dependency of every one's happiness upon the happiness of all; and of the sense of justice, or equity, which brings the individual to consider the rights of every other individual as equal to his own” (MA xvi). Put differently, self-sacrifice as the highest form of morality is yet to come, to which human evolution has proceeded and ought to further progress. In this sense, it is no wonder that self-sacrifice is also seen as an extreme case where the sense of equality, equity, or reciprocity, the very foundation of the present social life is bravely ignored and gets disordered (“self-sacrifice or magnanimity, i.e. those moments when man gives to others his powers, and at times his life, without thought of what he will obtain in return” (Ethics 246)¹⁵⁹.

If Kropotkin’s biological thinking implies that social life is simply an evolutionary fact where organisms have developed communal ways of living together in a cooperative manner as a no less effective and efficient strategy of survival than mutual antagonism and competition, Kropotkin’s anthropological insight also suggests that mutual aid, or sociability and sociality, is not something extraordinary and exceptional in human society either: “the mutual-aid principle is the necessary foundation of every-day life” (MA 246-47). Thus, both in the natural and in the cultural worlds, it is something very common and abundant in ordinary life, something foundational and constitutive, rather than additional or decorative. And all his writings, whether historical or biological, sociological or economic, anthropological or geographical, aim to

¹⁵⁹ Therefore, the English translator commits an error when he replaces Kropotkin’s three-stage theory of moral evolution of progress, mutual aid-justice-morality with mutual aid-justice-self-sacrifice (30, xi). As I show below, self-sacrifice is only a means and not an end in itself.
excavate such facts and examples of mutual aid in the past as much as in the present, thus
inviting us to see history and reality under a different light: whatever capitalism and the state
would say about self-interest and individualism, this world is always and already filled with
mutual aid feelings and practices.

In “Anarchist Morality,” a short text written around the same time with *Mutual Aid* and
read as a pamphlet version of it for a wider and general readership who could not afford to read a
whole book, Kropotkin warns that communism “cannot exist without creating a continual contact
between all for the thousands and thousands of common transactions...without creating local life,
independent in the smallest unities—the block of houses, the street, the district, the commune”
(*FW* 118). This is why I suggest we juxtapose Kropotkin’s communism, or anarchist morality,
with what David Graeber means by “actually-existing communism” or “baseline communism,”
one which “is not some magical utopia” but “something that exists right now—that exists, to
some degree, in any human society” (*Debt* 95). Of course, some significant differences exist
between Kropotkin’s conception of communism and Graeber’s. Graeber is more realistic and
subtle in suggesting that communism cannot be considered or conceived in an either/or manner:
“there has never been on in which *everything* has been organized in that way, and it would be
difficult to imagine how there could be” (95). Compared to this cautious attitude of Graeber,
Kropotkin often appears somewhat naive and intransigent, insisting that everything must be
organized in a free, horizontal, improvising, and interrelational manner.160

If Kropotkin’s prefiguration of communism tends to be somewhat dogmatic, like any
utopian thinking tends to be, Kropotkin’s interpretive method does not fail to detect tendencies
and traces of mutual aid wherever it looks at and however hidden or disguised they are. And

160 See, for instance, his definition of anarchism in the Britannica article (*KRP* 284).
precisely with this anarchist gaze and anthropological sensitivity, both Kropotkin and Graeber read natural and human phenomena against their apparent logic or ready-made narratives, resonating with each other and arguing that even if mutual aid or communist interactions have never dominated the past, they nevertheless have been always out there and will not disappear, whatever obstacles come in, however the state and capitalism intend to reduce human communication to mere exchange of quantified equivalents. It is not an either/or judgment; it is not whether we always aid mutually or we do not aid mutually at all. Rather, it is whether or not the principle of mutual aid constitutes our communal life in a fundamental way, whether it is one of such foundational principles or not. Thus, Graeber writes: “All of us act like communists a good deal of the time. None of us acts like a communist consistently...communism is the foundation of all human sociability” (Debt 95, 96). What these two communist anarchists, geographer and anthropologist, encourage us to do, therefore, is to liberate our imagination as well as our ways of feeling and thinking, so that we begin to notice that mutual aid or communism is not a special mode or type specific to (and limited to) an idiosyncratic society or a eccentric stage of civilization, but common to all societies, something we are doing without knowing we are doing that: “I should underline again that we are not talking about different types of society here...but moral principles that always coexist everywhere. We are all communists with our closest friends, and feudal lords when dealing with small children” (Debt 113-14).\(^\text{161}\)

\(^{161}\) Like Kropotkin who insists on the fundamental interdependence and relatedness in the modern world, Graeber argues that the “primitives” are not completely separate or distinct from us. The problem lies not in their primitive social codes or moral behaviors, but in our side, our walls that distance the primitives as “them.” Thus, Graeber suggests that the task of the anarchist anthropologist is to “blow up walls” and to get people engaged in “a kind of thought experiment” in order to realize our closeness across the West and the non-West (Fragments 46-47).
Yet, some significant difference remains between Kropotkin and Graeber. If Graeber discovers actually existing communistic relations between, for instance, “close friends,” Kropotkin insists on expanding such a limited case of mutual aid practices, because moral progress lies exactly in such an expansion. Should Kropotkin be accused of the Enlightenment perfectionism and progressivism? Probably. However, Kropoktin’s concept of progress should not be confused with such master narratives like the triumph of freedom, reason, rationality, science, and so on. To be sure, what Kropotkin means by “progress” includes technological innovation or modernization of productive forces. Indeed, these material transformations toward the increase of productivity and efficiency are essential to his anarchist thinking, as material affluence must become a condition of living and technological innovations must be taken advantage of for that purpose. However, ultimately speaking, Kropotkin’s idea of “progress” must be understood in relation to the unnatural expansion of natural mutual aid beyond the existing limits, beyond the same species (animal kingdom), beyond the same tribe (savages), the village community (primitives), the guild and the city (medievals), and the nation-state (moderns). It is worth quoting the final paragraph of Mutual Aid at length in order to underscore this point:

