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Anarchism and Multiculturalism

Uri Gordon

This chapter examines anarchist approaches to ethno-cultural difference¹, offering three main arguments. The first is that anarchists were early and consistent opponents of racism and imperialism, both in advanced capitalist countries and in the colonial and post-colonial world, reflecting the movement's transnational connections and internationalist outlook. While anarchists remain at the front lines of anti-racist and anti-colonial politics worldwide, the universalist terms in which their predecessors constructed their cosmopolitanism have come into question, as anarchists increasingly express intersectionalist critiques of domination with distinct post-colonial and poststructuralist resonances. The second argument is that anarchists share the wider radical Left critique of multicultural policies, which obscure systemic racial and class inequality while promoting monolithic and elite-driven representations of minorities. Anarchists may also conceptualise multiculturalism as a specific case of the state's general manner of upholding forms of domination by ameliorating their worst excesses in response to resistance. Thirdly, I argue that in order to offer a revolutionary alternative to state multiculturalism, anarchists should further develop their engagement with radical decolonial approaches. These place systemic racism at the centre of social critique, and in the context of past and present dispossession of peoples from land through military occupation, economic dominance, slavery, ethnic cleansing and genocide. Theoretically, this approach integrates critiques of racialisation and capitalism without recourse to essentialism or class reductionism. Ethically, it places the onus on white activists to offer active solidarity to struggles against racism and colonialism, while deconstructing their own privileged identities and behaviours.

A preliminary word on anarchism: I use the term to refer to a global network of activist groups, with their political cultures and discourses, which actively resist all forms of domination in society through means that already embody a non-hierarchical alternative (Gordon 2007, 2008, Amster 2012, Kinna 2012, Shantz 2013). Anarchist critique typically views societies as inherently constituted by systemic and intersecting regimes of domination along lines of ability, age, class, gender, race, sexuality and species. Anarchists think these regimes cannot be transformed through legal or policy measures, requiring instead revolutionary change in the basic structures of society. This means challenging, eroding and eventually abolishing all institutions that promote and underwrite regimes of domination – including the state, capitalist and feudal systems of production, and hierarchical variants of family, educational and religious institutions. Anarchism promotes direct action in any given struggle; that is, action without intermediaries, which seeks to directly achieve and defend goals rather than issuing demands to established authorities (and thus legitimating them). This could include the use of disruptive means such as blockades, tree-sits, sabotage and street confrontation but also – just as importantly – the constructive task of creating “a new society within the shell of

¹ Since the concept of multiculturalism is alien to the anarchist tradition, I am using alternative terminology here. In line with the critique of universalism discussed later on, the term "ethno-cultural difference" refers to a perception of such difference, however construed, rather than implying any objective premises. The term logically precedes the "factual" sense of the word "multiculturalism", since the perception of difference obtains whether or not the groups in question inhabit the same geographical space. The term multiculturalism, whose -ism suffix normally indicates a tendentious position rather than a factual description, is reserved here for the policies and rhetoric that normally go by that name.

the old” through self-organised communes and cooperatives, practical sustainability initiatives, grassroots transport and energy alternatives, public art practices and more.

In view of the decolonial perspectives discussed later in this chapter, I should also be upfront about my own position as an individual who benefits from a host of privileges: able-bodied, cis-male, educated, hetero, and white Jewish Israeli. In consequence, I should not only take special care to question any assumptions and arguments that might self-servingly legitimate my privilege, but also be aware of my limited ability to speak to the struggles of those who lack any or all of these. That said, the overwhelming whiteness of radical movements in advanced capitalist countries means that at least in this respect my positionality is not unrepresentative. As a result, the critical reflections offered here may be relevant to a wider audience.

