

POSTMODERN PHILOSOPHY AND MARKET ANARCHISM: ALLIES OR ENEMIES?

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POSTMODERN SOLUTIONS TO MARKET ANARCHIST PROBLEMS

by Daniel Pryor¹

Proponents of market anarchism should strengthen the case for their doctrine by incorporating some aspects of postmodern philosophy into their arguments. However, certain tenets of postmodern philosophy should be excluded from this enterprise, since they are theoretically false and potentially damaging to market anarchist praxis.

In order to advance this thesis, I will first define 'market anarchism' and 'postmodern philosophy'. The term 'market anarchism' refers to a diverse tradition within political philosophy that traces its origins to individualist anarchists like Benjamin Tucker and the mutualism of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Market anarchists are united by the contention that "the legislative, adjudicative, and protective functions unjustly and inefficiently monopolized by the coercive State should be entirely turned over to the voluntary, consensual forces of market society" (Molinari Institute, 2002). However, as this essay will make clear, different strains of market anarchist thought propose divergent visions of a stateless market society, all of which have been subject to criticisms from outside the tradition, as well as more granular criticisms from within. These conceptions range from the 'anarcho-capitalism' of Murray Rothbard, Hans-Hermann Hoppe and Walter Block – "in which market relationships [are] little changed from business as usual and the end of state control was imagined as freeing business to do much

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what it had been doing before" (Chartier & Johnson, 2011 : 6) – to the radically antiauthoritarian 'free market anti-capitalism' expressed in the works of Kevin Carson and the later writings of Karl Hess. This essay will focus upon several traditions within market anarchism, including the ones mentioned above.

For the purposes of this essay, the term 'postmodern philosophy' will be defined as philosophy informed by an "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1986 : xxiv). Metanarratives are understood as "totalising stories about history and the goals of the human race that ground and legitimise knowledges and cultural practises" (Woodward, n.d.), with specific examples including the accumulation of wealth in a capitalist society, the emancipation of the rational Cartesian subject, and the process of scientific inquiry yielding an increasing amount of objective knowledge. Throughout this essay, I will examine the extent to which the ideas of various thinkers working within the tradition of postmodern philosophy can be used to strengthen market anarchist political philosophy.

With these terms now defined, I will proceed to outline the structure of my thesis. Each of the essay's three sections will begin by identifying and explaining a problem with current market anarchist theory. Following this, I will detail the ways in which postmodern philosophy could address the problem in question, subsequently discussing the limitations of postmodern solutions and proposing alternatives where relevant. Finally, I will summarize the extent to which postmodern philosophy should augment market anarchist theory in each case.

Chapter One will evaluate the extent to which postmodern philosophy can provide an effective

means of accounting for (and combating) forms of domination other than the state. I will begin by arguing that a significant portion of market anarchist thought fails to adequately address non-state forms of domination, owing to its often singular focus on the inherent illegitimacy of the state. I will then outline several ideas within postmodern philosophy that have the potential to highlight and combat non-state forms of hierarchy, including Foucault's claim that power is an inescapably constitutive element of all social relationships, Deleuze and Guattari's rejection of a unitary, essentialist conception of the subject, and Crenshaw's idea of 'intersectionality' that stems from such an account of subjectivity. Following this, I will argue that each of these ideas are, to differing extents, subject to compelling criticisms that limit the degree to which they should be incorporated into market anarchist theory and praxis. These criticisms will focus on how Foucault's conception of power blurs useful distinctions between the state and society, the relative ineffectiveness of 'lifestyle anarchism' praxis implied by Deleuze, and the potential pitfalls of intersectionality in practice. Finally, I will conclude the chapter by assessing the potential contribution of postmodern philosophy to theorizing and providing a praxis for combating non-state domination.

Chapter Two will address the extent to which postmodern philosophy can help market anarchists distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable hierarchies. Accepting that power is pervasive in the Foucauldian sense necessitates the creation of a set of standards that judge which configurations of power are beneficial and which are harmful. Firstly, I will argue that market anarchist theory has failed to provide a compelling set of such standards. This stems

from a tendency to construe unjust hierarchy solely in terms of the state, as well as from the fact that in the rare moments where non-state forms of hierarchy (such as ableism) *are* condemned, market anarchists concentrate exclusively on the detail of such condemnations: to the detriment of a general theory of hierarchy. Following this, I will identify an important aspect of postmodern philosophy that may help contribute towards a market anarchist criteria for acceptance of hierarchies. I will focus on Derrida's methods of deconstruction and how they may be applied to all hierarchical oppositions. This idea will then be subjected to criticism; it will be argued that deconstruction is a flawed and harmful strategy for determining the acceptability of hierarchies. Finally, I will conclude the chapter by summarizing the relative merit of Derridean deconstruction in providing a means for judging the desirability of hierarchies.

Chapter Three will discuss the ways in which postmodern philosophy could act as a corrective to the totalizing aspect of market anarchism: an aspect that results in a limited to non-existent acknowledgment of the possibility for alternative modes of social organization in its conception of a stateless society. I will begin by outlining how a significant amount of market anarchist literature fails to account for the likely emergence of divergent, decentralized communities, as well as minimizing the advantages of such communities. I will then highlight the areas in which postmodern philosophy offers a justification for the existence of such heterogeneous communities, centering my analysis on Lyotard's account of competing language games and Rorty's pragmatist liberal ironism. These postmodern concepts will subsequently be criticized on

the basis that they rely upon incoherent theoretical underpinnings (namely, those that seek to rob science of its objective legitimation) that translate into a neutered market anarchist praxis that fails to encourage beneficial 'root-seeking'. Finally, I will end the chapter by summarizing the relative merits of postmodern ideas in justifying a non-totalizing conception of market anarchism.

This essay will conclude with a discussion of the suitability of incorporating postmodern philosophy into market anarchist political philosophy. I will accentuate the broad themes of compatibility and the areas of disagreement, before offering an overall assessment of the extent to which postmodern philosophy should augment market anarchist theory and praxis.

CHAPTER ONE

BEYOND THE STATE: FOUCAULT, DELEUZE AND CRENSHAW ON NON-STATE FORMS OF HIERARCHY

"Just as relations of power operate through ethical, psychological, cultural, political, and economic dimensions, so too the struggle for freedom and individualism depends upon a certain constellation of moral, psychological, and cultural factors".

- Chris Sciabarra²

The Limitations of the Non-Aggression Principle

The political philosophy of market anarchism has often been defended by appealing to the validity of the foundational 'non-aggression principle' (NAP). Murray Rothbard – arguably the most influential 'anarcho-capitalist' scholar – defined the NAP as follows:

"The fundamental axiom of libertarian theory is that no one may threaten or commit violence ("aggress") against another man's person or property. Violence may be employed only against the man who commits such violence; that is, only defensively against the aggressive violence of another. In short, no violence may be employed against a nonaggressor. Here is the fundamental rule from which can be deduced the entire corpus of libertarian theory."

(Rothbard, 2000 : 116)

Market anarchist writers have attempted to defend similar formulations of the non-aggression principle in different ways, including Hans-Hermann Hoppe's 'argumentation ethics'³,

2 (Sciabarra, 2000 : 383).

3 (Hoppe, 1988 : 20-22).

Rothbard's natural law approach, and David Friedman's quasi-consequentialist pluralism⁴. For market anarchists, a key conclusion of the non-aggression principle is that the state must be abolished; it follows from the non-aggression principle that "a form of human community that (successfully) lays claim to the *monopoly of legitimate physical violence* within a particular territory" (Weber, 2004: 33) is impermissible.

