The FUTURE in the PRESENT

LIBERTARIAN ORGANISATION & STRUCTURE

CONTENTS
- Moulding the Break
- Marketplace Politics
- Practical Anarchy
- Non-Rational Politics
- Ritual Anarchy

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No.1 Critical Anarchy
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Libertarian Organisation & Structure.

No 1. CRITICAL ANARCHY

contents

Page

1 LOS: Communiqués, Editorial

2 Moulding the Break: failure of libertarian organisation

6 Marketplace Politics: competition among radical groups

19 Practical Anarchy: finding a way forward

27 Non-Rational Politics: emotions in groups

36 Ritual Anarchy

57
LOS COMMUNIQUÉ, December 1985

"A Note from "Libertarian Organisation & Structure"."

LOS was set up with the intention of understanding some of the things which prevent groups with basically anarchical intentions from achieving them. We are also open to the possibility that we might have to modify what we mean by "anarchist forms of organisation".

We are dissatisfied with the usual anarchist ideas of what to avoid in groups. For example we feel that the classical anarchist concept of authority as something a minority inflicts on an unwilling majority is only relevant in a limited number of situations. Our experience is that there are many more subtle ways in which authority can develop, such as people getting bored, personal links inhibiting challenge or criticism etc., and these can affect even the most committed anarchist.

So we believe that classical anarchist theory is not based on the way people really do think, feel and behave. For one thing it has not taken on the vast changes in culture and economics which have occurred since its foundation. Also it reflects an over-simplified nineteenth century concept that a group is a collection of autonomous individuals who decide everything through rational processes that they completely understand. In fact a decision can be reached which seems rational on first impression, but actually results from hidden motivations, such as a desire to smooth things over, the impression way someone speaks for, or even just people want to go home. Such considerations may seem trivial, but they can often be as significant as what people would insist their reasons were, and allowing for them can radically alter the way we decide to act.

Starting off from these criticisms we have been looking at groups, collectives and co-ops that we have been in. For example the County Durham network of miners' support groups has shown that large numbers of people can decide to adopt our ideas, such as delegates to be mandated, although they would never dream of calling themselves anarchists. Unfortunately these ideas often seem to get distorted or lost, even if no-one intentionally decides to set themselves up in authority. We feel it would be a good thing if the mechanisms behind this were better understood.

We'd like to work with a wider range of experiences than just ours, so if you have been in a group which came across these "structural" problems (bearing in mind that there is often more going on in a group hijacked by Leninists than just their manipulations) we'd like you to send us details of what happened, why you think it turned out the way it did and how such failings might have been avoided. Any other comments would also be welcome, all letters will receive a reply and, in a few months time, when we bring out a pamphlet on the subject, you will get a free copy. Thanks, LOS.

LOS COMMUNIQUÉ, June 1986

"Libertarian Organisation & Structures: What Next?"

1. Since the summer of 1985 LOS has been meeting regularly to discuss aspects of libertarian theory and practice. In particular we share the concern that anarchist "ideas" have remained fairly static, in spite of repeated experiences of failure and defeat. A rather "holier than thou" attitude has allowed anarchists to blame the State, authoritarianisms and other external conditions. The possibilities that the ideas as they stand may not have some kind of inevitable, transhistorical relevance, and that having those ideas does not in itself lead to good libertarian practice, continually escape attention.

We have therefore concentrated on the details of the failure of libertarian organisation, trying to pin down what it is about anarchist principles and anarchists in action that may be at fault. We have been very aware of the fact that few precedents exist for this kind of criticism and self-criticism among anarchists.

2. There are several contexts in which this examination of libertarian organisations is important. Most obvious are anarchist groups or movements, and organisations whose structures have been strongly influenced by libertarian individuals or principles. But equally important are situations where ordinary people come together in groups and spontaneous-ly choose basic anarchistic structures. From the start we have tried to bring together analyses and critiques of these forms, stressing social and psychological factors rather than crude ideological rationalisations.

3. We began by focusing on specific personal experiences of libertarian groups or organisations breaking down or degenerating into authoritarian or hierarchical structures of one kind or another. These "case studies" included strike-support organisations, anarchist groups, housing co-ops and educational groups. From discussion of these, several general areas of concern arose. We then began to concentrate on these more general aspects of political groups.

4. Our first publication, a large pamphlet, is emerging from this work so far. In it we introduce our perspective, and discuss some detail particular factors in political groups which we feel affect their activities profoundly. These include:

- The social ecologies in which groups operate,
- The development of "the impossible of achieving absolute aims" (such as an absence of authority) affects our understanding of anarchism,
- The effects of emotion,
- The development and influence of rituals.

These parts of the pamphlet are being written individually, and as far as possible we have tried to keep them rooted in the reality of groups as we experience, perceive, think and feel about them.
5. Our immediate intention is to get the pamphlet published. Up to now we have remained a small group of 5 or so individuals. We plan to expand somewhat, and extend our contact with other libertarians. If the pamphlet makes any impression we may try to continue in that vein and turn it into a semi-annual journal.

In addition LOS as presently constituted is thinking of producing more diverse publications, analysing particular historical and current situations as well as hoping to move in more pragmatically useful directions. All of this depends, of course, on decisions made by any new, larger LOS.

6. We are extremely interested in contact and correspondence with people who see some value in what we are trying to do. Please get in touch.

LOS.

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Editorial

Each of the following chapters was written by a member of LOS. They were all changed to some extent after group discussions, but in each case what remains is the responsibility of the individual author. We think that the issues raised here are central to modern anarchism, but the way they have been dealt with here has not been collectively agreed. For example one member strongly disagrees with the interpretations of the recent history of the CNT given in "Non-Rational Politics". Or, the reduction of complex processes to "Conditioning" in "Practical Anarchy" is strenuously opposed by another member. Or, the suggestions at the end of "Marketplace Politics" are looked on with suspicion by some. But for the implications of these issues to be examined, they first have to be raised, and in such a way as to demand attention. This we hope to do, in this and in future publications.

We want to encourage as much involvement as possible in our work by interested groups and individuals. Descriptions and analyses, however short and sketchy, of successes and failures in libertarian and working class groups are very valuable to us. They give direct, first-hand accounts which are much more meaningful than our second-hand analyses. We also welcome suggestions as to areas we could follow up. For example some of the directions we may be investigating next includes the effects of patriarchy; authoritarian left-wing groups; rank and file workers' organisations; assemblies and our participation in them; encouraging reflective honesty in groups.

We hope to receive comment and criticism from readers about the ideas presented here. We will print as many of these as possible in "The Future In The Present" no.2. Contributions will also be welcome in the form of short articles on any subject related to what we are doing. We would be happy to correspond with potential contributors on questions of subject-matter, length etc.

LOS, November 1986.
Moulding the Break: failure in libertarian organisation

Introduction

In this chapter several important historical episodes will be described. It is well known that libertarian organisation can fail; is it not then possible that libertarian organisations can fail? To show that this is the case is the objective of this chapter. Part of it is a historical account of developments which make up the case. 

Other more general problems of libertarian practice are not covered here. The division of the period of revolution into periods of revolutionary potential is necessary so that we can see what factors contributed to the failure of libertarian organisations. The division is not an attempt to give a precise time period when libertarian organisations failed. The division of the period of revolution into periods of revolutionary potential is necessary so that we can see what factors contributed to the failure of libertarian organisations. 

The book is divided into two chapters, one on the failure of the First International and one on the failure of the Second International. The latter chapter is a continuation of the former. 

Russia 1917

From February 1917 the most combative workers of Petrograd inspired a rash of strikes and demonstrations. The majority of the workers, workers, action spread over the city, beginning from demands around pay and conditions but escalating into a determination to achieve self-management by their own efforts. This awareness was helped by the inability of political parties and Social Democracy to organise the problems faced by workers, let alone suggest meaning solutions. 

The end of March the factory committees had begun to organise together at district and then regional level. 

The Bolsheviks started talking about workers' control and "All power to the soviets" after the February events began to unfold. But in the subsequent months they were the single political grouping whose public pronouncements implied that they wanted to go as far as workers wanted. They gained a decisive influence in a relatively short time in the workers' section of the party. 

People themselves assumed that what their party leaders were talking about was real workers' control, so that this influence did not yet cast an overbearing influence on the workers. 

The widespread and growing practice of co-opting party militants who only had a paper membership of the soviets, which began to organise the parties, was the only form of action workers could take when they were faced with the powerlessness of the party. 

Because workers had assumed that the bolsheviks meant more or less the same thing as them with respect to workers' control, they went ahead with formulating their plans for industry and the economy. They crystallised in several proposals which soon excluded trade unions and employers from participation, the fundamental role of decisions made at grass-roots and the flow of power upwards. 

Although bolshevik leaders were already saying that workers' control actually meant state control, workers were still operating under the assumption that they controlled the relations and forces of production. 

As the power gap between bolshevik leader and workers started to become clear the factory committees dropped the plan of workers' control that workers' committees preferred to the bolsheviks' "Counter-Manual" (which amounted to a complete lack of workers' control). Soon the Supreme Economic Council announced that it would refuse funds to factories taken over by workers as they feared a socialist revolution. 

In 1918 bolshevik leaders and trade union officials began in earnest to sabotage self-management in a rigorous, organised way. "Nationalisation", Taylorism and one-management were inflicted on workers. Factory committees were recognised to be the natural factory committees and left to bolshevik control, and were no longer even part of any consultative procedure. 

The move to state capitalism had been engineered, and workers' control a complete illusion.

It is certain that the factory committees did not recognise early enough the nature of what the bolshevik party would represent in power. An important consideration here was the leading role of bolshevik workers and the disproportionally high numbers of bolsheviks on very many factory committees. Many of these people
genuinely in favour of self-management, and they and other workers believed that, since the party had proclaimed itself in favour of workers' control, then all that was necessary was for the party to ensure that workers wanted it and it would be done. The workers soon discovered that their colleagues at work did not really want them to control the factory and they would not support the workers' policy unless they were compensated with higher wages.

Workers could still identify the Bolsheviks with their Bolshevik colleagues at work, and not perceive the threat clearly enough to orient themselves appropriately. For some, workers had access to the factory's own history, of a potential political leadership saying anything remotely similar to what workers' own aspirations. And, anyway, what would the workers find out what the Bolsheviks really wanted and would actually do? They already knew what they wanted - Bolsheviks' policies were clear and consistent. But, at the same time, workers had developed plans for achieving it in peace, and they did not expect to be asked to sacrifice their interests for the sake of the working class as a whole.

The Bolsheviks' strategy was cleverly designed to play on workers' concerns and priorities. They talked about the need for a strong union, and then, when workers joined, they immediately started to weaken their bargaining power. They used the power they had gained from the workers' control to demand higher wages and fewer hours, weakening the workers' ability to negotiate effectively. This was a clear example of the Bolsheviks' manipulation of workers' interests for their own gains.

The question of attitudes to leadership is raised here, and it has been relevant throughout the history of socialist movements. Leaders and their followers often have a difficult relationship, with leaders having to maintain a balance between the needs of the collective and the desires of the individual. The Bolsheviks' strategy was to use the workers' control to gain power and then use that power to control the workers' lives. This was a clear example of the Bolsheviks' manipulation of workers' interests for their own gains.
Firstly, the combined efforts of PCF and the unions were concentrated on de-radicalising workers. Ideas of workers’ control and revolution were treated with suspicion. The socialist parties, for example, interpreted the events as a sign of the growing influence of the leading trade union leaders. This tactic was made easier by the fact that most workers were not organized, and the extent to which the workers’ councils were active was limited. However, the Paris workers were overwhelmingly in support of the students, and the campaign gained momentum.

The attitudes of the workers towards the unions were also implicated. Various libertarian currents supposedly existed among the workers, but the predominant feeling was that the unions were not a real force, not in any direct authoritarian sense, but rather a tool of the workers’ councils. This led to a decline in support for the unions, and a lack of trust in the workers’ councils. The sense of uncertainty and fear of the future was expressed in the slogans of the workers’ councils, such as “State cannot solve the problem, the workers can solve it.”

The workers’ councils were seen as a way to achieve a more participatory and democratic form of government, and to challenge the capitalist system. They were seen as a way to bring about a more equitable and just society. However, the success of the workers’ councils was limited, and the workers’ councils eventually collapsed, leaving the workers with a sense of frustration and a sense of powerlessness.

The self-satisfaction of the revolutionary students undoubtedly played a large part in alienating workers from them, and only a few would agree to the idea of a “dual” power. The students were not able to build a united front with the workers, and the workers’ councils were not able to support the students. The students were also unable to overcome the divisions within the workers, and the working-class movement was fragmented.

Czechoslovakia 1968

During the “Prague Spring” up to August 1968, workers were deeply suspicious of the workers’ councils set up by the “liberal-technocratic” regime under Dubcek. These workers correctly saw them as agents of more efficient exploitation, which was clear from their composition. The workers’ councils were either a tool of the state or a means of placing the workers under greater control. They were not able to achieve any real democratic changes, and the workers felt betrayed by the regime.

The workers’ councils were seen as a means to solve the problems of the working class, but they were not able to achieve any real change. The workers felt that they were not being listened to, and that their voices were not heard. They were also afraid that the councils would be used against them, and that they would be put into a position oferiev}

If there had been more of the untiring production of sound propaganda from any number of Comintern, the ideas of the socialists had been more convincing, and the workers had been less self-absorbed, the results might have been different. Consistent support and encouragement, in words and actions, could have resulted in a more fertile blending of the practices of revolutionary students and workers.
institutions for their own ends. However much 'democracy' had been introduced into the lower levels, the Party still retained much leverage, especially at higher levels where it could maneuver unseen and create confusion and uncertainty. This made the Dubcek regime's normalization later under Gorbachev much easier than it might otherwise have been. The other, more subtle factor here was the belligerent attitude of the workers towards the government, and particularly Dubcek himself, by 1969. Both before and after the invasion the government could not predict the extent of the scientific and technological forces at play. But once the stage was set, and as the workers and peasants occupations of factories and coalmines were legalized, it produced a spate of factory assembly protests. By 1974, this was very much in a context of condescension. The workers were being told what to think and when to think it. They were not interested in their conditions of existence and wanted to ensure that a system would be built that could meet their needs. This was possible when the system was controlled by leftist sectional interests.

The rivalries of the 'workers' parties' spoiled the movement in several ways. The government became increasingly difficult as it was not possible to know in whose interests a neighbouring committee was now acting. Within groups the leftists gravitated towards committees via their grasp of procedure and experience in organizations. Once, even if they started out with the best of intentions (i.e. bona fide workers, residents etc) their use of jargon and mystification bored and confused ordinary assembly members, and on its own this hampered proceedings.

Portugal 1974

The failure of the Portuguese revolution of 1974 illustrated a rather new phenomenon which we might call a 'proliferation of leaderships'. Huge strides were made by workers, unemployed and peasants, but their advances were progressively spoiled by the mêlée of competing, backstabbing, self-seeking, and self-serving factions, and by the typically debased and stultifying Communist and Socialist Parties. Most of these alternative 'leaderships' had wriggled into influence in national and local state machinery, and eventually returned to those positions as the only way they could survive - sacrificing the see straight through the intriguers and machinations of government. The threat from this was steadily growing, and the state and capitalists had to develop more subtle means of bypassing it. Appealing to psychological levels deeper than simple rationality is a major part of their adaptation. Libertarian ideas and practices have not responded to this change.

Poland 1980

The events in Poland in 1980 and 1981 are to some extent the logical consequences of the repression in Hungary in 1955 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, as well as of the resistance of Polish workers in 1956 and 1970. The free trade unions Solidarnosc represented workers' mass social movement which inevitably posed political demands implying a far-reaching confrontation with the State. But the fulfillment of these demands in practice would have meant the complete elimination of the Communist Party from society. The leaders of the workers' movement believed that they could gain nothing from a Russian invasion. Because of this they continually pushed their demands on themselves so as not to undermine the Party control. It was not that Solidarnosc militants wanted the Party (or the State), it was a realistic appreciation that they had to demand what the State could offer, as both employer and government. Thus their repeated last-minute compromises to bail the workers out of trouble were a sign of the loyalty and submissiveness of Solidarnosc militants to revolutionary workers' councils. These were the people of the problem, the workers who remained completely separate from and unaccountable to
Conclusions

A revolutionary libertarian organisation needs to express and sustain revolutionary development and eruption. But if the framework is flexible enough to deviate from theocratic to egalitarian thought. They must make the choices of demands and determine how they are to be articulated. The organisation must not restrict itself to a mode within its brink but not exceed the revolutionary period, and should not lead to a situation where urgent and pressing decisions have to be forced through a pre-existing executive structure which cannot properly handle them, and should not need to.