Ethno-cultural diversity in the anarchist tradition

There are many engagements with topics akin to multiculturalism in 19th and early 20th century anarchist literature, albeit usually in terms of "nations," "nationalities," or "peoples". The prevalent distinction made in this context was the one between “the nation” as an artificial entity constructed by the state, and “peoples” as factual entities based on common geographical, linguistic and ancestral features. Rudolf Rocker argued that nationalism had replaced religion as the chief ideological tool of legitimation for the ruling classes. In *Nationalism and Culture* he wrote that “the nation is not the cause, but the result of the state. It is the state that creates the nation, not the nation the state”, whereas a “people” is “the natural result of social union, a mutual association of men brought about by a certain similarity of external conditions of living, a common language, and special characteristics due to climate and geographic environment” (Rocker 1938: 200-1).

Kropotkin had taken a similar view in his article on rising Finnish nationalism, emphasising alongside heritage and language the role of “union between the people and the territory it occupies, from which territory it receives its national character and on which it impresses its own stamp, so as to make an indivisible whole both men and territory” (Kropotkin 1885). Rocker’s naturalism in this regard was far more circumscribed – he clarifies that peoples can only be spoken of in place- and time-specific terms, since “cultural reconstructions and social stimulation always occur when different peoples and races come into closer union. Every new culture is begun by such a fusion of different folk elements and takes its special shape from this” (op. cit. 346).

Anarchists were thus universally opposed the nationalism promoted by existing states, which instils in the workers a false sense of common identity and interest with their exploiters (Cahm 1978). At the same time, they could celebrate the diversity of culture and language among the world’s different peoples. In the words of Gustav Landauer:

I am happy about every imponderable and ineffable thing that brings about exclusive bonds, unities, and also differentiations within humanity. If I want to transform patriotism then I do not proceed in the slightest against the fine fact of the nation ... but against the mixing up of the nation and the state, against the confusion of differentiation and opposition. (Landauer 1973/1910: 263; cf. Landauer 1907)

More recently, Murray Bookchin (1994) wrote:

That specific peoples should be free to fully develop their own cultural capacities is not merely a right but a desideratum. The world will be a drab place indeed if a magnificent mosaic of different cultures do not replace the largely deculturated and homogenized world created by modern capitalism. But by the same token, the world will be completely divided and peoples will be chronically at odds with one another if their cultural differences are parochialized and if seeming “cultural differences” are rooted in biologistic notions of gender, racial, and physical superiority.

The internationalist and cosmopolitan approach taken by anarchists was only to be expected, in view of the movement’s own composition. The commonplace Eurocentric view of anarchism notwithstanding, it developed from the start as a transnational network, marked by “supranational connections and multidirectional flows of... ideas, people, finances and organisational structures” (van der Walt and Hirsch 2010: xxxii). Anarchists were active in Argentina, Cuba and Egypt as early as the 1870s, while the first two decades of the 20th century saw sophisticated anarchist movements emerge from the Philippines, Peru and Japan to South Africa, Chile and Turkey. Transnational networks among these movements “were often built upon migratory diasporas and were reinforced by the movement's press and the travels of major activists” as well as international campaigns (op. cit.. Cf. Turcato 2007, Khuri-Makdisi 2010, Ramnath 2011, Bantman 2013). In Britain and North America, the influx of Jewish, Italian and Irish immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th century created multicultural working class communities in which a radical cosmopolitan outlook took hold, embracing diversity and solidarity across ethnic and cultural lines (cf. Fishman 1975, Katz 2011, Zimmer 2015).

Numerous anarchists vocally opposed American slavery and segregation. Joseph Déjacque, an early French anarchist active for several years in New Orleans, looked forward to a revolutionary alliance between black slaves and white proletarians, and favourably compared John Brown to Spartacus. He expected that the “monstrous American Union, the fossil Republic, will disappear” in the cataclysm of revolution, creating a “Social Republic” wherein “Blacks and whites, creoles and redskins will fraternize...and will found one single race. The killers of Negroes and proletarians, the amphibians of liberalism and the carnivores of privilege will withdraw like the caymans...to the most remote parts of the bayous” (Déjacque 1858/2013). Kropotkin too declared, “all my sympathies lie with the blacks in America”, whom despite emancipation he continued to consider as a people under occupation, on par with “the Armenians in Turkey, the Finns and Poles in Russia, etc.” (Kropotkin 1897/2014: 140). During the height of lynching murders in the South, the anarchist James F. Morton wrote an extensive pamphlet against racism and its use to dehumanise and justify atrocities. “The blind stupidity of racial prejudice is simply unfathomable”, he wrote, “it acts in mad disregard of all logical considerations, and when challenged can give no coherent account of itself...it stops its ears in blind rage” (Morton 1906: 31. Cf. Damiani 1939).

