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## **David Held is an Anarchist<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction**

David Held is the Graham Wallas Professor of Government and director of the Centre for the Study of Global Governance at the LSE. He founded Polity Press in 1984 and his prolific output and high profile status, not to mention the timely intellectual contributions of his work, have lent him the ear of progressive policy-makers in the UK and Europe. Held's name has become almost synonymous with the study and advocacy of radical democratic projects, progressive left-globalisation and ethical and political cosmopolitanism.<sup>2</sup> His works, which stretch to many yards on most university library bookshelves, present a singular and hugely influential challenge to traditional statist, liberal and neo-liberal approaches to ethics, politics and power and advocate a coherent and philosophically grounded defence of what he calls 'global social democracy'.

It would therefore seem, on the face of it, quite ludicrous to claim that David Held is an anarchist and so I might as well make it clear from the outset that I do not think that David Held is an anarchist. However, David Held's vision of cosmopolitan democracy approximates anarchist thinking on too many levels to let such a comparison and analysis evade the attention of scholars of cosmopolitanism and of anarchist thought. I hope that the following comparison will prove enlightening for both sets of scholars and will raise questions regarding the historic convergence and divergence of contemporary post-Marxist and anarchist thinking. What I will also suggest in this paper is that by reading Held's work against the political philosophy of anarchism it is possible to bring anarchism in from the cold, demystify it somewhat by showing how similar anarchist arguments are to those offered by our academic and policy-making elite, but also show how anarchism can contribute in substantive ways

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a pre-publication version of an original, peer-reviewed paper that will be published in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. It is available in audio format at: [http://anarchist-studies-network.org.uk/Rethinking\\_Anarchy%3A\\_Anarchism\\_and\\_International\\_Relations](http://anarchist-studies-network.org.uk/Rethinking_Anarchy%3A_Anarchism_and_International_Relations).

<sup>2</sup> See for example: D Held, 'Beyond Liberalism and Marxism?', in *The Idea of the Modern State*, ed. G McLennan, D Held and Stuart Hall (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1984), 143, David Held, 'Cosmopolitanism: globalisation tamed?', *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 04 (2003), David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), David Held, *Global Covenant: the Social Democratic Alternative to the Washington Consensus* (Cambridge Polity, 2004), David Held and Anthony McGrew, *Globalization and Anti-Globalization* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), David Held and Heikki Patomäki, 'Problems of Global Democracy: A Dialogue', *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 5 (2006).

to the debate surrounding cosmopolitanism and governance in this post-statist world. What I will argue in relation to this final point is that Held's call for a global social democratic project risks falling foul of the very processes he believes the post-statist project has, or promises, to overcome. In other words, while Held has taken post-Marxist thinking closer to anarchism than ever before, his cosmopolitanism is not anarchistic enough. Without paying attention to the anarchist critique, his project risks falling foul of the very authoritarianism it is trying to overcome.

The paper is structured in the following way. I will begin by outlining the core contributions of Held's work. My aim here is to show why Held thinks his work is as significant for the post-statist age as Hobbes' was for the birth of the modern state. I will then set out, in brief, the core components of Held's political philosophy. I will here focus on 'the principle of autonomy', the seven 'sites of power' which undermine autonomy and in which autonomy must be defended if we are to take the principle of autonomy seriously. I will do this so as to illustrate Held's critique of neo-liberal economics and the so-called 'Washington Consensus'. I set out his defence of impartiality and finally, his defence of the principle of subsidiarity and how it fits into his theory of global cosmopolitan governance, or 'global social democracy'.

What I will argue in the second, more substantive section of the paper is that on each of these points Held is rather late to the party. The anarchists were warning of the potential travesties of statism, unbridled liberalism and the erosion of autonomy in the nineteenth-century. Indeed, autonomy, Held's core political principle, has been central to anarchist politics from the outset, the seven sites of power have all, at one time or another, been at the forefront of anarchist analysis and the anarchist anti-statist critique of neo-liberal political economy antedates Held's. There is, as I will show, some difference in their respective defence of subsidiarity, which I will argue is a quintessentially anarchist concept, and together, and finally Held's defence of the state is a glaring contradiction from the perspective to be outlined here.

It is but one step from here to argue that since the state has manifestly failed to defend the principle of autonomy at the domestic level, it is hard to see how a social democratic model would be any more successful writ large. What I will show, as my exegesis proceeds, is that if we take the anarchist stand on these issues seriously, Held's defence of global social democracy becomes untenable on his own terms. In short, global social democracy is not consistent with his reading of history, a robust defence of subsidiarity, the principle of autonomy, monopoly ownership of the means of production, or impartiality. On this final point I will argue that the democratic legal state, the backbone of Held's cosmopolitan theory of governance, is shot through with partial interests and reform of the state cannot undo the structures of power it sustains and defends and which routinely work to undermine individual and social autonomy. I will conclude that David Held is not an anarchist, but a more consistent Heldian political philosophy would be.

### **A Very 20<sup>th</sup> Century Promise**

At the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after two World Wars and the manifest failure of the state to bring security to our lives, after the collapse of Cold War antipathies and the

grand narratives of left and right that had set the terms of political debate for most of the century, political and social theorists were queuing up to tell us that there had been a profound and irrevocable transformation of political community.<sup>3</sup> While the trajectory of this transformative process, usually called globalization, is still debated,<sup>4</sup> what is usually taken for granted is that the old 19<sup>th</sup> century order, characterised by nation states at each other's throats for territory and prestige, governed by nothing more than the whim of royal prerogative, has passed us by. By way of illustration, the European Union is usually held up as the embodiment of this transformation, where pooled sovereignty and cooperation, the defence of universal values like human rights and freedom, open markets and social democracy, are said to embody the harsh learning process Western societies have had to go through in the wake of the travesties of Hobsbawm's 'age of extremes'.<sup>5</sup>

In this new age, while the consensus remains that states are still significant 'actors',<sup>6</sup> the promise of the century to come is that we can and must make the most of this interregnum to rethink the political philosophy of order that gave us the states we are now trying to move beyond. As Held puts it:

The transformation of politics which has followed in the wake of the growing interconnectedness of states and societies and the increasing intensity of international networks requires a re-examination of political theory as fundamental in form and scope as the shift which brought about the conceptual and institutional innovations of the modern state itself.<sup>7</sup>

Working within the critical theoretical project of the Frankfurt School and the neo-Kantian political philosophy of Habermas amongst others, Held and his collaborators see this new world order as one which necessitates the rethinking of political order while at the same time the recognition of the valuable progress achieved by modern political communities. In this sense, Held is trying to square two distinct processes: the first is a historical transformation in political communities, the product of war and its aftermath, with the achievements of social democracy, something that has