However, the fact that the non-aggression principle only entails the abolition of the state (and its replacement with alternative arrangements that protect private property) has resulted in the majority of market anarchist scholarship narrowly focusing on identifying and eliminating violations of the non-aggression principle. Defenders of this view argue that matters other than government coercion should (at most) merely be thought of as strategic considerations. This has translated into a praxis that willfully refuses to devote attention to most⁵ cultural and social concerns: an attitude summarized by anarcho-capitalist Walter Block, who stated that such issues have "nothing to do with libertarianism...[since they are not related to] the non-aggression axiom coupled with private property rights" (Block, 2010 : 159).

This dismissive attitude to examining cultural and social issues that are not related to government coercion has attracted much criticism from other schools of anarchist thought. The

4 Friedman argues for market anarchism on the basis of a context-sensitive combination of rights-based considerations and utilitarian concerns: "The version of [market anarchist] libertarianism that seems most plausible to me is one where respecting rights is seen as a good thing, a value in itself as well as a means to other values, but not as a value that trumps all others" (Friedman, 2012).

5 There are evidently some cultural issues that are addressed by applying the non-aggression principle. As Charles Johnson points out, "libertarians ought to actively oppose certain traditional cultural practices that involve the systematic use of violence against peaceful people – such as East African customs of forcing clitoridectomy on unwilling girls" (Johnson, *Libertarianism through Thick and Thin*, 2011) since such practices violate the NAP.

non-aggression principle is only concerned with 'negative freedom', defined by Isaiah Berlin as "the area within which the subject—a person or group of persons—is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons" (Berlin, 1969). As a consequence of the NAP's silence on matters of positive freedom, which concerns one's capacity for self-mastery and self-realization, it has been argued that market anarchism "calls for the absence of coercion but cannot guarantee the positive freedom of individual autonomy and independence" (Marshall, 2010 : 564). Indeed, Noam Chomsky criticizes the NAP's disregard for positive freedom to an even greater extent, asserting that a stateless society under market anarchism would (as an effect of the resulting private property distribution being radically unequal) perpetuate and heighten morally repugnant imbalances of power:

"The idea of "free contract" between the potentate and his starving subject is a sick joke, perhaps worth some moments in an academic seminar exploring the consequences of (in my view, absurd) ideas, but nowhere else."

(Chomsky, On Anarchism, 1996)

The charge of market anarchism relying on an incomplete conception of freedom has been resisted in two ways: simply reaffirming the irrelevance of non-coercive action to political philosophy, or arguing (contra Chomsky) that there is a symbiotic relationship between negative and positive freedom. The former 'thin' view centers upon the argument that importing cultural and social concerns that do not stem from violations of the NAP compromises the ideological integrity of market anarchist theory, with some scholars implying that doing so would result in

a move towards statism⁶. The latter 'thick' view convincingly asserts that "the struggle for liberty [should be integrated] into a comprehensive struggle for human liberation" (Johnson, 2011 : 132).

Postmodern approaches to non-state forms of hierarchy

Arguably the best known postmodern approach to non-state forms of hierarchy is that of Michel Foucault⁷, who argues that power necessarily constitutes all forms of social relations. If a market anarchist were to view power in this way, they may be encouraged to extend their critical analysis of power imbalances far beyond the realm of the coercive state, since society is no longer conceivable as neutral:

"Power becomes coextensive with all social relationships and is not reducible to the state, even though the state is the site where power is at its most concentrated, excessive and brutal. In other words, we can no longer imagine a clear conceptual distinction between society and the state..."

(Newman, 2011 : 62)

The consequences of adopting the stance that "everything is dangerous" (Foucault, OGE, 1983) as a result of power being inescapable are enormous. Market anarchists will be forced to acknowledge that the state interacts with other power structures, and furthermore that the

6 Lew Rockwell has drawn parallels between market anarchist concerns about matters other than rights violations and the transformation of classical liberal thought into more state-centered forms of liberalism: "Sure, twentieth-century liberals said, we favor liberty, but since mere negative liberty – that is, restrictions on the state – doesn't appear to yield a sufficiently egalitarian result, we need more than that" (Rockwell, 2014).

7 Although Foucault rejected the 'postmodern' label, for the purposes of this essay he is considered part of this tradition because his work criticizes 'metanarratives' such as the Enlightenment subject and the objectivity of science.

state is not the only potentially unjust hierarchy. The subjects of sex, gender, sexuality, race and much more are introduced in a manner that coheres with a rejection of state power.

Foucault's account of power also focuses attention on the potential for unjust power imbalances being manifested on a micro-political level. Although occasionally giving the impression in his earlier work that "power somehow inheres in institutions themselves rather than in the individuals that make those institutions function" (Felluga, 2011), Foucault's later writings clearly show that he believes power is ultimately expressed during interactions between individuals:

"...a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis...that 'the other' (the one over whom power is exercised) [is] thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results and possible inventions may open up."

(Foucault, 1982 : 789)

However, his conception of power is, in marked contrast with previous accounts⁸, "diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them" (Gaventa, 2003 : 1). The idea that power operates on such a microscopic level is useful. It curbs the arguably naïve optimism of market anarchism, reminding its adherents that whilst dismantling the state may

8 For example, the subject-centered account of power given by Max Weber, which is "both the purposive, human capacity to sway others to one's own interests and to prevent others from discerning or making explicit their opposing interests" (Lewandowski, 1995 : 223).

disperse the power concentrated in its hands, doing so is only part of a wider struggle against unjust hierarchies.

This struggle may even extend to the psyche itself. For Foucault, the exercise of power is not only an essential characteristic of all intersubjective human action, but also the force that produces the very 'subject' in such intersubjectivity. In other words, the individual is an effect of and conduit for power, rather than its wielder. This insight has been explored in greater detail by many postmodernist philosophers, including Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, who argued that statism's legitimation depends upon a false essentialism regarding subjectivity: "the unity of all our faculties at the center constituted by the Cogito, is the State consensus raised to the absolute" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988 : 376). Whilst the idea of anarchism taking place at a micropolitical level has been explored by anarchists prior to the emergence of postmodern philosophy⁹, it is only through postmodern notions of subjectivity that themes of fragmentation and anti-essentialist subjectivity have been extensively explored.

In contrast with the Cartesian view of the subject as autonomous and self-coincidental, Deleuze and Guattari conceive of a liberated subjectivity as fragmented and 'rhizomatic', which "eschews essences, unities and binary logic, and seeks out multiplicities, pluralities and becomings" (Newman, WOTS, 2009 : 7). If we refuse to engage in self-domination through our submission to what Deleuze terms 'Oedipal representation'¹⁰, we are able to fight the impulse

9 One example is the work of Emma Goldman: "...Anarchists...maintain that the solution of [social] evil can be brought about only through the consideration of EVERY PHASE of life, –individual, as well as the collective; the internal, as well as the external phases" (Goldman, 2014 : 29).

10 Criticising the conclusions of Freud, Deleuze and Guattari regard Oedipal representation to be a harmful concept, in that it "constructs [desire] in such a way that it believes itself to be repressed" (Newman, WOTS,

towards statism at its very root.

Though rarely advocates of the free market, various anarchist thinkers have focused on the importance of how power relates to subjectivity, in terms of its consequences for anarchist praxis. In combination with the insights of other thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, postanarchist writers have called for an 'anarchism of becoming' in line with viewing liberated subjectivity as that which is constantly in flux. Though Nietzsche is rarely thought of a truly postmodernist philosopher, his work arguably symbolizes its genesis, and at times bears a striking resemblance to the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari. Drawing from Nietzsche's critique of Cartesian subjectivity in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Lewis Call states that:

"Out of the critical anarchy of the subject, there emerges an equally powerful but affirmative anarchy of becoming, one that understands humans not as beings with fixed essences but rather as "selves-in-process."

