CHAPTER 1

ANARCHISMS, MODERNISMS, AND CENTRALITY

Ni Dieu, ni maître! anarchist slogan

Whoever denies authority and fights against it is an anarchist. Sebastien Fauré

Anarchism is an alternative political philosophy that opposes the arbitrary, hierarchical dominion of political, religious, and economic authorities, whether elected, hired, or appointed. These authorities tend to be concentrated in centers, and thus anarchism is also about the abolition of centers — administratively and often geographically distant loci of control which extend to the individual human subject neither significance nor mercy. The economic transformations of the 19th century were accompanied by the development of vast government and corporate bureaucracies. The anarchist William Godwin's 1794 novel Caleb Williams had described an England in which a fugitive could not escape his powerful, wealthy pursuer; Kafka in his 1920s novels The Trial and The Castle represented the hypertrophy of this world in its full terror. In them the State is both everywhere

and nowhere; centers of power are simultaneously omnipresent and inaccessible. At their worst, as Kafka seemed to intuit, such a State apparatus could organize and commit large-scale atrocities, like genocide. It could identify all the Europeans who had one Jewish grandparent, make arrangements to round them up, transport them to concentration camps, murder them, and dispose of the remains.

"The major fact about the nineteenth century," observed Eric Hobsbawm in The Age of Empire, "is the creation of a single global economy, progressively reaching into the most remote corners of the globe, an increasingly dense web of economic transactions, communications and movements of goods, money and people linking the developed countries with each other and with the undeveloped world." [1] This observation is particularly striking when one considers that it was written in the 1970s about a now distant century, yet it sounds like a fitting description of the first decade of the 21st century. Thanks to free trade agreements like Nafta and Gatt, goods sold in American stores are manufactured in China, Sri Lanka, Malasia, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico. Downtown shops in smaller American cities like Eugene, Oregon, have been driven out of business by suburban malls and megastores like Walmart, whose ubiquitous presence is eradicating any vestiges of regional difference throughout the country. American chain restaurants and stores are almost as familiar in Europe as they are here; in France and England, the MacDonalds chain has been a frequent target of attacks.

The meeting of the World Trade Commission in Seattle in the year 2000 occasioned massive protests against economic centralization, the exploitation of cheap foreign labor, and the destruction of indigenous cultures around the world.

In the course of the demonstrations, and quite probably in response to police repression and violence, chain stores like Starbucks, the Gap, and MacDonalds were trashed; their status as icons of an intolerably top-down and homogeneous global culture made them targets for young people who called themselves "anarchists." After the decline of 1960s activism, anarchism had seemed a thing of the past; now it was back with a bang.

An Introduction to Anarchisms

In the popular lexicon, an anarchist is an anti-authoritarian sociopath who wants to bring chaos into all systems, relishes committing acts of destruction, and is willing to use violence, stereotypically in the form of bombs, to incite disorder and confusion. The American media took the Unabomber missives at their word when the author claimed to be an "anarchist collective," and when Theodore Kacynski was arrested, he must have seemed to many media observers to be the perfect anarchist—an embittered loner, misfit, and crackpot who translated his personal grievances against the world into a philosophical rationale for acts of violence.

If the mainstream press and the conventional political right imagine anarchists either as solitary malcontents, or as bands of youthful lunatics rampaging spontaneously against all forms of order and authority, some on the left have faulted anarchism for lacking Marxism`s theoretical sophistication. George Orwell observed that anarchism is "less easily defined" than Communism, its principles, primarily an "emphasis on liberty and equality," being "rather vague."[2]

Guy Debord finds anarchism theoretically simplistic, characterized by a "deliberate contempt for method." [3] Debord claims that "the illusion entertained more or less explicitly by genuine anarchism is the permanent imminence of an instantaneously accomplished revolution which will prove the truth of the ideology and of the mode of practical organization derived from the ideology." [4] Such critiques date back to Marx and Engels's own attack on anarchism; David Miller writes that "Marx and Engels seized upon Bakunin's association with Nechaev [the violent nihilist on whom a major character of Dostoyevsky's The Devils is based] to claim that the inner secret of anarchism was terrorism."[5] But Noam Chomsky speculates that such criticisms can in part be explained by the fact that "anarchism offers no position of privilege or power to the intelligentsia. In fact, it undermines that position" and in part because "many of the anarchist intellectuals basically accepted the Marxian analysis of capitalism." [6]

The stereotype of the irrationally violent anarchist is unfair to both the history and the theoretical complexity of anarchism. Unlike Marxism and Christianity, anarchism does not have a single, authoritative founder whose texts supply the guiding principles for belief, revision, and debate. There are, therefore, as Chomsky notes, many anarchisms: "There have been many styles of thought and action that have been referred to as `anarchist.` It would be hopeless to try to encompass all of these conflicting tendencies in some general theory or ideology."[7] These anarchisms have different national origins; their main strains are philosophical anarchism, revolutionary anarchism, collectivist and individualist anarchism, anarcho-syndicalism, and right-wing libertarianism. Each major figure

in anarchist theory has inflected and developed anarchist ideas in different ways and attracted a distinct group of followers.

For anarchists, "anarchy" is not a synonym for social disorder; it simply means "without a leader," and, by extension, freedom from despotism. The Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin defined it as follows:

> Anarchism (from the Greek, contrary to authority) is the name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government —harmony in such a society being obtained not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements, concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilized being. In a society developed on these lines, the voluntary associations which already now begin to cover all the fields of human activity would take a still greater extension so as to substitute themselves for the State in all its functions. [8]

Free agreements and voluntary associations — these are the interpersonal and social mechanisms that anarchists prefer to the static hierarchy of the bureaucratic state and the impersonal rule of law. In such a world, the particular would matter more than the general, and individuals would be more important than artificially defined collectivities. In an ideal anarchist society it would be possible for human

agency to respond spontaneously and flexibly to "the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilized being" rather than being constrained by regulations, laws, and traditions administered by indifferent authorities, the most powerful of whom are as inaccessible as the officials in The Castle.