Jean Grave was perhaps the most eloquent among the many outspoken anarchists critics of colonialism. As part of his wider critique of social hierarchy, and especially of nationalism and militarism, Grave disparaged both the irrationality of notions of racial and cultural superiority, and

their insidious role in causing workers to legitimate their own exploitation. In *Moribund Society and Anarchy* he strongly condemned colonisation as robbery and murder writ large, poured derision on its claims to be a “civilising” force, and supported the revolts of colonised peoples. In a chapter titled “There are no inferior races”, he repudiates a series of then-common arguments about the inferiority of non-Europeans and draws a parallel between racism and the self-serving bourgeois designation of the poor as inherently inferior. Although he did not question the prevailing view of technological sophistication and social complexity as marks of a higher stage of development, Grave argued that colonialism stymied this development in peoples – rather than being justified by its impossibility.

By what right do we speak of the inferiority of other races when their present condition proceeds from our barbarous persecutions?...the aboriginal civilizations which were developing at the time of the European conquests were destroyed by their invaders...Highly flourishing civilizations thus disappeared, no one knowing what they might have brought forth...Certainly we do not want to assert that all races are absolutely identical; but we are persuaded that all have certain aptitudes, certain moral, intellectual, and physical qualities, which, had they been allowed to evolve freely, would have enabled them to take their part in the labor of human civilization (Grave 1899: 105-110; cf. Porter).

Anarchists’ responses to national liberation movements were less univocal. Some, like Kropotkin, saw national liberation movements positively, arguing that the removal of foreign domination was a precondition to social revolution (Grauer 1994). On the other hand, anarchists such as Proudhon and Bakunin opposed the elite-led national liberation agendas of their day, such as the Polish national movement. In the 20th century, anarchists distanced themselves from Marxists’ often uncritical championing of oppressive regimes in former colonies in Africa and south Asia instrumental, and from their instrumental support for new centralised nation states that would fulfil the program of capitalist development (cf. Bonanno 1976). During the Algerian independence war, French anarchists engaged in heated debate around its various aspects. According to Porter (2011: 487),

some French anarchists, like Camus, Joyeux, Guerin, and those in *Noir et Rouge*, openly criticized actions and orientations of the FLN while also supporting the principle of ending colonial rule. Guerin, *Noir et Rouge*, and *Tribune Anarchiste Communiste* publicized, supported, and also offered detailed critiques of Algerian *autogestion* [“self-organisation”, U.G.] to an extent not easily found elsewhere at the time in the French left, let alone in the mainstream press. While the Berber Spring and urban upheavals of the 1980s received some coverage elsewhere, the particular anarchist emphasis on the anti-authoritarian content of these developments was rather unique.

More recently, Hakim Bey saw revolutionary potential in nationalism’s collision with neoliberal capitalism, inasmuch as “the nation as zone of resistance” could “launch its revolt...from the left (as ‘non-hegemonic particularity’)” rather than from the right. Thus a secession movement would deserve anarchists’ support “to the extent that it does not seek power at the expense of others’ misery. No State can ever achieve this ideal – but some ‘national struggles’ can be considered

objectively revolutionary provided they meet basic minimal requirements – i.e. that they be both non-hegemonic & anti-Capitalist”. His tentative candidates for this category include Kurdish, Sahrawi, Hawaiian and Puerto Rican independence movements, movements seeking “maximum autonomy for Native-american ‘nations’”, the Mexican Zapatistas, and “at least in theory the bioregionalist movement in the US” (Hakim Bey 1996: 49).