Each time, however, that an attempt to return to this old principle was made, its fundamental idea itself was widened. From the clan it was extended to the stem, to the federation of stems, to the nation, and finally—in ideal, at least—to the whole of mankind. It was also refined at the same time. In primitive Buddhism, in primitive Christianity, in the writings of some of the Mussulman teachers, in the early movements of the Reform, and especially in the ethical and philosophical movements of the last century and of our own times, the total abandonment of the
idea of revenge, or of "due reward"—of good for good and evil for evil—is affirmed more and more vigorously. The higher conception of "no revenge for wrongs," and of freely giving more than one expects to receive from his neighbours, is proclaimed as being the real principle of morality—a principle superior to mere equivalence, equity, or justice, and more conducive to happiness. And man is appealed to to [sic] be guided in his acts, not merely by love, which is always personal, or at the best tribal, but by the perception of his oneness with each human being. In the practice of mutual aid, which we can retrace to the earliest beginnings of evolution, we thus find the positive and undoubted origin of our ethical conceptions; and we can affirm that in the ethical progress of man, mutual support not mutual struggle—has had the leading part. In its wide extension, even at the present time, we also see the best guarantee of a still loftier evolution of our race. (247)

Kropotkin does believe in (the concept of) progress, observing progressive tendencies that run through history, covertly or overtly, implicitly or explicitly, and this is where Kropotkin’s biological thinking shifts to the anthropological and historical mode, as it is no longer an instinctive sense of communal existence or an intuitive sense of communal belonging, but a consciously worked-out conscience and recognition of our infinite interrelatedness and interdependence that as much determines as defines modernity. While Kropotkin is critical of exact quantification of give and take, he is very much concerned with equity, since it constitutes the basis of justice. However, the higher form of morality has to overcome a reciprocal thinking whose juridical manifestation is revenge for revenge and be based on giving freely and pardoning. What must be encouraged at the higher realm of morality is not self-sacrifice as such;
put differently, self-sacrifice is not an end in itself but a means to deconstruct the principle of quantification and reciprocity and to usher in the higher principle of pardon or free giving in which one is no longer (solely) motivated by the sure and exact sense of revenge or reward.\textsuperscript{162} For Kropotkin, the moral evolution lies in this cultural overcoming of the natural principle of equivalence, in the acquisition of a collective consciousness that goes beyond personal or tribal love. Put differently, our morality or ethics originates from nature, yet has evolved by transcending natural limitations, and should continue to move in that direction.

Kropotkin does not make us an ethical being, but proposes to educate us in such a way that we could be able to act in a moral manner without consciously asking what behavior would be morally good. This is why Kropotkin suggests that “true ethics does not trace a stiff line of conduct” and that moral education does not train an individual to be able to “weigh the relative value of the different motives affecting him” (“EN” 222). Morality or ethics is a fundamentally

\textsuperscript{162} In this regard of overcoming the principle of utilitarian calculation and reciprocity, Kropotkin’s ethical thought might be compared to Alain Caillé’s anthropological reflection on anti-utilitarian possibilities. See \textit{Critique de la Raison Utilitaire}. Caillé is one of the founding members of the Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales (MAUSS), where Marcel Mauss is one of the most significant inspirations. Relationship between anarchism and Mauss might be worth exploring. Graeber already situated Mauss in anarchist contexts in \textit{Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology}. Lewis Call also briefly refers to Mauss through Bataille. But I propose a possibility of approaching it from the perspective of classical anarchism, especially, of Kropotkin. There appear to be some intersecting points and overlapping zones. As I showed above, Kropotkin’s biological and historiographical thinking is already quite anthropological, and Kropotkin’s interest in justice as equity and morality or ethics as overcoming of quantification and even of reciprocity could be compared to Mauss’ theorization of reciprocity, exchange, and gift that is also traversed by his interest in such celebrated instances like potlatch. It is then somewhat surprising that both appeared unaware of the other’s work. Yet, it might be possible to conceive a half-speculative, half-positivist intellectual history of anarchism at the turn of the nineteenth century where the coupling of Mauss and Kropotkin constitute a chapter. And such a chapter would include other intersections, from primitive religious experiences studied by William James and Emile Durkheim to economic studies of Russian communes by Marx to anthropological and genealogical research on the origins of family, private property and the state by Engels, even to psychoanalytical exploration into primitive consciousness by Freud.
collective and fundamentally foundational matter. Therefore, the final aim of morality is to “make them act instinctively in the proper direction”:

Just as the aim of intellectual education is to accustom us to perform an enormous number of mental operations almost unconsciously, so is the aim of ethics to create such an atmosphere in society as would produce in the great number, entirely by impulse, those actions which bet lead to the welfare of all and the fullest happiness of every separate being. (223)

Thus, Kropotkin advocates for moral education and the construction of a proper social environment, so that one’s instinctive act and unconscious thought are always and already ethical in themselves. This is to make ethics a condition, foundation, and horizon, not a choice.