Despite its reputation for violence, anarchism has many optimistic, compassionate, and benevolent tenets and characteristics. Anarchist theorists recognize the presence of selfish, despotic and sadistic inclinations in human beings, but they do not regard these tendencies as primary or dominant. In Mutual Aid Kropotkin points out the broad spectrum of mutual aid among social creatures from bees to humans. He observes how common it is for a mammal to protect an injured member of its group and for a stranger to help another stranger. In more contemporary terms, this assistance may take the form of patiently giving directions, holding a door for someone heavily burdened, offering to carry a bag of groceries, tinkering with a stalled car, parting with "spare change," and a hundred other ordinary acts of kindness and empathy, but it can also take more challenging forms, such as working on the Underground Railroad or rescuing Jews from the Nazis. Under certain circumstances, Kropotkin reminds us, people will even spontaneously, instinctively, risk their own lives to save strangers from fire, drowning, and other hazards. All of this is at odds with the kind of talk Americans hear in election years, when politicians remind us of the crime rate, stir up anxieties about television and the Internet, and pontificate about the need for increased military spending. Rhetoric of this ilk spreads the conviction that people are essentially selfish, are frequently tempted to commit crimes unless held in

check by religious fears and beliefs, and that foreigners are implacably and even self-destructively hostile to our welfare. Thus, an ideology comes to seem like "common sense."

Given this assumption of an innate tendency toward goodness in human beings—not perfectibility or saintliness, but decency and sympathy—it is clear why anarchists would dispense with regulatory and punitive agencies like the State, the police, the army, the legal system, and in the case of some anarchisms, private property. All of these institutions are rigid, codified substitutes for human ingenuity in response to particular situations. Such responses may be either spontaneous or carefully planned, but they are least harmful, anarchists argue, if they are neither carved in stone for posterity nor administered by a remote authority.

Anarchists believe in the incommensurability of singularities. This is why they cannot support the statist ideal of representative government or the economic concept of exchange value. How can anyone speak for someone else? How can one representative speak for opposing groups, as must the Oregon congressman who represents both the loggers of Springfield and the environmentalists of neighboring Eugene ? To ignore the individual and the particular is, in anarchist terms, to commit a particular kind of violence — the kind of violence that the law commits when it judges a case according to legal precedent and hands out a sentence based on legislative decree. People and situations cannot and should not be reified and administered in this fashion.

By contrast, advocates of authority, of a strong State, of "law and order," understand humanity as being in a state of nature, either evil or weak. Efficiency and authority require that rules, commandments, precepts and laws be formulated so that citizens know what is permissible and what is not. Fear and the threat of punishment, monetary or physical, are necessary for the preservation of order. Thus parents must discipline and punish their children, or the children will grow up to be spoiled and lazy; the State must deter its citizens from wrongdoing or they will commit crimes when an opportunity offers itself; and States must arm themselves to the teeth in order to discourage the imperial aspirations of other States. Such an ideology has, according to anarchist theory, malign effects on human subjectivity: "The self in hierarchical society not only lives, acts, and communicates hierarchically; it thinks and feels hierarchically."[9]

Every political-economic system has both utopian and dystopian dimensions. The authoritarian state is a fantasy of imperturbable order, a kind of sublime geometry. It promises personal safety, the preservation of property (once the State has decided to whom it should belong), and an apparent homogeneity of population (achieved via the dominance of a particular social group and the oppression or eradication of cultural difference).

As the ultimate form of the state, the authoritarian state is the opposite of an anarchist social order, for one paradigm for anarchism, most famously proposed by Murray Bookchin, is the ecosystem, in which diversity is a sign of health. Mutual aid, free agreements, and voluntary associations are among the utopian elements of

anarchism. They are what maintain the coherence of the theory despite sectarian conflicts about particular means or arrangements.

Authority and Centrality

Oppositional modernism and revolutionary anarchism had common concerns and common aspirations for alternative modes of social being. Both were preoccupied with, and usually opposed to, established 19th-century models of authority and centrality, two essential characteristics of the modern, bureaucratic nation-state — considered by anarchists the paradigm and source of worldly evils. Some modernists were more ambivalent about these issues than anarchists, but they nonetheless found them inescapable. A compelling indication of modernism's philosophical distance from nationalism in general and the authoritarian State in particular was the official antipathy its artists aroused in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and somewhat later, fascist Italy. It is this philosophical distance I want to emphasize as I go through, in the next few pages, some material well-known to scholars of modernism and the twentieth century. My intent is to give this familiar material an anarchist inflection.

For experimental modernist artists with progressive political ideas, authority and centrality were objectionable on intellectual and aesthetic grounds. The insistence on traditional subject matter and rules, as inculcated in art academies and universities, was an affront to the artist's own judgment. Anarchism provided a rationale for a kind of secular antinomianism; artists could decide for

themselves what truth in representation meant. In what I call the "discourse of anarchy" around modernism, the aesthetic experiments of modernism were troped as political radicalism.

Even those modernists who bemoaned the erosion of traditional centers and authorities rejected traditional modes of representation with their implicitly centrist aesthetics. They had begun to think of art as an international phenomenon and artists as citizens of an international community, rather than as definers of and propagandists for particular national cultures. Thus, for example, the nationalist musical aspirations of later nineteenth-century composers who, with their incorporation of folk melodies, had asserted themselves against the musical hegemony of Vienna, gave way in the early twentieth century to an eclectic and experimental internationalism. American and Irish writers abandoned their longstanding national inferiority complexes about English literature and left their homelands to live in European cities. Their own national identity could become ambiguous; both American and English literary critics, for example, lay claim to T.S. Eliot. European painters left their native lands to work in Paris and New York; in art museums, the unpatriotic modernists are identified in characteristically indeterminate fashion: "American, born Romania."

Both the Nazis and the Soviets expressed a public preference for familiar, traditional, accessible, and often overtly nationalist aesthetic strategies. Although initially hospitable to modernism, Mussolini's Italy and Lenin's Soviet Union soon became aesthetically reactionary. Hitler and Stalin's personal dislike of modernist experimentation is well-known. Many readers will be familiar with Stalin's

monitoring of Shostakovitch, who had a tendency to stray from the aesthetics of the party line, and the German exhibits of Entartete Kunst ("Degenerate Art"). The Soviet Minister of Culture, like his German counterpart, ruled over the content and style of art in the public domain. State authority was thus very much an issue for artists of this period.