(Call, 2001 : 67)

If one accepts postmodern critiques of traditional subjectivity, there are potentially important consequences for market anarchist praxis. Rather than confining one's entire activism to the field of societal struggle, adopting an 'anarchism of becoming' implies individuals devoting at least some time to revolting "against identity and roles" (Newman, POP, 2011 : 65). This could take the form of refusing to essentially define one's subjectivity in terms of fixed categories such as 'man', 'parent', or indeed 'anarchist': opening up the possibility of escaping the

2009 : 10) and therefore incorrectly conceives of repression as confined to the unitary subject.

essentializing tendency of the state.

One particularly influential mode of analysis that traces its origins to the aforementioned idea of the fragmented postmodern subject (as well as related concepts which will be discussed in subsequent chapters) is 'intersectionality'. The term's creator, Kimberle Crenshaw, defined intersectionality as the study of "the various ways in which race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political and representational aspects of violence against women of color" (Crenshaw, 1991 : 1244). Since Crenshaw's first use of the term, its meaning has expanded to encompass analysis of how many different social identities—ranging from disability to age—interact to produce certain specificities of oppression¹¹. Her acknowledgment of postmodern philosophy's influence in her creation of the concept is clear: "I consider intersectionality to be a provisional concept linking contemporary politics with postmodern theory" (ibid. : 1244).

Applied to market anarchist theory, intersectionality can provide a novel and productive exploration of how the state uniquely affects individuals in multiple, related ways as a consequence of their identities. Indeed, writers in the libertarian tradition have previously alluded to this conception of the subject, albeit without acknowledging their practical implications to the same extent as those who explicitly use the term 'intersectionality'. Friedrich Hayek viewed the individual as the "*foci* in a network of relationships" (Hayek, 2010 : 97) and Carl Menger's methodological individualism considered individuals to be "'structurally connected' totalities with 'interdependent elements'" (Sciabarra, 2000 : 118). From the

¹¹ For example, the popular feminist website 'Geek Feminism' refers to "homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, classism" (Geek Feminism Wiki Contributors, n.d.) alongside sex and race in its definition of intersectionality.

distinctive impact of the drug war on black women to the harms caused to trans sex workers by the criminalization of sex work, addressing intersectional concerns "strengthens [justice movements] against attempts by the ruling class to divide and conquer by exploiting internal fracture lines as a source of weakness" (Carson, 2014 : 9). Without intersectionality, antiauthoritarian praxis cannot form a broad, united front against power concentrations:

"Proponents of intersectionality, then, argue that all struggles against domination are necessary components for the creation of a liberatory society. It is unnecessary to create a totem pole of importance out of social struggles and suggest that some are "primary" while others are "secondary" or "peripheral" because of the complete ways that they intersect and inform one another."

(Shannon & Rogue, 2012)

Problems with postmodern approaches to non-state forms of hierarchy

Foucauldian power theory poses a serious problem for the market anarchist. If the state is merely one unjust power concentration amongst many, it no longer retains the special importance afforded to it by the non-aggression principle. In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault asks the following: "is it really so important to provide oneself with a theory of the state?" (Foucault, BOB, 2008: 91). For the market anarchist, the answer is a resounding 'yes'. Unless one is able to produce a valid reason why the state is in some important sense categorically distinct from other power structures, the foundational anti-statism of market anarchism will be significantly undermined. Furthermore, the desirability of a praxis that aims to reduce state

power is reduced:

“What is truly remarkable is the fact that [Foucault’s] discourse, which tends to blot out power by dispersing it among tiny molecular vessels, is enjoying great success at a time when the expansion and weight of the State are assuming proportions never seen before.”

(Poulantzas, 2000 : 44)

The most compelling response to these problems is to insist upon the unique nature of the state in relation to power. Whilst Foucault’s argument that “violence...[does] not constitute the principle or the basic nature of power” (Foucault, *SAP*, 1982) is valid, it does not follow that violence is merely one unremarkable instrument of power amongst many. Market anarchists argue that the state’s successful claim to being a legitimate geographical monopoly on physical violence (actualized and threatened) demarcates it from other power concentrations. The state is more than “the point of strategic codification of a multitude of power relations” (Jessop, 2011 : 68); it is, at its very core, defined by the initiation of physical violence or threat thereof. Whether market anarchists justify their opposition to the institutionalization of initiatory violence (and the prioritization of such praxis) by consequentialist ethics, deontological ethics or virtue ethics, they are largely united by this indispensable definition of the state.

There are also issues with the postmodern approach to fragmented subjectivity as previously outlined in relation to the work of Deleuze and Guattari: both in terms of theory and praxis. Objections to the theoretical underpinnings of postmodern subjectivity, which focus on a

defense of our shared capacity for reason and reflexivity on the multiplicity of our subject positions, will be explored (indirectly) in *Chapter Three*. The primary counterargument to the praxis entailed by postmodern subjectivity, discussed in the work of Lewis Call and Saul Newman, is that it draws energy away from collective struggle against the state in favor of an ineffective egocentricity.

This criticism has been advanced most forcefully by Murray Bookchin, who coined the disparaging term 'lifestyle anarchism' in order to describe what he saw as the emerging harms within the anarchist movement caused by accepting postmodern accounts of subjectivity:

"Ad hoc adventurism, personal bravura,...celebrations of theoretical incoherence (pluralism), a basically apolitical and anti-organizational commitment to imagination, desire, and ecstasy, and an intensely self-oriented enchantment of everyday life, reflect the toll that social reaction has taken on Euro-American anarchism over the past two decades."

(Bookchin, 1995: 6)

Bookchin's damning polemic against the inconsequential hedonism he believes stems from adopting an 'anarchism of becoming' has been subject to criticism, most notably from Bob Black in *Anarchy after Leftism*. Black accuses Bookchin of erecting 'lifestyle anarchism' as a strawman, before taking him to task on the assertion that a certain strand of anarchism is 'apolitical': "how can a political philosophy like anarchism – any variety of anarchism – be apolitical?... Anarchism is anti-political by definition" (Black, 1997 : 25).

There is a major problem with Black's rebuttal; he is wrong to think of 'lifestyle anarchism' as a strawman. In an interview for *The Interstitial Journal*, Lewis Call states that he has become "quite a few different things over the years: anarchist, vegetarian, Taoist, nudist, polyamorist, etc. I hope to be freakish in so many different ways that the modern disciplinary state can't figure out how to regulate me" (Call, BD, 2013). This comment typifies the praxis that commonly associated with those who apply postmodern accounts of the subject to anarchism, which places importance on personal change to the extent that it neglects wider forms of activist organization. Furthermore, it may be argued that a degree of identification with social roles is necessary to provide a basis for resisting unjust hierarchies; identifying oneself with the role of anarchist activist provides psychological incentives for engaging in meaningful action.

Another criticism of the praxis which stems from the postmodern approach to subjectivity is that scholarship informed by intersectionality often fails to correctly prioritize specific social divisions, ultimately neutering its effectiveness as a tool for analysis. Such a viewpoint has been advanced by many scholars and centers upon the contention that "it is impossible to take into account *all* the differences that are significant at any given moment" (Ludvig, 2006 : 246). The impossibility of accounting for all relevant aspects of one's identity in the analysis of difference means that market anarchist applications of intersectionality may, in an attempt to cover all social identities relevant to a certain experience of oppression, rob themselves of their critical power. Whilst there is some truth to the claim that "ranking oppressions is divisive and unnecessary--and worse, it undermines solidarity" (Shannon & Rogue, 2012), such an action

may at times be necessary given the limited resources that can be devoted to anarchist activism: both physical and psychological.

An example¹² of this may be that cisgender women who wish to discuss the suppression of their reproductive rights by state coercion are chastised for using the term 'women' as an analytical category in doing so, since it does not account for the experiences of trans people. Alternative terms such as 'womb bearer' or 'pregnant person' arguably gloss over the fact that the overwhelming majority of people who are affected by the state's interference in reproductive rights are cisgender, and therefore have consistently fallen victim to the sex hierarchy that ostensibly contributes towards restricted reproductive rights.