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Richard K. Ashley, 'Imposing International Purpose: Notes on a Problematic of Governance', in *Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to world politics for the 1990s*, ed. Ernst-Otto Czempiel and James N. Rosenau (Cambridge, Mass: Lexington, 1989), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 2000), Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical foundations of a Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), John Gerard Ruggie, 'Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations', *International Organization* 47, no. 1 (1993), R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International relations as political theory*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Justin Rosenberg, *The follies of globalisation theory : polemical essays* (London: Verso, 2000), R. B. J. Walker, *After the globe, before the world* (London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-199* (London: Abacus, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> For more on this see Prichard, 2011 and forthcoming

<sup>7</sup> Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*, 143.

traditionally been confined and conceptualised only within the confines of the distinct political communities now being superseded or eroding. 'Political space for the development and pursuit of effective government and the accountability of power is no longer coterminous with a delimited political territory. Forms of political organisation now involve a complex deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of political authority.'<sup>8</sup> The challenge is to recast the progressive 'compromise' between labour, capital and the state, which was cemented in Western Europe in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and do so in radically different political context.<sup>9</sup> The question is, at least from the perspective of political philosophy, on what grounds can such a recasting be based. The promise is that this is just such a time in which the answers are not only clearer, but also more historically compelling because if we fail to avert what has gone before, we will not be given a third chance in a thermo-nuclear age. The assumption here, of course, is that no one saw this coming and that there was never any realistic and practicable alternative to the modern state. More problematic still is the assumption that we had to go through the travesties of the 20th century in order to 'learn'. This sort of historical providentialism is typical of neo-Kantian enlightenment ethics.

### **Towards Autonomy**

In a 1985 piece that prefigured much of his future political theory, David Held argued that the unsatisfactory political choice of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was between liberal reformism and revolutionary Marxism.<sup>10</sup> Neither position, Held argued, was well positioned to respond to the transformation of political community. With the former wedded to the notion that the structuring effects of the market could be ignored and that the state could be a neutral arbiter in economic and political disputes, and the latter unable or unwilling to look beyond the class dynamics of modern society for signs of change or entrenchment, neither tradition was well equipped to respond to the promise inherent in the transformation of political community.

Held sought to defend the 'principle of autonomy' by taking a route which took him between Mill and Marx, but bypassed the anarchist tradition completely. This principle, he argued, could help us frame and specify the appropriate institutions and identify those sites of power which at once restrain and yet might enable full and active citizenship in this (post)modern era. Held claimed that the principle of autonomy is not 'at the heart of any of the models of participatory democracy which place the active citizen exclusively at their centre',<sup>11</sup> and building on the work of Immanuel Kant, and neo-Kantians such as John Rawls, Brian Barry and Jurgen Habermas, Held defined the principle of autonomy thus:

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<sup>8</sup> Held and McGrew, *Globalization and Anti-Globalization*, 124.

<sup>9</sup> Held, *Global Covenant: the Social Democratic Alternative to the Washington Consensus*.

<sup>10</sup> Held, 'Beyond Liberalism and Marxism?'.

<sup>11</sup> Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*, 149..

persons should enjoy equal rights and, accordingly, equal obligation in the specification of the political framework which generates and limits the opportunities available to them; that is they should be free and equal in the determination of the conditions of their own lives, so long as they do not deploy this framework to negate the rights of others'.<sup>12</sup>

Bearing in mind that Held was alert to the way in which the liberal state is, in practice if not in theory, often deployed in the interests of the few to negate those of the many, and he was also alert to the fact that class was not the only way in which our life chances were curtailed, using this concept to cut through the contemporary political problematique and to do so in a way that would retain the best of both traditions of political theory, was a mighty task. Indeed, this principle of autonomy bears nearly all the weight of Held's political philosophy and while he argues that others may have leant on this principle from time to time, he argues that they lacked as full an appreciation of the conditions which undermined it. To help him to understand these conditions, Held develops and sketches the contours of what he calls seven 'sites of power'. These are: the body, welfare, culture and cultural life, civic associations, the economy, the organisation of violence and the state.

It is not possible to adequately deal with each in turn in as short a piece as this and so I will focus on two: the state and the economy. Discussing these two will give us a strong enough sense of why subsidiarity and global federalism are important institutional arrangements that can respond to the transformation of political community, respond to the challenges of defending autonomy and help us understand how we might get to a stage where the state might 'whither away'. I say might, because as the following section will show, ignoring the anarchist critique means that Held is left open to it, and one thing that anarchists have consistently argued is that you can't expect the state to get rid of itself.

### **Autonomy, the State and the Economy**

David Held uses the concept of autonomy to help him unpack and think through the implications for human flourishing in seven real-life 'sites of power'. These sites of power are those areas of social life in which the life chances of individuals are undermined by pre-existing structures and social processes. Having specified the analytical yardstick by which human autonomy can be judged, he turns to modern society and finds it wanting. The seven sites of power Held specifies are the body, politics, the economy, organised violence, welfare, race and culture. For the sake of brevity I will focus only on the economy and state for the purposes of this analysis. This is not to say that the other domains are any less important or to suggest that

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 147.



anarchists have not engaged with the other five - far from it.<sup>13</sup> It is simply not possible to do justice to the richness of the anarchist tradition or David Held's work by casting our net too widely.

As Held rightly points out, the evolution of social citizenship is a progressive change by any measure. The recognition that the positive freedom to vote, political rights, would be impossible without the economic resources to do so, so called social rights, is central to realising a positive sense of autonomy. As Held puts it: '[o]nce citizens entered the factory gates, their lives were largely determined by the directives of capital... politics was not extended to industry [...] To the extent that modern capitalist relations produce systematic inequalities in economic and social resource, the structure of autonomy is profoundly affected.'<sup>14</sup> The autonomy of the capitalist has historically undermined the autonomy of the worker and when the two have come into conflict, with one or other side defended by the state, capital and labour have historically resorted to open conflict. Modern social democracies have historically found a new compromise between these three forces and the aim of this compromise has been to redress the balance somewhat in the interests of the working class.