If, on the one hand — economically and militarily —national centers were becoming ineluctable forces, capable of dominating geographically distant margins, on the other hand — philosophically, theologically, culturally — other centers were disappearing, eclipsed by a rapidly developing worldview that cast doubt upon their validity. This loss of centers had historical origins in the overthrow, or subversion, of various traditional authorities —in the fall of the Hapsburg and British empires, the continuing erosion of conventional religious faith, the decline of European high culture, with its residual aristocratic models, and the many destructive causes and effects of World War I. Modernist art, literature and music were preoccupied with the loss of centers — centers of political influence, traditional culture, and metaphysical order, as well as centralizing aesthetic conventions. For as these centers disappeared, the felt result, especially for those who lamented all the social and technological changes, was social and philosophical chaos.

In physics, Einstein's view of the universe was displacing Newton's, and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle seemed paradigmatic for a new, disconcerting understanding of natural energies. Just as famously, Freud was decentering the human subject, freeing it from the false authority of the singular ego and restoring

its many levels and voices. Scientific explanations of the world were displacing religious ones, and science was also calling into question the existence of God, the ultimate authority. In his history of the period, Eric Hobsbawm describes in great detail "the dramatic retreat of traditional religion, at least in the European heartlands of bourgeois society." [10]

Atheism is the denial and rejection of the ultimate centralized authority, and as such, it is a hallmark of anarchism. A famous anarchist slogan, still to be found scribbled on walls and churches in Paris, proclaims, Ni Dieu, ni maître! ("Neither God nor master!"). Although commonly associated with "godless communism," atheism is even more consistent with anarchist theory; in their rejection of gods and masters, a-theism and an-archism suggest each other. Atheism explains, in part, the anarchist attraction to Nietzsche, who in The Gay Science famously declared the death of God. Yet the anarchists anticipated him. In Political Justice Godwin, who had grown up in a strict Protestant family, criticized religion as contrary to reason and as enabling tyranny:

> I understand the value of ease, liberty and knowledge, to myself and my fellow men. I perceive that these things, and a certain conduct intending them, are connected, in the visible system of the world, and not by any supernatural and unusual interposition. But all that can be told me of a future world, a world of spirits, or of glorified bodies, where the employments are spiritual, and the first cause is to be rendered a subject of immediate perception, or of a scene of

> retribution, where the mind, doomed to everlasting inactivity, shall be wholly a prey to the upbraidings of remorse and the sarcasms of devils, is so foreign to everything with which I am acquainted, that my mind in vain endeavors to believe or understand it. If doctrines like these occupy the habitual reflections of any, it is not of the lawless, the violent and ungovernable, but of the sober and conscientious, overwhelming them with gratuitous anxiety, or persuading them passively to submit to despotism and injustice, that they may receive the recompense of their patience hereafter. [11]

Later, under the influences of Mary Wollstonecraft and Coleridge, Godwin became, according to several of his biographers, a deist or a pantheist; nonetheless, he continued to express "the utmost repugnance of understanding for the idea of an intelligent Creator and Governor of the universe, which strikes my mind as the most irrational and ridiculous anthropomorphism." [12]

Voltaire, whose work Godwin read at the time of his apostasy, famously remarked that if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him; atheism would pose a potential threat to social order and peace. [13] The anarchist Bakunin repudiated Voltaire in his famous, or notorious, tract, God and the State (written in 1870-72, published in 1882, and still in print), declaring:

> If God existed, only in one way could he serve human liberty—by ceasing to exist.

> A jealous lover of human liberty, and deeming it the absolute condition of all that we admire and respect in humanity, I reverse the the phrase of Voltaire, and say that *if God really existed, it would be necessary to abolish him.* [italics original] [14]

As a body of art that came into existence during a period of religious skepticism, modernism shares some of anarchism's attitudes toward religious authority. In addition to Nietzsche, some of the most prominent and influential modernist thinkers were nonbelievers. Peter Gay describes Freud's "irreligious principles," his "determined and articulate unbelief," explaining that "his irreligiosity was fundamental to his scientific stance, essential to his psychoanalytic theory." [15] Gay has written an entire book on this subject entitled A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis (the phrase "godless Jew" comes from one of Freud's own letters). In it Gay describes Freud as "a loyal son of the Enlightenment, the last of the philosophes" who "was happy to claim the Enlightenment as his intellectual ancestor." [16] Like God and the State, Freud's The Future of an Illusion contrasts science and religion; like Marx, Freud compares religion to a narcotic. He even speculates that it is "the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity." [17]

Another –arguably, the other—modernist thinker was Albert Einstein. Because of his famous aphorism, "God doesn't play dice," Einstein is often assumed to have believed in a creator, but he was avowedly secular in his personal attitudes. In a letter he wrote, "It was, of course, a lie what you read about my

religious convictions, a lie which is being systematically repeated. I do not believe in a personal God and I have never denied this but have expressed it clearly. If something is in me which can be called religious then it is the unbounded admiration for the structure of the world so far as our science can reveal it."[18]

In the following passage, Einstein describes his abandonment of religion in ways consistent, particularly in the italicized phrases, with the broader sense of "anarchism":

> I came - though the child of entirely irreligious (Jewish) parents - to a deep religiousness, which, however, reached an abrupt end at the age of twelve. Through the reading of popular scientific books I soon reached the conviction that much in the stories of the Bible could not be true. The consequence was a positively fanatic orgy of freethinking coupled with the impression that youth is intentionally being deceived by the state through lies; it was a crushing impression. Mistrust of every kind of authority grew out of this experience, a skeptical attitude toward the convictions that were alive in any specific social environment—an attitude that has never again left me (italics added). [19]

Modernist writers had an outspoken critic of religion in the person of Bertrand Russell, a social acquaintance of E. M. Forster and other members of the Bloomsbury Group. Like Einstein, Bertrand Russell believed that religion had its

origins not in some apriori spiritual sense but in fear. Russell's Why I Am Not A Christian caused a stir when it was published in 1927.[20] Like Bakunin, Russell compares superstitious beliefs to chains and believers to slaves, appealing instead to reason and evidence. Russell, the author of Roads to Freedom: Socialism, Anarchism, and Syndicalism, has appeared to many anarchists as a kindred spirit. He was even included in an anarchist bibliography because its editor thought he had "the tendency."