During the early periods too, the organisation should be, and should be seen to be, the expression of class co-ordination, mutual aid and solidarity. It should not be seen as just one additional layer; at least partly outside of the class. This applies both to the constructive tasks of workers’ councils and other self-managed bodies as well as to the destructive tasks of defending the revolution against the bourgeois state machinery and fifth column distortion and recuperation, as well as those wishing to subvert the revolution to its own ends.

These tasks demand the generalisation, active presence and moral implementation of the mass at all levels of development and carrying out activities with autonomy and collective self-control. A structure split-off from the mass and seen as separate and mediating means that all that happens is that the people collectively become more passive, ceasing more and more areas of decision-making to others in progressively wider areas of life. Once this process starts to become the pattern of the organisation, it inevitably develop bureaucratically. This is subtle and indirect at first (even more the most revolutionary among them into that role) and then accelerates as the developing passivity of the mass leaves them as the only ones prepared to make hard, immediate decisions. These developments are enhanced by the domination of authoritarians who are in influential positions (not just those who has dominants, justify such traits). Whatever evolution the organisation has gone through before the crisis period, if it hasn’t already dealt with these problems of suffocating power to active, respected comrades - a position will be reached of “leading militants” among a more or less sheep-like membership. These questions cannot be left indefinitely on the assumption that the revolution will “sort them out” or by means of particular methods. Libertarian organisations must begin now, so that people can be used to realising that it can have serious effects.

One can often look back on this by observing the behaviour of libertarian groups and organisations in crisis. Do the membership wait for the word of leadership, of the local organisation, to decide what is appropriate? Do they adopt the concept of dominating the organisation as if they only have a role in making decisions. Self-managed organisations must begin now, so that people can be used to realising that it can have serious effects.

Looking at existing anarchist organisations here and abroad, we are struck by the extent of non-libertarian practices that are both commonplace and denied utterly. There are all the elements of self-management common to ultra-left groups in the West. There is a widespread patriarchal chauvinism insisting that women have to adapt to fit modes of behaviour designed by the men (and hence a disastrous absence of feminist women). A more or less subtle authoritarianism allows established elites to control the direction of activity by their self-confidence and group-think. Formal alliances coexist with self managed organisations, groups of people, and the like. Often they are not the same people, and who are impotent enough to make a point of their uncertain. As soon as one gets beyond the level of local activism (where even this exists)- sheer prejudice rules. Even at the most the uniliated and factionalism is growing. The framework of co-operativeness with others is next to impossible. And people in the movement want why
I'm not getting anywhere.

The following articles discuss various aspects of all this. From very varying perspectives the complicating realities of human associations are examined to see what bearing they may have on the ways groups and organisations are structured, develop and behave. We are not content with the notion (the wishful thinking) that anarchism as historically moulded is sufficient unto itself, that it covers all eventualities and can be consulted as divine wisdom for answers. On the contrary, we believe that this can never be the case. Many things are different now. In 1986, Anarchism has not kept up.

Chapter 2
Marketplace Politics: Competition among radical groups

Introduction

This discussion aims to analyze the way that groups derive their political aims and tactics. Some of the 'internal' (i.e. psychological, ritualistic, subjective, etc) aspects of group structure are discussed elsewhere in this pamphlet. Here, it is the 'external' social and political conditions which are of interest. These external conditions will be listed in preliminary form. After this brief ramble through the variety of factors that constitute the 'environment' in which groups operate, I will settle on one particular aspect: the diversification of political struggle and the competition between different members within that system. That is, I will focus on the fragmentation of the political domain and the way that this at once reflects, serves and undermines capitalism's dynamic. Political groups, including anarchist and libertarian ones, are necessarily caught up in the dynamic and the aim is to locate them within it. So, in this section, there will be an outline of the process, form and theorisation of this political fragmentation. This discussion draws heavily on the marketplace as an analogy of the prevailing political 'scene'. The argument is, simply, that competition has a profound effect on the constitution of groups. The bulk of the rest of this text will be taken up with the way that competition between groups is assimilated by them into their general political practice.

External factors: a preliminary list

The thing to note here is that the following list will be partly undermined in the discussion of diversification that will follow. Nevertheless, it provides an overview of the sort of 'external' factors that are liable to shape the political activity of radical groups.

Infrastructure

This refers to the basic structures of Western capitalism - in particular the contradiction between forces and ownership of production, patriarchy and statism. These will affect the group in various ways.

(a) At the individual level they condition the array of personalities that can emerge. We can hypothesise that we all have an underlying character which will affect the type of politics to which we will be attracted. Thus Leninist or fascist groups might be thought of as serving an authoritarian personality. Possibly this personality structure also asserts itself in the emergence of covert power alliances in unstructured groups (see Ritual Anarchy for the way that this might be affected).

(b) The infrastructure creates class, gender and race related experiences which will condition the form of group structure. Thus working class organizations will reflect the collectivism of their social conditions. Conversely, middle class political organizations will tend to be more individualistic. Similarly for gender: it is no accident that CR groups were developed by women.

(c) The ends, as well as the structure of a group, are also influenced by infrastructure. Because of the range and diversity of interests that working class organizations have to express, it is not always obvious what the real interests of the class as a whole are. In comparison, capitalists have a shared and precise vision of their collective interests. As a result the latter find it easier to unify in the process of pursuit. To achieve the same sort of clarity,

SO YOU SEE, AS ANARCHISTS, WE HAVE NO LEADERS

YEAH!

RIGHT!
working class organizations need some consultative process through which to draw on the experiences and desires of their membership. However, this is relatively 'useful' as regard time and resources. In consequence, there is a tendency to adopt the authoritarian structure of capitalist groups in order to place themselves on a par with them. As a result, working class groups tend to become opportunistic, subordinate means to ends, elevate short term aims, recruit to increase size irrespective of the quality of the membership, and so on. This is aggravated by the internationalization of capital. With the multinationalists also becoming increasingly more informed and qualified, many groups are bid for the sake of their own stability. This means a crackdown on working class resistance which is often conducted via unions desperate to maintain membership. Thus the conflict between both national and international proletarians comes to be orchestrated by the multinationalists.

Cultural Factors

These are not completely distinct from infrastructural elements, but are interrelated with these. The division is for ease of exposition. (a) The family, education, etc, provide the basic model for the structure of organizations. These will be predominantly hierarchical. However, because cultural experience is multi-faceted and contradictory, we can expect conflicting models. Thus the experience of informal, leisure-oriented groups which have a libertarian culture will conflict with more traditional models experienced at school. The 'respectability' or efficacy of these more radical structures will of course vary over time. But in recent times, they have re-established themselves in the form of, for example, miner's support groups. (b) The traditional hierarchy within the working class means that some proletarians are less subjectively proletarian than are others. This will affect the way in which they look in formulations in the form of a new understanding of the 'resistance' and their acceptance of their social and economic condition. (c) The state has not simply oppressed the working class, it has also mediated its reformist gains (eg Welfare). Currently these are being eroded. Because of the state's monopolization, some groups are forced into dialogue with it; this requires that they remain within the legal framework. Thus groups are obliged to adapt themselves to the state's demands, in particular they are required to adopt given organizational structures (eg hierarchy). (d) The expansion of the service sector (eg psychiatry, social work theory, criminology, etc). The state comes to have a major say in people's treatment of themselves and each other, furthering through its 'disciplines', the categories and positions by which people define themselves (eg decent sexuality, IQ, mental stability, etc). We might suggest that rationality is being wrested from ordinary people by a professional elite to the point that people begin to 'need' such an elite in order to formulate the problems they face. As such there might be some, historically circumscribed, truth in Lenin's idea that the working class can only achieve trade union consciousness.

Short-term conditions

Once again it is impossible to qualitatively separate these from cultural factors. What I have in mind are local, temporary changes such as the prevailing political climate (leadership), present struggles being waged (as opposed to the essential antagonism between capital and labour), the immediate state of the economy (up/down-turn). These factors people will often experience as 'new' or novel events within their lifetimes. The elements considered in preceding section (gender, class position, cultural background, etc) are more or less taken for granted because many of these short-term changes are imposed on them to unduly draw the group's attention. (a) General political climate will condition the limits of political debate and action. The rightward shift in Labour might induce similar adaptations in radical groups; alternatively, it might lead to a polarisation (b) Increase/decrease in funding/resources will affect the capacity of many groups to act, negate the impact of economic depression results in a situation in which energy is siphoned off by the simple need to survive. (c) The tightening of policing means that there has been an increase in surveillance, inquiry, surveillance, etc. Inevitably this will constrain the range and form of activities that radical groups can engage in. (d) Technological changes have also influenced the ability of radical groups to act. While the microchip revolution has improved surveillance techniques, it also offers the promise, with appropriate decentralization of a more democratic dissemination of information and thus power.

Diversification: real and unreal

Multiplication

This section takes up just one factor of those described in the preceding sections, that of the multiplication or diversification of political effort. The aim is to show how this process has its own dynamics which has led to a stagnation rather than a flowering of political struggle. In the paragraphs that follow I will describe how this diversification has arisen.

The mass movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are less and less in evidence, or rather their coherence seems to have become more and more degraded. Instead we have a mass of small, or less agreed, or less agreed (generally, the workplace - the aim was to make the point of revolution) groups. However, even there was there an awareness of the multiplicity of oppressions, there had been a sudden multiplication of these sites of struggle. Of course, the point of production is still a major focus, but it has lost its monopoly.

In the sixties, amidst the affluence of the west, revolutionary political emphasis. In some quarters at least there was a shift away from production to consumption. What we consumed was beginning to consume us: it impoverished us. We made us one-dimensional. Whereas previously it had been alienation and exploitation at the point of production that would provide the impetus toward revolution, now it was the poverty of the individual that had become the commodity and spectacle. In the end some Marxists (the Frankfurt School) saw the grip of this 'bogus culture' as so all-embracing as to have turned the mass with the exploitation of major social forces and retreated into aesthetics. Anyway, this new emphasis with consumption linked up with the ecological protest: changes in lifestyle and consumption appears as an environmental movement that people could partly withdraw from the general ecological onslaught. The direction of attention towards from the social contradictions of capitalism to it's global effects was paralleled by an inward turning. Necessitated animating women, personal politics became a substantia lie.

Personal politics, as we are all aware, revolves around power. In confronting that power, women change to change, to give in some of the aspects of the feminine stereotype, to affirm others. Furthermore, feminism is also an additional infrastructural component: over and above production, consumers' capitalism has to reproduce. The new sensitivity to relations between and within individuals has meant in the general re-orientation toward the self: the importance of discovering the 'real me', etc. Tune the to the force of a pathology of consumerism arose to cater for the. As is to be expected, many of the group's attempts to heal a self tarnished by power were swiftly recuperated by capital and the state (the consumption of therapies by the well-to-do who want to feel good about their well-to-do-namess). Nevertheless,
within the right context, many of these attempts represented the fact that the self had now become a site for political action.

This expansion has involved all sorts of other struggles - race and gay issues being the most obvious of them. And at the local (residential, school, environmental, etc) level, resistance has continued (although this will inevitably fluctuate with conditions).

But where do anarchist groups stand in all this? There can be no doubt that the dominant model of class struggle that has characterized recently has failed. The moment this became clear, we began to see the development of alternative models and tactics, which were often quite contradictory to each other, yet shared a common goal of creating a more radical and revolutionary form of political struggle.

A degree of specialization is inevitable. The problem arises when what is a specialization, or more accurately, a genuine though specific concern, is doggedly announced to be the only real issue.

This diversification is nothing new to anarchists. Indeed, many anarchists and Marxists accept this in their stride. After all, we can provide the unifying theory that will tie all these disparate strands into a coherent whole. Next I want to look at the reasons for and the more dubious perceptions of this multiplication.

The problem with this analysis is that it will reflect a political position, it can't be objective, and reasons for this multiplication can be established in terms of two theoretical poles. On the one hand, it is asserted that there has been a profound change in the constitution of society; on the other hand, the claim is that there is only the surface appearance of multiplication. In the former argument, it might run as follows: In the old days, the working class were the political force; history ended when the proletariat realized its essence, overthrew the bourgeoisie and socialized the means of production. But now history is no longer driven by the class struggle. Rather, it spouts along, judged from day to day by the conjunction of forces such as the state, capital, scientific knowledge, the law, social practice, the latest political ideology, etc. There is a real change here - there is no longer an economic infrastructure and a social superstructure for everything has become all mixed up, a mass of moments. It is not to argue that the classical confrontation between workers and capital is no longer possible; if the right conjunction of forces occurred, then this confrontation might again emerge and revolution would be a viable option. One of the factors behind this multiplication is the huge expansion of the state. As the state has grown and become more and more areas of our lives into its ceaseless attempts to shape and fix us, so resistance has had to confront it on more and more fronts. Multiplication has been the result. In contrast, the latter perspective sees this multiplication as relatively superficial. Certainly the state has expanded, but it has been pulled apart by the growth of its internal conflicts (e.g. the economic sector is still the driving force behind society), not through the state's own intrinsic tendency to increase its power. Thus, through the medium of the state, the class struggle is fractured and disoriented. Whereas the former argument accepts this multiplication as relatively superficial (sometimes celebrating it as 'molecular revolution'), interpreting the variety of struggles as inherently valid, the latter laments the fragmentation of the one true struggle, class war. Indeed, it might seem such a process of fragmentation as play by capital to deftly deflect the wrath of the oppressed.

However, perhaps we should not see these two positions as being polar absolutes. They are bound to reflect their own peculiar historical context. Thus the economically-oriented view emerged in the Victorian age when exploitation and the stark contrast between bourgeoisie and proletariat was all too evident. In the sixties, this was no longer a viable option, at least superficially. The welfare state eased some of the suffering, relative affluence brought into blue-collar status and earnings differences. Even the theoretical differences (e.g. bourgeois means you own the means of production; proletariat means that you sold your labour power) were unimportant by the substitution of management and shareholder funds for the classical entrepreneur. Moreover, the massive rise of the service-middle class didn't help clarify matters. So, in the post-war world a variety of factors have conspired to obscure what had been, at least in theory, a neat class division. If the view of the social world as multi-layered and many-strung has prevailed in recent times, it means that it is now under attack. The new wave of economic crises have reminded us, or those of us who forgot, of the irrationality of capitalism, of its tendency toward crises. And with crisis, class distinctions have sharpened up as recent industrial legislation and the state reaction to disputes simply demonstrate.

If we accept that there is currently a re-emergence of the economic, it can't really be objective-perspective might result in a diffusion of radical effort. Class is of the essence under conditions of crisis, and many battles with the state are more openly class-related (as, for example, international capital forces states to provide congenial conditions for investment). And if the radical groups engaged in such struggle fail to see the class implications (e.g. radical feminism, radical anti-psychiatric groups). That is, such radical activity does not in itself address the economic; how, this should not distract from the inherent validity of these fights against power, both internal and external. They break up the feedback loops whereby the state (as the state the state as a whole) tax the needs of capital. In effect they challenge the primacy of the economic: they can act as a brake on any simplistic return to the old economics.

The reader will have detected a note of uncertainty; I oscillate between economic/singular and state-cultural/multiplicity models. This tension can't really be objective-perspective might result in a diffusion of radical effort. Class is of the essence under conditions of crisis, and many battles with the state are more openly class-related (as, for example, international capital forces states to provide congenial conditions for investment). And if the radical groups engaged in such struggle fail to see the class implications (e.g. radical feminism, radical anti-psychiatric groups). That is, such radical activity does not in itself address the economic; how, this should not distract from the inherent validity of these fights against power, both internal and external. They break up the feedback loops whereby the state (as the state the state as a whole) tax the needs of capital. In effect they challenge the primacy of the economic: they can act as a brake on any simplistic return to the old economics.
Marketplace Politics

What I now want to consider is how the singular versus multiple views have both meditated and been contaminated by a particular aspect of the environment in which this occurs. The aspect is the diversification/multiplication of political groups. It is argued that through this some of the components of the market have infiltrated radical politics. Political groups are in competition with one another for the hearts and minds of their potential audience/members/target group. Even in a market economy, potential competitors, despite their avowed dislike of recruitment, have to engage in this competition. Anarchist groups, because of their minority status, are inevitably parasitic on larger movements (e.g. CND) or events (e.g. miner's strike). As a result they are forced to 'market' their own views to draw members, supporters, strikers away from orthodox political ideas and activities (appeals to parliament, marching, petitioning) to more radical perspectives. The most traditional way of doing this is by asserting that your views are absolutely right and everyone else is wrong. When we are told that Brand X is better, that Brand Y is better, this is demonstrated not so much through its outstanding performance as through the certainty (whether it is portrayed with vehemence or subtle rhetoric) with which its superiority is asserted.