In this way, Kropotkin underscores both the continuity and discontinuity of nature and culture, natural world and human world: if social feelings originate in nature and continue in culture, both nature and culture can work to suppress its expansion, setting up a boundary; but if nature is incapable of breaking its naturally imposed limit, and even if culture often follows the nature’s path in this regard, reinforcing the natural boundary or inventing different boundaries to territorialize other realms of domination, it is nevertheless culture that radicalizes the naturally endowed capacities and capabilities of sociality and sociability, of cooperation and collaboration, and expands and extends them toward universality, toward the welfare of all.\textsuperscript{163} It is in this

\textsuperscript{163} Analyzing Darwin’s theory of evolution and its influence on the left discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Stack provides a detailed analysis of different ways in which the nature-society continuity and discontinuity gets theorized. According to Stack, unlike other socialist or leftist Darwinians, Kropotkin does not accept the dichotomy of animal and mankind. Instead, Kropotkin recast man back to nature, instead of abstracting man from nature: “Humans must be social, because animals are social and humans are animals” (“The First Darwinian Left: Radical and Socialist Responses to Darwin” 698). However, Stack concludes that by foregrounding their continuity, Kropotkin ended up with “minimiz[ing] the cultural space humanity had carved for itself” (699). However, I argue that while Kropotkin criticizes the state and individualism as two historical forces that intervene
context that Kropotkin’s state theory does make more sense, because, in Kropotkin’s theorization of modern history and anarchist communism, it is the state that emerges as the other dominant historical force and tendency that starkly opposes the ever-expanding and ever-encompassing sense of mutual aid feelings and practices.

Ultimately speaking, what Kropotkin teaches us is not a natural continuity but a cultural break, or an unnatural or counter-natural elaboration of natural propensities. It is Social Darwinism that applies the same principle of competitive struggle for survival both to natural and social realms, while it is the modern combination of state formation and capitalism that, being trapped in its “natural” tendencies, cannot expand beyond their given or existing territories and groups. To be sure, our history cannot be read as a final triumph of cooperation and collaboration over struggle and competition, a triumph of sociality and mutual aid over egotism and self-interest, and Freud might be right to lament the inevitable cacophony between society and individual in *Civilization and Its Discontent*: the advancement of civilization cannot but result in the decrease of individual happiness, making impossible the full libidinal satisfaction of each and everyone. Yet, Kropotkin would still be hopeful, seeing the general tendency of an ever growing sense of sociability from the past to the present, from animal kingdom to the civilized world:

N]otwithstanding the temporary regressive movements which occasionally take place, even in the most civilized nations, there is—at least among the

the natural tendency of mutual aid, he assumes the existence of another historical force which derives from nature but goes beyond it, as it succeeds in constructing a wider and broader community, no longer constrained by parental relationship, by blood relationship, by geographical contiguity, and so on. In short, if Kropotkin hopes to revive a cooperative nature, such reviving is as much natural as human, more conscious and intentional. What Stack forgets to take into consideration here is the role of consciousness of conscience in Kropotkin’s biographical and historical account of living organisms.
representatives of advanced thought in the civilized world and in the progressive popular movements—the tendency of always widening the current conception of human solidarity and justice, and of constantly improving the character of our mutual relations. We also mark the appearance, in the form of an ideal, of the conceptions of what is desirable in further development. ("EN" 217-18)

And if Kropotkin is right to underscore the ancientness of our biological and natural sociality—organism cannot live alone, in isolation, without absolutely any contact or communication with other organisms and/or environments—as well as the ubiquity of collaborative and cooperative feelings and practices—even if such things are less a norm than improvised acts that fill in the margins of capitalist exchange and utilitarian calculation—Kropotkin would still make us hopeful of our possibilities of transforming and reinventing different ways of living along the line of intuitively and consciously practiced mutual aid, and even toward non-reciprocal free giving and pardoning, because such praxis is never an imposed, coerced surface, but conscientious activation of what nature gifted us.
Afterword

Anarchist Trouble: For Anarchistic Hermeneutics and Historiography

The opening of News from Nowhere is probably well-known. A man falls asleep, aspiring to see what a utopian future would look like. Waking up the next morning, he finds that he has time-traveled for two centuries; he is then taken on a guided tour of the egalitarian, communistic, and aesthetic society in which both men and women enjoy working and producing as well as eating and playing, socializing and traveling. What is easy to forget here, especially when one is drawn to the natural and cultural attractions William Morris so powerfully describes and narrates through the middle-aged protagonist, William Guest, is that the story is doubly framed, with the narrator talking about what a friend tells him. Within this Chinese-box narrative structure, the protagonist is first introduced as the narrator’s friend (“says a friend”) but immediately renamed as our friend (“says our friend”), which makes the reader more deeply involved with Guest’s peculiar adventures as a fellow traveler, or even as the adventurer himself. Indeed, this mediated distance or non-identity of narrator, story-teller, and reader-listener seems to be effaced at a quick brush toward the end of the first chapter, where the pronoun switches from the third to the first person: “But, says he, I think it would be better if I told them in the first person, as if it were myself who had gone through them; which, indeed, will be the easier and more natural to me, since I understand the feelings and desires of the comrade of whom I am telling better than any one else in the world does” (CWWM 16:5).\(^{164}\) Another thing, and what especially interests me

\(^{164}\) This narrative pact between narrator and reader would not be canceled even at the end of the book, which makes the story strangely closed and opened, finished and unfinished. Toward the end of the journey, Guest would become as much drawn to the future society as drawn back to his imperfect society; but he would become invisible to utopian people in the final scene, and then wake up “in my bed in my house,” returning to his present and recalling
here, is how the story begins, how and why the protagonist’s desire to see the future is aroused in the first place, even if this would not be discussed in any other parts of the text, and it is exactly in this conjuncture of narration and narrative motivation that the anarchist figures pop up as trouble-makers:

Up at the League, says a friend, there had been one night a brisk conversational discussion, as to what would happen on the Morrow of the Revolution, finally shading off into a vigorous statement by various friends of their views on the future of the fully-developed new society.