Most of the historical anarchist approaches to nationalism were grounded in a universalist ethics of humanism and rationalism. While positively encouraging cultural diversity, they sought a continuum leading from the individual, through the ethno-cultural group and on to the entire human species. This amounts to a "belief in the shared humanity of people regardless of their membership in different cultural, ethnic, and gender groups, and their complementary affinities in a free society as rational human beings" (Bookchin, op. cit.). The commitment to universalism occasionally involved wishful thinking about the eventual intermingling of all peoples into a single humanity – explicitly in the above quote from Déjacque, as well as in the work of Jean Grave, who was convinced that “races are bound to disappear by fusing, missing with each other through intercrossings; that is the very reason we are choked with indignation at seeing entire tribes disappear before they have been able to contribute to our civilization the original share which they may have potentially possess” (op. cit. 110).

Yet the appeal to universalism has become increasingly problematic, as anarchists come to emphasise post-modern and post-colonial critiques of humanism and universality (cf. Newman 2007, Jun 2012). For American anarchist of colour Roger White,

European universalism has never truly been about the recognition of our common humanity. In practice it's been about forcing the particular norms, prejudices and ideals of white, Christian cultures on the rest of the peoples of the earth, sometimes through economic domination, sometimes through cultural imperialism, sometimes through force...For left internationalists, universalism provided a nice humanitarian cover for a massive social engineering project that sought to strip the masses of their national and communal identities in exchange for a workerist one (White 2004:15. Cf. Alston 1999).

Insights such as these form a parallel, in the area of race, to the experience of feminist movements, who came to critique universalism as an expression and masking of gendered power relations. As a result, universalism fails to “provide adequate grounding for political action in a situation where dominant values masquerade as everyone's values and where opposing identities (and the values and practices associated with them) are necessarily multiple, fragmented, and at best provisional” (Ackelsberg 1996: 93). The anarchist emphasis on intersecting regimes of domination (Shannon and Rogue 2009), which avoids granting any of these regimes analytical primacy, is in this sense much more productive than class reductionism for examining the power dynamics surrounding race and culture. I return to some consequences of this position in the final section of this chapter.

Critique of multiculturalism

Anarchist critiques of multiculturalism are primarily directed at actually-existing multicultural policies and discourses, rather than at the arguments found in the works normative multicultural theorists (cf. Kymlicka 1995, Modood 2013). Of the latter, there is little to say from an anarchist perspective except that it has never (at least to my knowledge) questioned the legitimacy of the state. To the contrary, multicultural theory universally “assumes the existence of the state as a neutral arbiter, a monological consciousness that, upon request, dispenses rights and privileges in the form of a gift” (Day 2005:80). This amounts to yet another instance of the “politics of demand...oriented to improving existing institutions and everyday experiences by appealing to the benevolence of hegemonic forces” (ibid) – an approach alien to anarchists. So comprehensive is the liberal reliance on the state as the arbiter of collective claims that its presence is sometimes elided altogether. Thus Parekh (2006: 196) allows the terms “society” and “community” to stand in for the state when asserting that a “multicultural society...should foster a strong sense of unity and common belonging among its citizens, as otherwise it cannot act as a united community able to take and enforce collectively-binding decisions and regulate and resolve conflicts”. In its consistent failure to problematize the legitimacy of the state and seriously challenge hierarchical power, mainline multicultural theory suffers from the same blind spot that afflicts moral-cum-political theory in general: the assumption that the state is, or could potentially be, a vehicle for the operationalization of moral reasoning. Thus moral “ought” statements are cloaked in language which not only assumes the desirability and continued existence of the state, but also rather naively constructs an unproblematic continuum between morally correct positions and what the state is supposed to implement.