The areligious ideas of Einstein, Freud, Russell, and other thinkers of the period were assimilated by some of the most famous modernist novelists. The philosophical and scientific attacks on older epistemologies had challenged the theological worldview of an omnipotent Creator at the center of an orderly universe that is governed by His divine plan. Thus the meaning of "anarchy," or the absence of government, bled into the notion of "chaos," the random and irrational tumult of the godless, meaningless universe. An implicit agnosticism or atheism — the terms were sometimes interchangeable — is subtly present in many canonical novels, most obviously in a character's sudden awareness of the indifference of the universe — an experience that is the obverse of a religious conversion.

"How could any Lord have made this world?" wonders Mrs. Ramsey in To the Lighthouse (1924). "With her mind she had always seized the fact that there is no reason, order, justice: but suffering, death, the poor. There was no treachery too base for the world to commit; she knew that. No happiness lasted; she knew that."[21] In the middle section of the novel, "Time Passes," this pessimism explicitly

dominates the authorial vision. Woolf evokes a frightening universe in which the characters of the novel die suddenly, war and destruction replace peace and order, and storms take place "until it seemed as if the universe were battling and tumbling, in brute confusion and wanton lust aimlessly by itself." [22] Even in spring, when the violets and daffodils bloom and the world seems beautiful again, "the stillness and brightness of the day were as strange as the chaos and tumult of the night, with the trees standing there, and the flowers standing there, looking before them, looking up, yet beholding nothing, eyeless and so terrible" (italics added). This is a modernist account of the anarchic universe—empty, entrophic, devoid of order and metaphysical significance. In Chapter 4 we will revisit some of these issues in relation to Henry Adams.

Among modernist poets the linkage to religious skepticism may seem more problematic, largely because T.S. Eliot's Anglo-Catholicism is such a salient counter-example. In 1965 a contemporary of Eliot and a fellow poet wrote a memoir about their friendship, making specific references to their intellectual debates. "When he announced in the preface to For Lancelot Andrews (1928) that he was a classicist in literature, a royalist in politics, and an anglo-catholic in religion," Herbert Read recalled, "I could only report that I was a romanticist in literature, an anarchist in politics, and an agnostic in religion."[23] Another contemporary, the equally prominent and influential modernist poet Ezra Pound, acidly rejected religion and Christianity, declaring in "Provincialism the Enemy" (1917) that "religious dogma is a set of arbitrary, unprovable statements about the unknown" and "I think the world can well dispense with the Christian religion." In

the same essay Pound praises Christ for his "profound and philosophic genius" but describes him as "an intuitive, inexperienced man, dying before middle age," provincialism having limited his philosophical range. Much like Bakunin, Pound rages that "Christianity has become the slogan of every oppression, of every iniquity. From saving your own soul, you progress to thinking it your duty or right to save other people's souls, and to burn them if they object to your method of doing it." [24]

The rise of a new mass culture, the women's suffrage movement, the new Soviet state, theories of psychoanalysis and modern physics, and a slew of technological inventions were changing everyday life more radically than in any earlier period of history. These revolutionary changes exacerbated the sensation of vertigo that Yeats described in "The Second Coming. " (1919) when he so famously wrote, "Things fall apart, the center does not hold/mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." The new world of the twentieth century seemed to many of its citizens to be in flux or in decline, unmoored from its past history, lacking both meaning and direction.

Unnatural Modernisms

One symptom of the center's failure to hold was the radical disappearance of traditional, unifying aesthetic strategies. "Anarchy" became a common term of abuse leveled at seemingly chaotic, random, or willfully untraditional modernist works. When cultural commentators rejected modernist formal innovations as

evocations of "anarchy," they were responding to this loss of an aesthetic of centrality, totality, hierarchy, and linearity in modernist artworks. They were also alluding to anarchism

Although to some modernists and cultural conservatives, the demise of the old order was deeply disturbing, to others, such as André Breton and Tristan Tzara, it was reason for celebration. In his 1929 essay on Surrealism, Walter Benjamin writes that the German observer in particular "has no excuse for taking the movement for the 'artistic,' 'poetic' one it superficially appears." [25] Surrealism's literary origins are themselves anarchist, or — the claim is reversible— its anarchist origins are literary, as Benjamin later implies:

> Between 1865 and 1875 a number of great anarchists, without knowing of one another, worked on their infernal machines [bombs]. And the astonishing thing is that independently of one another they set its clock at exactly the same hour, and forty years later in Western Europe [i.e., 1905-1915] the writings of Dostoyevsky, Rimbaud, and Lautréamont exploded at the same time [italics added] [26]

The Surrealists, Benjamin continues, are descendents of these writers and thus belong to "a lineage of insurrection." Their "particular task" is "to win the energies of intoxication for the revolution" and to bind anarchist revolt to communist revolution. The intoxication, ecstasy, and destruction of revolt are, in

his view, inherently anarchistic, whereas communism, with which the Surrealists sought to affiliate themselves, was constructive and disciplined but also "dictatorial."

If there are several anarchisms, there are also, as critics have come to realize, multiple modernisms with differing aesthetic, social, and political agendas. It is a conservative strain of modernism that was canonized as Modernism in the 1950s, a modernism whose key tenets were articulated by Eliot and Pound and further elaborated by the Anglo-American New Critics. By the time Modernism was canonized, it had been domesticated, divested of all the wild and revolutionary attributes that had made its first adherents appear so shocking to their bourgeois publics. The obscenity trials of Joyce and Lawrence, the uproars at the premiere performances of compositions by Stravinsky, Berg, and Webern, the horror of the public and the critics at exhibits of modern painting from Edvard Munch to the Impressionists and Cubists, the irritated incomprehension that greeted modernist experiments in poetry—all these reactions faded into folklore as "close readings" substantiated the erudition and craft of modernist innovations while bracketing the social context of their early reception.