The same goes for political groups: the actual arguments become secondary to the conviction that they are right and the power with which they are projected. This hard-sell marketing ploy is not simply the form in which the 'product' (i.e. the ideology, analysis, programme) is presented, it also works back to condition the very logic of that ideology. It is not as if activists are the political equivalent of advertising executives. Whereas the latter are aware that they are marketing crap, the politico is assuredly not. S/he is far too close to the material, is necessarily and wrongly emotionally involved with what s/he has to say. So we find that this leads to amongst some groups (the vision of the paper-seller, hunched back and shifting from foot to foot, or the Tories or Fight the Cuts) one to undermine their effectiveness. They suffer the same fate as hard-sell advertising; they become caricatures of themselves. Advertisers cottoned on to the limitations of the hard-sell: it is eschewed of a sort of youthful paranoia and pietism we have a distancing from the product, achieved through oblique description and recommendation, even an element of self-parody. The result is that the claims made for the product are not to be taken too seriously. It is no longer the lauded excellence of the product that impresses, rather there is the buyer's own good taste. That makes the choice all the more convincing. The major political parties have latched onto these techniques - they are of course target marketing, and from what they say: manifestos are first and foremost vote catchers and most parliamentarians are well aware that the art of holding political office is knowing how to compromise while making it appear that one has been true to one's overt ideals.

Things are different for radical groups. The competition of the 'political marketplace' has constrained to lead radical groups to adopt hard-sell methods. (Their sometime humour is not the equivalent of soft-sell insofar as it is often only be appreciated by the converted). Why then does the hard-sell persist?

Hard-sell, in the realm of politics, involves (and this is where the analogy with the advertising industry gets a bit too tenuous) a commitment to the 'product' (i.e. the ideology, the programme, the direct action). That commitment is one of the things that keeps groups together in the face of competition from other groups. In their embattled positions, commitment helps maintain the integrity of both group and message. And yet it is this commitment, expressed in this way, that helps prevent a gross competition between political groups, which in turn necessitates commitment. That commitment, in turn generates the hard-sell and so on and so on. Thus we have a circularity, if not a spiral: the substance of the market is transported into the 'radical community' where it serves to undermine any 'unified' revolutionary potential. I am not seeking a unification in which differences are somehow dissolved in the flow of a generalized love for one's fellow human beings. Rather, I am thinking of a minimal level of communication which allows others to have their say without being shouted down, whether that be overtly or privately, in the chumminess of one's group or in the coyness of one's head. As things stand now the market continues to operate in its infamous way: the consequent in-fighting and vindictiveness against each other diverts energy away from the actual enemy. In terms of our advertising analogy, the enemies of Brand X soap powder are no longer dirt and stains, but Brands Y and Z. In the terminology of Marxist economics, the value of a political position (i.e. its capacity to inflict damage on capital, state, patriarchy, et c.) is increased by (one aspect of) its exchange value (i.e. whether it is more attractive than other positions).

In brief: competition acts to drive groups and their members into the corner of certainty - a certainty which might at first be observed as the purposes of the sell, but which in time comes to resound in the make-up of both groups (their internal structure) and members (some form of authoritarian psychology). As regard structure, certainty assures that the prevailing organizational form becomes unquestioned: the vanguard party, the O-type group, the bottom-up assembly, are the only means by which to assert the politics. They become absolute structures whose usefulness does not alter with changing conditions.

The paradox here is that this rigidification in fact secures the group's future. Certain types of individual will be attracted to the group (by virtue of their specific psychological and situational circumstances) and keep up its numbers. But they will find it hard to make their ideological ethos is already the necessary minimum turnover of members. But, as a partial result of this, the expression itself - the group - expand membership, to disseminate its ideas in such a way that they are 'absorbed' and noted upon by its 'audience' - is never achieved. In other words, competition does not change the same. As it does so in economics. In the latter, unless a company's profits continue to rise, it (or attain the average rate of profit) will perish as a distinct entity. Not so with political groups: as long as they have sufficient members (and here 'membership' means) then the group continues. In the political domain, competition takes place on a psychological as well as a material plane. Importance shifts onto the necessity to advertise, to attack, to fight other groups (as well as on state and capital). As we suggested above, one element in this is the maintenance of a purity of message and form: keeping a distinct character, different level of political activity that will attract 'sufficient' numbers for group survival. So long as the group is in the process of struggle, then it is achieving something, even if, in actuality, it is not; or else, is achieving something retrograde.

Summary/conclusion

To summarize: the process of diversification, with its potential to create a series of parallel and sympathetic (or antipathetic) struggles on a variety of levels, simultaneously sets up the conditions for competition between groups. Moreover, as we have seen, this competition is, at the level of politics, the product of the level of theory at which 'intellectuals' happily trade concepts and ideas) results in a stagnation. What could have been fruitful cross-fertilization of ideas and, more importantly, activities, emerges as a stable fragmentation, a tense network of counter-rooms, sects, infighting and certainty, conditioned only by the competitive for supremacy of a sort, but ultimately all competing for competition. Where this stagnation does break down, it is, of course, when an 'easily and globally identifiable' enemy presents itself.
However, even in the middle of one of the worst recessions in recent history, this enemy is becoming less and less likely to appear as the rigidification of perspectives becomes more and more set. Of course, history changes and this process might be halted or reversed.

This is a pessimistic note on which to end, and I can’t really prescribe any remedy other than in the most general terms. The obvious, and admittedly facile, suggestion (one which echoes the spluttering end of ‘Ritual Anarchy’) is that, now that there is no ‘obvious’ point around which to mobilise, there should be a redirection of effort away from differentiation and rigidification. Instead, effort should be expended on a blurring of edges; groups should begin to listen, discuss and experiment with other groups, even if this means (temporarily) setting aside the tenets on which the group founds itself. The problem is that this assumes that groups play fair. Unfortunately, ‘stronger’ (eg large, ideologically more virulent, etc) groups will be less likely to give up their share of the cake— they will tend to overwhelm weaker groups. Another problem is that the gains made by the individual groups might be counteracted by the decrease in diversity in the radical movement as a whole. For, at the very least, diversification and a clarity of group identity allows a range of positions from which to launch valuable criticism of alternative positions and tactics. What seems to be needed is an intrinsically contradictory or, more accurately, dialectical— both cooperation and competition—a process of critical dialogue and qualified joint ventures. The aim is to eradicate the excess competetiveness of radical political groups and to replace it with critique, even sympathetic critique. Trots are not inherently evil sworn; to class them as such is to fall prey to the pettiest machinations of capitalism.

Finally, it is important to stress yet again that the analysis I’ve presented in both too abstract and too partial. I’ve not really presented any concrete evidence for the processes of fragmentation other than in broadest fashion. However, despite this, my conviction is that fragmentation is a genuine process and must be faced. More important is the partiality of this analysis: as I stated at outset, there are innumerable other ‘ecological factors’ that influence the activity of radical groups. All I can claim is that the processes described in this essay do influence political action, and though they are often diluting by other factors, it is important that we recognize them in order to combat them, even if at the moment a thoroughgoing attack is unlikely.

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**chapter 3**

**Practical Anarchy**

**Finding a way forward**

Although most anarchists could give a reasonable description of the basic forms of organisation which we want to promote (eg. accountability, instant recall, etc) we need to go beyond these generalisations and take an honest look at how our ideas would really work out in practice. What there is of anarchist organisational theory to date tends to deal in over-simplified, black and white concepts applied to a world in which people are totally rational, separate and consistent units, fully conscious of their motivations and in no way affected by such things as the fact that they personally don’t like the person getting forward a certain idea. These ideal comrades never reach a decision just because they are bored and want to move on to something else and (of course) never get tired of attending endless meetings to take part in organising the self-managed society.

If then, as I believe, it is necessary to work out a more detailed and realistic idea of what ‘organising among anarchist lines’ means, the way to do this is to attempt to apply our ideas in practice and see what does and doesn’t work.

Before we can do this we need to ask ourselves what we are even trying to achieve as anarchists. Am I particularly given the large number of anarchists in Britain today who are propagating the ridiculously naive idea that ‘anarchism means no one can tell anyone else what to do’. If anarchism is to regain the central place it once had in the working class movement we have to clearly and precisely distinguish ourselves from such misconceptions. That is what I hope to do in this article.

Another advantage of clarifying the essential core of anarchism is that it helps us to identify the important aspects which separate our outlook from those of other political tendencies (eg Marxism), so that we might disentangle the points which need to be debated rather than arguing over things which should be accepted as common ground. This attitude acknowledges that anarchism grew out of a certain political tradition, rather than just popping up in someone’s head one day with a label saying ‘This is the Truth’ on it. In reality, I would suggest, anarchists turn out to have basically the same ‘shopping list’ of demands as the Marxists do (at least in theory) but by giving these demands a different emphasis we end up with a quite different practice. More on this later.

**The problem of authority**

Anarchists can be defined fairly simply as people who believe that authority is the main cause of the world’s problems, as opposed to Marxists who also recognise authority as one of life’s problems, but are quick to drop such slogans as ‘dissociate delegates’, for example, if this starts to look inefficient. For me, the essence of authority is the ability to deny another person’s perceptions.

To expand on this seven word definition a bit, I would start by saying that by ‘authority’ I don’t necessarily mean something very rational and calculated, rather I take the phrase to mean the sum total of situations that have reached about ‘authority’ as a result of their experiences and observations. To bring it down to earth a bit, in any particular situation someone’s ‘perception’ could amount to their point of view, what they think matters or even something as immediate as the back pain they are experiencing as a result of whatever they are being made to do. Also this definition of authority does not just work in terms of individuals but also applies to the denial of the perceptions of a whole class by a ruling elite.
Anarchy without absolutes

If authority is about alienation, then anarchism, by contrast, means getting participation and dialogue, with the essence of real dialogue (as opposed to just coming people into accepting your ideas) being for people to respect each other's perceptions.

One method with which you can draw from these examples is just how bad authority can be, in denying a person's perceptions you will be basically denying that their experiences matter, or, in other words, turning them into an object to be used. In this sense, alienation is at the heart of an authoritarian relationship. Without an element of alienation the division of labour between manual and organisational work need not be oppressive. In fact it could be a case of communication between two equals. This alienation can, of course, also be inflicted using social pressures, dogmas and a whole battery of mental coercions as well as physical ones.

Problems of participation

Literally complete participation by everyone in a group would indeed be an achievement, but before we consider that it is worth pointing out that such a thing is not necessarily a good thing, depending on what you mean by the word 'participation'.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Obviously, someone whose perceptions lead them to think they should drive on the wrong side of the road could not be allowed to participate in society on that basis. Perhaps extreme examples such as this would be rare, but it illustrates a problem which shouldn't be ignored (though many anarchists try to do so), namely that on thousands of day-to-day issues (eg. what is the best time of day for a road to be dug up so that some new drains can be laid) there will not be an obvious, common sense answer and some people will hold strong to ideas which the majority find unacceptable. On the question of drains, say, some compromise could no doubt be found between the commuters who want the roads open in the early morning and the residents who work shifts and so need to sleep in the early afternoon, etc. What if, however, if one shift worker (despite the usually unspoken teamwork decision was democratically arrived at and it has been fully explained to him that there is no alternative) gets so pissed off that he storms out of his house and starts smashing up the sewage pipes. To be practical, someone would probably have
to physically stop him which, in absolute terms, is authoritarian. It's also inevitable. The safeguard in an anarchist society would be that the original decision was taken by an assembly of everyone affected and the person who intervened would be held accountable to this same assembly after the event. I would be happy with this, but it falls short of the literal interpretation of 'No Authority'.

Obviously we have to be very careful about defining someone's behaviour as 'unsocially anti-social' especially as such 'deviants' may be the geniuses of tomorrow. However, even the basic anarchist slogans as 'freedom to the extent that it doesn't impose on someone else's freedom' recognises this compromise with reality.

One important guide should be that this attempt to modify anti-social attitudes should take account of the personal perspective of the person involved (perhaps by considering their psychological history) rather than just dealing with them like an object by locking them away and filling them full of sedatives as happens today in prisons. This attitude (which comes back to respecting other people's perspectives) would present 'because I say so' (the standard authoritarian's 'explanation') being replaced by 'because the assembly says so'. In other words there would be a genuine communication between members of the collective based on a day to day shared experience and communication, although this is obviously a lot harder to achieve at higher levels of co-ordination. Still, the cultural side should not be ignored as if people don't 'speak the same language' no organisational form is going to stop authority developing.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PERCEPTION

Those who still cling to a simplistic interpretation of anarchism would be well advised to consider the details of how a person forms a perception of life. Obviously someone could have a head full of slogans and cliches which are the last party rally they went to without having much in the way of a political perception of their own. So, as well as people having anti-social perceptions, they might not even have any perceptions which could rightly be called their own.

What anarchists are trying to promote is the idea that people should think for themselves. To put it more accurately they should think through themselves, which acknowledges that our ideas come from interaction with the society we live in. On this basis traditions and customs need not necessarily be rejected by our so-called independent individual, but can be taken on board if they mean anything to them in the light of their own experience. In other words things should be more open to question, but this begs the question of what characterises a person who is genuinely thinking through themselves. This is a central question when, in our part of the world at least, the state tends to hold power not so much by direct coercion as by manufacturing and manipulating people's reality through a whole host of 'political commentators', experts, social workers, etc.

For example, a lot of people who don't cling in to the right way to ingratiate themselves with the teacher, etc, get labelled 'thick' at school and have it drummed into them that they are inferior to people who can use long words. Even though these long words are usually just so much waffle a lot of people so believe that they have a real value and give the person using them a status which the far more desirable skill of 'straight talking' does not.

Obviously, as anarchists, we need to resolve disagreements by discussion, that is to say by respecting the other person's opinion even though we disagree with it, as long as they are not out and out reactionaries. But is there ever such a thing as a free and equal meeting of minds when everyone is conditioned, as with the mass media which tells them that long words mean clever, expressively confident means well-thought-out, environmentally stable, etc. Is it ever possible in absolute terms to think things through yourself?
Given all this it’s simply not possible for someone to say ‘Right, I’m going to be an anarchist’ and just do it. No matter how they structure their relations in the present they are going to keep running up against the consequences of historical conditioning which makes people too embarrassed to speak in meetings, admire firm leadership, etc. and which gives certain people an inherent cultural authority over others. It’s no solution to say that you will refuse to take up the position of authority as to a large extent it does not need the assistance of an individual to have its effect. If someone has been told since their first day at school that people who use big words are smart they will still be overawed to some extent and create an authority inheritance even if one isn’t inherent in the new system they’ve found themselves in.

‘Using big words’ is a fairly obvious example which is not impossible to avoid or expose, on the other hand it’s not necessarily easy as it functions on the unconscious level to a large extent and is mixed up with people’s self-image and other such things into which they’ve invested a lot of emotional energy. As a result you could easily get the impression that you’re saying they’re thick when in fact you’re saying they’re not. Anyway, there are plenty of other subtle ways in which people’s perceptions of reality are twisted so that they get to know their place and recognise who are the confident and successful types. This may lead to resentment and avoidance rather than admiration but even this less self-effacing response results in a loss of influence as you can’t decide how a group is going to develop if you don’t go to the meetings or sit at the back thinking what bastards the people on the platform are.

Cultural conditioning is incredibly subtle and significant, but gets largely ignored in anarchist theory. It forms another reason why the total abolition of authority is not literally possible.

**A POLITICAL BALANCING ACT**

While we’re on with the problems of trying to achieve total participation it’s worth mentioning what seems to be a constant phenomenon in any organisation, and that is the fact that you can get too much of a good thing. Accords in any way someone couldn’t get too much of but in trying to promote this I have on occasions ended up being criticised for being too bureaucratic, and quite rightly! Obviously the present system is desperately short of accountability and needs a good dose of ‘mandated delegates subject to recall’ (preferably a lethal one) but we’re running into our own problems. Who wants to belong to an organisation where every sentence that gets uttered is met with ‘excuse me comrade, I think that contradicts a decision made by this assembly on 3/8/86, see minutes, paragraph 3, page 19’.