Says our friend: Considering the subject, the discussion was good-tempered; for those present being used to public meetings and after-lecture debates, if they did not listen to each others' opinions (which could scarcely be expected of them), at all events did not always attempt to speak all together, as is the custom of people in ordinary polite society when conversing on a subject which interests them. For the rest, there were six persons present, and consequently six sections of the party were represented, four of which had strong but divergent Anarchist opinions. One of the sections, says our friend, a man whom he knows very well indeed, sat almost silent at the beginning of the discussion, but at last got drawn into it, and finished by roaring out very loud, and damning all the rest for fools; after which befell a period of noise, and then a lull, during which the aforesaid section, having said good-night very amicably, took his way home by himself to a western suburb, using the means of travelling which

Ellen’s words (16:210). Then, the last sentence leaves us in a suspended state, as it is as much Guest’s words as the narrator’s, which should also be ours: “Yes, surely! And if others can see it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream” (16:211).
civilisation has forced upon us like a habit. As he sat in that vapour-bath of hurried and discontented humanity, a carriage of the underground railway, he, like others, stewed discontentedly, while in self-reproachful mood he turned over the many excellent and conclusive arguments which, though they lay at his fingers' ends, he had forgotten in the just past discussion. But this frame of mind he was so used to, that it didn't last him long, and after a brief discomfort, caused by disgust with himself for having lost his temper (which he was also well used to), he found himself musing on the subject-matter of discussion, but still discontentedly and unhappily. "If I could but see a day of it," he said to himself; "if I could but see it!" (16:3-4)

This raucous interruption and appropriation of the peaceful discussion by the anarchists might be a direct reference to Morris’ actual disappointment and frustration with the anarchists which ended up breaking apart his socialist group, having Morris decide to leave the Social League and resign from the editorship of Commonweal after anarchist members took over the board.165 Can we say then that Morris registers, quite rightly, a barren aspect of anarchism as a disturbance, as a nuisance within practically-minded revolutionary circles? Does he not clearly state that what he learns from his anarchist friends is the impossibility of anarchism?166 But if anarchism is really impossible and nonsense, one may wonder why one is still bothered with “anarchism”?

165 Concerning the British anarchism, socialism, Marxist movements in the last decades of the nineteenth century, see Hulse, Oliver, and Quail. Morris’ relationship with socialism, including anarchists and anarchism, is discussed by Beaumont; Boo; Brantlinger; Gooday, Anarchist Seeds; Holzman; and Kinna, William Morris. For the classical reading of Morris as a socialist, see Thompson. Raymond Williams offers a British genealogy of aesthetic socialism running from Ruskin to Morris to Wilde in The Country and the City.
166 In “How I Became a Socialist” Morris narrates how and why he did not become an anarchist: “Anyhow, I read what I could, and will hope that some information stuck to me from my reading; but more, I must think, from continuous conversation with such friends as
What I have attempted in the previous chapters by traversing a variety of cases and instances (anarchist historiography/histories of anarchism, post-anarchism/disciplines of anarchism, Zola/naturalism and historical fiction, Kropotkin/sciences and ethical education) is to displace such “practical” questioning concerning the effectivity and efficiency of anarchism, whether it is taken as a series of political theories, political programs, revolutionary strategies, insurrectionist tactics, or whatever else. What I would like to add here anew is that if the anxieties of misunderstanding and misrepresentation are endemic in anarchists and anarchism, this is no less the case with other people and other ideas that are close to them, so close that their differences could be carelessly disregarded by those who do not care about their scholastic distinctions. Put differently, the anarchist anxieties of self-differentiation may be applicable beyond them, as they are mutual and contagious: if anarchism is so concerned with distinguishing itself from what it is not, so are contiguous -isms and ideologies which often more forcefully differentiate themselves from anarchism which is what they do not want to be related to at any cost. What is abundantly observed in leftist discourses from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries is thus fierce gestures of disavowal by socialists, social democrats, Marxists, trade unionists, activists who would deny any alliance with “anarchists” and

Bax and Hyndman and Scheu, and the brisk course of propaganda meetings which were going on at the time, and in which I took my share. Such finish to what of education in practical Socialism as I am capable of I received afterwards from some of my Anarchist friends, from whom I learned, quite against their intention, that Anarchism was impossible, much as I learned from Mill against his intention that Socialism was necessary.” (Political Writings of William Morris 242). George Bernard Shaw discusses the impossibility of anarchism in one of his Fabian tracts. G. V. Plekhanov also ridicules anarchism in Anarchism and Socialism, translated by Marx’s daughter, Eleanor Marx Aveling.
“anarchism,” while such denial only intensifies the undeniable yet negative presence of anarchism in reality and in discourse.167

***

What conclusion should be drawn from this relational understanding of anarchism and its others, or conversely, of anarchism as the negative of its others? It is certainly not to vindicate anarchism by demarcating it against its untruths, against its enemies and opponents, against its rivals and competitors, against its friends and colleagues. Rather, we should embrace, rather promiscuously, whatever can be/is related to anarchism in both positive and negative ways, what is being ascribed to it both rightly and erroneously. Then, what immediately becomes noticeable is that anarchism has been and is a problem, a trouble to be dealt with, a nuisance to get rid of, nonsense to be ridiculed and dismissed, something to be rejected and excluded rather than something to be negotiated, incorporated, and/or put in coalition and collaboration. However, precisely because of this troubling nature, “anarchism” functions as entrances and back doors, as holes and fissures, as threads and planes that could open up access to disparate phenomena and texts whose intersection and interconnection would have hardly been imagined. I therefore proposed and attempted to examine such interpenetrations and imbrications, however uneven and