Every politics seeks to defend itself as an outgrowth of the natural order. It is natural for the strong to survive and the weak to go under; thus capitalism is in accord with nature. It is natural to have a leader and a center of power; thus anarchism is unnatural. It is natural for men to dominate the public sphere; thus feminism is a violation of the natural order. Just as, on the diachronic axis, history and custom become conflated with nature, similarly, on the syntagmatic axis,

politics and aesthetics become confused with nature. If nature is redefined, culture and society must also be reconfigured. By the same logic, reconfigurations of culture can pose challenges to our understanding of the natural. The radical style of all modernist artists, their abandonment of rhyme and meter, tonality, and perspective, suggested to these critics a political and social radicalism.

Because music and painting rely upon the senses as well as the imagination, they are implicitly associated with the natural as well as the cultural; that is, once an audience becomes acculturated to a particular aesthetic, it seems natural to that audience, and any marked deviations from it appear "unnatural" and thus illegitimate. Tonality, the longstanding European practice by which a composition was organized around a "central" key, lost its preeminence in the modernist era. Modernist composers experimented with polytonality, serial tonality, and polyrhythms. One music historian dates the beginning of musical modernism from the opening notes of Debussy's Prélude de l'apres-midi d'un faune, composed in the 1890s. By 1913, he says, the year Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire, Debussy's Jeux, and Stravinsky's Rite of Spring held their world premieres, modernist innovations in rhythm, harmony, and form were in full swing. [27]

Many contemporary listeners could not follow the logic of such music, which seemed to them a kind of aural chaos, a random assortment of discordant sounds. In Vienna in 1913, when Schoenberg conducted atonal pieces by his disciples, Webern and Berg, the audience broke into such an uproar that the concert ended prematurely and the police were called. [28] The first Paris performances of the "Rite of Spring" famously provoked the audience to fistfights. Writing about

composers now as uncontroversial and beloved as the Impressionist painters, a contemporary critic described Ravel`s Daphnis and Chloe (suite I) as "harmonic and polyphonic anarchy," and another critic identified Debussy as "the head of the anarchists." [29] Explaining this usage of the term, a music historian writes, "it is clear that 'anarchy' now meant not absolute musical disorder, but merely failure to confirm the familiar functions of triads and their derivatives in the delicate balance of tonal forces defined by Haydn. This refined order by now seemed natural, and deviations from it were regarded as open rebellion against nature and reasonable conformity with nature." [30]

In painting, there was an equally dominant aesthetic convention, that of Renaissance perspective, whose single focal point controlled and directed the viewer's gaze. John Berger explains the rationale for it as follows:

> The convention of perspective, which is unique to European art and which was first established in the early Renaissance, centers everything on the eye of the beholder. It is like a beam from a lighthouse—only instead of light travelling outward, appearances travel in. Perspective makes the single eye the center of the visible world … The visible world is arranged for the spectator as the universe was once thought to be arranged for God.[31]

Berger's synopsis sweeps from centrality to monotheism, from the single gazing eye (monocular vision) to the single divinity (monotheism). Modernist painting's rejection of perspective is suggestive, politically and philosophically, of an

epistemic shift. In the late 19th century, the authority of perspective was being discredited. Cezanne problematized the implication of point of view; the canvas was, after all, a two-dimensional surface, and the attempt to portray a three-dimensional world upon it was bound to induce contradictions. Picasso, in his 1907 Demoiselles d'Avignon, set off the first modernist bomb. His stylistic innovation took the form of multiple points of view, an aesthetic strategy that decentered both the subject of the painting and the gaze directed upon it. In overtly anarchist terms, Kandinsky rejected the traditional painterly perspective. Other modernist painters acknowledged, as Clement Greenberg famously argued, the flatness of the canvas.

Like modernist music, and for similar reasons — the disorientation of the audience, apparent violations of nature —modernist painting and anarchism were associated in the cultural discourse of the period. In a 1909 article on the painting of the 1890s, Maurice Denis declared, "Without the destructive and negative anarchism of Gaugin and Van Gogh, Cézanne's example, with all that it comprised in the way of tradition, restraint and order, would not have been understood" [32] [italics added]. In a history of fin-de-siècle France, Eugen Weber observes: "When the first Fauve paintings appeared in the Salon of 1905 and critics described Derain`s brush as dipped in dynamite, readers understood this was not unmitigated praise" [italics added].[33]

Critics in the visual arts have long been aware of the common sympathies of anarchists and artists. Jerrold Siegel observed that "the two groups shared a commitment to liberation from external rules and restraints," [34]and Roger Shattuck saw in "the atmosphere of permanent explosion in artistic activity" evidence of

"anarchistic tendencies."[35] Patricia Leighten wrote in her book on Picasso: "for the anarchists, unlike the Marxists, the role of art in society was a central issue, both in its reflection of the current state of culture and, in the future, as an expression of a harmonious society." [36]

Anglo-American literary critics were slower to consider the relationship of politics to modernist novels and poetry. Unlike their immediate predecessors, the Naturalists, who wrote badly and took a vulgar interest in social issues, the modernists seemed to many critics to be the last avatars of bourgeois individualism. They were interested in high culture and deviant sex, not in political leaders and social movements. In his 1979 book on Wyndham Lewis, subtitled The Modernist as Fascist, Fredric Jameson wrote, "The most influential formal influences of canonical modernism have been strategies of inwardness, which set out to reappropriate an alienated universe by transforming it into private styles and personal languages."[37] Proust, languishing in his cork-lined room, was a descendent of Flaubert, not Zola; Eliot and Pound, studying the Metaphysical and Chinese poets, were so austere and scholarly as to require footnotes and annotations; the Bloomsbury Group seemed harmlessly aristocratic, preoccupied with the exchange of witty repartee and enticing one another into bed. Like other writers of his generation, Joyce was erudite, aloof, and filthy-minded. The modernists were surely too interested in their own stylistic innovations, sexual experiments, and lofty, arcane reading to have any energy left over for colonialism, the Dreyfuss Affair, or World War I. "There is indeed a political modernism," observed Terry Eagleton in a 1980s essay, "but it is hardly characteristic of the

movement as a whole." [38] Modernism was interpreted as the last gasp of elite culture, a fragile bulwark of resistance to the tidal wave of tawdry mass culture that would overwhelm the twentieth century and wash modernist artworks up like rare, fragile shells onto the dunes, where they could be collected by the likes of F. R. Leavis and the New Critics, to be arranged and protected in university collections.