However, the global economic system, increasingly defined along neo-liberal lines, 'creates objective exigencies that must be met if economic growth and development are to be sustained.'<sup>15</sup> The periodic crises of global capitalism, made particularly stark by the collapse of casino capitalism and the 'exuberance' of 'the markets' in 2008/2009 suggests that if people's livelihoods are to be protected, a global system of regulation must be introduced that tilts the balance of power back towards states and workers since private economic interests were manifestly incapable of regulating themselves. This, Held argues, demands a global social democratic compromise that would mirror that achieved in Western Europe in the post-War era. Put bluntly, '[i]f democratic legal relations are to be sustained, corporations will have to uphold, de jure and de facto, a commitment to the requirements of autonomy',<sup>16</sup> which is to say that economic relations would need to be democratised with those likely to suffer from the effects of private actions given control over the processes that have hitherto been denied them. As Held puts it: '[t]he question of particular forms of property right is not in itself the primary consideration',<sup>17</sup> but reasonable access to the decision making procedures that govern any given property regime is. The question is: how would such access and regulatory control be granted to those most affected by

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<sup>13</sup> For anarchist responses to and ways of alleviating the issues that arise from these seven sites of power see, for example, the numerous chapters in the following introductory works: Ruth Kinna, *Anarchism: A Beginners Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005), Jon Purkis and James Bowen, *Changing anarchism : anarchist theory and practice in a global age* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), Jon Purkis and James Bowen, *Twenty-first century anarchism : unorthodox ideas for a new millennium* (London: Cassell, 1997). Nathan J. Jun and Shane Wahl, *New perspectives on anarchism* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*, 182-83.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

these processes? For Held, the answer to this question lies with the democratic legal state.

For Held the state is ‘an independent corporation, made up of an ensemble of organisations coordinated by a determinate political authority’<sup>18</sup>, which is itself bound by legal rules. States also have a *de jure* monopoly on violence and are historical products peopled by historical subjects, rather than an abstract entity populated by rational egoists. The state has a real and formative role to play in the shaping of the life-chances and opportunities of the groups over which it has jurisdiction. It is not an impartial arbiter, but nor does that mean that it is automatically beholden to particular interests in a given society. The state is shaped and constrained by law which has itself emerged out of historical processes of contestation and bargaining with ever widening participation in the law-making process. The purpose of the principle of autonomy and the historical sociology of state formation is to show that this process has become ever more inclusive and that to develop this neo-Kantian process demands further entrenching the principle of autonomy within a framework of democratic public law.

Democratic public law sets out the basis of the rights and corresponding obligations which follow from a commitment to the principle of autonomy. It sets the form and limits of public power – the framework in which debate, deliberation and policy-making can be pursued and judged. Rules, laws, policies and decisions can be considered legitimate when made within this framework; that is, when made bearing ‘the democratic good’ in mind<sup>19</sup>

This is some way from bourgeois ideology and Held makes this clear by stating that the ‘entitlement to autonomy within the constraints of community [...] can be clearly distinguished from an unbridled licence for the pursuit of individual interests in public affairs’<sup>20</sup> However, by this analysis, ‘political empowerment’ demands ‘*de jure* status’<sup>21</sup> and without it this neo-Kantian framework would likely crumble. We must also hope and pray that those empowered by law to make decisions on our behalf do indeed have the public good in mind, even that their conception of the public good echoes our own or those of the communities we spend most time in. We must also hope that the state makes good this promise. However, as Held points out, in international affairs, many states fall far short of these demands, though, as I will discuss later, it is somewhat idealistic to assume they do so in a domestic context either.

Indeed, it is precisely because states cannot be guaranteed to adequately defend the rights and autonomy of their citizens that the European Court of Human Rights and other such supranational bodies were established. Held sees these bodies as providing historically significant redress beyond the confines of the nation state but

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 101.



also sees that these institutions themselves lack the legitimacy of more established democracies precisely because so few are entitled to participate in the decision-making process. While the ECHR is a relatively positive example, Held draws attention to the multi-lateral economic institutions of the global economy and their significant legitimacy deficits. Held notes how the legal rules which govern the global economy, for example, routinely favour those who first wrote them, which is to say that life chances are structurally skewed in favour of the affluent North West. Global social democracy would therefore constitute a new compromise between labour, capital and states at the international/global level. The question remains regarding the appropriate institutional frameworks through which to realise this compromise and how they can be shown to defend autonomy.

### **Autonomy, Subsidiarity and Multi-level Cosmopolitan Governance**

Held argues that the principle of subsidiarity implies that ‘those whose life expectancy and life chances are significantly affected by social forces and processes ought to have a stake in the determination of the conditions and regulation of these, either directly or indirectly through representatives’.<sup>22</sup> The problem is that ‘[p]olitical space for the development and pursuit of effective government and the accountability of power is no longer coterminous with a delimited political territory. Forms of political organisation now involve a complex deterritorialization and reterritorialization’,<sup>23</sup> which ‘points to the necessity of both the decentralisation and the centralisation of political power’.<sup>24</sup> However, ‘decision-making should be decentralised as much as possible [...] centralisation is favoured if, and only if, it is the necessary basis for avoiding the exclusion of persons who are significantly affected by a political decision or outcome’.<sup>25</sup> Thus the state’s ideal role is to redress the balance of forces in society in defence of the principle of autonomy. This approach ‘yields the possibility of multilevel democratic governance. The ideal number of appropriate democratic jurisdictions cannot be assumed to be embraced by just one level – as it is in the theory of the liberal democratic nation-state’.<sup>26</sup>

The political discourse of citizenship is contemporary means through which our moral obligations to one another are framed. While there is debate as to where these obligations lie,<sup>27</sup> there is general consensus that this debate should be framed through the language of rights and responsibilities. The challenge is how to have this debate in the absence of a clearly determinate political centre; in the absence of a sovereign. Modern politics is such that sovereignty, while formally identifiable is, in

<sup>22</sup> Held, *Global Covenant: the Social Democratic Alternative to the Washington Consensus*, 100.

<sup>23</sup> Held and McGrew, *Globalization and Anti-Globalization*, 124.

<sup>24</sup> Held, *Global Covenant: the Social Democratic Alternative to the Washington Consensus*, 100.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>27</sup> Needless to say this literature is vast. Any short selection might include the following:

practice and in theory quite difficult to locate. The EU is but one political system where multi-level governance and shared, balanced power renders the idea of a centre somewhat enigmatic. But this has probably been true throughout history. We cannot take sovereignty too seriously, since as it is manifestly clear, most states at most key points in history have routinely ignored it.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the establishment of multiple, overlapping and binding bodies of international law, the UN system and so forth, all undermine state sovereignty irreparably.