167 Of course, it is wrong to claim that everyone was afraid of anarchists and anarchism. Paradoxically, but very understandably, the much publicized dangerousness of anarchists drew some people to anarchist circles, sometimes purely out of curiosity and frivolity, sometimes with a more serious interest and sincere commitment. Among others, Margaret Anderson’s friendship with Emma Goldman may be exemplar in many ways, Anderson’s initial enthusiasm, their mutual disillusionment and parting, and yet her long-standing loyalty to the brave anarchist, as testified in the final issue of Little Review, where Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman were selected as contributors along with literary celebrities and artists which fostered modernism in the US and Europe. See Anderson’s three-volume autobiographies, especially the first volume titled My Thirty Years’ War: An Autobiography and Emma Goldman’s Living My Life. See also Cane, Ferguson, “Assemblages,” Stansell.
unbalanced they are, even if, when, and where figures and images of anarchists and anarchism might be deformed and distorted to a barely recognizable degree.

This displacement, or reorientation would remain ineffective or unproductive unless discursive and textual questions would be posed simultaneously and properly. This is why I felt that Jameson’s conception of text and subtext, or their duality and simultaneity of action and reaction, was fundamental to posing these textual questions to anarchism itself.\textsuperscript{168} Put differently, what is at stake here is not simply what anarchism is (not), something which is unmistakably and unambiguously being objectified; it is something more interpretive and indeterminate, where we cannot avoid such open-ended, as it were, creative and aesthetic questions like how it has been textualized and narrativized and brought into certain discursive formats and story types. This simultaneous questioning of the what and the how should explain why my anarchist project has always oscillated between history and reading, between the past and the present, between historiography and hermeneutics.

This deliberate inexactitude and indistinction, this methodological tautology may be accused of subjectivity, of theoretical wordplay and wishful fantasy. Is it history or fiction? Isn’t it rather my inventions and projections, even though they pretend to be an excavation of hidden and disavowed relations of actually existing anarchist movements and phenomena with other tendencies and orientations? The truth, I should admit, might be that even when such examinations look like the writing of cultural and social histories from an anarchist point of view, they should be located primarily at a virtual level. Put differently, I have to be responsible for my choice and selection, and moreover, I should be willing to take the risks of (re)constructing connections and combinations that are as much out there as not-yet, something

\textsuperscript{168} See my discussion on Jameson’s theorization in Introduction. See also Jameson’s \textit{The Political Unconscious} 66-68.
that belongs as much to the world as to us who perceives it in its multiplicity and with its virtualities and potentialities. It is not that we read (only) what we want to read: we read what we invent ourselves, while our inventions must be always predicated, however tangentially, on what we find in histories and historiographies, in realities and material worlds, and not merely in our fantasies or dreams. But why aren’t our hopes and wishes part of the real? The success of anarchistic hermeneutics depends on whether or not such points and zones of predication can be discovered, or on attending to the performative invention of such horizons and grounds, not in order to substantiate and legitimate them as a transcendental truth or usefully usable authority, but in order to foreground their potential groundlessness and ultimate fictionality and nevertheless participate in their perpetual creation. In this respect, Harry Kelly beautifully articulates the anarchist mindset in a series of articles he wrote for Emma Goldman’s little magazine, *Mother Earth*:

> It transvalues the values of yesterday to-day and will transvalue the values of to-day, tomorrow. In proportion to the realization of certain social ideals, the

---

169 Ernst Bloch builds his philosophy of the future based on this concept of not-yet [Noch-Nicht]. See Part II of *The Principle of Hope*. Concerning Deleuze’s discussion of virtual-actual, in contradistinction to possible-real, see *Le Bergsonisme*. See also May, *Deleuze* 48-52.

170 In Introduction, I accepted Jun’s working definition of anarchism as simultaneous and unconditional commitment to egalitarianism and anti-authoritarianism. I also accepted the common distinction of anarchist and anarchistic, explaining that the former is self-identity, whereas the latter is an interpretive label imposed from without. However, at this point, the latter distinction becomes less meaningful, as hermeneutics, especially of the kind Vattimo and Zabala names as weak thought and hermeneutic communism, is itself anarchist, even though it does not assume that name, and how should I call it when I appropriate it and take it to this anarchist context? Perhaps what should be asked is whether anarchist membership and recruitment still matter, or whether one is interested in what can be done with anarchist or anarchistic things. As Stirner cautions, one could become a slave of Thought and becomes thoughtless in whom only Thought thinks and not he. Similarly, it should be maintained that in the final analysis it is neither the brand of anarchism nor the adjectives that matter, but what to do with them and for what. At any rate, thereafter, I prefer to use “anarchistic,” by which I intend to include both cases of self-proclaimed and imposed labels.
Anarchist’s social ideals grow and expand. The sky line of Anarchism forever recedes and the Anarchists grow to a certain point, then stop and crystallize; others start from that point or overlap and go on; but Anarchism grows as man grows. (184)

***

What those writers and thinkers I have discussed in this dissertation teach us in different ways is that the utopian seeds for a better life are always out there, here and now, even if we have to employ certain specific ways of seeing and feeling, of experiencing and performing in order to make them actual and manifest, or even only to perceive them. Perhaps, those two anarchist tendencies and orientations, anti-authoritarianism and egalitarianism, might never be realized to the fullest extent, not necessarily because, as anarchist detractors would say, we are not angels and will never become so, but because it is deadly to organize collectives and communities based on predetermined principles, however well-meant and beneficial they could be. We should not confound means with ends, as if it were our humane end to construct a perfect system, whether geometrical or organic, mathematical or ecological, It is always us who inhabit concrete environments, acting on them as much as we are acted on by them. That should be the real end.