There are however limitations to the criticism of intersectionality outlined above. The valid point that specific identities are more relevant in certain contexts than others can be bastardized as an excuse for reproducing oppression within antiauthoritarian movements. In the case of the above example, it is possible that acknowledging the particularities of having one's reproductive rights limited by the state can be taken to endorse an overly essentialist conception of womanhood in general, therefore excluding trans women from participation in the feminist movement in general. Ultimately, one must take great care in appreciating the importance of how intersecting identities produce specific shared experiences without ignoring the liberation of minorities within marginalized groups.

¹² See '4 Ways to Be Gender Inclusive When Discussing Abortion' on the popular 'Everyday Feminism' website for an example of this happening in the real world (Qu'emi, 2014).

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, it has been argued that market anarchism's focus on the non-aggression principle as a basis for praxis fails to appropriately address cultural and social concerns that do not flow directly from state coercion. Three areas of postmodern philosophy were then proposed as potential solutions to this problem: Foucault's conception of power, Deleuze and Guattari's account of fragmented subjectivity and intersectionality as a framework for analysis. Foucauldian power theory was evaluated as being beneficial in its ability to reveal the ubiquitous nature of power relations, but flawed in its refusal to emphasize state coercion as a unique category of power relations. Meanwhile, Deleuze and Guattari's postmodern approach to subjectivity was judged to be useful in positing the 'anarchism of becoming' as a way of combating internalized hierarchical thinking, but criticized for its neglect of collective activism. Finally, intersectionality was posited as a useful means of examining how different hierarchies contribute to individuals' experiences of power, albeit with the qualifier that some intersectional scholarship has the tendency to eschew meaningful analysis in favor of overestimating the relevance of certain axes of oppression to specific situations.

Overall, postmodern philosophy can contribute to a market anarchist understanding of non-state hierarchies to a moderate extent. A recognition of the inescapability of power as a constitutive force in social relations encourages the market anarchist to acknowledge that abolishing the state may not be enough to eliminate unjust hierarchies from the world. Whilst it would be harmful to focus too heavily on combating essentialist thinking about one's

subjectivity, a degree of recognition that one is always more than any one social identity coheres with a resistance to singular modes of market anarchist praxis entailed by 'fixed' essences. The potential pitfalls of intersectionality can be overcome by exhibiting heightened awareness of when to limit the "exasperated *etc.*" (Butler, 1990 : 143) that so often appears at the end of lists of social identities, thereby producing a more inclusive and powerful market anarchist account of hierarchies.

CHAPTER TWO

DECONSTRUCTING DECONSTRUCTION: WHEN ARE HIERARCHIES ACCEPTABLE?

*"One would not call all exercises of power oppressive"*¹³

- *Todd May*

Market anarchist approaches to evaluating hierarchies

Market anarchists have failed to elucidate a compelling means of determining which hierarchies are acceptable and which are not. In *Chapter One*, it was established that a Foucauldian analysis of power was a useful method for opening up new fields of critical analysis beyond state coercion. However, even if Foucault's insights into the nature of power are heeded, market anarchists must still give an account of why certain power relations are beneficially 'productive', whilst others are unjust.

There are two main approaches to such an account that dominate current market anarchist theory. The first is simply to state that hierarchy that exists as a result of state coercion is illegitimate, and that any other hierarchy is legitimate. Despite the seemingly restrictive nature of this approach, market anarchist scholarship in this tradition sometimes arrives at some fairly radical conclusions regarding the resulting distribution of power. For example, Murray Rothbard argued that one conclusion of the libertarian property theory¹⁴ underlying his defense of the non-aggression principle was that students should take over their universities:

13 (May, 1994 : 96).

14 Rothbard's 'homesteading' justification of private property is situated firmly in the Lockean tradition. He argues that one may possess a just title to any unowned resource through mixing one's labor with it or acquiring it through voluntary trade.

"Take, for example, the State universities. This is property built on funds stolen from the taxpayers. Since the State has not found or put into effect a way of returning ownership of this property to the taxpaying public, the proper owners of this university are the "homesteaders", those who have already been using and therefore "mixing their labor" with the facilities. The prime consideration is to deprive the thief, in this case the State, as quickly as possible of the ownership and control of its ill-gotten gains, to return the property to the innocent, private sector. This means student and/or faculty ownership of the universities."

(Rothbard, CHP, 1969)

However, despite the occasionally radically anti-hierarchical conclusions of libertarian praxis arrived at through the non-aggression principle alone, it fails to provide any basis for directly opposing non-coercive hierarchies. This can result in the emergence of culturally authoritarian varieties of market anarchism, such as the anarcho-capitalism advocated by Hans-Hermann Hoppe. Professor Hoppe argues that anarcho-capitalism should be based on hierarchical, conservative moral values, and states that:

"...advocates of alternative, non-family and kin-centered lifestyles such as, for instance, individual hedonism, parasitism, nature-environment worship, homosexuality, or communism-will have to be physically removed from society, too, if one is to maintain a libertarian order."

(Hoppe, DGTF, 2007 : 218)

Though Hoppe and other anarcho-capitalists (such as Walter Block) often make statements that demonstrate their advocacy of a stateless society predominantly based on conservative moral values, it may be objected that they are only arguing that such a society *could* be legal in the absence of government. However, the underlying tone of such rhetoric strongly suggests that they are committed to creating a conservative social order within a stateless society, even if they do not think it should be accomplished through violations of the non-aggression principle. In the absence of effective criteria for determining whether such a hierarchical stateless society is ethically preferable, market anarchists are left unable to cogently articulate objections to the views of Hoppe and those who hold similar beliefs.

The second market anarchist approach to determining the acceptability of hierarchies is to deny that a general theory can be formulated: a view shared with some non-market forms of anarchism. Instead, such a set of generalized criteria is replaced by a tendency to assume "that the burden of proof for anyone in a position of power and authority lies on them" (Chomsky, WWWL, 2013), and that instances of power concentrations are best evaluated purely in their local contexts. Rather than appealing to a universal set of standards by which market anarchists can judge specific hierarchies, it is argued that "the relativity of the anarchist principle to the actual situation is of the essence of anarchism" (Goodman, 2009 : 1). Whilst this approach is not without considerable merit, owing to its emphasis on examining hierarchies other than the state, it is undermined by the fact that it fails to adequately delineate general conditions of acceptance for any given hierarchy that one could apply in the real world.

Postmodern approaches to evaluating hierarchies

Arguably, Jacques Derrida's project of 'deconstruction' is the area of postmodern philosophy that deals with the acceptability of hierarchies most explicitly. Deconstruction refers to process of "undermin[ing] the philosophy [that a discourse] asserts, or the hierarchical oppositions on which it relies, by identifying in the text the rhetorical operations that produce the supposed ground of argument, the key concept or premise" (Culler, 1982 : 86).

The primary way in which deconstruction attempts to undermine hierarchical oppositions within a text is by identifying value-laden binarisms (where the 'left-hand' term is given primacy), reversing the hierarchy entailed by them in order to show that the 'right-hand' term is in fact "the condition of possibility of the left-hand term" (Searle, *The Word Turned Upside Down*, 1983), and finally displacing the binarism itself by showing that "something that cannot conform to either side of a dichotomy or opposition" (Reynolds, n.d.). In Derrida's earlier work, the process of deconstruction is largely focused upon undermining the 'metaphysics of presence', which Derrida believes characterizes the entire Western philosophical tradition. He therefore concentrates on:

"...reversing the Platonistic hierarchies: the hierarchies between the invisible or intelligible and the visible or sensible; between essence and appearance; between the soul and body; between living memory and rote memory; between *mnēmē* and *hypomnēsis*; between voice and writing; between finally good and evil."