This ensuing 'multilevel citizenship' would be constituted by 'respect for shared rules and principles'<sup>29</sup> The nine principles of cosmopolitan governance that Held outlines and believes could be universally shared are the following: egalitarian individualism, active agency, personal responsibility and accountability, consent, collective decision making, democratic voting, inclusiveness and subsidiarity, avoidance of serious harm and sustainability.<sup>30</sup> These principles 'can form the basis for the protection and nurturing of each person's equal significance in the moral realm of humanity'.<sup>31</sup> The moral individualism of this selection of principles is well highlighted by Heiki Patomäki, and Held rightly I believe responds that the moral worth of collectives are usually the pretext for the erasure of individual rights.

My summary of Held's argument has been unavoidably brief but I hope it gives an accurate account of his wider political philosophy. I have drawn attention to Held's attempt to move between and beyond the traditional left/right dichotomy of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, his illustration that history has brought us to a point where it is possible to conceive of political orders that supersede the state precisely because they are here in nascent form and are necessary. I have tried to show that in order for us to conceptualise the legitimacy of these movements beyond statism in the contemporary world order a political theory that has the principle of autonomy at its heart and seeks to embed politics in a discourse of rights and responsibility is crucial to Held. Indeed, the world-historical imperatives of the time we live in demand nothing less. The catastrophic effects of unbridled capitalism, both economic and environmental, the failure and moral bankruptcy of authoritarianism and the extension of a global framework of legal redress demand that we strike a new compromise between state, labour and capital that today must be global in scope. The question I will now ask is whether a compromise that includes the state and capital will ever respect the principle of autonomy. I will not argue that labour is the only revolutionary subject, the only political body that can bring lasting change and secure autonomy in all its multi-faceted dimensions, but I will argue that the state and capital cannot deliver on the promise Held outlines.

### **Beyond Global Social Democracy: Anarchism, Autonomy and Politics**

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<sup>28</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty : organized hypocrisy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999)..

<sup>29</sup> Held, *Global Covenant: the Social Democratic Alternative to the Washington Consensus*, 114-15.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>31</sup> Held and Patomäki, 'Problems of Global Democracy: A Dialogue': 116.

The first question we need answered is how does Held represent anarchism, because if I am to claim that Held has anarchist tendencies, should we not be able to account for this by reference to his reading of anarchism? After all, Andrew Linklater, another key proponent of cosmopolitan democracy and one of the foremost sociologists of the transformation of European political community, is well aware of these synergies. ‘The anarchist tradition’ he argued, ‘has long-argued for the despatching state monopoly powers to local communities and transnational agencies in order to recover the potentials for universality and difference which were stifled by the rise of the modern territorial state’,<sup>32</sup> and that this calls for more research into anarchist conceptions of citizenship and community in a post-Westphalian era.

Held does not share these views. In *Models of Democracy*, David Held quite explicitly and deliberately ignores the anarchists.<sup>33</sup> When Held does engage with anarchism or anarchists, he reverts to stereotype and his ignorance is there for all anarchists, or those with a rudimentary understanding of the tradition, to see. Anarchists, he argues, ‘those notorious for attacking Starbucks at the 1999 Seattle WTO meeting [...] do not seek common ground or a new reconciliation of views [and...] in this respect they are no different from the extreme neo-liberalisers who put their faith first and foremost in deregulated markets’.<sup>34</sup> Elsewhere he argues that ‘the radical anti-globalist position’ which he intimates is synonymous with anarchism on the most part, ‘appears deeply naïve about the potential for locally based action to resolve or engage with, the governance agenda generated by the forces of globalization. How can such a politics cope with the challenges posed by overlapping communities of fate?’<sup>35</sup> What is perhaps most telling, and is a phrase which pops up throughout his work, is Held’s observation that ‘Marx, it should be emphasised, was not an anarchist’ and therefore envisaged a long period of state-controlled society before it could eventually ‘wither away’.<sup>36</sup> This position prefigures much of the argument to follow and, as far as it has been possible to determine, these short quotes constitute the full extent of Held’s engagement with anarchism. But is it fair? The case I will now make is that not only is this unfair, but Held’s ignorance on these matters undermines the originality of his own position and lends intellectual support to the anarchist position. However, my aim here is not to develop a points tally, but to show how each might benefit from an engagement with the latter. The crux of the matter for Held is that by not paying closer attention to the anarchist critique of global social

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<sup>32</sup> Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, 196.. See also, Richard Falk, ‘Anarchism and World Order’, in *Nomos XIX: Anarchism*, ed. J. Roland Pennock and John Chapman (New York: New York University Press, 1979), Thomas G. Weiss, ‘The Tradition of Philosophical Anarchism and Future Directions in World Policy’, *Journal of Peace Research* 12 (1975),.

<sup>33</sup> David Held, *Models of democracy* (Cambridge: Polity in association with Blackwell, 1987), 6.

<sup>34</sup> Held and McGrew, *Globalization and Anti-Globalization*, 115.

<sup>35</sup> Held, *Global Covenant: the Social Democratic Alternative to the Washington Consensus*, 162., Held and McGrew, *Globalization and Anti-Globalization*, 130.

<sup>36</sup> Held, ‘Beyond Liberalism and Marxism?’, 227.

democracy he is left wide open to it. The problem for anarchist thought is that having obviated the need to analyse 'the global' in any detail, they leave themselves open to charges of naivety.

The narrative to follow takes Andrew Linklater's observations seriously and explores some of their implications for cosmopolitan theory. If the anarchists have indeed long argued for the dispatching of state monopoly powers, when did they begin to do this and why? I will investigate the anarchist understanding of stateless citizenship once we have a stronger sense of the history of anarchist ideas since this gives real added weight to anarchist arguments. I will then suggest that we might usefully position anarchist political philosophy somewhere between liberalism and Marxism, that autonomy has always been at the heart of the tradition, that anarchists always judge the legitimacy of institutions to the extent that they can protect and enable autonomy, that capital, the state and labour have all at one point or another been questioned from this basis. I will then show that anarchists have routinely argued that the state system is not fit for purpose, that it has passed its use by date, and that a new global politics would involve radical conceptions of subsidiarity, multi-level governance, federalism and stateless citizenship. What I will show is that if we start from anarchism, Held's call for global social democracy looks no less naïve than the original call for social democracy in mid-nineteenth century France and is likely to sustain rather than overturn formally hierarchical, exploitative and exclusionary global social orders. This is not the place to outline solutions, but a range of questions and suggestions, for cosmopolitans and anarchists, will close the analysis.