Moral theorists might, of course, object that it is not their job to disentangle the real-world political obstacles to the implementation of morally correct policies; it is a job for political scientists and policy analysis, rather than for moral philosophers, to identify these obstacles and suggest ways to overcome them. But the question here is not technical but ontological; it involves the assumption that the state is potentially a neutral tool which can be made subservient to social agendas (presumably through democratic representation). An anarchist approach, in distinction, is informed by a critique of the state as the custodian of a hierarchical society and the institution that legitimates and ultimately underwrites manifold forms of domination. That some states also work to ameliorate some of the excesses of otherwise unregulated systems of capitalist, racist and sexist exploitation (to name a few), is seen not as a virtuous function but as the result of forced historical compromises with liberation movements of the oppressed, an attempt to stave off more thoroughgoing social transformation by curbing the worst excesses of injustice as a way of guaranteeing the continuation of the basic logic of domination. The state, on this account, always tends towards autonomy – that is, to ruling on behalf of itself (Oppenheimer 2007: 8 ff.).

Hence, the critiques pursued here focus on “really existing” multiculturalism. Most of these critiques are not idiosyncratically anarchist, but shared with a broader spectrum of the radical left. Perhaps the most prominent one regards mainline multicultural policy’s role in defusing social dissent. This is done by redefining socio-political antagonisms as stemming, not from *inequalities* attached to race, class and gender, but from forms of *difference* among cultural communities inhabiting an allegedly horizontal plane. This conception actively obscures forms of social stratification, while effectively limiting the legitimate use of the term racism to manifestations of individual bigotry. According to Lentin (2005: 381-2),

As a policy, multiculturalism would have us see our societies as 'race-free' and culturally rich... [this] often serves to mask the persistence of *racism* in what is widely believed to be a post-racial age... While we may accept that individual institutions contain racist elements or have even become steeped in a culture of racism, extending this to the idea that the state itself may be structured by racism is generally considered to be an extremist position... the constant identification of racism with the actions of the politically marginal enables the apparently more banal, everyday racism experienced by the racialized in all social, political, economic and private spheres to be played down.

In the UK, the antifascist group Red Action – which was largely Marxist but included anarchist sympathizers – added a sustained class dimension to this critique. Multiculturalism is here approached as “an alternative and bulwark against” social change, since under its premises “social antagonisms historically on a vertical trajectory are thereafter directed horizontally” (O'Halloran 1998). Multiculturalism dissolves the potential for solidarities that would challenge extant social hierarchies, by redefining which identities enjoy first-order relevance (namely, ethnic or religious ones) and allowing the state, and its coercive technocracy of urban governance, to engage with groups (or their declared leaders) on that basis. Hence multiculturalism is primarily a subsidiary for state-driven population and immigration management, which rewards "ethnic entrepreneurs" (Kymlicka 2010) for representing “their” “community” in ways which either do nothing to challenge inequalities, or do so within the boundaries circumscribed by the state.

To extend this point, anarchists might argue that beneath the rationale of extending recognition and certain collective rights to cultural and racial minorities, the state re-asserts its hegemony over the categorisation and management of its population. The determination of which groups are to be legitimately considered minorities for the purpose of legal and policy entitlements, as well as the substantive characterisation of these groups, becomes the purview of state officials and proceeds through fixed categories tied to ancestry or the profession of religious doctrine. Moreover, under the guise of providing equal attention to diverse cultures, the multicultural paradigm adopted by states (and often integrated by corporations and NGOs) defines and compartmentalises these differences in ways which reinforce state power as well as the neoliberal project. On this view, liberal multiculturalism “institutes a separate sphere in society where the political antagonisms arising from cultural differences are policed in para-political fashion... by incorporating them in the social order as ‘competencies’ to be developed by individual citizens, ‘human capital’ to be managed by organizations and ‘assets’ that enrich society. The move away from concerns with discrimination and structural disadvantage of ethnic minorities and towards organizational efficiency effectively forecloses the invocation of the equality of humans as cultural beings” (Van Puymbroeck and Oosterlynck 2014: 101).

In a similar vein, Sunera Thobani argues that in Canada, multiculturalism has functioned to displace anti-racist discourse and has “allowed for certain communities—people of colour—to be constructed as cultural communities...defined in very Orientalist and colonial ways—as static” (Thobani 2008). The policies and discourses of multiculturalism thus continue to construct minorities as opposed to white Canadians, both English- and French-speaking. Averting attention from the continued reproduction of deep racial inequalities, multiculturalism “has become a policy of

governing and managing communities of colour, so that those politics only get articulated in the name of culture, and culture is defined in highly patriarchal terms” (ibid.).