Ernst Bloch was somewhat naive when he defined our ultimate destination, or the utopian end, as “the naturalization of man, humanization of nature” in line with the classical Marxist formulation (209, 247). As David Kaufmann rightly indicates, Bloch leaves us “a deeply

171 Jameson conceives this master collective narrative of “wrest[ing] a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity,” not only for Marxism but for all the other paradigms, quoting at length from the third volume of Capital: “The realm of freedom actually begins only where labor which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production. Just as the savage must wrestle with Nature to satisfy his wants, to maintain and reproduce life, so must
problematic legacy” in this regard (38). Being aware of the danger of facile totalization that does injustice to the process philosophy of Bloch and wrongly monumentalizes it, Kaufmann warns us that Bloch’s future philosophy contains an “oddly joyless teleology which allows us to dream and then restricts those dreams in the name of the docta spes which is less an educated hope than a chastened one: his classicizing aesthetics and his pre-critical ideas about signification” (38). Kaufman even shows us that a “Stalinist apologia” is embedded in The Principle of Hope, where hierarchically ordered hopes and wishes justify sacrificial means.172 However, Bloch is nevertheless right to displace the direction of our thinking and wishing from the wherefrom to the whereto, from the origin-beginning to the destination-end: “If being is understood out of its Where From, then it is so only as an equally tendential, still unclosed Where To” (18).

My anarchistic hermeneutics of utopian desires has striven to look for the other Where Tos, for the other anarchistic ends which might do not lie in perfecting the world toward the final goal of a classless society. What has been detected in both Kropotkin and Zola at the turn of the nineteenth century is the indistinct and uncertain wish for universal happiness and infinite progression. I would say that they are indistinct and uncertain, because they showed the direction

civilized man, and he must do so in all social formations and under all possible modes of production. With his development this realm of physical necessity expands as a result of his wants; but, at the same time, the forces of production which satisfy these wants also increase. Freedom in this field can only consist in socialized man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favorable to, and worthy of, their human nature. But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis” (3-4n3). See also the last chapter titled “Conclusion: The Dialectic of Utopia and Ideology” in The Political Unconscious 271-90.

172 “[T]here is therefore a hierarchy of ideals, and a lower one can be sacrificed to a higher one, because it is resurrected anyway in the realization of the higher one” (qtd in 50n23; The Principle of Hope 173).
without reaching their goal, because they did so based on their cherished supposedly scientific methods but also going beyond such strictly knowledge-based realm and moving toward the aesthetic and the educational realms, where truth, if any, is possibly fictional and wishfully projective, what we transform ourselves into with our natural capacities and capabilities which we take advantage of, not always against their grain but at least free from their naturally imposed limits and culturally working on them. Thus, if the anarchist end, or final state, could be defined, it would be only imagined as a beginning, a dynamic state of harmony that cannot be completed only schematically and institutionally, but constantly practiced and adjusted. 173

---

173 In “Qu’est-ce’que la critique?” Foucault suggests that the critical or “virtuous” attitude arises in Western civilization along with the modern problematics of governmentalization. However, I do not think that Foucault means by it that this critical-virtuous art of not being governed is exclusive to the West. Foucault’s thought on history is philosophical and contingent, where foregrounding of the necessary conditions of historical phenomena and practices would reveal, rather paradoxically, the very contingency of such conditions. And if such an art or technique is defined as an actual attitude against the present, a critical intervention into the temporal succession of history, then it should not be odd to claim that similar wills of refusing specific modes and types of government could be observed in the non-West as well as in other historical periods, as Pierre Clastres tells us about the Guayaki people in Paraguay in La Société contre l’état or James C. Scott relates people in Zomia, or highlands that traverse Southeast Asian nations, in The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia. While Clastres does not use the word anarchism, Scott is quite explicit about and conscious of his political affiliation and commitment to anarchism. However, as Scott frankly admits his huge debt to Clastres from his “strategic positionings designed to keep the state at arm’s length” to “the history of deliberate and reactive statelessness” (x, xiii). Scott further develops his anarchistic thoughts in Two Cheers for Anarchism, in relation to modern problematics (centralization and geographical differences, bureaucratic administration and regional discrepancies, effectivity and utility, and so on). David Graeber’s anthropological reflection on anarchism in Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology and Debt takes a similar path, questioning the very existence and authenticity of Western values as the sole criterion of culture and civilization. If Scott applies Clastres’ redefinition of the political—as violent, coercive, and hierarchical power—to histories of Southeast Asian nations, Graeber provides anthropological and ethnographic accounts of primitive societies beyond regional examples and on the scale of world history. Even more radically, Marshall Sahlins puts into question the Western illusion of human nature as Hobbesian (see Waiting for Foucault, Still and The Western Illusion of Human Nature). To these critical lists, I may add the modern pursuit of human interest beyond its own human limits, beyond what it could soundly and productively consume.

229
What can an anarchist historiography reveal along with such anarchistic hermeneutics? Is it restorative and complementary as a counter-history to pre-existing histories which tend to assign condemned or stigmatized positions to anarchism? Does it claim a higher and richer truth by salvaging what has been missed and lost? In order to discuss these questions, let me turn to Walter Benjamin’s Messianic historiography. In “On the Concept of History,” Benjamin explores Proustian problematics like remembrance and the lived experience as he already did in “On the Image of Proust,” claiming that the historical articulation of the past does not mean recognizing the past as the way it really was, but rather “appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger” (4:391). This flashing image of the past is in truth comparable to Proustian involuntary memory in that both of them are beyond the rational control of the recollecting subject: such illuminating images would come to him, but no voluntary effort could have them take place, not even bring him closer to them.