Modernist novelists necessarily rejected notions of centrality in a more complicated way than did painting and music. The most obvious philosophical and aesthetic connection between the novel and painting, that of the omniscient narrator, was discredited by the same logic that had cast doubt upon the validity of perspective. The later Henry James and his high modernist successors abandoned omniscient narrators, working instead with partial and unreliable narrators whose report of events was always biased, ambiguous, and problematic.

Modernist novelists took as their principal characters figures who struggle against, or succumb to, interpellation by centralizing social forces. These characters typically live in capital cities and move among government buildings. Running her errands in London, Mrs. Dalloway is constantly reminded of the British Empire, World War I, and male authority in all its symbolic and corporeal forms. Joseph K., who is arrested in the first sentence of The Trial, can find no way out of the immense labyrinth of the state. In Petersburg, Nicholas Apollonovich, the son of a powerful bureaucrat, takes the side of revolutionaries and mystical anarchists against his father and the statist universe he represents.

The Poet as Anarchist

Of all the modernist artists, it was the poet who became most identified, in the cultural discourse of the period, with the anarchist.

In Plato`s Republic, the poet is represented as a disruptive and inassimilable element in the State, a figure whose mind, temperament, and practices are essentially anti-authoritarian. According to Socrates, poets appeal to the irrational and emotional in their audiences, arousing thereby the imagination and fears of future soldiers; the State is closely identified with its military force and poets with the imaginative, even the "effeminate." Poets malign and offend the rulers of the state, suggesting that the gods are indifferent to, or even, as in the story of Niobe, the malicious causes of human misery. In some cases it is the lies that the poet tells which are harmful; in other cases it is the truths. The poet must be censured—Socrates cites examples of harmful passages in Homer — and in certain cases expelled. "We must also inform him that in our State such as he are not permitted to exist," Socrates says; "the law will not allow them." The Republic postulates an inevitable antipathy between the poet and all forms of authority, hierarchy, national identity.

Modernist poetry rejected the traditions of rhyme and meter as well as a previous public and social role of the poet, that of laureate of the State. Instead of working from a traditional rhyme scheme and metric pattern, each piece of free verse would generate its own organizational rationale — its line length, rhythms, assonance and off rhymes, etc. Instead of celebrating nationalism, the new poetry

would trespass in international waters. Like music, poetry would no longer practice an aesthetic whose reigning principle had been one of simultaneous accommodation to, and ingenious subversion of, traditional forms—sonata form, the sonnet, etc.

The most prominent modernist poets seem initially to have little in common with Plato`s dangerous poet. T.S. Eliot, a self-described "royalist in politics," would have maligned neither the monarchy nor the gods. Although Ezra Pound's trial for treason in the United States links him to the poet of The Republic, he supported the ultimate authoritarian State, the fascism of Mussolini and Hitler. Yeats's reactionary attitudes are the subject of a scathing critique by Yvor Winters. Yet no matter how conservative their views, some tension between modernist poets and the State is evident. Modernist writers are internationalists, polyglots like Joyce, Eliot, and Pound, incapable of wholehearted allegiance to, and thus often voluntarily exiled from, their countries of birth.

Cultural conservatives of the modernist era, however, saw the poet much as Plato did; in fact, they often interpreted the poet`s antipathy to the state as involving the most radical of anti-statist philosophies, that of anarchism. Even Eliot and Pound struck some of their contemporaries as radicals. Objecting to their poems as collected in Pound`s Catholic Anthology 1914-1915, Arthur Waugh wrote, in apparent ignorance of the oxymoron he employed : "If the unmetrical, incoherent banalities of these literary `Cubists` were to triumph, the State of Poetry would be threatened with anarchy" [caps original]. [39]

In his 1908 novel The Man Who Was Thursday, G.K. Chesterton summed up the modernist version of Plato`s poet. The novel opens with a long, mildly contemptuous description of a London suburb called Saffron Park, a counterpart to Chelsea or Islington whose inhabitants are reputed to be artists and intellectuals. The most important character in the suburb is the poet Lucien Gregory, whose political speeches draw the attention of his neighbors, particularly the "new women" who "were of the kind vaguely called emancipated, and professed some protest against male supremacy" (MWWT, 2). To them Gregory preaches "the old cant of the lawlessness of art and the art of lawlessness" (MWWT, 2). Gregory is a double hybrid, first of male and female and then of human and animal: "His dark red hair parted in the middle was literally like a woman`s"—the use of "literally" with "like" is peculiar—while his face was "broad and brutal." Chesterton sums up Gregory's disturbingly ambiguous appearance in theological terms: "he seemed like a walking blasphemy, a blend of the angel and the ape." Gregory`s composite being poses an assortment of threats to the world of order, particularly religious order, while his "apelike" face, mentioned several times, poses the threat of evolutionary theory, which has challenged Genesis as an explanation of origins.

Gregory is explicit in the identification of poets and anarchists:

> "An artist is identical with an anarchist," he cried. "You might transpose the words anywhere. An anarchist is an artist. The man who throws a bomb is an artist, because he prefers a great moment to everything ... An artist

> disregards all governments, abolishes all conventions. The poet delights in disorder only." [40]

Later the same character elaborates:

> Dynamite is not only our best tool, but our best symbol. It is as perfect a symbol of us as incense of the prayers of the Christians. It expands; it only destroys because it broadens. A man`s brain is a bomb ... My brain feels like a bomb, night and day. It must expand! It must expand! A man`s brain must expand, if it breaks up the universe! [41]

By the end of the novel, Gregory has been exposed as Satan himself, a figure celebrated by the anarchist Bakunin for his rebellion against the ultimate center and authority, God.