While considerations of space make it difficult to develop the argument in detail here, it is important to note that, singularly amongst 19<sup>th</sup> century social philosophies, anarchism was anti-statist. Marxists, social democrats, liberals, monarchists, imperialists, revolutionary nationalists and so forth were all driven by the desire to capture the state and wield the instruments of state power in their favour against other prevailing interests. Proudhon was among the few to fear the militarization of the French state, in fact coining the term militarization,<sup>37</sup> seeing in the new alliance between bourgeoisie and Napoleon III an alliance that was in no one's interests.<sup>38</sup> Bakunin, watching the rise of Prussia and being among the few to fear an alliance of the working class and the Bismarkian state, warned of the consequences of Prussia's defeat of France.<sup>39</sup> Kropotkin, inspired by Darwin but fearful of the linking of Darwinism to racism and to statism, was inspired to his magnum opus *Mutual Aid* and his 1914 preface clearly warns of the dangers that were to follow.<sup>40</sup> Rudolf Rocker argued much the same in 1937, linking nationalism,

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<sup>37</sup> Volker R. Berghahn, *Militarism: The History of an Intellectual Debate 1861-1971* (Leamington Spa: Berg Publishers, 1981), 1.

<sup>38</sup> Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du Principe Fédératif et de la Nécessité de reconstituer le parti de la révolution. (inc) Si Les Traités de 1815 ont Cessé d'Exister, Oeuvres Complètes de P-J Proudhon* (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1867-1870).

<sup>39</sup> Mikhail Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>40</sup> Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1989).

culture, religious mysticism and statism in Germany to inevitable disaster.<sup>41</sup> And these men were not alone. Emma Goldman was as fearful of the Bolsheviks and Kropotkin, in a series of private letters to Lenin lambasted him for betraying the aspirations of the Russian people.<sup>42</sup>

And yet, despite the millions that were sent to their deaths either in war or through the highly mechanised and centralised killing of civilians by the state (a process that would have been practically impossible on that scale without one), the anarchists were seen to be the crazy outsiders! And now, today, when non-anarchists warn of the dangers of centralisation and the lessons we are supposed to have learnt from the past, we conveniently forget that the loudest voices were the ones most on the right and left sought to silence. British and American abstention during the Spanish Civil War, for example, when anarchists fought Mussolini's fascists, Hitler's Nazis and Stalin's Red Army in the name of democracy and freedom, ought to be seen as a moral stain on the historical conscience of so-called democracies. There is nothing particularly edifying in hearing the new left claiming to have learnt from history.

So what about this move between and beyond liberalism and Marxism that Held, and most of New Labour, also advocates? Is this at all original? I do not want to claim that anarchists are new labour, since clearly on the question of the state, new labour and old seem quite united in defending its centrality to the possibility of human freedom, though a few words on the ideological positioning of anarchism will open p this debate a little further. Consider, first of all, David Apter's famous argument that 'the virtue of anarchism as a doctrine is that it employs a socialist critique of capitalism with a liberal critique of socialism'.<sup>43</sup> Richard Falk argued has also argued that anarchism is 'alive to the twin dangers of socialism and capitalism if pursued within the structure of statism',<sup>44</sup> and Monique Canto-Sperber has argued that Proudhon was what she has called 'the first liberal socialist'.<sup>45</sup> But does this imply, as Held suggested above, that anarchists are free-marketers? The answer to this is yes and no, some are and some are not. But they are socialist free marketers who advocate the collective ownership of property formalised through workplace democracy and markets which emerge from these collectivised social and economic relations rather than the individualist, capitalist system we have today.

The second claim to originality that Held makes is that he is quite unique in putting autonomy at the heart of his political philosophy. From the nineteenth-century

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<sup>41</sup> Rudolf Rocker and Ray E. Chase, *Nationalism and culture*, [2nd American ed. reprinted] / [with a new preface and bibliography] ed. (Sanday: Cienfuegos Press, 1978).

<sup>42</sup> See for example, [http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/ANARCHIST\\_ARCHIVES/goldman/disillusion/toc.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/ANARCHIST_ARCHIVES/goldman/disillusion/toc.html); [http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/ANARCHIST\\_ARCHIVES/kropotkin/kropotlenindec20.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/ANARCHIST_ARCHIVES/kropotkin/kropotlenindec20.html)

<sup>43</sup> David E. Apter, 'The Old Anarchism and the New-Some Comments', *Government and Opposition* 5, no. 4 (1970): 397-98.

<sup>44</sup> Falk, 'Anarchism and World Order'.

<sup>45</sup> Monique Canto-Sperber, 'Proudhon, the First Liberal Socialist', in *The Gimeon Conference on French Political Economy 1650-1848* (Stanford University: 2004).

onwards, Anarchists have always been resolutely against the doctrine of unity that characterised the process of nation state building. Unity, not in the sense of finding consensus, but in erasing difference by force and centralising all political power. The anarchist alternative was to defend the autonomy of the plural social and political cleavages of society and show up the doctrine of political unity for what it really seemed: 'simply a form of bourgeoisie exploitation under the protection of bayonets'.<sup>46</sup> Looking to the autonomy of states in the international system as model for the autonomy of all social cleavages, Proudhon also pointed out that 'the idea of universal sovereignty, the dream of the middle ages and formulated in Charlemagne's pact, is the negation of the independence and the autonomy of states, the negation of all human liberty, something in which states and nations are eternally unified in refusing'.<sup>47</sup>

De plus, ce serait l'immobilisme de l'humanité, absolument comment le despotisme dans un État, ou le communisme dans une tribu, est l'immobilisation de cet État et decette tribu. La civilisation ne marche que par l'influence que les groupes politiques exercent les uns sur les autres, dans la plénitude de leur souveraineté et de leur indépendance; établissez sur eux tous une contrainte, le grande organisme s'arrête; il n'y a plus ni vie ni idée.<sup>48</sup>

We should recall, that this critique of unity was not simply one aimed at rejecting the unification of Europe under an imperial power. Proudhon was no less scathing of the revolutionary nationalists of Italy, Hungary and elsewhere for campaigning for national unity in places like Italy which was nothing like a unified nation.<sup>49</sup> Mazzini's dream of a unified Italy and the secret Carbonari societies used to achieve it was replicated by Bakunin who prior to his explicitly anarchist years argued, along with much of the left, for doctrinal and strategic unity.<sup>50</sup> Proudhon, it should be pointed out, was diametrically opposed to Karl Marx on precisely this point. His famous letter to Marx rebuffed his offer precisely on the grounds that he feared Marx's position would undermine the autonomy of the very people his programme was designed to emancipate.<sup>51</sup> And how prescient the anarchist critique of Marxism soon became.