There needs to be a balance between accountability and spontaneity if the organisation is going to attract anything apart fromLeninist dailies.

Similarly, a useful and clarifying theory can become a dogma, decentralisation can lead to inertia through relative privilege, etc. A lot of anarchists have simply ignored this need to balance contradictions and gone full steam ahead with their simplistic cliches which they describe as a theory of organisation. They have fooled themselves, but not other people.

In fact, it will never be possible to completely remove the kind of authority which comes from lack of participation without grossly inflating the kind created by the growth of bureaucracy, and likewise for all the other pairs of contradictions. All we can do is work for a constantly shifting dynamic balance which minimises the amount of authority present. In this our anarchist dreams do not describe the end goal but are more like a compass which tells us in which direction we need to turn next to avoid drifting into new forms of authority.

As no principle is absolute this means we could well have to take up what could appear to be contradictory positions over a period of time. We might start by pushing for more decentralisation within an organisation but if this were to go too far, to the point of making it impossible for the rest of us to use the organisation as an effective place for raising money, then we might have to consider going in the opposite direction. In fact, with the right kind of pressure, etc. it might be possible to get to the point where members of some organisations would be asking for more centralisation.

**What a difference an ‘a’ makes**

One convenient way of labelling the ideas I am trying to put across here is to change the word ‘Anarchy’ which is popularly taken to mean ‘no authority’ to ‘Anarchy’ with the significance that a libertarian is someone who, like an anarchist, fights against all forms of authority but also realises that they can only be minimised, never fully abolished. My aim here is to propose an alternative to anarchism, simply to create a useful handle, such as ‘The Tyranny of Structurelessness’ which allows a series of ideas to be summed up quickly if someone wants to refer to them in mid conversation.

This anarchy stance opens up various useful options in terms of organisational forms which I will now go on to sketch a few examples of in the last section of this article. Although many anarchists say that they have already incorporated the basic assumptions of anarchism in their organisation the whole thing is an unnecessary fuss. It will be interesting to see how many comrades still cry ‘heretic’ in response to the practical conclusions which can logically drawn from these ideas.

**Some practical considerations**

**Anarchoc-nutters**

Some people may dispute the need for a re-visualisation of anarchist practice but I personally think that the antics of your average ‘bannermaking’ anarchist are at odds with their appeal of absolute truth that they have been an absolute disaster in terms of ordinary people’s perceptions of what anarchism means, basically because they don’t mind being extremely authoritarian in order to sort out the problems their idealism has created as long as they don’t have to admit that’s what they’re doing.

One typical example of this I encountered was an anarchist centre where, in order to achieve absolute authority people were trusted to pay for any books they took by putting money in an open box. When it became obvious that money was being pinched by someone, one blower, whose position in the uncredentialled hierarchy of attractiveness and social skills was not very high, became a scapegoat and was ejected on the basis of such ‘evidence’ as he was looking suspicious, etc. No doubt this is what they would have called ‘direct action’ by the mass assembly’, if so give me Lord Scammon any day!
Some useful possibilities

One advantage of a minimalist approach to organisation is that we can take on board a whole series of organisational structures which will probably have the effect of reducing authority, rather than increasing it. One more certain absence of authority (or, more accurately, the appearance of this)

This could provide a solution to one of the most burning and least discussed limitations of a self-managed society, namely that attending meetings tends to get a bit boring and out of reach for a lot of people. An opportunity to spend their leisure time in various activities of how they wish to be organisations when they could be admiring the sunsets, stupiding the human brain, or even mean that we would never process the vast amount of information we would need if we were going to have total control over every aspect of our existence - the literal consequence 'of nobody telling me what to do'

So, rather than every member of an assembly being involved in making sure that its deliberations are carried out their mandated as instructed all that’s needed is an organization which is equivalent to a certain perfection that the possibility to be in touch with the local community and the local people. The possibility of access has been as effective as actually getting access to a maximum of information and doing it is enough to create the kind of structure and to be sure that the people can do is it's worth while in how things are run (Assuming that they've already acquired the power to change the light of their discoveries).

So such a system wouldn't matter that I didn't want to get involved in the finer points of the official system that are organised. I would know that there was probably someone committed enough to prevent it from being modified in the course of the system. As an artisan, I would think that there had been given the opportunity, plenty of ways of getting around the fact that the system is still there. It is the whole system, at a large scale, and to a large extent. Society would run itself.

There are problems within a context in terms of pluralism, that is, an elitist party and people working within the system, a sort of pluralism pressure group, under the control of international capitalist, rather than a federation of workers' assemblies. Anyway, it is far more plausible that anything in compensation, everyone would get together and talk about everything which is easy and effective. The need to coordinate in the form of a system and has been responsible for putting so many people off anarchism.

A statistical approach

One interesting possibility which working in terms of probabilities has is that if we can make people more open to simple forms of organisation which will be egalitarian on a statistical basis at some future time. For example, if a group faces a situation where one member is leaving, it could be very difficult for them to persuade that person that they didn't take with them anything other than the fact that it would involve the whole group having to split up so that the fruits of their labor could be divided. On the other hand if the group made an adjective group this effect when it started so no one knew who this person was that would be leaving there would be no personal bias involved. The group could see itself as a group, do what was best for the group and each take an equal risk that they would be the individual who lost out. And then, although the actual effect on the person leaving would of course be different, they would see it in a completely different context and be willing to accept that they would be the individual who lost out.

So, by dealing with the misfortune involved in the situations, it was still only a future possibility, the probability of it happening can be shared equally in a simple system, rather than having to reach some kind of a complex compensation after a lot of argument in such a context in which the knowledge of how any solution would affect them would make them biased and probably cause a lot of resentment.

My point is that a beautifully simple system can be found to solve a difficult situation if that situation is, looked at in a context other than just that of being a concrete event in the here and now, even though it actually happened in the end is the same in both systems. In other words, even if you didn't want to adopt this particular system, we should never underestimate the subtleties of human communication and organisation.

Briefly, on to the classics

I'd like to finish by a brief (I stress that) look at the anarchist nature of some of the classics of anarchism organisation with a view to bringing their limitations (in the absolutist sense) out into the open. One essential point is that if authority can only be minimised then there will never be a time 'after the revolution' when we can relax our vigilance. To date anarchists have been unrealistically complacent about the difficulties involved in displacing the hydra headed monster of authority.

ROTATION OF DELEGATES

Someone once wrote that it is impossible to infiltrate anarchist organisation in the current context of relative to try to take over the CNT in Spain. The basis that all delegates are nominated so they don't gain power if they capture key positions, just a lot of unpaid work. If only life were that simple! If being elected as a delegate didn't give people a certain amount of power, there wouldn't be any need to rotate them in the first place, but of course, in reality it does. No mandate can ever be complete, so there will always be a need for interpretation even before you allow for the fact that unexpected, urgent events are always going to crop up. Many anarchists try to avoid the problems caused by events which need to be resolved too quickly for the assembly to be consulted by dismissing them as rare and therefore not important. On the contrary, the importance of an electoral system is often directly proportional to the urgency with which it needs to be decided, in historical terms I would suggest that 'urgent events' and urgent decisions are the very ones which historically led to the breakdown of anarchism forms in organisations which described themselves as anarchist.

How is this done about? First the problem should be recognised as a serious one and, on this basis, people might be willing to create the sort of slogans that would be inevitable if the assemblies nominated utility. These decisions in retrospect is to be anything other than just rubber stamping a fait accompli. At this juncture most anarchist theory doesn't even recognize that members of the assembly could easily find it difficult to contradict the decisions of the 'leading militants' on the council of delegates. We need to build a culture which makes it easier for them to do so.

THE SOVEREIGN ASSEMBLY

A lot of anarchists talk about groups within a federation maintaining complete autonomy but really this is a contradiction in terms. How can a collection of groups be said to be organised at the level of a federation if
that federation is never able to pass a decision which is any way binding on the groups which make up it's members. The expression becomes meaningless, in the same way that a group of individuals who do not share the autonomy to a group can not be said to be organised as a group - they just happen to be in the same building together.

While it is true that groups in anarchistic federation would have a lot of autonomy, this could never be absolute. For example, the decisions made at congresses of the CCF are only as basic guidelines, not hard and fast rules, but any branch which goes against their central points is subject to expulsion. To me it seems obvious that a certain amount of authority would creep in under any system at higher levels again, if this isn't the case why seek maximum autonomy in the first place? so all we can try to do is minimise it.

This is not to say that it's proposing some kind of 'minimum state'. The distinction is that in a minarchist system we would not reach a certain level of authority which was the least we could hope for and have to do with that. Also the authority which did exist would not be split off into special institutions. Even if the state is totally abolished in the form we recognize authority would remain to some extent in our everyday relationships mediated through our language, culture, etc.

LIVING WITH AUTHORITY
- If, as I feel is inevitable, there will always be a certain amount of authority wherever people are organised in units of more than one this must lead to the rather startling conclusion that, along with the roads, education, energy policy, etc., when 'the people' take responsibility for running society they will also have to take on responsibility for handling the authority within it.

Up till now anarcho have, for obvious reasons, encouraged people to have a very simple response to authority - total rejection. If, though, at some point in the distant future authority ceased to be something totally external, because something ordinary people had to handle with a view to keeping it as minimal as possible, then perhaps a more subtle approach would be necessary.

These days, for example, we are generally pleased when people get pissed off at the idea of a queue and proceed to matter to themselves, allegings off whoever organised it. In a minarchist society, where the person who organised that queue was someone who had stood in a similar one themselves the day before and perhaps had no alternative but least deserves a bit of sympathy even if they have made a mistake, then a blanket condemnation of 'them in authority' would be a cop out compared to dealing with the individual concerned as responsible equals.

The above example, where the organiser wasn't strictly speaking in a position of authority, is difficult enough. The situation calls for even more subtlety when an element of authority does exist, but its the minimal amount which at that point, at that time, can't be avoided. If, for example, sorting out the problems within this queue created even worse ones elsewhere because of the time it would take up. A lot of discrimination would be needed to avoid lumping the minimal level of authority with any other level of authority and saying 'not the lot of them'. To do so could only create a vacuum which, by definition of 'minimum authority' could only be filled by something worse.

These questions may be abstract at the moment, but the more successful we are the more they will arise, along with the reverse problem: not how to avoid going over the top, but how to confront a delegate who is becoming a boss if they also happen to be your friend or neighbour.

Summary

So, what is all this about? Basically I'm trying to get rid of the idea that life can be understood in terms of simple absolutes where something is 'good' full stop and others as 'bad' full stop. In fact most characteristics have potential for both attributes. Spontaneity has a lot to be said for it, so does accountability with the result that, if, as I suggest is inevitable, the two tend to contradict each other: the only way forward is the pragmatic one of experimenting with the effects of different balances in practice. To me anarchy is essentially pragmatic as it defines people's right to assess received wisdom, do new, etc. in the light of their own experiences. Perhaps this is why anarchists are inclined to try and build the new world incrementally and not go for an acid test as to whether a course of action is advisable or not.

If anarchists would accept that progress is made by balancing contradictions rather than pushing one virtue to its absolute limits I feel we would have a much better basis on which to begin an honest assessment of how much different forms of organisation do achieve where we need to make improvements and what those improvements might be.

Instead, groups of all kinds tend to set up a structure to do a certain job, eg increase participation, but not have the flexibility and honesty to constantly assess whether or not that job is being done and make any necessary changes. Instead, groups of all kinds tend to set up a structure to do a certain job, eg increase participation, but not have the flexibility and honesty to constantly assess whether or not that job is being done and make any necessary changes.

If, on this basis, we can go beyond the orthodoxies of absolutist anarchism, it's just possible that a lot of ordinary people will start to realise how relevant the struggle against authority is in their everyday lives.

Mick Larkin.

(I'd like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance and criticism of the other members of L.O.S. in the preparation of this article.)
chapter 4

Non-Rational Politics: emotions in groups.

Introduction ....................................................................................... 36

I. WORK GROUPS AND THE BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ......................... 37
   a) Investigating groups
   b) A totally different perspective
   c) The individual and the group
   d) Emotional leadership

II. THE BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ............................................................. 40
   a) Dependency
   b) The messianic group
   c) Hostility

III. SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ............... 44
   a) The group and its emotions
   b) Rationality and the fear of emotion
   c) Impossible rationality
   d) How not to see (or dismiss) the basic assumptions

IV. EMOTION IN ACTION ................................................................. 46
   a) Strong emotions
   b) Liberal democracy
   c) Structural schizmatics
   d) GNP outline of a case study
   e) OND and other liberal messianic movements
   f) British anarchism: emotion and prejudice

Introduction

Why do the explanations by political groups of their activities and of their successes and failures often sound so unconvincing? Groups usually say quite a lot about what they are doing, what they mean and want. Why is it that what they do can seem so different when you observe it close up? Why are groups so defensive when confronted with even mild criticism, and turn a critic into a hated enemy?

We need to get away from the universal tendency to pretend that in political activity everything happens as a result of people being totally rational. From this viewpoint conflict only arises when interests or aims differ. Similarly we should avoid the doctrine that things going wrong are always just due to evil people doing wicked things, or from stupidity. This article proposes that groups are affected (as are individuals) by various emotional and motivational processes which can be very subtle, compelling and unconscious. They can completely alter the patterns of behaviour of groups, so that people involved may be totally mystified as to what has really happened. They may thereafter take refuge in trite rationalisations which look absurd and unsatisfactory to everyone else.

The nearest groups usually get to realising that emotional forces are having some influence on activity is by seeing that other (often rival) groups have hidden motivations. But instead of leading on to looking at themselves, it has the opposite effect. So we have the common spectacle of groups dismissing others for their sexism, racism, authoritarianism or whatever, but who are themselves virtually incapable of dealing with their own exist, racist or authoritarian tendencies. Usually it is denied that they exist, or accepted intellectually that they do as a way of avoiding doing anything about it.

From a different point of view the chapter on ritual in this pamphlet discusses some of the same areas. The other chapters cover subjects which involve many more issues, but all of these are related, in part, to the inevitable effects of emotional lives having unexpected, undesired and/or uncontrollable influences on all of our activity.

Parts I to III contain an outline of theory which opens the possibility of analysis of the effects of emotionality on groups. Part IV contains some very tentative explorations of how such theory can contribute to our understanding of real political situations. The huge void of theory may look rather uninviting, but I felt it better to explain as precisely as I could what I meant before getting into its applications to real life. Nevertheless readers may prefer to start with Section IV.

Workgroups & the basic assumptions

Most discussions of the effectiveness of groups exclude consideration of the emotional nature of all human associations. We can draw a distinction between a workgroup and a basic assumption group. The workgroup orientates itself towards specific aims, which are then addressed by more or less rational means. The basic assumption group, whatever its pretensions, can often chug along quite happily independently of its environment or of any relationship between its aims and achievements. The difference between the two kinds of group is only one of degree. In a basic assumption group the shared emotions are usually more 'visible'. There is a sense of a 'mission', a closeness between group members that is never verbalised. This may be what we mean by 'solidarity'. But workgroups can become basic assumption groups, either momentarily or for longer periods.

a) Investigating groups

Psychologists and sociologists have almost always assumed that groups can be seen as workgroups. Indeed they manipulate the structure of their experimental groups with the intention of approaching such an ideal. Measurements are chosen which, they believe, encompass the important aspects of workgroup function: communication, information, task-efficiency etc.

There have been two general effects. Empirical studies fail to take account of the 'human' qualities of group interaction. These affect their results, and their explanations of them. Also, the relevance of the studies to the real world is greatly diminished. An illusion common among scientists operates. This is that because, for some purposes, it may be useful to consider groups as collections of odd-looking, flawed computers; that in fact groups are just collections of odd-looking flawed computers. These are then talked about in terms of formal, logical accounts of information-systems, goal-seeking behaviour and so on, as if this was all there was to it. Apart from being highly conical at times, such an attitude has more serious implications. Real characteristics of real groups, such as power and leadership, are talked about only in terms of their effects on a narrow range of measures related to task-efficiency. Accounts of groups as workgroups are thus highly unreal and optimistic about the effects of critical factors. These would include questions of group discipline, the emotional interactions amongst group members, and the feelings that members have towards the group and its work.

b) A different perspective

The concept of basic assumptions was first developed by people working with small therapeutic groups. Here, the 'work' of the group aimed at producing reductions in the psychological problems of its members. It was noticed that on any
occasions a group would exhibit rather bizarre patterns of behaviour. These would occur irrespective of how well the group was developing its capacity to fulfil the requirements of its work. These patterns seemed centrally to involve strong emotions within the group. They could be accounted for if the group shared an emotional assumption. This could be about particular group members, or the whole group, or about some less well-defined aspect of the group such as an idealised attitude. While active this basic assumption would have a major bearing on all that transpired in the group.