Chesterton`s novel may seem to be playing with familiar notions of modernism — the solitary genius who defies social and aesthetic conventions, shocking the complacent bourgeoisie. Alternatively, the character of Lucien Gregory may be based on the redhaired poet Percy Shelley, William Godwin's admirer and later son-in-law. (Shelley was sent down from university for distributing a pamphlet he had written entitled "The Necessity of Atheism.")

But Chesterton is not the only writer of the period to identify the anarchist with the poet. Herbert Read, the aforementioned friend of Tom Eliot, also made

this identification. If for Matthew Arnold culture and anarchy are by definition opposed, for Read, anarchy promised a seamless integration of art and everyday life. Read's exclusion from the modernist pantheon is doubtless in part a product of his public identification of himself as an anarchist. A poet, novelist, essayist, and art critic, he counted among his friends and acquaintances T.S. Eliot, Ford Madox Ford, Pound, Yeats, Lewis, the Woolfs, and other writers of the era. He did not, however, share their ideological attitudes. In To Hell with Culture Read reminded his audience that he had often expressed his disagreement with the political opinions of Yeats, Eliot, Pound, and Lewis.

For Read, revolutionary politics and modernism in the arts were inseparable. In an essay entitled "What is Revolutionary Art?" he argued: "Everywhere the greatest obstacle to the creation of this new social reality is the existence of the cultural heritage of the past—the religion, the philosophy, the literature and the art which makes up the whole complex ideology of the bourgeois mind." [42] Therefore, a consciously modernist art that breaks with the past — formally innovative work, including abstract painting and Surrealism —is more revolutionary than what communists imagine as revolutionary art, namely "folk art, peasant pottery, madrigals, and ballads." [43] Like Emma Goldman, he thought that the socialists he knew were deficient in their understanding of cultural practices, even though political revolution was inseparable from transformations in aesthetic perception:

> What in the attitude of our between-war socialists probably repelled me most directly was their incapacity to appreciate the significance of the artist's approach. To me it seemed elementary that a belief in Marx should be accompanied by a belief in, say, Cézanne; and that the development of art since Cézanne should interest the completely revolutionary mind as much as the development of socialist theory since Proudhon. I wanted to discuss, not only Sorel and Lenin, but also Picasso and Joyce. But no one saw the connection ... No one could see that it was the same force that was transforming the whole of reality—making it possible to give different interpretations of reality. To me it seemed just as important to destroy the established bourgeois ideals in literature, painting, and architecture as it was to destroy the established bourgeois ideals in economics (emphasis added). [44]

Read was influenced not only by Sorel, Kropotkin, and Proudhon, but also by such disparate thinkers as Marx, Hegel, Tolstoy, Schiller, and Carl Jung, whose "psychological types" inform some of Read's speculations about individual artists. His ideas thus come from all parts of the political spectrum; he sounds by turns like a flaming radical, a conventional English liberal, and a Burkean conservative.

Neither capitalism nor the State, Read believes, provides a climate hospitable to the arts. A culture in which the State determines what kind of art is appropriate results in the death or destruction of the artist; the suicide of Mayakovsky under the Soviets is evidence of this. Artists need the liberty to

express their ideas as they see fit—not to be monitored or censored, like Pasternak and Shostakovich under Stalin, for the crime of "formalism." It is not enough for the State to promote and champion culture; the Nazis, Read says, were very keen on the notion yet they produced no great art or artists, and their celebrated writers either fled or were exiled. (Accurate as this observation is, it elides the issue of talented writers sympathetic to fascism, like Céline, Hamsun, and Pound.)

Read also debunks a Social Darwinist notion of the arts in which economic struggle and hardship actually benefit the artist and lead to artistic triumph. "There is scarcely a great artist in the history of modern civilization," Read writes, citing Cervantes and Leonardo da Vinci as examples, "whose work would not have been incomparably greater if he could have lived in spiritual freedom and economic security."[45] The marketing of art has only worsened the situation of artists. If the patronage system made the artist into a servant, "the commercialization of art which followed was much more disastrous, and I can think of no artist — certainly not artists like Scott or Balzac or Dickens — who would not have been better artists if they had been relieved of insistent financial pressure."

"Culture" does not mean to Read what it does to Matthew Arnold—individual self-cultivation, possession of "aesthetic culture" or cultural capital — or to T. S. Eliot, for whom culture and religion are interdependent and the cultures of some groups are "higher" than those of other groups. Nor does Read endorse the Arnoldian idea that workers should be introduced to and enriched by the culture of their betters. In To Hell with Culture Read imagines a "democratic culture" which is also necessarily modern in its technology, but is no

longer ruled by the profit motive. A capitalist making a chair for profit would use the cheapest materials, or the cheapest labor, or both, and to inflate the price of particular items, add "a bit of culture—a claw-and-ball foot in the manner of Chippendale, a wriggly bit of scrollwork. " However, a chair made for use rather than for profit—an anarchist chair, in a sense—"would be the result of two considerations—function and fulfillment. " It would be produced in exchange for the new owner's contribution, in the form of labor, to the community.[46]

Read's particular interest lay in the relationship between the arts and education. In perhaps his most famous book, Education Through Art (1948), he advocated a pedagogy that emphasizes perception and sensual pleasure and that is uncontaminated by authoritarian practices. Accordingly, teachers would act as collaborators rather than masters, examinations would be eliminated, punishment would be superceded by acts of reparation, and a spirit of co-operation and reciprocity would replace competition and regulations. The senses would be the focus of attention; musical education would develop the ear, kinetic education (as in dance) the muscles, verbal education the facility for poetry and drama, constructive education the ability to create with the hands, etc. Such an educational system would "precede and preclude the formation of those egoistic and anti-social impulses which are the present product of the social process"[47] (ETA, 6). The result would be egalitarian, cooperative individuals capable of participation in a free society.