Individualist and philosophical anarchists are typically closer to a neo-Kantian ideological tradition defending individual responsibility and the freedom and autonomy of the will. The argument here is that laws not freely acceded to are

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<sup>46</sup> Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *La Fédération et l'Unité en Italie* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1862), 25.

<sup>47</sup> Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *La Guerre et La Paix, recherches sur la principe et la constitution du droit des gens*, Nouvelle ed. (Paris: Editions Tops, 1998), 293.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Proudhon, *La Fédération et l'Unité en Italie*.

<sup>50</sup> For more on this see Alex Prichard, 'Deepening Anarchism: International Relations and the Anarchist Ideal', *Anarchist Studies* (2010 (forthcoming)).

<sup>51</sup> Pierre Hauptmann, *Marx et Proudhon: Leurs rapports personnels 1844-1847* (Brussels: Editions Économie et Humanisme, 1947).



arbitrary impositions on the will of naturally free individuals. Taking Kant seriously, the argument is that the rational individual is wholly responsible for his or her actions and this autonomy, far from buttressing the liberal state, undermines it. Indeed, such is the defence of individual autonomy that, quite unlike in the oxymoronically labelled anarcho-capitalism, it cannot be squared with the power inherent in liberal property rights. This tradition of thinking is unequivocal, and has been for far longer than David Held, that '[t]he primary obligation of man is autonomy, the refusal to be ruled.'<sup>52</sup>

It may be replied that this is a quite distinct understanding of autonomy and that it perhaps has different philosophical roots. Held, for example, is a neo-Kantian. So how does Wolff's position compare here? As I have argued elsewhere, Proudhon's ideas are deeply neo-Kantian or liberal on the moral and political autonomy of the individual.<sup>53</sup> He was however also a socialist and realised that individuals are not only shaped by communities, but that community is the pre-requisite of individuality.

In the context of contemporary political movements, it is worth analysing in depth the make up of contemporary social movements. As Steffen Böhm, Ana C. Dinerstein and André Spicer have pointed out:

Some social movement theorists have registered the importance of autonomy as a central aspect of many new social movements. For example, Offe (1987) points out that one of the distinguishing features of 'new social movements' is their focus on 'non-institutional' politics and their attempts to craft a voice and practice that are autonomous of existing bureaucratic structures such as unions, corporations and the state. Similarly, Scott (1990) argues that one of the central aspects of the ideology of new social movements is the 'autonomy of struggle', which involves 'the insistence that the movement and those it represents be allowed to fight their own corner without interference from other movements, and without subordinating their demands to other external priorities' (1990, p. 20).<sup>54</sup>

The three main domains in which contemporary social movements wish to remain autonomous are, perhaps surprisingly, precisely those three domains which were supposed to make up the social democratic compromise – state, capital and labour. We might make more sense of why this is the case by pointing out, as innumerable others have done but which Böhm et al fail to do, that these social movements are also

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<sup>52</sup> Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defence of Anarchism* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1998), 18.

<sup>53</sup> Alex Prichard, 'The Ethical Foundations of Proudhon's Republican Anarchism', in *Anarchism and Moral Philosophy*, ed. Benjamin Franks and Matt Wilson (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010 (Forthcoming)).

<sup>54</sup> Steffen Böhm, Ana C. Dinerstein and André Spicer, '(Im)possibilities of Autonomy: Social Movements in and beyond Capital, the State and Development', *Social Movement Studies* 9, no. 1 (2010): 18.

increasingly anarchist or anarchistic.<sup>55</sup> As David Graeber has argued, drawn from in extensive ethnographic analysis within the newest direct action social movements, “‘autonomy’ [is] simultaneously the greatest anarchist value, and the greatest dilemma’.<sup>56</sup> Hostility to the established forms of representation and political agency derives from the manifest failure of these structures to deliver on their promises. Of course Held is nevertheless right to point out that these social movements, in retaining the centrality of autonomy to their identities, might find it difficult to organise and to speak across social cleavages and political interests. But what sort of compromise would his global social democratic project encompass without the active participation of the global social movements which are increasingly defining the political terms for debate on these issues? And if held ignores these movements, can his project be said to be anything other than a traditionally elitist one with little if any grass roots legitimacy?

In order to answer this question it is instructive to return to Graeber’s observation that autonomy is both a value and presents dilemmas. The dilemma is this: how to reconcile individual and collective autonomy with the requirements and pressures of collective action and the structural pressures that emerge from the interrelationship of autonomous groups and their desire to remain autonomous? But far from being unable to meet these challenges, as Held suggests, anarchists and others working within contemporary radical social movements have developed a variety of strategies for coordination and alternatives to non-representative politics. Indeed, as I will show, ultimately they issue in precisely the global institutional frameworks Held advocates, but arrive at these conclusions from different premises and with demonstrable variation in the make up of the authority structures.

Let us focus on authority, economic processes and organised political agency as an equivalent, more appropriately anarchist vocabulary to make sense of positions on the terms of this compromise. What I want to argue is that anarchy, anarkhia, without leader, or the absence of a sovereign,<sup>57</sup> is the precondition of autonomy.

So why is anarchy the precondition of autonomy? The simple answer is that if one is ruled directly or indirectly by a political or economic sovereign, one cannot be said to be autonomous in one’s actions. When we look at the social democratic compromise that Held sets out, what we can see is that it is a ‘compromise’ rather than the result of the dictates of state, labour or capital. None is sovereign. Indeed, defending the political autonomy of labour, capital and also the state, demands that none is truly sovereign. Formal sovereignty may be legal shorthand, but it is clearly not reflective of reality. If we develop this analysis as Held does, we must begin to

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<sup>55</sup> Richard Day, *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), Barbara Epstein, 'Anarchism and The Anti-Globalisation Movement', *Monthly Review* 53, no. 4 (2001), Uri Gordon, *Anarchy Alive!: Anti-Authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), John Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today* (London: Pluto Press, 2002).

<sup>56</sup> David Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2009), 266, David Graeber, 'The New Anarchists', *New Left Review* 13 (2002).