(Lawlor, 2014)

Drawing upon the work of Swiss linguist and structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure, Derrida aims to demonstrate how the fact that "language consists of a system of elements whose essential functioning depends on the differences between the elements of the system" (Searle, *The Word Turned Upside Down*, 1983) entails those elements "being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system" (Derrida, 1982 : 26).

In the case of Platonic 'presence', the result of such deconstruction is that presence is revealed to depend upon absence, and furthermore that the difference between the two terms is in fact illusory. In order to illustrate this, one may think of a white circle upon a black background. For the observer, the white circle is thought of as 'present', whereas the black background is 'absence' and merely supplementary to such presence. Deconstructing presence and absence in this case would first attempt to show that the presence of the white circle depends upon the absence of the black background, since if the background was also white then questions of presence and absence would be redundant. Secondly, a deconstructive strategy could employ a 'Gestalt shift'¹⁵, whereby the viewer could see the white circle as a 'hole' in the black background, reconceiving of the black as presence and the circle as absence. The net result of this process is the realization that behind the notions of presence and absence, there lies what Derrida terms a 'différance': an infinite deferral of meaning and an indeterminacy about what counts as presence or absence.

Through deconstructing the metaphysics of presence, Derrida hoped to mount a "polemic...

¹⁵ See Wittgenstein's famous 'duck-rabbit' illustration in his *Philosophical Investigations* for a more comprehensive explanation of the 'Gestalt shift'.

against all the opposite pairs of terms so characteristic of Western thought" (Meynell, 1999 : 61). In the work of Derrida and other postmodern writers who utilize deconstruction, hierarchical oppositions ranging from 'man and woman' to 'white and black' are first inverted by privileging the previously subordinate term and then displacing the very idea of an opposition between the two sides of the binarism. Although some scholars argue that deconstruction is a strategy of literary criticism rather than philosophy as such¹⁶—since openly resorting to rational argument would mean appealing to the logocentrism¹⁷ that deconstruction eschews—its various manifestations do entail normative conclusions for the domain of politics and therefore market anarchism. If, as seems to be the case, Derrida and other advocates of deconstruction are calling for a "generalised 'deconstruction' of 'hierarchical oppositions'" (ibid. : 68), this would imply a particular approach to determining the acceptability of hierarchies. All hierarchies are unacceptable, and must be subjected to deconstruction:

"What must occur then is not merely a suppression of all hierarchy, for anarchy only consolidates just as surely the established order of a metaphysical hierarchy; nor is it a simple change or reversal in the terms of any given hierarchy. Rather the Umdrehung [revolution/rotation] must be a transformation of the hierarchical structure itself."

(Derrida, SNS, 1978 : 81)

Deconstruction has had a particularly large influence on discussions of the 'masculine/feminine'

¹⁶ Indeed, Derrida attempts to deconstruct the binary opposition between fiction and reality, famously remarking that "there is no outside-text" (Derrida, OG, 1976 : 158-159).

¹⁷ Logocentrism is defined as "that characteristic of texts, theories, modes of representation and signifying systems that generates a desire for a direct, unmediated, given hold on meaning, being and knowledge" (Gross, 1986 : 26-27).

binary opposition, with writers such as Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray imploring us to deconstruct the hierarchical systems of thought that identifies men as original and women as supplementary. In the case of Cixous, she takes up phallogocentric¹⁸ themes from Derridean deconstruction, tying together the privileging of the masculine over feminine in Western history with the privileging of narrative over 'stream of consciousness' approaches in literature: encouraging women to move beyond binary thought by engaging in 'écriture féminine' (feminine writing). One can see the influence of Derridean deconstruction in the following passage:

"If woman has always functioned 'within' the discourse of man, a signifier [man] that has always referred back to the opposite signifier [woman] which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds, it is time to dislocate this 'within', to explode it, turn it around..."

(Cixous, 1976 : 887)

In essence, Cixous is using deconstruction as a way of addressing the hierarchy of patriarchy: recommending a praxis of writing that is "open, varied, fluid and full of possibilities... [enshrining] a subversive kind of thought that heralds a transforming of the basis of society and culture" (Meynell, 1999 : 149). Market anarchists may look to Cixous's approach as an specific instance in the process of deconstructing all hierarchies, since leaving them as they would reinforce the tyranny of binary, oppositional thinking. One may therefore resist the hierarchy of the state by refusing to submit to the binary, oppositional discourse that justifies it.

¹⁸ A neologism coined by Derrida in reference to the link between binary thought and patriarchy.

Problems with postmodern approaches evaluating hierarchies

The most persuasive criticism of Derrida and deconstruction is centered upon the argument that he fails to undermine the 'metaphysics of presence' that gives rise to binary thinking and its associated hierarchies. For John Searle, this failure can be seen in Derrida's misinterpretation of Saussurian linguistics. Derrida argues that "nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces" (Derrida, P, 1982 : 26), but Searle correctly points out that language's functioning through the differences between elements does not entail those elements being neither present nor absent, or constituted by traces of the other:

"I understand the differences between the two sentences 'the cat is on the mat' and 'the dog is on the mat' in precisely the way I do because the word 'cat' is present in the first while absent from the second, and the word 'dog' is present in the second, while absent from the first. The system of differences does nothing whatever to undermine the distinction between presence and absence; on the contrary the system of differences is precisely a system of presences and absences."

(Searle, *The Word Turned Upside Down*, 1983)

Applied to the aforementioned example of a white circle upon a white background, Searle's criticism is pointing out that whilst the 'presence' of the white circle does indeed depend upon the 'absence' of the black background to become intelligible, this is not the same as arguing that there is no distinction or infinite deferral of meaning between them.

It is only through the undermining of the metaphysics of presence that Derrida is able to conclude that there is no 'outside-text', and therefore "philosophical texts can be rendered accessible in their essential contents by literary criticism" (Habermas, 1991 : 190). This assertion—that all discourses consist solely of differences and traces—enables Derrida to call for the deconstruction of all other binary oppositions within texts, since "once the apparatus of talking about traces and differences has been treated as definitive of writing, of textuality, this apparatus is then applied pretty much all over" (Searle, *The Word Turned Upside Down*, 1983). Since the very foundation of deconstruction is at fault, its subsequent applications are also flawed. Contrary to the claims of Derrida and those who utilize his methods, one cannot use deconstruction as a basis for dissolving all hierarchical oppositions, nor as a criteria for the acceptability of hierarchies that views all hierarchies as necessarily flawed and based on faulty metaphysics.

Derrida responded to the criticism that he dissolves the distinction between philosophy and literature by claiming that Jürgen Habermas and other critics "have visibly and carefully avoided reading me" (Derrida, *ISPL*, 2006 : 37). Regardless of whether numerous criticisms of Derrida's work as deliberately and unnecessarily obscurantist are accurate¹⁹, his reply is a poor defense of his position. If Derrida does preserve the distinction between philosophy and literary theory, deconstruction is subject to the criticisms by John Searle outlined above. Its "unconditional and incalculable advocacy for the indeterminate other" (Pensky, 1996 : 247) is

¹⁹ For example, Foucault is reported to have said Derrida practiced "obscurantisme terroriste" (Searle, *RP*, 2000): the terrorism of obscurantism.

based on incoherent metaphysical foundations. If, as Habermas asserts, he is dissolving the distinction and moving philosophy into the realm of literary criticism, then he is transposing “the radical critique of reason [i.e. the metaphysics of presence] into the domain of rhetoric in order to blunt the paradox of self-referentiality...[but dulling] the sword of the critique of reason itself” (Habermas, 1991 : 210). In summary then, Derridean deconstruction cannot provide a solid basis for distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable hierarchies.