Whatever one thinks of the theory behind the hypothesis of basic assumptions (psychoanalytic theory), what was described in small therapeutic groups does seem to explain how emotional tone of groups in general. It has been developed and extended to apply to groups as diverse as couples and small societies.

An analysis of group phenomena based on the idea of basic assumptions may offer a way out of the usual rationalist impasse. It could be very valuable to consider groups from this perspective, just as there may be some point in seeing groups as workgroups composed of emotionally, functional automatons. In neither case should we judge the approach by how immediately satisfying we find the theory to be. Rather, we should see how fruitful it can be for any given purpose. The hypothesis of basic assumptions can be a starting point for an explanation of the emotional content of group activity that doesn’t in effect deny that emotions will inevitably be central to human life. Plenty of other approaches pay lip-service to the idea of integrating emotion into explanations of social phenomena - unfortunately lip-service is about the extent of it. What follows at least has the merit of consistently focussing on and emphasising emotions in groups.

c) Individual and group

Some aspects of an individual’s psychology only make sense as seen in the group situations which are their relevant contexts. Being fundamentally social, humans are in groups even when isolated in time and space. In a sense humans are only complete as members of groups. But this does not mean that joining a group is effortless and unthreatening. On joining, individuals lose experience, react to and play a part in shaping the emotional life of the group. If this is not done the individual will not feel part of the group. If done too well or completely the individual is submerged into the group and is then at the mercy of whatever emotional content group activity can provide the individual. There is a crucial paradox here. The more the boundaries of the self break down into the group (or the more the person identifies with the group), the more substantially will basic assumption processes usurp the work functions of the group.

Identifying with the group involves believing that there is something called “the group” more than just the sum of individuals. The identification means some loss of individual distinctiveness. This leads to a loss of individual distinctiveness. The illusion of “the group” is thereby bolstered. The idea that the group is somehow more than the sum of its members makes that the emotional interaction characteristic of the group is not there in a more aggregation. This is because in the larger individuals have not undergone the regression of identification with the group.

It is a very threatening feeling to begin to lose one’s sense of individual distinctiveness. How this is responded to varies and depends very much on the mood of the group. The form resistance to identification takes depends on the individual’s personality and on the structure of the group. Structure and organisation can protect the group against some of the dangers of personal power and authority, but are no barrier to the basic assumptions. At most, an organised workgroup is only relatively less easily submerged in basic assumption activity, and a basic assumption group functions irrespective of the formal or informal structures developed over its history. Similarly true co-operation (orientated to workgroup functions) is unnecessary when a basic assumption is active. A more

unconscious and spontaneous collective phenomenon operates instead, leading to automatic, instant, unverbalised combined action centred on the basic assumption. The essence of this is the shape of emotional activity in the group. For each basic assumption the combination of emotions has a characteristic quality. For example what might be called anxiety and aspect of the group has different emotional connotations from anxiety in a dependent group. In the affective group anxiety tends to make members feel that they are not doing enough, that there is so much to be done. When a dependent group anxiety tends more to relate to the group’s position with respect to its leadership. Or, in a hostile group, expressions of anger tend to be tinged with anger or hate. In this case all group activity has a conflictual feel to it, pulling uncannily to a very intense emotional identity within the group.

d) Emotional leadership

Each basic assumption involves a group “leader”. Having said this, in the affective group the leader is as yet non-existent (i.e. “unborn”). In the hostile group the leader is usually identified as a particular individual. In the dependent group the leader may be embodied in a person or elite, an ideal, the history of the group or in an inanimate object such as some kind of group bible.

“Leadership” in this special emotional sense does not necessarily entail a position in a structure or the organisation of an hierarchy. The term is kept here, despite its ambiguity, because the institutional power of a leader in the conventional sense will always interact with emotional leadership.

All basic assumptions will be latent in any group. So the potential emotional leadership for each assumption exists even when neither the assumption or its leader are active in that role at any given moment. The basic assumption group leader may vary over time, between different assumptions, and may or may not be effective in any sense. This person may or may not be the individual who is the formal organiser, administrator, leader or other role invested with delegated or imposed power.

Certain kinds of personality are especially suited to the roles of each basic assumption group leader. For example narcissists or hysteric are particularly easily drawn to the leadership of dependent groups. Or, those with psychopathic or severely paranoid tendencies tend to become the leaders of hostile groups. The personalities of the leader and of the other group members determine how “well” the leader can fulfil the requirements of the basic assumption. Only one basic assumption at a time can be in evidence in the group’s behaviour. However, the basic assumption active at any one time can change frequently - at the rate of several times per hour, or can remain unchanged for months or years on end. This applies whether or not the workgroup functions change at all. Analyses of workgroups that ignore the basic assumptions will fail to give an accurate picture of what is going on. False lessons can be drawn from historical occurrences and present experiences. People are unable to see alternative explanations and are left with a choice of delusions. If any are chosen despite being so unsatisfactory they can only be sustained by dogma.
The basic assumptions

a) Dependency

The basic assumption of dependency involves the group’s desire to carry on a relationship of mutual dependency with a leader. This leader could be a person, a subgroup or an idea or text identified as expressing the essence of the group. Dependency revolves around the emotional sustenance felt to flow between the group and its leader, in particular how aggression, fear and anxiety are handled.

GROUP SUPPORT

A dependency system typically goes through a two-stage cycle. At one stage the group members look to the leader to behave and talk so as to alleviate anxiety and provide reassurance. But sooner or later the group may no longer feel satisfied with what the leader does in this respect. Then the group may rapidly switch to that its predominant activity is now to sustain the leader. If at this point the new leader is not felt to be a suitable object of the group’s sustenance, a new leader is sought, perhaps corresponding to a change in basic assumption. If not, the new leader would be perceived as more adequately fitting the role of dependent on the group. Logically therefore, the leader would tend to be the most insecure or least-balanced member psychologically; since from the group’s point of view there is little gratification to be derived from trying to sustain a leader who appears perfectly able to cope without such an effect on the group’s part.

The group’s effort to meet the dependency needs of the leader (the leader’s “real” dependency needs plus those projected by the group into the leader) can come to tie up the whole energy of the group. When the cycle is stable the switch back to dependency on the leader occurs when the group members feel drained or exhausted by their previous efforts. Now, the group members stop projecting into the level of dependency needs. Instead they project their ability to sustain a needy other, and expect to be taken care of by the leader. It goes without saying that the work of the group can only suffer under the regime, and the group will tend to become detached from its aims and environment as it absorbs itself with support and the need for support.

HELPLESSNESS

The most straightforward example of a dependency system is shown by religious groups. The leader indeed recognises that the leader (the deity) is in fact insane. In general, any evidence that suggests that they are not seen after by the deity is rejected. Similarly the group will not accept that the deity or its representative is rational or sane (personification is possible) are preferred. The problem for the dependent group is that the group sees itself as totally inadequate or helpless, needing to be able to depend on an omnipotent, all-knowing leader. But then the leader is also seen as totally helpless without the vigilant care and attention given by the group.

Religious groups may express most simply the situation where a basic assumption of dependency holds sway. But the analogy is clear with charismatic leadership and apocalyptic and fanatic groups as well as with populist movements of all kinds. It is not far-fetched to look for signs of dependency operating in all groups with certain sorts of purposes. Idealistic and revolutionaries and other groups have aims which are more or less extremely divorced from current reality. Understandably, frustration and devaluation are widespread in such groups. They could be especially likely to develop dependency relations so as to be able to tolerate their very unthreatening environments.

INSTABILITY

Under the basic assumption of dependency the “badness” of the group is (rightly) seen as residing largely within the group. The group oscillates between seeing it as inherent in the leader and in the other group members. In the latter case it must be combated and banished by the group. As in the former by the group. As in the cycle repeatedly passes the oscillations may become more rapid and violent, continually diverting attention from the reality of the group in its environment and its work. (It is one of these many instances of many of these tendencies have been more than true). Such groups tend to survive only by continually expanding — which can only lead to the outsider to be the only coherent identifiable aim. On the other hand too few new members would rapidly become infected with the pre-existing emotional appeal within the group. There is no dynamic equilibrium in a system developing by this way. If the group does not break up it will simply transmute the underlying conflicts onto a larger scale. Switch to another basic assumption is more likely to be all that prevents breakdown.

ABSORPTION

A strong desire to absorb the emotional reactions to these oscillations can be to recruit other individuals and groups. These others would not (at first) share the emotional situation. From the point of view of the original aims and tasks of the group, too many newcomers too quickly would be a threat through weight of numbers alone. With some groups though; the aims and purposes have already been substantially lost or reduced to superficial banalities (if indeed they were ever more than that). Such groups tend to survive only by continually expanding — which can only lead to the outsider to be the only coherent identifiable aim. On the other hand too few new members would rapidly become infected with the pre-existing emotional appeal within the group. There is no dynamic equilibrium in a system developing by this way. If the group does not break up it will simply transmute the underlying conflicts onto a larger scale. Switch to another basic assumption is more likely to be all that prevents breakdown.

SCHISM

Another common tendency in a group of those heavily influenced by basic assumptions is schism. If a group is to some extent a workgroup (is not simply gripped by basic assumptions), then the group and its members must develop. This is almost the defining criterion of a workgroup. As its work progresses, its orientation with respect to its environment will have a great effect on the group to change. It will be the change (we would rightly be suspicious of apparently fundamental) This change will tend to be biased, depending on the personalities of those involved. The most obvious form of resistance is for the group to become status quo. The alternative is one of stagnation and dependency. The quality of thought becomes lower, consisting mainly of generalisations and platitudes, and is basically reactionary.

Another subgroup supports a new idea, often acting on a messianic assumption. But the new idea becomes so specific or highly rationalised in the hands of this subgroup that it fails to grow or gain further influence. It becomes involved and sterile compared to the bland and conventional subgroup. Both subgroups end up fulfilling the same end — and avoid the sort of development necessary to the group. If only it has to glance at the history of left-wing groups to see the relevance of these comments. What usually happens is that the group splits off into two or more mutually antagonistic groups. The resulting groups may not be of the basic assumptions, towards each other and in general. But they will usually be schismatic too, leaving the prospect of further splits, frictions and fragments that look so pathetic to the outsider.

Groups usually switch from time to time among the basic assumptions. This can be prompted by events and circumstances, by the environment, by conflicts and external events and external circumstances, as may be wholly due to the internal emotional states of the group. Schism and absorption are more likely to result when both types of pressure are present, especially in crises. Schism is especially likely to occur when aggression becomes a prominent feature of group behaviour. Even more frequently, after schism the basic assumption
b) The messianic group

The second basic assumption, even more than dependency, relates to the aims and purposes of the group. In the independent group the aims tend to become identified with the emotional leadership of the group. This happens whenever their interests are for the fulfillment of the aims in the real world; however, in the messianic group the aims tend to be associated with diffuse and almost erotic feelings of hope and optimism. A future paradise is half-expected that would satisfy all desires; in effect this outcome would abolish all negative experience and desire. In small messianic groups (and sometimes in larger ones) the most hope and optimism is felt in connection with the interaction of two or a few specific group members. These appear to be the group to be potentially fertile and fecund in terms of the aims and purposes. The rest of the group may become more passive, banking in the pleasurable emotions experienced. In larger groups a subgroup tends to become split-off from the main group to deal with the emotions and effects of the messianic assumptions. Examples in large-scale group may be the tanks, aristocracies and any other elite which purports to carry the hope of the group.

HOPE AND OPTIMISM

Perhaps the central characteristic of the messianic group is that an illusion of messianic expectation is maintained irrespective of real achievements. Clearly, this can cripple the group's development as a workgroup as much as a dependency can. Under dependency feelings of the "badness" of the group alternate between being applied to oneself and to the dependent leader. The messianic assumption that the product of the group's fertility is felt to promise salvation from all feelings of anxiety and despair, aggression, destructiveness and hatred. In this sense the badness of the group is held in abeyance. The emotional leadership is postponed to the future, remaining unborn but always looked to. Optimistic rationalisations allow the group to defend against actually occurring negative feelings which would otherwise threaten the messianic assumption. The bad feelings are displaced in time to the future when the fulfillment of the messianic hope would deal with them. Of course the negative feelings aren't really put off. In fact they remain unchanged - except that they are hidden, denied, avoided or suppressed. Sooner or later they can no longer be contained. Guilt is felt all along at the pleasure derived from the basic assumption, but the moral superiority of the 'millennium' justifies the pleasure felt "before and now". The guilt is tolerated or avoided along with the aggression and fear.

AVOIDING SALVATION

In order for it to fulfill all of these functions for the group, the messianic vision must not be allowed to be achieved. If it was, the hope for it that binds the group together would evaporate. But there is always the danger that the group will move towards actually producing the messiah. This could be in the form of a person, idea, utopia etc. The more this likelihood is felt to have increased, the more hope and optimism are replaced by anxiety, as the basis of the group is at risk. The negative emotions so far avoided in the group are more and more free to emerge. The resultant crisis in the group can be resolved by a switch to another basic assumption sufficiently mutilating the group's ability to go as to reduce the possibility of producing it; so as to recreate hope. If the messiah is not rendered less imminent it would tend to become the emotional leadership of a dependent group.

An excess of hope and optimism perpetuates itself because of the pleasure it affords the group. It leads to compulsive, zealous, energetic behaviour. This can be so intense that it interferes with most realistic work activity. Once established it is a convenient way of handling negative feelings with the bonus of providing immediate gratification. Groups can become addicted to this mode of functioning. They can become more impatient, obsessive and rigid in their behaviour. They may be seen in their treatment of those who disagree with them, who are ignored or dismissed hastily. The messianic assumption may well not provide the opportunities for resolution which are present in dependency groups. Members become burnt-out and useless to the group (and to themselves). Alternatively members can come to pursue their habitual gratifications in ways more and more divorced from the group and its aims (eg decadence).

c) Hostility

The third basic assumption involves the way that aggression in the group is focussed. In the dependent group aggression is spent in the cycles of interaction between group and leader. In the messianic group aggression is denied and channelled into a dogmatic faith in the vision. But in the hostile group it assumes centre stage. The group's existence revolves around fighting enemies or fleeing from them, often not caring which it does as long as it is one or the other. The leader of the hostile group is taken notice of only insofar as he gives the group the maximum opportunity for engaging with the enemy.

HATE AND PARANOIA

The "badness" of the group can be treated in two main ways. It can be acted out collectively towards the environment. Alternatively it can be projected outward so that it is perceived as persecution of the group by some outside agency (or by all outside agencies). By these means, any aim that a workgroup might have can be perceived from a standpoint that is perceived by the group as the environment. The hostile group is not capable of being selective, and to accurately pick out those external groups who really were inimical to their interests. Unfortunately this is not so, and the whole group tends to be seen as already or potentially the enemy.

Ideas of change or development are treated with hostility (as tricks of the enemy) or simply ignored. The stated aims and purposes of these groups become thinly-disguised rationalisations allowing the group to justify its aggression and hatred. These are felt to need a focus in order to protect the integrity of the group. The overt unleashing of aggression in hostile groups tends to be self-perpetuating, leading to totally conflictual relationships with outside agencies. Then the group can feel justified in its paranoid and violent behaviour. Apart from the strains this causes the group, the hostile basic assumption is usually very unstable. This is partly because for the non-psychopath it can be rather difficult to sustain the levels of sheer aggressiveness required by the hostile assumption. The hostile assumption often leads to a literally vicious circle, where the level of violence has to escalate. A temporary solution can be to absorb other individuals and group. The group then feels that the hatred for these can be overcome, but then there are even more aggressive individuals involved. At any time individuals or subgroups may begin to promote other basic assumptions, but these dissenters very quickly find themselves becoming the focus of the group's aggression. This will often be at an even higher level than before because now the enemy can be specifically delineated as "those individuals" rather than as lazy or generalised outsiders. Normally a certain vagueness about the nature of the enemy allows contrary evidence to go unobserved. But when the enemy is suddenly perceived as inside the group this is no longer so.

In small hostile groups attacks within the group tend to be toned down because all members know each other and are in close personal contact. But when the group becomes larger they easily disappear. Aggressive acts are noted for their ability to turn on their own members in vicious and impulsive ways, for arbitrary
or even imaginary reasons. Infiltrators have a great deal of success in ruining group action that turns nasty by claiming that an innocent group member is a police spy etc.