<sup>57</sup> Uri Gordon, 'Ἀναρχία – What did the Greeks actually say?', *Anarchist Studies* 14, no. 1 (2006).

wonder why it is that we must defend the sovereignty of the state? Indeed, it is debateable whether we need defend the authority of the state either. The authority of the state would at best be something we decide to accede to on a case by case basis. The mere existence of a law cannot, as Kant would have it, be the equivalent of its moral value. Law is the codification of the balance or asymmetric equilibrium of social power, and this codification does not cease to indicate such a balance at the borders of states. Treaties are a different type of law, a negotiated and voluntary agreement – or the ideal type of law – and they too indicate a balance or asymmetric equilibrium of power.<sup>58</sup>

For Proudhon, this group autonomy is premised on the defence of the autonomy of the individual. Individuals join groups, he argues, for personal and collective reasons. Group dynamics are the emergent and irreducible outcome of the varied personal make up of said groups and while group dynamics and character cannot be reduced to the individuals within them, groups nevertheless have the characters they do because of the specific constellation of individuals in them. Now of course the context in which the group exists is also a determinate feature of group character but in the same way as individuals join groups for private and group ends, groups join with others for similar reasons and the emergent quality is determined by the particular constellations of groups and so on. This is not to say that larger groups are better or worse, nor that formal membership determines its character. Active participation, which is to say the actual empirical make up of the group is ultimately determinate of its character.

Now then, if individuals are to retain their autonomy then they ought to be able to leave groups and be ensured that their participation is voluntary and active, enabled and considerate of the rest of the group. Likewise for group membership. The question is, which processes ought to determine participation and which groups can best defend autonomy?

To be GOVERNED is to be watched, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, regulated, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, checked, estimated, valued, censured, commanded, by creatures who have neither the right nor the wisdom nor the virtue to do so. To be GOVERNED is to be at every operation, at every transaction noted, registered, counted, taxed, stamped, measured, numbered, assessed, licensed, authorized, admonished, prevented, forbidden, reformed, corrected, punished. It is, under pretext of public utility, and in the name of the general interest, to be place[d] under contribution, drilled, fleeced, exploited, monopolized, extorted from, squeezed, hoaxed, robbed; then, at the slightest resistance, the first word of complaint, to be repressed, fined, vilified, harassed, hunted down, abused, clubbed, disarmed,

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<sup>58</sup> For more on this see, Sophie Chambost, *Proudhon et la Norm: Pensé juridique d'un anarchiste* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2004). The most prominent twentieth century re-working of Proudhon's jurisprudential is Georges Gurvitch, *Sociology of Law* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1947). See also Amster, Randall J. 'Breaking the Law: Anti-authoritarian Visions of Crime and Justice' Available at: <http://www.newformulation.org/4Amster.htm> [accessed 12/05/10]; [Thom Holterman](#), *Law and Anarchism*, Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982. This is a little understood subject matter and further research on the relationship between anarchism and law would be welcomed.

bound, choked, imprisoned, judged, condemned, shot, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed; and to crown all, mocked, ridiculed, derided, outraged, dishonoured. That is government; that is its justice; that is its morality.<sup>59</sup>

If the state is not a group worth joining, what is? For Proudhon we are all simultaneously members of plural groups and some are more important to us than others. While I do not wish to imply that worker-based organisation should trump all other organisations, but at Proudhon's time and for most of the progressive left it was. Much has been written about anarcho-syndicalism and the union-base of social organisation,<sup>60</sup> but for Proudhon this model provided a template for all other social forms. It was also a deeply republican and civic vision of social organisation too. As he argued:

It is not in the fraternity of revolutionary citizens but in the reciprocity among producers that unity is to be sought. Nor is it in the sharing of uniformity of status as citizens that unity is found but, precisely to the contrary, in the diversity of skill and situation that, in making individuals complementary to one another, also makes them cooperative<sup>61</sup>

Thus we need not hesitate, for we have no choice. In cases in which production requires great division of labour, and considerable collective force, it is necessary to form an ASSOCIATION among the workers in this industry; because without that, they would remain related as subordinates and superiors, and there would ensue two industrial castes of masters and wage workers, which is repugnant to a free and democratic society.<sup>62</sup>

The democratic process would be direct and fully participatory at the level of the immediate group, and as Vernon has pointed out civil citizenship, the idea that universal suffrage was the ends of freedom 'as a political value, was merely an arrest of the spirit of liberation, whose ends were not political at all'.<sup>63</sup> For Proudhon, it is in the economy that such liberation could be truly found and unless property was owned and run collectively by the workers then autocracy in the market would consistently undermine any freedoms found elsewhere.

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<sup>59</sup> Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. John Beverley Robinson (London: Freedom Press, 1923), 293-94.

<sup>60</sup> Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-syndicalism. Theory and Practice*, 6th ed. (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2004).

<sup>61</sup> Cited in Richard Vernon, *Citizenship and Order: Studies in French Political Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 74.

<sup>62</sup> Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *De la Capacité Politique des Classes Ouvrières* (Paris: Slatkine, 1982), 216.

<sup>63</sup> Vernon, *Citizenship and Order*, 66., Richard Vernon, 'Obligation by Association? A Reply to John Horton', *Political Studies* 55, no. 4 (2007).

The issues are far more complicated than Held seems to imply. If we work with the group ontology I have outlined, then their interrelations are always contested, fractious but also usually cooperative. The principle of subsidiarity is absolutely central to ensuring that decisions are taken by those likely to be most affected by them. But anarchists refuse representation as a mode of political action. For subsidiarity to be meaningful democracy has to be direct and if this is not possible, delegation, veto and recall would be and is central to anarchist organising. For example, the constitution of the IWW states quite clearly that ...

If we distinguish society's natural groups from the state, i.e., recognise and formalise the relative autonomy of towns, regions, cities, trades unions and so forth, then cosmopolitan multi-level governance would be politics as such. We would be in a secular neo-medieval world order where there are 'no gods, no masters'.<sup>64</sup> The freedom or autonomy of groups would be the precondition of social dynamism and change and the defence of the autonomy of groups a moral imperative. It would also, in many senses, be the recognition of the realities of social life and a removal of those institutions which have historically consistently undermined the autonomy they claim to defend – namely the state and capital.

Anarchist schemas for organising order in anarchy are legion. We might well start with Proudhon's Principle of Federation (1863) and Bakunin's defence of a United States of Europe in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>65</sup> We can look at the way in which anarchist society was organised in Spain in the 1930s,<sup>66</sup> or more contemporary dilemmas of organisation and its relation to anarchic ends today.<sup>67</sup> We can find evidence of non-hierarchical organisation in infoshops and autonomous spaces,<sup>68</sup> in wider debates about union, social and trade federalism,<sup>69</sup> in the history of

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<sup>64</sup> {Guérin, 2005 #747}

<sup>65</sup> William H. George, 'Proudhon and Economic Federalism', *The Journal of Political Economy* 30, no. 4 (1922), Thomas O. Hueglin, 'Yet the Age of Anarchism?', *Publius* 15, no. 2 (1985), Dimitrios Karmis, 'Pourquoi lire Proudhon Aujourd'hui? Le fédéralisme et le défi de la solidarité dans les sociétés divisées', *Politique et Sociétés* 21, no. 1 (2002), Yves Simon, 'A Note on Proudhon's Federalism', in *Federalism as Grand Design: Political Philosophers and the Federal Principle*, ed. Daniel J. Elazar (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987).