Despite the incoherency of deconstruction, writers who have used it as a basis for political action should still be considered valuable in the service of giving grounds for opposing specific hierarchies. Whilst ‘écriture féminine’ is mistaken in its attempt to undermine the validity of ‘masculine’ binary thinking, Cixous does correctly place emphasis on the anti-patriarchal possibilities of women writing in a more instinctual fashion:

“Almost everything is yet to be written by women about femininity: about their sexuality, that is, its infinite and mobile complexity, about their eroticization, sudden turn-ons of a certain miniscule-immense area of their bodies...”

(Cixous, 1976 : 885)

However, Cixous’ call for women to express their inner emotions more is conceived as as an act of resistance to the tyranny of ‘masculine’ rationality, rather than a decision arrived at by rational reflection. Whilst there is value in achieving an adequate balance between rationality and instincts, Cixous (along with Irigaray) “invites us to abjure critical consciousness, to go with the flow of our instincts—which will consign us all to the devil in short order” (Meynell, 1999 :

154). The historical hierarchy of man over woman, and its pseudo-justifications uttered *in the name of* rationality and binary thought, does not provide good grounds for foregoing such rationality. On the contrary, it demands a more thoroughgoing attention to overcoming biases and constant modification of beliefs in the light of experience. Phallogentrism and other hierarchies must be overcome with more logocentrism, not less.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, it has been argued that Derrida's call for deconstructing all binary oppositions provides the market anarchist with a set of criteria for determining the acceptability of hierarchies. Such a call amounts to the judgment that *no* hierarchy is currently acceptable, since they all rely upon privileging the 'left-hand' term of a binarism at the expense of the 'right-hand' term. Furthermore, it has been contended that Derrida was incorrect in viewing all binary oppositions as hierarchies that need to be deconstructed, due to his unsound critique of the metaphysics of presence and ostensible attempt to transfer philosophy into the realm of literary theory.

However, the unsuitability of deconstruction as a criteria for determining the acceptability of hierarchies does not mean that those who work in such a tradition are useless for the market anarchist. Deconstruction's accentuation of the neglected 'other' encourages us to be especially attentive towards the existence of unjust hierarchies, and in some cases correctly identifies such instances. Whilst its assertion that binary thinking is problematic in itself is flawed, it is correct to emphasize a renewed attention to the ways in which we may wrongly devalue the right-

hand term in binary oppositions.

CHAPTER THREE

AGAINST TOTALIZING ANARCHISM: LYOTARD AND RORTY

"Why do you not say how things will be operated under Anarchism?" is a question I have had to meet thousands of times. Because I believe that Anarchism can not consistently impose an iron-clad program or method on the future."

- Emma Goldman ²⁰

Market anarchism and the totalized stateless society

Various strands of anarchism, including market anarchism, are often overly dismissive of possibilities for the co-existence of different forms of voluntary economic and social organization within a stateless society. Many anarcho-capitalists envision society after the state as being dominated by 'capitalist' norms, such as "...a social order of bosses, landlords, centralized corporations, class exploitation, cut-throat business dealings, immiserated workers, structural poverty, or large-scale economic inequality" (Chartier & Johnson, 2011 : 6). In reference to anarcho-capitalists Murray Rothbard and Roy Childs, Gary Chartier and Charles Johnson assert the following:

"The future free society they envisioned was a market society – but one in which market relationships were little changed from business as usual and the end of state control was imagined as freeing business to do much what it had been doing before, rather than unleashing competing forms of economic organization, which might radically transform market forms from the bottom up." (ibid. : 6)

20 (Goldman, 2014 : 25).

Some market anarchist writers, such as Kevin Carson, have ascribed the cause of this totalizing tendency to 'vulgar libertarianism': the idea that those within the libertarian and market anarchist tradition "seem to have trouble remembering, from one moment to the next, whether they're defending actually existing capitalism or free market principles" (Carson, SMPE, 2007 : 142). This tendency can be seen in a significant proportion of current libertarian and market anarchist literature, and stems from a misplaced admiration for those who profit not from the unknown ideal of the free market, but from the warped and privilege-ridden state capitalism (or 'crony capitalism') that characterizes much of the developed world. This admiration is the result of insufficient attention being paid to the ways in which state intervention undermines the "centrifugal tendency of markets" (Chartier & Johnson, 2011 : 3), which is defined as the propensity for free markets to "diffuse wealth" (ibid. : 3) rather than concentrate it.

There are however market anarchists who acknowledge the fact that market anarchism is likely to result in a number of different economic and social arrangements. On the issue of property theory, for example, there is considerable debate between those who would advocate more extreme 'occupancy and use' approaches, those who defend absentee landlordship to a significant degree, and those who believe that communes based on collective ownership can, under certain conditions, be compatible with market anarchism. They are nonetheless united by the assertion that under a polycentric legal system²¹ implied by market anarchism, no single concept of property will apply to all communities in a stateless society:

"I don't doubt that some rough approximation of broad rules or norms will hold sway in

²¹ A famous outline of such a legal system can be found in David Friedman's *The Machinery of Freedom*.

most plausible anarchist societies, but they will be so highly dependent upon context that we should really be talking about how free people might best process said context."

(Gillis, 2015)

Similarly, there are market anarchists who point out the fact that the 'market' encompasses far more than wage labor and hierarchical corporations:

"...worker ownership and consumer co-ops are part of the market; grassroots mutual aid associations and community free clinics are part of the market; so are voluntary labor unions, consensual communes, narrower or broader experiments with gift economies, and countless other alternatives to the prevailing corporate-capitalist status quo."

(Johnson, MFFC, 2011 : 62)

However, even amongst those market anarchists who do defend non-totalizing conceptions of a stateless society, the likely emergence of multiple forms of economic and social arrangements is presumed to be a positive aspect of market anarchist political philosophy without an appropriate degree of defense. Why should market anarchism be a "space of maximal consensually-sustained social experimentation" (Johnson, MFFC, 2011)? Market anarchists answer the question of why a non-totalizing anarchism is preferable. This essay will now evaluate the potential of postmodern philosophy to accomplish this.

Postmodern responses to totalizing anarchism

Two prominent postmodern philosophers who provide arguments for the desirability of a heterogeneous society containing multiple forms of social and economic arrangements are

Jean-François Lyotard and Richard Rorty. Whilst Lyotard believes that we should replace meta-narratives—whether the primacy of the capitalist mode of production or the universal ethical imperative to abolish private property—with 'petits récits' (little narratives), Rorty calls for a dynamic, tolerant pragmatism that stems from his anti-representationalism. Both thinkers arrive at a philosophical pluralism, embracing the idea that individuals are "equally entitled to their own path to happiness" (Smith, 2005 : 25).

Lyotard bases his defense of such pluralism in the Wittgensteinian concept of 'language-games': "each of the various categories of utterance can be defined in terms of rules specifying their properties and the uses to which they can be put" (Lyotard, 1986 : 10). Examples of different language games include commands, prayers, pleas and descriptions. He contends that, contrary to the norms of scientific discourse, there are no universal rules of legitimation applying to all language-games. Therefore:

"...competition between language-games is to be settled by something more like aesthetic judgment than rationality...In effect, a society is to be commended, on Lyotard's account, to the degree that it tolerates a wider variety of language-games."

(Meynell, 1999 : 104)

This defense of allowing the existence of multiple, equally valid language-games is based on the contention that no one language-game can adequately capture the entirety of human experience: Lyotard is against totalizing metanarratives. Such totalizing metanarratives do violence to the infinite diversity of human experience, and impose a single conception of the

good life upon every individual. In Lyotard, the market anarchist may find justification for a non-totalizing stateless society through his appeal to the importance of many valid modes of social and economic organization, which although sometimes being based on irreconcilable norms should be navigated with respect for their equal validity in the universal sense.