Multiculturalism in its state-sponsored rhetorical guise has also been criticized for aggressively painting the white working class as inherently racist, despite phenomena such as interracial relationships being almost entirely a working class phenomenon. According to this point of view, the alienating and artificial ways in which the state promoted its multicultural agenda, and the socially enforced expectation that citizens profess their pride in it (cf. Fortier 2005), has actually played a part in pushing sections of the white working class “left behind” by neoliberal globalisation increasingly to the right. According to Riley (2001), another Red Action writer, the “determination to focus on minority rights and the subsequent racialising of political situations inevitably leads to an ‘us or them’ scenario...the determined air brushing of the working class out of any serious political equation” contributes to a “carefully cultivated myth that anti-racism is the preserve of [privileged] social groups... for many, to be properly anti-racist it is necessary to be anti-working class”. This amounts to “[p]lacing race at the heart of the debate; then denying the political existence of the working class, prior to being forced to seek allies against them”.

Thus multiculturalism comes to serve as a lightning-rod for right-wing politicians, who portray it as a failed project of Leftist imposition, blamed “for everything from parallel societies to gendered horror to the incubation of terrorism” (Lentin and Titley 2012: 3). This view, which has rapidly bled over from far right groups into the “centre right” of leaders such as Angela Merkel and David Cameron, constructs multiculturalism as a policy fuelled by guilt and characterised by doctrinaire tolerance towards the illiberalism and intolerance of (always implicitly Muslim) minorities. Surveying the “the death of multiculturalism” trope in the British, Dutch and German press in 2010-11, Ossewaarde concludes that despite some national differences in the “rhetorical usages of national legacies”, its overall context remained “an attempt to reinforce particular monoculturalist visions of a national identity through the sociocultural construction of the other, the Muslims”, and the portrayal of Islam as an essentially unenlightened, totalitarian and imperialist ideology (Ossewaarde 2014: 174).

The opposition is often staked out in very similar terms to those used by the white-American right against the bogeyman of “political correctness”: as a coercive, state-led project to promote the acceptance of other cultures at the expense of white liberal identities, and to police the language and behaviour of white majority, which is supposedly now scared to criticise racism and exclusionism when these come from minorities (cf. Gilroy 2012). As Lentin and Titley (2011: 3) argue, the fact that no state multicultural project has ever done any of these things is largely irrelevant, since multiculturalism is used here as “a mobilising metaphor for a spectrum of political aversion and racism that...allows for securitised migration regimes, assimilative integrationism and neo-nationalist politics to be presented as nothing more than rehabilitative action” (Lentin and Titley 2011: 3). In this context, “the ‘liberal cultural agenda’ has become a modality of nationalisms that are primarily grounded through attacks on the illiberalism of minority and Muslim populations, and on the ‘relativist’ license multiculturalism has accorded them” (op. cit., 6). Rather than imagined terrorists, those bearing the brunt of this shift are refugees and migrants who are in the most vulnerable position in these societies.

An alternative perspective: decolonial anarchism

Anarchist notions of cultural difference have engaged explicitly with class conflict and structural racial oppression in a way that contemporary liberal conceptions of multiculturalism do not. By amplifying transnational solidarity and an intersectionalist critique of domination, anarchism creates a much more productive polarity with the far right around these issues, of which neither state policies nor mainline multicultural theory are capable.

To consider an alternative, anarchist response to contemporary ethno-cultural pluralism does not amount to expounding some blueprint for social relations among diverse groups in the absence of the state. Instead, the focus is on current ethical and strategic questions relevant to social transformation – asking how encounters in mixed communities impact on the political-cultural dynamics that anarchists face in their everyday organising, and how they can use grassroots forms of encounter to push forward radical agendas. The anarchist alternative to what the state hegemonically codes as "multicultural questions" is therefore the living creation of alternative economic and cultural relations of solidarity, which strive for social equality and autonomous collective self-determination. The contours of any multicultural stateless society of the future need to be worked out, not in abstract theory (a stateless mirror-world to mainline multicultural debates), but from practice. To do this, I would argue that solidarities and alliances across ethno-cultural difference should be constructed under a decolonial banner, with attention to asymmetric power relations and colonial legacies, as well as to points of mutual identification.