Kropotkin: [http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist\\_archives/coldoffthe presses/bernerikropotkin.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/coldoffthe presses/bernerikropotkin.html);  
 Colin Ward: <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/anar/en/display/334>; Bakunin: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/various/reasons-of-state.htm> Cf. Lenin: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/aug/23.htm>

<sup>66</sup> {Dolgoft, 1974 #9}

<sup>67</sup> Gordon, *Anarchy Alive!: Anti-Authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory*, Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography*.

<sup>68</sup> Tom Goyens, 'Social space and the practice of anarchist history', *Rethinking History* 13, no. 4 (2009).

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labour movements,<sup>70</sup> women's movements,<sup>71</sup> debates about sexuality and identity,<sup>72</sup> nature and environmentalism,<sup>73</sup> and so on. What is consistently argued is that the state cannot defend autonomy because its very *raison d'être* is predicated on denying that autonomy. The structures of modern political power cannot be reformed – they must be abandoned.

Anarchists on global social democracy:

- From the perspective of the exacting standards of the concept of autonomy social democracy has failed to deliver
- The issue is representation and the failure of social democracy. See David Bailey.<sup>74</sup>
- Too many utopias – time for a politics of anarchy

## Conclusion

What I have tried to show here is that any historical weight that David Held tries to use to prop up his analysis of the propitious historical times we live in is even more so vis-à-vis the warnings of the anarchists in the nineteenth century. Indeed, such is the shift in the debate on the left that anarchism deserves a serious audience from all quarters. The challenge is for those who wish to argue an anarchist case to do so with conviction and sophistication. I would suggest that in the area of political philosophy and political theory, this explosion of cosmopolitan literature, in particular David Held's work, may be a good place to start. As I have shown, there is general agreement on the centrality of the principle of autonomy, the desire to move between and beyond the tired old antinomy on the left, the desire to provide robust defence of the ethical worth of the individual alongside a sense of communal solidarity. There is also general agreement on the means by which autonomy can be best defended – radical democracy – even if there is still room for debate regarding the most appropriate institutional structures through which it might be realised.

In this regard, we need to ask whether a new compromise between labour, capital and the state is really adequate to the demands of any period of history. If society is plural then surely our institutions ought to reflect that. A new stitch-up between state, capital and labour, with the latter the minor and somewhat inadequate party in this *ménage à trois*, elides the very real diversity of modern politics. The state both 'too big and too small', as Andrew Linklater has argued. It is too big to be able to

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<sup>70</sup> David Berry, *A history of the French anarchist movement, 1917-1945* (Westport, Conn. ; London: Greenwood Press, 2002).

<sup>71</sup> Martha A. Ackelsberg, *Free women of Spain : anarchism and the struggle for the emancipation of women* (Oakland, Calif. ; Edinburgh: AK Press, 2005).

<sup>72</sup> Jamie Heckert, 'Sexual/Identity/Politics', in *Changing Anarchism: Anarchist theory and practice in a global age*, ed. Jon Purkis and James Bowen (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2004).

<sup>73</sup> Elise e Reclus and Béatrice Giblin-Delvallet, *L'homme et la terre : histoire contemporaine* (Paris: Fayard, 1990).

<sup>74</sup> {Bailey, 2009 #2401;Motta, 2007 #2400;Bailey, 2006 #2405}



respond to the micro and too small to respond to the macro political issues of the day. While this suggests, as Held rightly argues, that a politics of multi-level governance structures, subsidiarity and even a neo-medieval political system might be necessary, it is hard to see how the state and those who would use it for their inevitably partial ends, can be legitimately left standing. Indeed, this is precisely why anarchist political philosophy is a politics of action. As I have argued, anarchist autonomy and self-organisation fractals into myriad forms, each to the extent that it is possible, outside the formal structures of the state. This autonomy is central to showing that life without the state is not only possible but central to adequately defending autonomy. Indeed, much the same argument has been made in relation to the economy. Here, where capitalists have reigned sovereign over their employees and unions mollify the stark injustices of this economic dictatorship, anarchists seek autonomy in an infinite variety of anti-capitalist social forms. With each break away group, new collective, cooperative or federation, society becomes more complex, more enmeshed and the complexity of the balances of power militate against the inappropriate monopolisation of power by any one person or group(ing). This is the quintessential post-sovereign politics and one which has not been given the attention it deserves by critical theorists across what's left of the left.

There are more immediate reasons for this imperative to revisit anarchism. It is perhaps an understatement to say that at the time of writing, May 2010, these are interesting times in which we live in the UK. The collapse of New Labour, the drive for refreshing electoral system and a seemingly comprehensive break from 20<sup>th</sup> century politics has been compounded by a hung parliament, the tendency for politicians to slip into the old rhetoric of 'the national interest' and 'the people' as if appealing to a unified and disaggregated mass somehow bought legitimacy to public policy. We live in new times but we do not have the grammar of politics necessary to express how we might adequately respond to it. While abroad, the integration of the global economy and the institutionalisation of political processes beyond the state, utopian in the 1970s, have seemingly become cemented and yet commentators still try and offer grand solutions and futures for these processes in the tired and outdated idiom of 'global social democracy' or of a 'world government'. Traditional lines of thinking on right and left seem to find little support in broad swaths of the population in most modern democracies. Apathy and disengagement are the norm and new forms of engagement are seen as utopian while none seem to be able to invigorate politics with the tired old formulas of states and national elections. In this situation, options can once again be put on the table. The arguments set out here and in this forum ought to be considered with all seriousness. We no longer live in the nineteenth century, but we are still dealing with and attempting to deal with the legacy of statism, state-led capitalism and the radical neo-liberal rejection of states and embrace of profit. In this context, when none seem to have ideological predominance, anarchism can contribute much of promise. Finally, the political centre ground is defined in relation to the poles. By bringing anarchism to the fore it becomes possible to rearticulate a radical left politics in an unconventional idiom and should a future 'third way' come into being, it will be a third way that ought to be cognizant of a more representative

articulation of the options available in moving between and beyond liberalism and Marxism.

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