Since Lyotard contends that all language-games are both incommensurable and equally valid—“it is...impossible to judge the existence of validity of narrative knowledge on the basis of scientific knowledge and vice versa” (Lyotard, 1986 : 26) —a postmodern theory of justice is required to provide a means for dealing with these differences. He rejects the contention that an absence of universal criterion for legitimation (the collapse of metanarratives) results in “the disintegration of the social aggregates into a mass of individual atoms thrown into the absurdity of Brownian motion” (Lyotard, 1986 : 15), and details some of his reflections on the problem posed by irreconcilable language-games in *The Differend*.

A 'differend' is, for Lyotard, “a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments. One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy” (Lyotard, LD, 1988). An example of such a differend relevant to the market anarchist may be three communities in a stateless society that have settled upon different property norms: whilst one group may regulate proceedings by appealing to an 'occupancy and use' criterion, the second group may defend absentee landlordship, and the third may not even have a word that appropriately illustrates the concept of 'property' in their language-game. In such cases, Lyotard argues that it is crucial to

acknowledge "an ethical respect for the flux of experience, a respect that is prior to any ethical norm" (Dunn, 1993 : 196). Beyond this foundation of respect for the incommensurability of language-games however, Lyotard advocates a non-normative pragmatism based on 'paralogy', or a movement beyond established norms of reason:

"In relation to research, this means the production of new ideas by going against or outside of established norms, of making new moves in language games, changing the rules of language games and inventing new games."

(Woodward, n.d.)

Applied to the above example of communities with divergent ideas of property, the move towards paralogy entails respecting how different contexts may give rise to different property rules, each of which may be valid in their respective contexts. Such a move also recommends constant innovation in response to constantly changing local circumstances. Market anarchists have drawn attention to this respect for difference based on context in the area of property:

"The question is not so much what property system might finally be settled on, but how it should emerge... The assignment of titles to physical items is an inescapable concern – but for practical reasons. Concerns that are deeply dependent in many respects on context...Three shipwrecked people aren't going to divide up their island, write elaborate contracts, and start a fish subprime derivatives stand."

(Gillis, OEPR, 2015)

Richard Rorty shares Lyotard's emphasis on the importance of a non-normative pragmatism,

based on a skepticism towards metanarratives. Like Lyotard, he regards scientific discourse as unjustly asserting a claim to universal legitimation: "an overzealous philosophy of science has created an impossible ideal of ahistorical legitimation" (Rorty, 1984 : 35). Rorty's arguments against the possibility of science and reason's objective legitimation are expounded in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, where he defends anti-representationalism: the view that "the human mind reflects or pictures nature, or rather can be made to do so by following the appropriate procedures" (Meynell, 1999 : 128).

Building upon the work of Wilfrid Sellars and Willard van Orman Quine, Rorty suggests that we should view the acquisition of knowledge as "matter of conversation and of social practice, rather than as an attempt to mirror nature" (Rorty, PMN, 1979 : 171). This is in turn based on the contention that the correspondence theory of truth, which for Rorty roughly states that the structures of language and thought bear a resemblance to the world, is incorrect. Rorty attacks this "idea that we must acknowledge the world's normative constraint on our belief-systems if we are to be rational subjects" (Ramberg, 2009), and echoes Lyotard's suspicion of the ability of scientific discourse to provide an objective account of reality:

"...the Platonic notion of Truth is absurd. It is absurd either as a notion of truth about reality which is not about reality-under-a-certain-description, or as the notion of truth about reality under some privileged description which makes all other descriptions unnecessary because it is commensurable with each of them."

(Rorty, PMN, 1979 : 378)

For Rorty, "we understand knowledge when we understand the social justification of belief, and thus have no need to view it as accuracy of representation" (ibid. : 170). This position of 'epistemological behaviorism' entails there being both no possibility of (and no need for) any 'privileged representation' underpinned by correspondence to reality, since "there is no way to get outside our beliefs and our language so as to find some test other than coherence" (ibid. : 178).

Despite sharing the view that scientific discourse cannot be legitimated universally, Rorty differs from Lyotard in his views of the consequences of this position. Whereas Lyotard takes the incommensurability of scientific knowledge with other (equally valid) forms of knowledge as evidence for paralogism, Rorty criticises this move towards what he sees as the 'avant-garde'. Contrary to Lyotard's call for intellectuals to "escape the rules and practices and institutions which have been transmitted to him" (Rorty, HLP, 1984 : 42), Rorty argues that:

"Social purposes are served, just as Habermas says, by finding beautiful ways of harmonizing interests, rather than sublime ways of detaching oneself from others' interests."

(ibid. : 42)

This call for a harmonization of interests is what shapes the liberal political thought that stems from Rorty's anti-representationalist pragmatism: "the key imperative in Rorty's political agenda is the deepening and widening of solidarity" (Ramberg, 2009). Whilst acknowledging that such a commitment is ultimately without foundations, Rorty maintains that the historical

contingency of liberalism does not require such justification. Accordingly, he advocates 'liberal ironism', which involves a commitment to liberal values whilst in private acknowledging that such a commitment has no objective legitimation. The praxis entailed by liberal ironism amounts to "promoting conversation between different human groups, especially when these groups encounter problems of mutual understanding" (Meynell, 1999 : 129), and may be considered useful in the creation of a non-totalizing anarchism due to the need for toleration of differences in economic and social arrangements in a stateless society.

Problems with postmodern responses to totalising anarchism

Whilst the importance of tolerance, respect for difference and skepticism towards totalizing metanarratives are all positive features of Lyotard and Rorty's work, both thinkers' views of science rely upon theoretical arguments that have been subject to compelling criticism, and consequently impact considerations relevant to market anarchism in the field of science.

Rorty and Lyotard (the latter less directly) argue that the only candidates for an account of knowledge are variations on 'justified true belief' theories or their pragmatist approaches, which view knowledge as merely the product of a variety of non-foundational social justifications of belief. However, they neglect to address a third alternative: the epistemology of critical rationalism (or falsificationism), most famously expounded Karl Popper. Popper's approach to epistemology adheres to a correspondence theory of truth (namely, that of Alfred Tarski) but breaks from justification in arguing that knowledge is never justifiable, always provisional and can only progress through falsification. Popper rejects those such as Rorty and Lyotard who:

"...confuse consistency with truth, 'known to be true' with truth, pragmatic utility with truth...[all those who] reduce knowledge to beliefs and mental states. We can see that these identifications are wrong by noting that some statements may be true regardless of whether anybody believes them and, conversely, that some may be false despite universal belief to the contrary."

(Garcia, 2006 : 123)

Whilst Rorty and Lyotard believe that knowledge has no need for a theory of objective truth, with the former arguing that everything can be explained by his epistemological behaviorism, Popper argues that truth (referred to by him as 'verisimilitude') is necessary as a "regulative principle" (ibid. : 123) that can help guide us in the formation of better theories. Despite Rorty believing that Popper's approach to the truth was in many ways similar to his own²², it is clear that Popper rejected the 'truth as consensus' arguments of Rorty, instead arguing that "some beliefs are more useful than others precisely *because* they are more accurate representations of reality" (Carroll, 1995 : 453).

A famous criticism of critical rationalism can be found in the work of Thomas Kuhn, whom Rorty cites approvingly in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Kuhn argued that the history of science is split between long periods of 'normal' science, which works within a single dominant paradigm (such as Newtonian mechanics) and short bursts of 'extraordinary' science, which entail a 'paradigm shift' (such as the move from Newtonian mechanics to Einstein's special

²² Rorty states that the attitude towards truth centered upon "consensus of a community rather than a relation to a nonhuman reality...is associated not only with the American pragmatist tradition but with the work of Popper..." (Rorty, 500, 1991) : 23).

relativity). These paradigm shifts are, for Kuhn (and Rorty), evidence that rival paradigms are incommensurable, and furthermore that science does not (for the most part) proceed via bold conjecture and criticism. In other words, scientists are either not 'doing science' in the manner that Popper describes—constant testing of theories with the aim of falsification—or talking at cross-purposes. Quoting Max Planck, Kuhn agrees with the notion that:

"...a new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it."