PROSPECTS

Usually the most intractable problem with a hostile group is that there is no recognition that understanding or insight (or even thought of any kind) might offer a way out of the aggressive cycle. Even if anyone in the group has an inkling of this, saying so would be rather dangerous for them. Since everyone and all groups have many flaws, a reason can always be found to hate anyone genuinely wanting to help.

Since the aggression and violence is very resistant to being diverted or contained, violent rupture and disintegration is almost inevitable sooner or later. By then the costs of ignoring the amount of indiscriminate damage can have been done. But even then the story is not over. The resulting fragments carry their aggression into whatever other groups they are, or become part of.

The hostile assumption is a constant temptation for groups in crisis, whichever of the other assumptions they have recently been influenced by. Given the real perception that political groups face it is an ever-present option for those who cannot handle their inevitable frustration and aggressiveness. It can be an alternative to necessary change in the group.

Some implications of the basic assumptions

a) The group and its emotions

The basic assumptions express the regressed emotional state of group members losing their individual distinctiveness in the group. But the basic assumptions are not static and cannot themselves contain the emotions of the group. This is because the regression itself recalls more primitive (psychotic) anxiety against which defence must be found. Thus the switch from basic assumption to basic assumption and the other forms of change (action and absorption) represents a way to cope with the intense anxieties evoked by regression. That they cannot often find equilibrium means that the primitive levels of emotional functioning are always likely to be a last resort. The most paranoid and persecutory group behaviour is the final stage before group disintegration. That represents, in emotional terms, psychic death for the group.

The group can therefore be viewed as a psychic individual. The parts (members) identify by projection certain parts (certain members or others) as fulfilling a fantasied role of part-object in a regression to infantile modes of functioning.

The three basic assumptions are not exactly separate states of mind. They represent different facets of the regression involved in identifying with the group, in fact there are definite parallels between them. For example megalomaniac hope and the group deity of the dependent group may look rather similar. The full extent of the similarity between facets of the basic assumptions is masked by the considerable differences in overall emotional tone - guilt and depression in the dependent group, grandiose or sexualised hope in the megalomaniac group and the anger and hatred of the hostile group.

b) Rationality and the fear of emotion

People often feel that emotions are stronger in groups and that "rational" functions suffer accordingly. This effect is primarily due to the fear of being taken over by the basic assumptions. This expresses itself in attempts to suppress or avoid emotions surfacing. Since this is impossible for humans, the tension that results plays right into the hands of the basic assumptions. Thereafter, an important part of the "hidden agenda" of the group can be to maintain the fantasy that emotional control has been eliminated. Ironically this is now an expression of a basic assumption. All thought and words which don't fit the requirements of the basic assumption are ignored - hence the quality of the rational processes in the group appears to be lower.

c) Impossible rationality

At a more-or-less conscious level, all sorts of things are dreamt up to remove emotions from the scope of the group's work. These include compulsive hierarchy or legitimising arbitrary institutional power, as well as a range of ritualistic behaviour. Of course there are other reasons why such forms are chosen. But the shorter-term effects of emotion is an important reason why hierarchy can seem so effective at first sight. These methods fall in the end, though, and themselves precipitate further basic assumption activity. Emotionality is felt to be the enemy; or the demise of emotionality is cheerfully envisaged in the future; or dependency is established on the basis of complete (illusory) rationality. In short, these solutions to the problems caused by the emotionality of groups turn out to be a good deal more irrational than the effects of emotions were in the first place.

Rationality is certainly possible in individuals alone, although it will be divorced from the reality of groups (and hence from humanity). Emotions are essentially group phenomena, even when experienced alone. Useful rationality (as opposed to "intellectual masturbation") is a group phenomenon too, and therefore inescapably involves a fair measure of emotion.

d) How not to see (or dismiss) the basic assumptions

This article argues that emotional developments in groups can seriously affect what they do, and how they explain what they do. But two particular points must be borne in mind.

ANOTHER LEVEL

Firstly, explanations in terms of the basic assumptions are not simple alternatives to the familiar types of interpretation. Groups typically explain themselves (or are described by outsiders) in terms of conscious, rational, verbal processes. Attention will be made to the expressed aims of the group, its methods, and to the effects of the process on the culture of the group. The point is that the emotional events or situations having some influence on the process. Works here is that there is an additional level of mental activity which is also very influential. So it might be that both levels lead to a particular outcome for a specific group in a unique situation (in which case the outcome is overdetermined). What is more likely though, is that these different levels will have mutually interacted in complex ways throughout the group's history, so that neither can be pinned down as the sole cause of anything the group does. This means that the emotional states predominant in the group will have constantly conditioned its "rational" output and vice versa. The point is that these effects can take place relatively unconsciously, so that more care needs to be taken in drawing conclusions solely in terms of rational objectivity. The potential effects of emotionality have perhaps been overstressed here (maybe even exaggerated). This is because they have been almost universally ignored, or at best played down elsewhere.

PROS AND CONS

Secondly, there is another question of how damaging the activity of basic assumptions is or need be. This is rather difficult to assess in general terms. Basic
assumption processes may constitute the emotional foundations of all group behaviour. If so they cannot simply be condemned without falling into the trap of bourgeois individualism (to make an ideal out of the fully autonomous and rational individual). That would be exchanging one set of delusions for another. Furthermore ‘solidarity’ is a valued, admired and sought-after attribute for groups. We would presumably not want to undermine it or advocate that it be done without. Yet solidarity is one aspect of basic assumptions in practice. It is that intangible feeling of closeness and togetherness in shared endeavour that complements the loss of reality-sense and ability to perceive and act on their own irrational hope.

Political groups have another problem, especially those who see the need for radical changes in society. Hope and optimism must be maintained to some extent, even when it is not really justified. If it were not, groups would soon run down in depression, desperation and defeat. But hope and optimism may turn into a kind of wish-fulfilment or infantile display, and it is also often our most important sustenance.

A similar paradox applies to the hostile basic assumption. It is obvious how damaging (indeed disastrous) hate and aggressive behaviour can be in most situations. But given the power of the state and its institutions there will certainly be a place for implacable hostility and violence to be expressed. To a lesser extent, the assumption is true of resistance falling short of having revolutionary possibilities. Not to accept this is to be content with posturing and playing-acting, not to mention moralising smugness.

The question is whether such behaviour can be used without the hostile assumption taking over and subverting the action. We do not have or want the hierarchical structures others use to channel or absorb such strong emotional energy. To avoid utopianism we must have some idea of the answers to these questions. Remember, the authoritarians have answers. The fact that their answers are wrong, and lead to worse domination than before, is beside the point. Given the choice between concrete solutions (correct or not) and wishful thinking, most people reluctantly choose the former.

Emotion in action

a) Strong emotions

In what follows, the emotional states and changes of political groups and movements are given a status and priority that may seem exaggerated. There is a purpose to this. We have tried to interpret politics in terms of its rationalisations that we can completely forget that it is humans and human behaviour that are involved. What happens is that we see people in politics as ciphers, as mere vehicles for ideological alternatives. Fair enough in the context of the theory itself. But when analysing political action, it does not work. To be fair, many people realise this. But there still seems to be a determined resistance to applying that realisation in practice. When describing their own experience, the rationalised pretence takes over as before. Partly because people feel uncomfortable with the notion of themselves as largely irrational, they lack a language or model which adequately fits their experience.

In fact the most valid way to apply these ideas is in groups you are part of. One way is to become sufficiently acquainted with the group to be at all confident in making these different interpretations. Of course there are cases where the paradox here. The more involved with a group you are, the more influenced by its basic assumptions activity you will be. It may be useful to start by observing groups more impersonally to you - that is groups you have a lot of contact with but do not see yourself as part of. This can give experience in perceiving these processes, and in creating those perceptions coherently.

This article is an introduction to the subject. I am not going to risk making it even less interesting by concentrating on personal experiences in groups and situations unfamiliar to readers (even though that would allow more detailed and specific analysis). Instead the intention here is to show how these concepts can help to illuminate past and present happenings and struggles in political life.

Very often all that gets described is how much of a ‘heretic struggle’ people engaged in. Conversely, some of the same people are dismissed in contemptuous terms for their various human failings. Proper attention to emotional developments may help to change the picture from a black and white caricature to a more realistic mixture of shades of grey. This is not to blur the lines of opposition. Very often there may be compelling reasons to view people and groups purely as agents of one class enemy, capital or state, or as the agents of their own private interests. But denouncing people in this way is an insidious process. It is also the mainstay of capitalist exploitation and bureaucratic rationalisation. It is a dead end.

The examples discussed very sketchily here are mostly of large scale movements that consist of networks of groups and individuals. This is obviously far more complicated than the small group viewed in isolation. It is an aspect of the group’s ability to act, and may be a crucial determinant of successful outcomes. The small group itself has to find a balance between its needs and those of the individuals comprising it. When larger groups and ultimately societies. Each group will have to be a little more sensitive, a little more aware of its emotional functioning. But it will have some bearing on how automatically small groups respond to more large scale emotional changes. A small group behaving more autonomously will tend to resist such changes more. Mass populist movements, in particular, suffer from a lack of the emotional techniques of the small group.

b) Liberal democracy

Political parties in liberal democracies are simple examples of dependent groups. Their leaderships, or the parties themselves, are not only not as strong and capable, and then as vulnerable and needing support and tending. This oscillation
is even built into the parliamentary system, justified with the platitudes and cliches of the 'philosophy' of democracy. These have a robust ability to mask the fact of elective dictatorship and lack of choice. As long for liberalism point to the polling figures and argue that their politics is based on consensus, obviously it is a positive illusion, but cannot easily be extinguished by confronting the real power mistakes to 'belong' to politicians. Large-scale dependency systems need groups (communities) to feel important in controlling their own lives, so that the dependent leadership is felt to be necessary. In times of crisis the emotional leadership itself requires protection, covering itself with notions like 'the nation' or 'our way of life'.

The verbalised, communicative and communicable description of political 'reality' has to become displaced from material and economic reality for the system to persist without major recurring upheavals. One possibility is that this displacement any authenticity is sacrificed, heralding the deterioration of public life denounced by conservative moralists. Whatever is in power, all the conventional political parties collaborate in maintaining the illusion, leaving precious little in the way of language in which to oppose or resist the imperatives of capitalistic development. An excellent example of this is the work of Noam Chomsky on United States foreign policy (but his voice is barely heard in America). The terms of political debate, selective as they are, are presented in the mainstream media as the total range of possible positions that 'reasonable' people could take. Most Chomsky misses are the psychological underpinnings of this. The mass-psychological "need" for dependency in a dependent-group culture (even if it is a need engendered out of a cynical manipulation of human emotion). His analysis of the role of the intellectuals as 'permitted dissidence' is astute, but does not explain why it persists so successfully, even when people 'know' full well, intellectually, how immoral and pathetic their leaders are. Even on this level the whole basis of capitalism itself escapes examination.

In terms of power and control liberal democracy is a masterpiece of subtle demolition of the ideological authority to the structure of society. Under liberalism people participate in their own domination, collaborating to ensure that what they are doing. Under communism people see more clearly the nature of the coercion that compels them. The self-domination of liberal is not however the same as that in fascism. In the latter society shifts inevitably among the basic assumptions, in the former society is firmly nailed down to a cross of dependency. Liberalism is still a choice of contradiction. It is in such a mise of inauthentic and fantastic experiences that dependency false though it is, often seems to be all that holds society together. People find themselves having to believe, against some of their better judgments, that the politicians or parties know what they are doing, that the country is being run properly. Since 'the country' is in fact the 'people', this is a simple statement of dependency.

c) Structural schismatics

Marxist-leninist sects display what happens when basic assumptions activity become a major factor in determining group structure. Obviously their main form is schismatic. Switches of assumptions in subgroups have a subsequent effect in the timing of splits and the nature of resulting fragments. The hierarchical structure of the group, with each group at the apex have an inordinate effect overall. As is well-known, personal idiosyncrasies and conflicts largely determine the group's development. Typically a group goes through (or its precursors do) of mesiastic populism and absorption. Only the most stable leaders are able to continue this vein of thought. Absorption is a matter of aligning the party elite and themselves as the dependent leadership. However, they are personally so grandiose and paranoid that they convey an image of omnipotence to those at the base. But a dependent group cannot be stable and at all effective as a working group if it perceives the leadership to be so all-knowing and all-powerful in the group. This is because it involves seeing themselves as impotent, without the periodic legitimation of the leader by the group in normal dependency. The alternative to further schism must rely on rivalry and the religious incantation of marxist formulae, as well as the more mundane micro-politics of group status and hierarchy. This combination of emotional elements explains, on one level, the case with which leninist groups have been so detached from any reality, and from their stated aims and objectives.

d) CNT: outline of a case study

During its resurgence in the 1970's the spanish anarcho-syndicalist union, the CNT-AIT recruited tens of thousands of workers in a fairly short space of time. Whatever the emotional state of the embryonic CNT there was no way any kind of emotional continuity could be maintained during this period. For example, the CNT the first time around which grew slowly and painfully from traditions established in the 1860's. But although they may have been surprised by its rate of growth, the steersmen of its rebuilding recognized the trouble they were having to maintain the anarchist orientation of the CNT.

The new people coming in may have had sympathy for some version of anarchism. Many described themselves, and believed themselves to be anarcho-syndicalists. But there was no current that personal experience, practice and struggle in anarchist organisations. This facilitated the later adventures with the Works Committee which proved so damaging.

In the light of the rapid absorption, the anarcho-syndicalist principles of the CNT began to degenerate into a dependent leadership of the group-type. Given the turbulent history of the CNT this emotional leadership was necessarily selective, determined partly by the particular experiences and idiosyncracies of leading militants. Firstly in some cases there was the ignoble memory of collaboration with the republican government in the 1930's. In the Franco era, despite some notable efforts, the only way to sustain beliefs such as anarchism was to be covert, passive-dependent, virtually silent anyway. It was impossible to do anything about them. Then too there were memories of errors and mistaken paths taken in exile. All of this will have helped to facilitate the emotional developments which were to lead rather easily to a position of dependence on those beliefs.

THE TURN TO ASSUMPTIONS

The standard of political consciousness of the recruited masses in the 1970's was very varied. As mentioned, many had an idealised image of the CNT as past and future saviour. Perceiving this morass of mesiastic fantasy the committed anarcho-syndicalists were in the rather frightening position of realising that if they didn't do something, the principles they wanted to further were indanger of becoming made hazy, diluted and ultimately neutralised. Understandably perhaps, their response (probably unconsciously) was to strength these principles, turning them into a more rigid set of axioms rather than as guides to action. The switch to the dependent basic assumption had got underway in this subgroup.
This strengthening meant that despite the aspirations and development of the membership, a number of groups insisted upon themselves to end in the rest a faith, trust or belief in principles that otherwise might have been known to require a long gestation in practice to become meaningful and concrete. Most of the revolutionary syndicalists could have done open to question, other than to resign themselves to a long and arduous process of development or opposition to rebirth. After Franco the temptation to do what they did must have been very strong, especially in the light of the other messianic tendencies.

What of the idealisation of the CNT? The irrational euphoria at post-Franco possibilities and the widening of the new CNT-ers was not but a signpost. Other than to raise the question of the circumstances of those who had stayed in the vertical unions during fascism. So although the dependent sub-group recruited many members, so did the messianic one.

With some sections of the CNT developing towards dependence on its principles, some individuals and groups have been shy to question the fundamentality of the CNT. Several have appeared at the beginning of the CNT. If it is such a messianic one.

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 przykwalifikowane do przechowywania na temat, aby uniknąć konfrontacji. Tworzenie tych grup było skomplikowane i wymagało wielu godzin pracy. W terminie, tworząc te grupy, musieliśmy sobie radzić z różnymi elementami, takimi jak emocje i wydawanie środków na realizację planów. Wreszcie, pracę nad tą grupą musieliśmy podjąć na podstawie wyznaczonej procedury i zgodnie z przepisami.

W zależności od potrzeb i możliwości, tworzenie grupy mogło być skomplikowane, ale ważne było, aby zabezpieczyć, że każdy członek miał dojść do wniosku, że pracę nad grupą prowadził serio i sprawnie. Wszystko, co zostało robiło, musiało być adekwatne i zgodne z przepisami.