Decolonial thinking has been described as an act of "epistemic disobedience" whereby people who share the "colonial wound" can carry out a "political and epistemic de-linking" from western dominance and the ways of thinking it imposes – not in order to compete with it in the geopolitical and neoliberal arena, but to assert an ethic of respect for all life and for oppressed peoples' struggles (Mignolo 2009; Cf. De Lissovoy 2010, Sprecher 2011, Morgensen 2012, Grosfoguel 2012). Politically, a decolonial approach may be a promising antidote to the problematic remains of Western universalism in anarchist practice and theory. This requires anarchists to recognise that colonialism is not merely a historical event, but a set of logics that continue to maintain and deepen inequalities and dispossession in advanced capitalist countries. As Ramnath (2011: 21) puts it,

Where ethnicity is brutalized and culture decimated, it is callous to discount the value of ethnic pride, asserting the right to exist as such – not forgetting that cultural expression must include the right to redefine the practices of one's own culture over time... in the colonial context, the defense of ethnic identity and cultural divergence from the dominant is a key component of resistance... the decolonization of culture shouldn't mean rewinding to a "pure" original condition but instead restoring the artificially stunted capacity freely to grow and evolve.

This obviously challenges any notion of the anarchist as an abstract ideological subject, judiciously extending support to those movements meeting her or his criteria. Instead, anarchists have an obligation to consider solidarity with sub-national minorities not simply from a position of ideological agreement, but in the context of activists' positionality within a post- and neo-colonial condition of exclusion and exploitation (cf. Barker and Pickerill 2012). According to Harsha Walia

(2012), the implication for non-indigenous activists is that "meaningful support for Indigenous struggles cannot be directed by non-natives":

Taking leadership means being humble and honouring front-line voices of resistance as well as offering tangible solidarity as needed and requested. Specifically, this translates to taking initiative for self-education about the specific histories of the lands we reside upon, organizing support with the clear consent and guidance of an Indigenous community or group, building long-term relationships of accountability and never assuming or taking for granted the personal and political trust that non-natives may earn from Indigenous peoples over time.

In practice, this has led some anarchists practicing decolonial solidarity to carry out joint work with under specific principles. As articulated by a long-term activist in the Israeli group *Anarchists Against the Wall*,

The first principle is that although the struggle is joint, Palestinians are affected more by the decisions taken within it, and therefore are the ones who should make the important decisions. Second, Israelis have a special responsibility to respect Palestinian self-determination, including respecting social customs and keeping out of internal Palestinian politics...it would be far more repressive to try to codify what constitutes appropriate social ties, let alone demand it of individuals. The only principle is the general policy of respecting requests by Palestinian popular committees in this regard as well (Snitz 2013: 57-8).

Abdou et al. (2009) suggest a similar conception in considering radical settler-indigenous alliances in Canada. Drawing on Levinas, they promote an ethic of encounter between settler and indigenous activists which builds solidarity through honesty and mutual responsibility. In this ethic, recognition "requires that the settler disrupt his or her colonial (dis)orientation to the other" and adopt a disposition that includes "acceptance of the unknown—a lack of anticipation of the other's essence; a knowledge of self-identity incorporating an understanding of infinite responsibility; a willingness to accept difference and avoid the tendency to subsume the other into the same; and finally, a humility in the face of the other, which implies having the courage and willingness necessary to learn from the other" (215-216).

