

ANARCHISM AND POLITICAL THEORY:
Contemporary Problems

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For my parents, Shifra and Ze'ev
and in memory of Yosef Gordon (1920-2005)

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores contemporary anarchism, in its re-emergence as a social movement and political theory over the past decade. The methodology used combines participatory research and philosophical argumentation.

The first part, "Explaining Anarchism", argues that it should be addressed primarily as a political culture, with distinct forms of organisation, campaigning and direct action repertoires, and political discourse and ideology. Largely discontinuous with the historical workers' and peasants' anarchist movement, contemporary anarchism has come together in the intersection of radical direct-action movements in the North since the 1960s: feminism, ecology and resistance to nuclear energy and weapons, war and neoliberal globalisation. Anarchist ideological discourse is analysed with attention to key concepts such as "domination" and "prefigurative politics", with attention to the avowedly open-ended, experimental nature of the anarchist project.

The second part, "Anarchist Anxieties", is a set of theoretical interventions in four major topics of controversy in anarchism. Leadership in anarchist politics is addressed through sustained attention to the concept of power, proposing an agenda for equalising access to influence among activists, and an "ethic of solidarity" around the wielding of non-coercive power. Violence is approached through a recipient-based definition of the concept, exploring the limits of any attempt to justify violence and offering observations on violent empowerment, revenge and armed struggle. Technology is subject to a strong anarchist critique, which stresses its inherently social nature, leading to the exploration of Luddism, the disillusioned use of ICTs, and the promotion of lo-tech, sustainable human-nature interfaces as strategic directions for an anarchist politics of technology. Finally, questions of nationalism are approached through the lens of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, addressing anarchist dilemmas around statehood, and exploring approaches to "national conflicts" that link multiple forms of oppression and that employ a direct action approach to peacemaking.

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