ON'T COMMITTEE

The crunch came over the issue of the works committees. These were initiated by the CNT to work in order to establish a national and effective union activity. The messianic assumptions had by now set the tone for development in the pro-committee CNT. A measure of this is that it didn't seem to occur to them that it was not just a tactical decision, and that in fact it could be a tactical decision. To them there was no alternative to works committees. After all there is plenty of evidence that this is so, for example in West Germany or even in the hierarchical fascist-bureaucratic unions of the Franco time. Indeed the pro-committee CNT were so confident in their roles of prophets and advisors of the CNT that they are too few to ever work with the committees so as to destroy them, dismantling them from within. Where have we heard that before? If they felt themselves to be invulnerable in this respect that would be another mark of the messianic assumptions.

More recently an unease has begun to surface about the rationale of working in the Works Committees. But in the light of the hard decisions made by the pro-committee groups, and the trouble caused since these decisions, it would be very difficult for this unease to culminate in a U-turn over the whole issue.

It is important to remember that the basic assumptions interact with all other areas of thought and behaviour (as do single-mindedness). The overtly messianic attitudes in the resurgence of the CNT will have been to destroy rapidly into strings of rationalisations. These will be clung to tenaciously thereafter, leaving people with well-worked out arguments to wield against unbelievers. These arguments will nevertheless contain crucial gaps or blind spots, which betray the emotional origins of the rationalisations themselves.

SPLITS GALORE

Several waves of splits and expulsions have occurred from 1980 onwards in the CNT. Each concerned minorities who wanted to experiment with Works Committees. The largest split was that of 1984 after the 6th Congress of the CNT-AIT in Barcelona. A resolution condemning the Committees but allowing individual unions to experiment with them if they felt they had to was passed by a small minority. But the aggressive behaviour of the most vehement anti-committee delegates caused the Congress to retract the resolution and refer the issue to a special Monographic Congress. This was said to be due to wanting to avoid playing into the hands of the bourgeois media, who were waiting like vultures to pounce on discord in the CNT.

After the treatment the compromise resolution received, many of the pro-committee unions did not send delegates to the special Congress, which was resolved with a large majority to condemn the Committees utterly and to expel any unions that went ahead and stood for election to them. The pro-committee faction had not got their way. The Congress had been enamoured of the CNT and had put the interests of the CNT above the interests of the Committees. But pro-committee CNT members made up less than half of the membership of CNT before 1980, so it was just possible that the decision to split had already been made, albeit emotionally and perhaps unconsciously. If so then the timing of the split just needed an opportunity for easy rationalisation. The events of the 6th Congress may have represented such an opportunity.

Those leading the CNT-AIT mostly took the name CNT with them (CNT-V, CNT-PC, CNT-I, etc.). Anarchist syndicalism was kept in place. But this was far less than half of the "activists". Was it really just CNT-AIT fanatics manipulating Congresses? Was it also possible that the decision to split had already been made, albeit emotionally and perhaps unconsciously? If so then the timing of the split just needed an opportunity for easy rationalisation. The events of the 6th Congress may have represented such an opportunity.

The behaviour of the CNT-AIT was reprehensible. Although it had led to a vigorous anarchist-syndicalist face, it had meant leaving aside for a time the notion that means must be commensurate with ends, in the manipulation and intimidation used. But also nothing can justify the split. The pro-committee groups. If they were to be serious anarchist-syndicalists (and even to the point where they were) it would be a case of the CNT members and the CNT members that they should have stayed in and fought their case.

If the idea of the CNT as a viable organisation was so vulnerable to being taken over by authoritarians and fanatical leaders (as the pro-committee CNT claimed had happened), why did the splitters keep identical structures in their rival organisations?

Unfortunately they were obsessed with the vision of themselves as the descendent of the old CNT, most fitted to saving the CNT and the workers. This messianic attitude showed itself more clearly with the first splits, for example when those who left called themselves the CNT-I. They were not in a clear minority but still took the name CNT with them. Grandiosity could lead them to equate completely the image and future of the CNT with their own beliefs and intentions, and it wouldn't have mattered how many disagreed with them. They dismissed others with pretensions to that role in the most convenient terms that could be found.

This tendency to split wherever one发生 with others (either personally or over particular tactics) will usually be very destructive. It makes the idea of direct democracy and consensus rather pointless if people will only go on taking part if they get their way. What would the splitters do in an anarchist society? Go off and form a separate universe? The CNT-I groups argued that they could not function on a day-to-day level as a syndicalist union without splitting from the others seen as dogmatic and intrinsinct. Even if we accept that they genuinely felt that, we must still ask how they will function as a syndicalist union if they are going to cooperate with each new tool dreamt up by the state to ruin effective unionism.
WHAT'S HAPPENING?

In the last three years the CNT-AIT seems not to be declining in numbers any further. Its gross emotional state seems to vary greatly, oscillating mainly between dependence and hostility. As always its only real hope lies with the activities of the many militant individuals in rank and file industrial struggle and worker solidarity. Little money is being made by the money and property confiscated by the rebels to any anywhere fast. Of course it would be nice for them to have the money... then it would be nice for them to win the war. I'm not going to lose sleep over the possibility. On the other hand it could still happen, the relative hardships of life in a communications, to imagine what wondrous things could be done with the money. But if the CNT-AIT concentrates all of its efforts on winning a fight it will probably make rather little impression on workers needing protection from the socialist state.

Younger militants may not be so backward looking and bitter as some of the remnants of the CNT-AIT. The latter could be a continuing source of inspiration and could contribute much, providing that they don't concentrate on replaying old arguments and infecting others with them. This is the necessity of accepting, analysing and learning from past mistakes, which is one of the things the CNT-AIT is urging.

In Britain we may be getting a rather distorted picture of what is going on at the base. Individuals in the CNT-AIT and the ex-CNT-AIT may know each other as united in anarch-syndicalism. Remember, many of the people whose unions left or were expelled from the CNT-AIT were strongly opposed to the Workers Committees themselves, even though they stayed with their groups. We can mistake some of the posturing on both sides for real attitudes and behaviour from top to bottom. Indeed, if it had not been for one person in England making an effort to discover and publicise the events we might be left with a view of this piece of history that would just assert how the splitters were merely CIA dupes, crypto-fascists or hasten enemies, or some other such nonsense. This must indicate some deep-seated and irrational tendencies in ourselves, that we could have been content with such a ridiculous black-and-white travesty. We could always cover it up by pleading ignorance.

The ex-CNT fractions are now grouped mainly into the CNT-U (U for unification). They have tended to move between dependent and messianic assumptions. The dependency on individuals was already there rather than on principles of defusing or mutual understanding. The CNT-U has a strong branch of the Workers' Committees. As the movement of the CNT-U and workers. Instead, the Workers' Committees are the remnants of the messianic vision and become increasingly dispersed. It has come to be represented by the idea of a council of Workers' Committees as the vehicle of the deliverance of CNT and workers. In the CNT-U one can find fewer of the workers' committees than on principle. The syndicalist fractions are tending to form from CNT-U members on committees that are less aligned with the rank and file. Groups of committee members can become independent, especially if the messianic hope can be recreated. But the syndicalist fractions in the CNT-U have this unlike, in my view.

Nevertheless, in some areas the CNT-U is the only functioning mass syndicalist union, as the CNT-AIT defends its ideology at the expense of organizing workers, and becomes a propaganda group by its own design. Another widespread tendency is for syndicalist unions to develop industrially, such as the Co-ordinators of the dockers, or among peasant unionists. These wish, among other things, to distance themselves from both CNT's.

e) CND and other liberal messianic movements

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, in its current incarnation in Britain, is a good example of a movement heavily influenced by messianic assumptions. In whichever direction you choose to rationalise their movement, it is the present emotional tone which has been one of generalised and irrational hopefulness and expectation. The decline of movements like this coincides with the ebbing of such mood,

when the vision can no longer be sustained. It should be emphasised yet again that I am talking about the emotional states of CND-ers, rather than the ideology and rationalisations per se.

CND tend to have a very naive, almost childish faith in the ability of their organisation to force the state to disarm. This is reflected in their choice of actions, which remain largely symbolic. The belief that non-violent direct action is decisive, but, for example, the women at Greenham Common only really believed that they were going to stop the installation of cruise missiles. During the period where CND's messianic assumptions were most marked, all of their usual characteristics were present in extreme form. Nuclear activity was born along on the conviction that they were going to save the world.

As in the 1960s, CND activists get 'burned out' and disillusioned with the messiah, and a turn to dependency becomes more and more widespread. Now, as a popular expression of the switch of assumption is shown as it is to believe that because the Labour Party will do away with Britain's nuclear weapons. The Labour Party or some other dependent leadership take the place of the messianic vision of a wonderful world without makes as the emotional focus for members. This contrasts with environmentalist groups, who are able to generate their own independent leaderships from amongst their own ranks.

It is a commonplace that CND has no theory of social or political change. They appear to want to believe that once a majority of the population opposes nuclear weapons in principle, then the appropriate changes can be forced. It is a mark of how we have been seduced by the messianic assumptions that we can thus ignore the massive historical evidence against that belief.

Disarmers identify their cause (and themselves) with saving the species, or all species, or the planet. Arguments along these lines are quintessentially messianic. In part, they arise from the messianic assumptions that the only way to save the world is by getting rid of nuclear weapons; that there is some magical way of doing so; that this magical way is somehow the key to the very existence of the species; that it is possible to save the world and that we can see this clearly now.

For a messianic assumption to be sustained, all other considerations which don't fit it must be ignored. From reading (CND) propaganda one could sometimes be forgiven for thinking that no other area of struggle matters, that everything else pales into insignificance compared to the need to disarm. This is undoubtedly one of the main reasons why working class people are so under-represented in CND, and why CND hasn't the vaguest hint of any class analysis. Another of the arguments about CND is the blind eye it turns on weapons which are not nuclear, and to war and the military in general. It can be argued that nuclear weapons are much more worrying; the argument that it is valid to concentrate on the threat of nuclear weapons only can be said that CND divert attention from the proliferating biological and chemical weapons complexes, and from the normal activity and roles of the military across the world. This tendency to be an inexorable process at which turns opposition to nuclear weapons into an exclusive alternative to opposition to everything else.

What about the state of the world after disarmament? States would possess all of the knowledge of nuclear weapons that they do now. They will probably use much enhanced security systems even than exist now, enabling them to build nuclear weapons in any place when they choose. They might no longer be subject to any of the marginal public constraints that they now have. Plus of course all of the other arms of the apocalypse would be in correspondingly more advanced stages. For this CND want us to agitate against nuclear arms?

GREENS ETC

Environmentalism avoids similar messianic behaviour to CND. However the content and aims are much more diffuse and generalised. In some ways this is more satisfactory from the point of view of the messianic assumptions. They do not now
Fascism

Nemesian fascism has fewer of the sexualised overtones of the liberal movements. It shows rather the primitive, psychopathic character of the nemesian assumption, with grandiose and sadistic sources of pleasure. Unlike the liberal movement, it is well-known for its tendency to degenerate into outright hostility and violence. This is because the nemesian vision is associated with destroying the devil rather than delivering the god. The devil inevitably comes to mean particular people rather than remaining just an ideal. Providing that these people are not too obviously not the devil-incarnate, it will be impossible to prevent them from physically attacking them. A glance at the mystical beliefs of the nemesian and other fascists substantiates this contention well enough.

Other Factors

When they become less marginal in conventional political terms, mesanetic groups tend to turn to dependency, often through certain organs or subgroups retain the mesanetic assumption, playing an even greater role than before. Intellectual elites and recruiting subgroups develop the mesanetic vision away from the lives of the dependent members, safeguarding the leadership from threats from within the group, and relieving the leadership of the onerous duty of having to control the mesanetic behaviour.

With all of these mesanetic movements a variant on the theme may be found. The vision may be identified with some lost paradise in the past, before the original sin. This has the particular advantage that historical evidence can be distorted to flesh out the mesan with the slightest chance of turning it into a dependent leader. For example, Stresemann fascism idealises a feudal past, some environmentalists appeal to a pre-industrial ecology, and some feminists derive inspiration from a mythical, pre-historical patriarchal. The CND is an exception here - it could hardly get away with extolling the virtues of the pre-nuclear world.

54
necessary. But often people want to insist that all of their personal peculiarities have to be fundamental to anything they get involved in. People confuse their own moral stance with anarchism, which is surely about strategies to change society. We may or may not endorse that in an anarchist society anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-environmental mutilation and all of the other things would become the norm. But strategy to change society has to appeal to more than a change in laws or public opinion, and has to involve more than rebellious moralising and the counter-cultural pose.

One thing that can be done is to think carefully about what a national organisation is for, what it can and would do, as opposed to what it might be nice for it to do. This is better than having the easy conviction that it must be necessary and then rushing ahead issuing membership cards. From this angle it is clear that it should involve no grandiose claims and intentions, which would only detract from the slow process of building active local groups. To start with a major role is providing co-ordination of information relating to present struggles and with educative functions. But it is questionable whether or not that would be enough to keep it going and stop it from glorifying itself or breaking down as previous efforts mostly have done.

Another possibility is that there might be a place for a loose federation of class-conscious anarchist groups, linked even more loosely to the DAM. Something along the lines of the old GRC-FAL situation in Spain, but without the clandestine secretive structure of the PFL. Even if something like this were to be remotely desirable, it would certainly require major changes in attitudes. For a start everyone would have to be a damned sight less ambitious about how meaningful it would all instantly be. Also the DAM itself would need to be a little less hostile and less demanding of its members, instead of expelling many militant and assuming that any discussion of DAM is necessarily hostile and malandistic. Thirdly, because the movement is so small and hence cannot do much, there has been a tendency to sneer at talk. Talk and what passes for theory may be at most mildly interesting, so it doesn't justify the kind of hysterical attacks it gets from some quarters when the interest isn't shared. With big groups action can be difficult and unsearing, whereas discussion, and especially criticism is easily enjoyed. It can be emotionally satisfying to stick the knife in about some one else's pathetic talk, when one is really trying to alleviate the anxiety and frustration felt at one own lack of effectiveness in action.

CONCLUSION
Maybe we all need to grow up a bit, to cultivate a little more humility (this applies to some older as well as to some younger comrades). If that sounds like moralising - look around - at how infantile and childish behaviour messes up anything and everything it infects. In spite of all of our fine words, and undoubtedly superior basic theories, we as humans can be just as silly, blundering and bloody-minded as anyone else. And we are like that a lot of the time. We do not become immune from all of the basic human frailties by choosing the black and red.

Chapter 5
Ritual Anarchy

Introduction
In this essay I will consider the way that we as subjective individuals necessarily fall prey to objective factors in our group and political environment. The point of this is not to sound a nostalgic note of pessimism - that autonomy is an impossibility - but to recognize our limits and thereby attempt to deal with them. By sensitizing ourselves to these constraints, hopefully, we will become a little critical of the monopolistic rationality we habitually lay claim to.

The format of this essay is as follows: First there will be a brief commentary on Jo Freeman's "Tyranny of Structurelessness". This will serve as a prelude to a more general discussion of the relation between individual and (group) environment. In this section, the role of ritual will be considered. In particular, the pay-offs of ritual, and their grounding in certain historical conditions, will be examined in the context of general examples of the way that rituals permeate and subvert libertarian groups.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
The main issue I will attempt to address concerns the claim to an unalloyed rationality that many political groups, including anarchistic ones, express. These often take the form of an assumption that the people involved in such groups are pure autonomous individuals. In contrast, I argue that people are also objects affected by an array of factors which includes the other members of the group. Primarily, I will focus on how mutual objectification (treating each other as objects) is orchestrated as ritual within libertarian groups. By understanding the pay-offs such a process has for individuals, the group, and anarchism.

A partial critique of the notion of the freely constituted and active group can be found in Jo Freeman's essay, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness". Freeman presents us with a contrast between the apparent structurelessness of some political groups, particularly feminist 'rap' groups, and their covert power content. She aims to show how this decoupling of ideology and practice happens: (1) Equality and democracy within the group itself; (2) Practical action by that group; and (3) Practical action mounted on a wider (eg national) scale. In doing this, she constructs a Hart's-theoretical and historical analysis of the degeneration of or potential degeneration of 'rap' or consciousness-raising (CR) groups. Her argument runs thus: In structureless groups there is a tendency for informal elites to be constituted; these elites are derived from friendship groups which are themselves constituted on the basis of similar characteristics (eg liking, hipness, having the time, etc). As such, they will often tend to be comprised of white middle-class women (for feminist groups). The informal friendship elites practice their power by essentially forming a bloc or body of opinion, based on liking and these outside links, which can be set up as the norm of the rap group. The point is that such a sub-group becomes a structure on the group by monopolising skills, authority, right-ousness, etc. that is, it wields power. Historically, other sub-groups have also come to operate in structureless groups, especially those based on membership of another
and practice, or consciousness and action. What we do affects the way we think, and what we think affects the things we do. However, this is not a historical dimension at work; we do things before we think about them. For each one of us, there is a set of activities and ideas prior to our existence which we absorb as a way, to accept wages, etc. What ‘natural’ means in this context is that the thing that is ‘natural’ is not open to reflection, it is part and parcel of our practices, they are no longer natural (or objective); we render them historically conditioned. With that we open up the possibility of change. However, our perception of that change is itself historically conditioned. We cannot escape the grip of history; such a transcendentalism would be ideological.