In proposing an inevitable kinship between anarchy and the arts, Herbert Read raised two issues: first, under what kind of society could the arts and artists

prosper, and secondly, what kinds of art would an anarchist society produce? This second notion is closely tied to the possibility of an "anarchist aesthetics" — formulated in opposition to both fascist aesthetics and the commodification of art under capitalism. In Read's libertarian society, the artist would be "integrated," a valued participant, not a "parasitic dilettante or a propagandist, " a "derelict outsider." And in order to be a participant, the artist must express more than a "private vision" and must no longer "be excluded from direct participation in the processes of economic production." [48] An emancipated society in which the artist would play a significant public role necessitates a radical economic transformation and the redistribution of wealth. Accordingly, Read concludes, "to hell with the artist" because "art as a separate profession is merely a consequence of culture as a separate entity. In a natural society there will be no precious or privileged beings called artists; there will only be workers" [italics original]. [49]

The notion of an anarchist aesthetics has been proposed by a number of writers. Read does not employ this formulation, but he makes some observations that imply its possibility. In Poetry and Anarchism he writes:

> I realize that form, pattern, and order are essential aspects of existence, but in themselves they are attributes of death. To make life, to insure progress, to create interest and vividness, it is necessary to break form, to distort pattern, to change the nature of our civilization. In order to create it is necessary to destroy; and the agent of destruction in our society is the poet. I believe that the poet is necessarily an anarchist, and that he must oppose

> all organized conceptions of the State, not only those which we inherit from the past, but equally those which are imposed on people in the name of the future. [50]

The poet is an anarchist because the poet opposes "form, pattern, and order" in all their guises—intellectual systems, aesthetic prescriptions and rules, governmental structures and regulations, divine edicts and interdictions. The poet is thus also a modernist, departing from artistic dogmas about form, pattern, and order.

Both revolutionary anarchism and oppositional forms of modernism, therefore, challenge unjust authorities and deconstruct the binary opposition between centers and margins. The modernist poet is necessarily an anarchist, and the anarchist necessarily a poet, in the sense that both are bound to defy any directives issued from above. These are their affinities, and this is why, despite many worldly differences, they were confused and conflated with one another

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[1] Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Empire 1875-1914 (New York: Viking, 1989) 62.

[2] George Orwell, Homage to Catalonia (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanavich, 1980) 61.

[3] Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle (Detroit:Black and Red,1983) 92.

[4] Debord, Spectacle, 94.

[5] Miller, Anarchism, 92.

[6] Noam Chomsky, The Chomsky Reader (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987) 19-20.

[7] Noam Chomsky, "Notes on Anarchism," For Reasons of State (New York: Pantheon, 1973) 370.

[8] Emile Capouya and Keitha Tompkins, ed., The Essential Kropotkin (New York: Liveright Press, 1975) 108.

[9] Murray Bookchin, Toward an Ecological Society (Montreal: Black Rose Books,1986)268-69.

[10] Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Empire, 1875-1914, 266.

[11]Godwin, Political Justice, 497-98.

[12]quoted in Marshall, Godwin, 238-39.

[13]Voltaire, "We Must Take Sides" in A Treatise on Toleration and Other Essays, translated by Joseph McCabe (Prometheus Books: Amherst, NY, 1994) 26.

[14] Michael Bakunin, God and the State (New York: Dover, 1970) 28.

[15] Peter Gay, Reading Freud: Explorations and Entertainments (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990) 59.

[16] Peter Gay, A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987) 41.

[17] "The Future of an Illusion" in The Freud Reader, Peter Gay, ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995) 713.

[18] Albert Einstein - The Human Side, selected and edited by Helen Dukas and Banesh Hoffman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) 66.

[19] Albert Einstein, Autobiographical Notes (LaSalle and Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1979) 5.

[20]Marshall, Demanding the Impossible, 566.

[21] Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse (New York: HBJ, 1955) 64.

[22] Woolf, To the Lighthouse, 135.

[23] Herbert Read, T.S. Eliot: A Memoir (Middleton, CT.:Wesleyan Center for Advanced Studies,1966).

[24] Ezra Pound, Selected Prose 1909-1965 (New York: New Directions, 1973) 190-193.

[25] Benjamin, "Surrealism" in Reflections, (New York: Schocken, 1986) 177-78.

[26] Benjamin, "Surrealism, " 187.

[27] Paul Griffiths, Modern Music: A History from Debussy to Boulez (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978) 14 and 41.

[29] Richard Crocker, A History of Musical Style (New York: Dover, 1986) 488.

[30] Crocker, 488.

[31] John Berger, Ways of Seeing (London: Penguin, 1972) 16.

[32] Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison, eds. "From Gaugin to Van Gogh to Classicism," in Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology (New York: Harper & Row, 1987) 52.

[33] Eugen Weber, France: Fin de Siècle (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1986) 118.

[34] Jerrold Siegel, Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life (New York: Penguin, 1986) 311.

[35] Roger Shattuck, The Banquet Years (New York: Vintage, 1968) 22-23. He adds later, "Like the anarchists, the artists of the avant-garde took liberties with the structure of life itself, defied convention and lethargy in order to assert a new order of things" (41).

[36] Patricia Leighten, Re-Ordering the Universe: Picasso and Anarchism (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP 1989)39.

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[38] Terry Eagleton, "Capitalism, Modernism, and Postmodernism" in Against the Grain: Selected Essays (London: Verso, 1986) 140.

[39] quoted in Julian Symons, Makers of the New: The Revolution in Literature, 1912-1939 (London: André Deutsch, 1987) 70.

[40] G.K. Chesterton, The Man Who Was Thursday (New York: Dover Books, 1986) 2-3.

[41]G. K. Chesterton, The Man Who Was Thursday , 38.

[42] Herbert Read, "What is Revolutionary Art?" in Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology, ed. by Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison (New York: Harper & Row, 1987) 126.

[43]Read, "Revolutionary Art," 127.

[44] Herbert Read, Anarchy and Order (London: Faber & Faber, 1954) 76-77.

[45] Herbert Read, To Hell with Culture (London: Routlege and Kegan Paul, 1963) 89-95.

[46] Read, Culture, 17.

[47] Read, Education through Art (New York: Pantheon Books,1948) 6.

[48] Read, Anarchy, 226.

[49] Read, Culture, 23.

[50] Read, Anarchy, 58.