(Kuhn, 1970 : 151)

If Kuhn's criticism is valid, this lends weight to Rorty's view that "neither the concept of truth, nor those of objectivity and of reality, can be invoked to explain or legitimate our inferential practices and our standards of warrant" (Ramberg, 2009), since if rival scientific paradigms are incommensurable, there cannot be an objective standard of truth to which we can appeal as a regulative principle for scientific inquiry.

However, Popper provides compelling answers to Kuhn's criticism of his work. Contrary to Kuhn's thesis, Popper argues that the history of science is not broadly characterized by 'normal' scientists working within a single dominant paradigm. In reply to Kuhn's assertion that rival paradigms are incommensurable (hence Kuhn quoting Planck approvingly), Popper states that he does "not agree that the history of science supports [Kuhn's] doctrine (essential for his theory of rational communication) that 'normally' we have *one* dominant theory" (Popper, 1970

: 55). Furthermore, although admitting that rational discussion between competing theoretical frameworks is challenging for a number of reasons, Popper argues that Kuhn "exaggerates a difficulty into an impossibility" (ibid. : 56-57), citing points of contact between Newton and Einstein's theory of gravity as an example.

Given that Popper's epistemology successfully defends the existence and usefulness of a correspondence theory of truth, we can now assert that Rorty's defense of pragmatism (at least in the field of science) is based on flawed theoretical underpinnings. This rescues the idea that an objectively legitimated science can, in the right circumstances, inform market anarchist praxis. Indeed, non-market anarchists have praised market anarchism's commitment to 'root-seeking', with Noam Chomsky stating that he "admire[s] [market anarchists'] commitment to rationality – which is rare" (Chomsky, OA, 1996). The capability of science (freed from the grasp of unjust hierarchies and overextension into other domains via 'scientism') as a tool for such 'root-seeking' radicalism has been explored by William Gillis:

"...to search for the most deeply rooted patterns, to push beyond the existing or the immediate, into extremes, to look for what can break and how, and to not be afraid of throwing everything out, all in order to better grasp what is possible...This is the beating heart of science and it is what has driven its rise, rectified its mistakes, and continually resisted its capture by power. It is what makes it the most fecund site for resistance in our world today."

(Gillis, SR, 2015 : 27)

The above criticisms of Rorty are also relevant to the work of Lyotard. Whilst they differ on the question of whether consensus-building is preferable to a more avant-garde approach towards postmodern society, they are united in their view that there is no objective way of legitimating any metanarrative, including science. However, in light of the above criticisms, it is possible to hold that whilst "the proliferation of language-games is certainly useful for keeping attentiveness and intelligence alive...it does not dispense us from reasonableness" (Meynell, 1999 : 118).

Whether Rorty and Lyotard's theses on incommensurability hold for the realm of ethics is a question that is beyond the scope of this essay. Suffice to say that Lyotard's work on the idea of the differend contains valuable insights into toleration and the importance of lively experimentation between different modes of social and economic life in a stateless society, regardless of what metaethical stance one takes in defending market anarchism.

Whilst Lyotard fails to view scientific discourse as a means of truth-orientated problem-solving within such experimentation, his work is nonetheless valuable for the market anarchist in that encourages the adoption of a stance of respect towards forms of life that diverge from one's own, and tolerating their existence. The same can be said of Rorty who, although mistaken in his commitment to statist liberalism, also highlights the importance of a non-totalizing praxis that approaches difference with respect.

Concluding remarks

Both Lyotard and Rorty accentuate the importance of empathizing with divergent approaches

to social and economic organization. The former is correct in advocating continuous experimentation between different language-games, which coheres with a dynamic, non-totalizing market anarchist praxis. The latter is correct in arguing that the promotion of mutual understanding and solidarity between groups holding different views on ideal forms of organization is a laudable goal, and this principle should be taken into account when formulating a non-totalizing market anarchist vision of a stateless society.

However, the criticism of science's objective legitimation in the work of both thinkers should be rejected by market anarchists, since it has been established via critical rationalism that it is possible to validate the notion of progress towards an objective scientific truth. Such a conception of truth is useful to market anarchist praxis; the idea of 'root-seeking' as a means of resistance to unjust hierarchies is represented by the scientific quest for knowledge.

Overall, the ideas of Lyotard and Rorty can assist in the creation of a non-totalizing anarchist praxis to a moderate extent. Although their rejection of science guided by the regulative principle of truth is mistaken, they provide worthwhile defenses of variation in social and economic arrangements according to circumstance, as well as of adopting an attitude of respect towards difference.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

During the course of this essay, the potential for postmodern philosophy to augment market anarchism has been explored in three main areas. Over the course of *Chapter One*, it was argued that the non-aggression principle commonly used as the foundational axiom of market anarchism failed to account for the importance of hierarchies other than the state. It was subsequently argued that Foucault's postmodern approach to power is capable of illuminating non-state hierarchies, although it fails to preserve the crucial distinction between coercive state power and other forms of power relations. Following this, Deleuze and Guattari's postmodern account of subjectivity was examined, and it was contended that this account revealed the full of extent of power relations, as they reside within subjectivity as well as beyond it. The consequences for market anarchist praxis were evaluated, with the postmodern-inspired concept of the 'anarchism of becoming' judged to be somewhat unsuited for adoption by market anarchists, owing to its excessive emphasis on personal revolution at the expense of wider social struggle. Finally, the concept of intersectionality was revealed to be inspired by postmodern accounts of subjectivity, and judged to be a useful tool for market anarchists in highlighting the specificities of non-state forms of oppression if used in an appropriate manner. In *Chapter Two*, it was stated that market anarchism has struggled to provide a means of differentiating between just and unjust hierarchies. In lieu of this problem, it was argued that

Derrida's notion of deconstruction may provide a way of drawing the line between just and unjust hierarchies. It was then asserted that Derridean deconstruction amounted to a criticism of *all* hierarchies, since hierarchies are all based on the binary thought and logocentrism that Derrida sought to deconstruct. However, deconstruction was then subjected to criticism, centering upon the contention that it is either based on flawed metaphysics or blunted by its consignment to the field of literary criticism. It was concluded that whilst deconstruction is indeed caught in the double bind of faulty metaphysics and its non-philosophical nature qua literary criticism, the emphasis it places upon potential instances of the right-hand side of a binarism being undervalued should be adopted by market anarchists in their evaluations of hierarchies.

Over the course of *Chapter Three*, it was argued that Lyotard and Rorty's work on eliciting a heightened respect for difference in social and economic arrangements can assist market anarchists in illustrating the importance of a non-totalizing conception of stateless society. However, it was noted that both thinkers wrongly reject the ability of science to move closer to objective truth, due to their flawed criticism of the correspondence theory of truth and neglect of critical rationalism. This rejection was evaluated as potentially harmful to a market anarchist praxis that engages in 'root-seeking', since it advocates the abandonment of such a practice and negates the radical possibilities it can provide.

If one were to make a general assessment of the postmodern philosophy discussed in this essay, and its capability to inform market anarchist praxis, it must be concluded that such philosophy

is deeply flawed in a number of key areas. Nonetheless, the work undertaken in the postmodern tradition—and the antiauthoritarian qualities it possesses—should not be entirely discounted by market anarchists. On the contrary, postmodern philosophy can augment market anarchist theory and praxis, albeit to a moderate extent.

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