This parallel between the Proustian non-method of involuntary memory and the redemptive dialectics of materialist history might sound striking, but this is exactly what Benjamin seems to have kept thinking about. Indeed, Benjamin coalesces historiography into the texture of memory, in which history is something to be recollected later, something that becomes fully meaningful only at that time of remembrance, because it is untimely recollection and weaving and not real-time narration and description, that produces historiography; and more importantly, a recollected and (re)interpreted history is more meaningful than a history as it actually happened, because the former adds to the latter the act of remembrance by a concrete historical subject who also recalls the history of previous interpretations of what happened by those who come before. In groups of fragments which the volume editors put together under the
title of “Paralipomena to ‘On the Concept of History’,” Benjamin states that “history's original role” is “remembrance [Eingedenken]” (4:402). In another place, he explicitly refers to involuntary memory: “The dialectical image can be defined as the involuntary memory of redeemed humanity” (4:403).  

For Benjamin-Proust, time is always two-fold or three-fold, with the primary and original experience, the secondary (but even more important than the primary) involuntary memory or re-experience that comes to us only later, and the final moment of intellectually understanding two preceding moments. In Proustian terms, this can be formulated in the following way: the past should be grasped from the extra-temporal standpoint, while the moment of such appreciative comprehension by involuntary memory could only be this-worldly, experienced by the historical and physical agent who, while inhabiting this world, can see both the flowing time and the Time at one and the same time. In Benjamin’s terms, this means that the epiphanic revelation of the past is visual or figural [bildlich] that also spatializes the temporal without fully converting the latter into the former: the whole past flashes up “in the constellation of a single moment,” while this knowledge of the whole past is inseparable from the moment of knowing and the knowledge of that moment, because “[h]istorical knowledge is possible only within the historical moment.”

174 He restates the same point in a slightly different way: “In drawing itself together in the moment—in the dialectical image—the past becomes part of humanity's involuntary memory” (4:403).

175 The first instance of involuntary memory appears in “Combray,” the first part of Du côté de chez Swann, the first volume of À la recherche du temps perdu: in this memorable scene, with a piece of tea-dipped madeleine, the narrator re-experiences his past blissfully and almost in its entirety, yet without understanding the enigma of this sudden revelation; and the final revelation is postponed until the last volume, Le Temps retrouvé, where the past at last becomes legible to the narrator-protagonist as to us the reader; in fact, the final volume represents the explosion of a chain of epiphanic moments, and Marcel finally realizes the real meaning and significance of involuntary memory as well as his true vocation of writer-artist.  

176 Proust names such a state “extratemporal.” For a more detailed analysis of this extratemporal space, see Maurice Blanchot. “Experience of Proust” in Faux Pas 42-46.
and “knowledge within the historical moment is always knowledge of a moment” (4:403). Thus, the past is not something out there: it is of the experiential paradigm, to be sure, but it is still open to question who or what truly (re)experiences it and when and where it could take place, and the significance of “after” or “later” in the paradigm of recollection comes close to the hegemonic structure of appropriating past histories, in which the oppressed would be killed twice by the oppressor or victor, first physically and second discursively, and this second killing is further reinforced by such an ideological, justificatory notion of progress by which any misdeeds could be pardoned as necessary steps to the one who won the battle today. However, Benjamin’s Messianic historiography resists to such self-justificatory revision by the powerful,

177 As regards the question of visuality or figurarity of history, it is probably instructive to compare this Proust-Benjamin formulation of what has happened and here-and-now to Freud's explanation of dream work. Freud suggests that in dreams, causality, or cause-effect relationship, is converted into the temporal before/after order and folded back into spatial coexistence, in a word, overdetermination (“The Dream Work” in *The Interpretation of Dreams*). In both cases of Proust and Freud, visual images appear to have a causal and temporal relation, but the stake is elsewhere, because the final product is figural which includes causal and temporal relations but in different formats than logical deduction. See also Jameson’s rather length discussion on three models of causality (organic, mechanical, and structural) in *The Political Unconscious* 7-43.

178 Here, I do not further discuss to which extent this retrospective but not necessarily revisionist practice of Proustian or Messianic remembrance can be voluntary and conscious, whether it can only be (and should remain) involuntary and unconscious. It suffices to remark that historical materialism may be more methodical and intentional than involuntary memory, because the former is as it were a strategic attitude against orthodox historicism, while Proustian events are what you cannot make happen but something that comes to you almost without reasons, unexpectedly and suddenly. In Proust, memory is primarily a matter for the protagonist-narrator who experienced and not an anonymous reservoir of what happened. Similarly, in Benjamin's theory of history and historiography, as in Jameson's Marxist hermeneutics, history is and ought to be a collective matter in which the oppressors and the oppressed are in conflict. Benjamin thinks for the latter, breaking up the continuum of historical time, and opening up a new space for revolution by, as Marx would say, “leap[ing] in the open air of history” (4:395). In a word, like Proust's event of involuntary memory, Benjamin's philosophy of history presupposes a temporal distance between the object of memory and the act of remembrance. Yet, such a distance is not simply quantitative but qualitative. Then, the real question is not how many years passed but more essentially who recollects and what temporal relation one constructs with what to be recollected.
considering how to salvage the defeated for their sake and by their fellow losers, as Vattimo would propose weak thought as a thought of weakening the strong for and by the weak.

If the victor-oppressor instrumentalizes history as a practical means of domination and governance—La Boétie suggested centuries ago that the governor dominates over the governed by depriving historical knowledge and education from the latter and thus perpetuating the existing relation of servitude as given and determined, eternal and unchangeable—Benjamin almost refuses to take the past in such a pragmatic manner, suggesting that it is not and cannot be be confined to our conscious will, as Proust privileges involuntary memory over voluntary memory, something that comes to you and shocks you over something that you (can) step towards safely, and by doing so, both Proust and Benjamin keeps the past open and undetermined, not fully signified (or even never fully signifiable). Against the useful and usable past of the victor, Benjamin opposes Messianic images that suddenly crystallize with a shock and then pop up, which must be grasped from the perspective of the losers and for their sake (4:396).