Here, the deconstruction of one's own identity becomes an essential part of radical action. As Ackelsberg (1996: 98) argues,

since identities - particularly group identities - are not something we develop independently of politics and then bring fully formed into the political arena but, rather, are constructed precisely in and through politics, it is not only reasonable but necessary to look to politics as the ground on which our differences might finally be constructively addressed. If we can begin to understand coalition-building as a process through which we not only act together with others but develop and change our own identities at the same time, we may open up new possibilities both for identity and for politics.

This has two implications. First, that anarchist struggles must shed any universalist premises, instead striving to empower and defend the spontaneous development of identities in the context of egalitarian economic relations based on commons. Second, that the celebration of diversity and difference could be extended from culture to other aspects of identity including gender and sexuality. These could also be informed by a queer anarchist logic (Daring et al. 2012) which seeks fluidity and the defying of fixed categories, as long as there is explicit attention to issues of power and privilege that would work against dynamics such as cultural appropriation.

A decolonial logic is not only relevant to current and former settler-colonial states in the Americas, Oceania, southern Africa and the Middle East. It operates on a continuum from Palestine and Tibet (peoples under military occupation) through America (systemic racism) to Europe's processes of immigration absorption, rejection and securitisation. In the European context, the demographics of inequality continue to carry the legacies of colonialism and the effects of current imperialism, while the exclusionary policies of neoliberal "Fortress Europe" disadvantage precisely those who have borne the brunt of both. For European anarchists, solidarity with migrants and refugees is already an important activity, part of a transnational No Borders movement against migration controls. In Calais, a permanent presence of European activists has for six years been resisting the police harassment of migrants, supporting camps and squats, and raising awareness. In Turin, the Refugees and Migrants Solidarity Committee has squatted the abandoned Olympic village and a second site, where Italian-born and migrant activists have seen through eviction attempts to sustain self-organised communities. Israel Jewish anarchists have supported not only the Palestinian popular struggle but also asylum seekers from Eritrea and Sudan who organised to resist deportations, internment and rampant racism. These and other initiatives share the ethos of taking leadership from self-organised movements of refugees and migrants, and of avoiding both a saviour mentality and the condescension of revolutionary tutelage. As such, they have the potential to generate "an antagonistic struggle which does not take place between particular communities, but splits from within each community, so that the 'trans-cultural' link between communities is that of a shared struggle" (Zizek 2009).

Conclusion

This chapter has emphasised the egalitarian and anti-systemic underpinnings of anarchist engagements with ethno-cultural difference. While anarchists have celebrated cultural diversity and offered critical support to the liberation struggles of peoples under foreign rule, this was always within the context of a revolutionary project to abolish domination and the institutions that maintain it. As a result, anarchists' more recent appreciations of post-colonial and poststructuralist critique have led them to re-evaluate universalist and humanist premises on terms much more profound than those found in liberal re-evaluations. The emergent anarchist analysis, which binds an intersectionalist critique of power with the rejection of state and capital, is deeply indebted to the contributions of anarchists of colour.

With regard to modern multicultural realities, anarchists focus not how to best manage cultural difference within the confines of the state, but on how to relate to such difference in the process of revolutionary struggle. State multicultural policies have thus come under heavy criticism from

anarchists and their allies, who view them as veiled strategies for inequality management. In drawing attention away from enduring forms of stratification and discrimination, and in allowing the state to function as an arbiter of recognition, multiculturalism on this view plays an active role in stifling social antagonisms.

From an anarchist perspective, the decolonial approach offers the most promising alternative to mainline multiculturalism. This approach recognises not only the colonial foundation of advanced capitalist societies, but also the ongoing dispossession of indigenous peoples by settler-colonial states, and the neo-colonial nature of neoliberal economic dominance. Put together, these recognitions add a crucial dimension to anarchists' intersectional analysis of contemporary hierarchies, while placing the onus on white anarchists to offer active solidarity to the self-organised struggles of indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees – taking leadership from these struggles while deconstructing their own privileged positionalities. The integration of a decolonial approach into anarchist activities is far from complete; yet the advances it has been making in recent years offer an encouraging reminder of anarchism's continuing vitality and of its ability to self-critically transform and reformulate itself in response to new practical and theoretical challenges.

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