Praxis can be divided into two components: practical and discursive consciousness. Practical consciousness refers to what we do; discursive to what we say and think. While the practical is involved in the automatic types of behaviour we engage in, it is not necessarily directly accessible to the discursive. For example, it is very difficult to describe how to do certain things such as ride a bicycle. Moreover, it is impossible to learn how to ride a bicycle simply by discussing it. What is needed is ‘hands-on’ experience. Similarly, with some practices the acknowledgement and criticism of them by discursive consciousness will have little practical effect (eg tools, fashion depression). In the social domain, the same division applies, though with complications given that a large part of social interaction involves language. Nevertheless, in communication the use of either means of clothing, etc as signals primarily entails practical consciousness; it is not accepted or open to discursive consciousness. Similarly the way we sometimes treat others as objects, is a practical process that men discourse on only with considerable effort to resist them is often merely rhetorical - it does not actually feed into the practice of those men.

The point is that the practical and discursive type of consciousness hints at a space in between which we do and what we say we do (the motives, intentions, ends, etc with which we do things). Some authors suggest that a ‘negotiable accuracy’ can be got to the root of his/her behaviour - ie social motives, intentions, etc underlying the relevant actions. Others suggest that the individual does not always accurately (discursively) know why s/he did what s/he did. The explanations, etc that s/he furnishes might just be rationalizations. In other words, the gap between discourse and practice is bridged by ideology and mystification. Relating this to the above discussion of CH and structured groups, we can suggest that the structures of the latter groups might end up being little more than ideological, discursive glosses on the actual practices going on within that group.

The division between discursive and practical consciousness can be somewhat messily, mapped onto the distinction between subject and object. Crudely, the subject is the individual conceived as an autonomous, self-determining, conscious being. The object, by comparison, is a thing whose behaviour is caused by influences both internal and external, over which it has no ‘conscious’ control. These are the dual faces of being human; we are both subjects with wills and objects with features. On the whole, in social interaction we treat both ourselves and each other as subjects. Nevertheless, and necessarily, there is an objective component. As regard their relation to ideology, the discursive

**SOME DISTINCTIONS**

The mutual influence of individuals can be studied from a variety of vantage points. Non-Rational Politics examines it from the perspective of the psychological aspects, my main effort will be directed at their philosophical and social underpinnings.

The relation between influence and autonomy can be re-read in terms of the concept of Praxis. In brief, Praxis refers to the close interaction of theory

58

59
can be aligned with the subjective (though mosting of clichés, ideologies, etc suggests that the object also emerges in the discursive), and the practical with the objective (though, of course, we subjectively decide to learn to ride a bike, etc). In the sense that the discursive can play an ideological role, so too the subjective, by promoting itself as the sole source of action, can become ideological. Thus we find that the petty bourgeois individualist ideal of an absolute responsibility, while rejected by anarchists when applied to the oppressed (they behave as they do because they have been hoodwinked in daily life or by ideologies) in the same way, the assumption of a subjectivity behind every action can obscure the grounding of that action in a range of objective forces (eg group influence, political climate, human nature, etc.) that apply as much to anarchists as to less enlightened folk. The problem, as we shall see, is that this glorification of the subject serves to obscure a profound objectification of the self and others.

RITUAL

Ritual can be approached from a variety of angles. Functionally, it can be said to serve the communication, communicating to others anything from the performers' conception of the world to their current psychological state and position in the hierarchy. On the same level, it can also be instrumental insofar as it is an attempt to, say, negotiate with or bring under control aspects of nature. Clearly, the communicative and instrumental functions are not mutually exclusive. For example, communicating a message will have instrumental effects on the perceivers. By the same token, we have the anarchist/relativist view of ritual as essentially ideological, as constructed by the ruling elites to mystify, subordinate and control the masses. However, as it has been pointed out, we can't assume that rituals necessarily do this. It would have to be positively shown that such rituals as the Coronation ceremony, etc permeate and condition working class consciousness in such a way as to limit proletarian radicalism. In opposition to this, it can be argued that working class radicalism is usually thwarted by the material and legal impositions of capital and state. Further, some rituals also serve to resist mystification, to foster working class unity (eg the chants of 'here we go' in football hooliganism and yet bring individuals together as a more or less coordinated mass that is 'consciously' directed at its given enemy).

Rituals also serve a function for the individual as well as the social system. I will return to this in more detail below, but for the present it will suffice to say that the use of ritual in everyday interaction (eg the stereotypical use of certain phrases such as 'have a nice day'), the wear of uniforms and the immersion in certain types of tightly demarcated roles) affords people a form of protection, a front behind which they can operate.

So far I have only dealt with the function of ritual; now I look at its structure. A ritual can be defined as comprising of a set of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances. These acts are stylized, repetitive, stereotypical and are performed at certain points and times. This basic definition really refers to the rituals that occur as a special event (eg Marriage, rain dances, etc). However, as already mentioned, ritual can also be extended to everyday life. Its characteristic features are:

1. Patterned routines of behaviour. This can be expressed as a set of rules stating what set follows what.

(2). A system of signs to convey overt messages. Often this takes the form of postures, facial expression, etc, but also it can involve costume and props.

(3). Sanctions. If you don't follow the procedures then you are punished; if you follow them properly you are accepted.

(4). The connection between any given action (posture, movement, expression) or sign (costume, prop, etc) and the meaning (is what they represent and it is what they represent) is not intrinsically linked to the ritual in itself. For example, both a crown and a leather jacket, don't intrinsically represent monarchial power and youth rebellion respectively; these connections have had to be established through history, through convention.

We are now in a position to relate ritual to our discussion of subject/object and practical/discursive consciousness. The main claim I will make is that ritual pervades political groups, and that it is part of the individual member's practical consciousness. In other words, we practice rituals as objects, deciding neither upon the type of ritual nor its constitution. As such, we do not readily acknowledge either the presence of ritual or its pay-offs. In other words, ritual is not easily accessible to discursive consciousness; indeed, discourse, by invoking the autonomy of the individual tends to deflect attention from ritual. The subject positions; the object prevails.

What, then, are the pay-offs of ritual? What do individual members gain from the simultaneous practice and denial of ritualistic behaviour? What are the implications of this for politics as theorized and practised?

PAY-OFFS

To briefly summarize, ritual has been (roughly) equated with practical consciousness and the individual as object. What I will do in this section is suggest some of the gains that individuals derive from ritual and its tendency to objectify.

Ritual renders the individual passive. S/he knows exactly what is required of him/her. Even though s/he goes through the ritualistic motions, they are automatic. There is no choice in the action or sequence of actions. One is impelled to act as one does. (Obviously this is only a partial reading of ritual, but it is the component I will discuss.) This process of objectification, of constructing the self as an object is one of the things that is desired by the ritual performer. Self-objectification has peculiar pay-offs for the individual. (1) In allowing the individuals to be passive, ritual provides an opportunity for them to be lazy. They don't have to think very strenuously, to exert themselves. This might take the form of repeating what are simple revolutionary formulations. (2) Ritual can generate a sense of certainty, especially when it is collectively performed. This is ritual allows little space for critical reflection and the uncertainty that comes with that. (3) A corollary of the above two points is that ritual offers security: a feeling that all that can be done is being done, that there is no alternative, that one is part of a cogent, orchestrated community. To reiterate, these processes are systematically denied by the performers.

The implication of this for political action is that, at the broadest level, intragroup behaviours and negotiations that are supposed to constitute a rational means of deciding upon political action, can actually be rituals by which the individual members reproduce their own and each others positioning.
within the group. The lack of ideas that are generated by groups (though possibly anarchist groups are the most creative) can be viewed as a partial outcome of this ritualization. Similarly, factionalism and sectarianism can be recognized as forms of ritual whereby subgroups ritualistically oppose one another, marking what are more or less stereotyped (it's probably more accurate to call these insults) against each other while making no genuine attempt to listen. We'll return to this below.

For the moment, I will consider how it has been possible for the pay-offs outlined above to be 'pay-offs', ie to constitute 'valued' psychological conditions. In brief, the point is that people do not so much 'want' certainty, passivity and security (each of the sort that leads to stultification and a loss of the capacity to rise above hierarchy) so much as tend towards it: it is an aspect of their objective constitution - they are constitutionally predisposed to it. Such a predisposition is not simply a natural tendency - though it can be argued that a substantial part derives from social conditions. In the following paragraphs I will look at three types of social condition that have influenced the tendency to ritualistically objectify. Each will be illustrated with a practical failing (or style).

However, it should be noted at the outset that the equation between social condition and falling is not absolute.

Hierarchies
To treat others as inferior is to render them objects relative to oneself. According to Bookchin, power found its original expression in age-related hierarchies. Simultaneously, placing oneself in an absolute, non-negotiable position of (relative) power also renders the self an object insofar as one ascribes to the self traits which are permanent and superior - there is an admission of negotiated change. (Eg the elders were wise and therefore deserved power; in fact they were old and longed for security). Running parallel with this is the development of subjectivity. Those higher up the hierarchy also see themselves as more autonomous than those below. Thus the media almost (if not) as an imperative - portray the elite white, middle-class male in terms of his personal characteristics as a (subject), but treat members of 'minority' groups (working class, women, black, etc) in terms of the characteristics of their group (eg the working-class woman is drunk because the working class are rowdy and women are it is his decision and desire to do so). In other words, minority groups are stereotyped and this is a means of objectifying them. A possible outcome of this is that members of the minority groups come to see themselves through the eyes of the elite; that is, they treat themselves as objects, they self-objectify. (Certainly studies regarding the way women assess their success/failure on various types of task suggest this).

Given that many anarchists are located in a minority group, it can be argued that the uniformity and inflexibility of some of their arguments and actions reflects this process. But furthermore, given that many anarchists are also white, middle-class and male they will also have the rhetoric of autonomy at their disposal, a rhetoric that is devoid of any clash under and below) that furnished by anarchism itself.

Within the overall social structure, politically marginalized groups will have an additional impetus to self-objectify. Political marginalization is often combatted by a determined effort to produce a coherent and absolute political line. This would suppress critical reflection and negotiation. This is common in authoritarian groups of both fascist and communist ilk; but it can also be an, albeit less profound, element in anarchist groups. The result is a 'forensic ideology' in which complex events are perceived as having simple causes; above all, it is imperative to preserve the logical coherence of the explanatory framework. Everything is reduced to a single cause, and the successful suppression of any contradictions attest to the existence of evidence for the Jewish-communist conspiracy; for the WRP, imminent economic crisis seems to encompass most events in the world; amongst certain anarchist groups, such as Class War, it all comes down to the rich bastards and the bastard state lackeys. It's not hard to imagine these processes of other, and self, objectification taking ritual form. The practical outcome of all this is a SIMPLIFICATION OF TACTICS. An enemy can be clearly defined and dealt with (final solution, sell more papers, kick a policeman in the goolies). Now, such a simplification is obviously conditioned by other factors, and its main 'advantages' are that it yields actions that are manageable, economic and, for the individuals involved, effective. But that's no real consolation for the poverty of vision that it consolidates.

Patriarchy
Objectification is something that is intimately intertwined with patriarchy. The psychological characteristics of macho masculinity can be roughly summarized as: A 'desire' to exert absolute control over the self and others, especially the (otherness) of the feminine, whether that be in the self, in work, or expressed in the way the non-objectification (a): their own sexuality (ie they become phallocentric: Willy is the sole repository of their eroticism); (b) women (feminize particular parts of them; insist on their passivity); (c) exploit nature (ecology is ideally a process of exploitation: nature is a means of exchange). Bookchin is further suggesting that the ultimate masculine objectification is realized in death. Patriarchal science aims for certainty, predictability and control and yet these are most obviously present in death. In the macho world of many political groups, anarchist ones not exempted, this tendency to objectify is mediated by ritual. The ritualistic heckling of chanting at rallies is not simply a legitimate means of registering protest (given the minority status and relative powerlessness of such groups), but it is also an attempt to control the proceedings. It objectifies the target of the heckling in such a way that anything one says is interpreted as a manifestation of his/her essentially (objectively) evil characteristics. As I've already hinted, often this is perfectly justified. But sometimes it's not.

In this guise, machismo, can also generate self-objectification - especially through the medium of the group. Thus identification with a social group and the attribution of that group's defining characteristics to the self itself leads to self-stereotyping. (eg I am a perfect/exemplary Tottenham supporter, Terry, anarchist). However, this self-objectification is in dialectical tension with masculinity's insistence on projecting itself as the subject par excellence. Hence the macho subject objectifies himself while advertising his autonomy as a means of putting the other down. Hence the anarchistic subject objectifies others as a concomitant to the rise of themselves (in addition to any genuine claim to the righteousness) as fundamentally more enlightened than everyone else can be seen as a moment in this dialectic; it is a partial cause of FASCIONALISM and sectarianism. The purity of the anarchist creed as practiced by certain
individuals and groups, their utter dismissal of all those 'coerced' who dare dilute that purity, might reflect not a reasoned, negative evaluation of the 'other's' position/tactic/strategy/etc, but their own predisposition to objectify both self and other.

**Capitalism**

Finally, objectification has become contingent on certain dynamics and contradictions within capitalism. Because of the nature of the capitalist mode of production, especially the way in which it is managed, with the worker often having control neither over what is produced nor how it is produced, the product of labour appears to the worker to be stumped with an objective character. It is something outside the worker. In consequence, what is actually a social relation begins to appear as a relation between things. Relations between objects are no longer seen to be the result of human decision, but dependent on the objects' own intrinsic character which is beyond human reach. Powerlessness at the point of production means that people treat themselves and each other as objects. This process lies at the heart of much social interaction. We treat each other and ourselves as things; we see ourselves as static; we lose sight of our own social dynamic.

Anarchists are not immune from this 'infrastructural' condition. Likewise, they are not immune from the bourgeois creed of individualism. The sovereign individual is a necessary fiction: it is s/he who enters the market place hawking his/her labour power. Similarly, in the domain of consumption, it is the same autonomous subject who prefers Brand X to Brand Y. This autonomous subject needs to be continuously reconstructed: the role of the 'ideological state apparatuses' is just this. Thus the law summons the legal subject; school projects the achieving subject; religion divines the redeemable subject. Once again the contradiction between subject and object is reproduced in the functioning of capitalism.

The brutalization of the work place and its diffusion into all social domains is at one and the same time practised and denied by the ideology of the free subject. This dialectic surfaces in the workings of political groups and their use of ritual. The division of labour within groups can become ritualistic. The hush that surrounds the theoretician/tactician, the lay-out specialist who shows her/his latest pamphlet to the group, etc - these processes of assertion and defense entail both the objectification of qualities (eg s/he in good at doing that) and the subjectivization of decisions (eg s/he doesn't want to do that). Within all this ritual objectification, one comes to know one's place. There is an **INSTITUTION OF HIERARCHY**.

**SUMMARY/ CONCLUSION**

In sum, in all groups there is a ritual verification of the subject and its autonomy, and a denial of objectification. The assertion of autonomy rightly allows responsibility to be ascribed; but it can also obscure the fact that people are conditioned by forces, included those of the group, that they cannot control. Given the individualism of such groups, it is ironical that the assertion of autonomy contrasts so starkly against the uniformity (objectivity) of political practice in many groups.

The radical dissociation of subject and object is a condition that marks the present epoch. Some writers cast back into prehistory or project into the future a time in which these two facets meld. I'm not really interested in this: we are faced with this break and must work around it, accommodate it through a constant critical reflection in which, with each look over our shoulder, we catch a glimpse of the objective factors that have made us behave in the ways we have. As such, it is necessary to admit the tenaciousness, the ambivalence and uncertainty of all our actions, and to somehow introduce this into the structure of libertarian organization.