Would anarchist historiography fully subscribe to this Messianic, redemptive historiography? Not quite. On the one hand, Benjamin’s critical impulses that both problematize the orthodox, justificatory history of progress and the homogenous temporality should be fully appropriated. On the other hand, we should be cautious of such a Proustian moment of the promised fulfillment, of full-fledged redemption and full salvation, which, in our anarchist opinon, should be embraced only as a fiction—let us not forget Kermode’s warning that fiction degenerates into myth when it becomes unconscious of its own fictionality—or as a critical practice as subaltern historians have elaborated.¹⁷⁹ In the second untimely meditation, Nietzsche sketches three different attitudes to historical studies, or three different relations we can establish

¹⁷⁹ See Chapter Two for Kermode, Chapter Four for subaltern studies.
with the past: antiquarian, monumental, and critical. And what interests me here is the third attitude, which, it seems to me, complements as well as moderates the as it were modernist epiphanic exaltation in Benjamin’s historiography, when combined with Bloch’s philosophy of the future, or utopian hermeneutics.

It is important, when one discusses Bloch’s insistence on the ubiquity of utopia and the infinite shapes and forms it could take, that this liberation of tradition takes place via the critique of ideology, because “the excess of ideology contains the kernels of truth and salvation” and ideologies are not merely and simply false (36). I would like to compare this ideological attitude of redemption toward the past, whether it is Benjamin’s version of weak Messianism or its stronger variation of overtly revisionist and vindictive overwriting, namely, the “dangerous” attitude which invents an alternative past that deserve us more than the actual past, with Nietzsche’s critical attitude which takes a similar path but in a more critical and more radically revising way.

Nietzsche suggests that forgetting does nothing to change reality: we cannot undo ourselves merely by forgetting that we who live in the present are a consequence of past aberrations and injustices. What we can change, Nietzsche implies, is not the past as such that had already happened, but rather our present that is itself a continuous effect of the past. In fact, if the past has constituted us, simultaneously constituting our first nature, it is our critical task to confront it and invent a new, second nature which would in turn allow us to fantasize that we derive from a different source than we actually do:

The best we can do is to confront our inherited and hereditary nature with our knowledge, and through a new, stern discipline combat our inborn heritage and implant in ourselves a new habit, a new instinct, a second nature, so that our first
nature withers away. It is an attempt to give oneself, as it were *a posteriori*, a past in which one would like to originate in opposition to that in which one did originate. (76)

Kropotkin would say that our first nature, the animal nature, is always and already social and sociable, cooperative and collaborative, more than competitive and deadly. Zola might conjoin with the Russian anarchist, suggesting that our primary nature is as much fraternal and affectionate as brutal and murderous. Then, is it our task, as a practitioner of anarchist hermeneutics and historiography, to salvage such an obscured and effaced first nature because of the secondly invented habit that has been consolidated as a new instinct and nature in modern times, and which may be called by many different names like civilization, culture, order, religion, capitalism, the state. However, to retrieve the origin is always a perilous act, as it could in turn bind us. Here, Rousseau’s speculative remark that one has to risk conjectures about the origin may be very useful: we need imagine “un état qui n’existe plus, qui n’a peut-être point existé, qui probablement n’existera jamais” (“a state that exists anymore, that perhaps haven’t existed at all, that will probably never exists”) precisely because we want to clearly understand “notre état present” (“our present state”) not because we would want to come back to the origin, true or false, real or speculative (my trans.;159).

***

In “The Crisis of Comparative Literature,” René Wellek criticizes pseudo-scientific methods of positivism, while problematizing nationalist or patriotic enthusiasm, which, in Wellek’s opinion, reduces culture into politics and economy, “a strange system of cultural bookkeeping” and “the creditor and debtor calculus” (289). Against this quantitative compartmentalization, Wellek demands a free mind which finds distasteful such “fenced-off
reservations with signs of ‘no trespassing’” (291). And he calls “comparatists” those who stand “themselves at the crossroads of nations or, at least, on the borders of one nation” (287). With this formulation, Wellek seems to depict two figures of inter-national comparatist, exilic and minor or off-center, both of whom survive by residing in multiple systems, while keeping vigil in case some systems would forcefully take over or conquer the others, or in case they would isolate with each other, which would equally increase antagonism among them. In a somewhat similar manner, but in an even more universalist way, Edward Said privileges those who stand for universal values, hold nations and traditions at a distance, live in an intellectual exile, free themselves from the burden of loyalty and fidelity without simply disowning their own given or acquired identities, and speak truth to power and authority, even if that would risk their own lives. Said calls such brave but tormented people “intellectuals.” And then I would like to call “anarchists” those who would dwell in the state of suspension between origin and end, sincerely inhabiting such disjointing in-between sites and moving toward the destination yet without really reaching it, both believing in fictions and not believing in them, always remembering that they are (only) fictions, yet nevertheless escaping from nihilism or cynicism, and performatively inventing and re-inventing better fictions, ones which might not make us happy immediately, but at least ones which might have us hopeful enough to wish such an impossible possibility of universal well-being for ourselves as well as for these others we know and those others we do not know, as if this fictional utopian collective desire were more than fictional and almost real and actual.
Works Cited


Bookchin, Murray. Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism : The Unbridgeable Chasm.


Boschian-Campaner, Catherine. “L’esthétique du portrait féminin dans Le Docteur Pascal.”


Initiation Philosophique, 76.


Print.


