

# **Anarchists Without Adjectives: The Origins of a Movement**

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## Introduction

The "anarchism without adjectives" designation (the phrase, at least -- the concept, as we shall see below, may have originated with Malatesta) was originally the work of two Spanish anarchists, Ricardo Mella and Fernando Tarrida del Marmol. Mella and Tarrida del Marmol worked out their theory in response to doctrinal disputes within the European anarchist movement between the collectivism of Bakunin's followers, and the communism that was supplanting it, that was tearing the movement apart in the 1880s.

Tarrida, who emigrated to Spain from Cuba, published "Anarchism Without Adjectives" in the anarchist periodical *La Révolte*.<sup>1</sup> "We are anarchists and we preach Anarchy without adjectives," he wrote. "Anarchy is an axiom and the economic question something secondary." What he opposed was not dialogue or disagreement on the economic question by mutualists, collectivists, communists, syndicalists and so forth -- he viewed such ideas as complementary rather than mutually exclusive -- but totalizing and dogmatic systems that rendered themselves irrelevant by their own sectarianism.

This does not mean that we ignore the economic question. On the contrary, we are pleased to discuss it, but only as a contribution to the definitive solution or solutions. Many excellent things have been said by Cabet, Saint Simon, Fourier, Robert Owen and others; but all their systems have disappeared because they wanted to lock Society up in the conceptions of their brains, despite having done much to elucidate the great question.

Remember that from the moment in which you set about drawing up the general lines of the Future Society, on the one hand there arise objections and questions from one's adversaries; and on the other hand, the natural desire to produce a complete and perfect work will lead one to invent and draw up a system that, we are sure, will disappear like the others....

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<sup>1</sup> Fernando Tarrida del Marmol, "Anarchism Without Adjectives," *La Révolte* vol. 3 no. 51 (September 6-12, 1890). Translated by Nestor McNabb. Reproduced at Robert Graham's Anarchist Weblog, August 8, 2015 <<https://robertgraham.wordpress.com/2015/08/11/anarchism-without-adjectives-1890/>>.

Let us agree then, as almost all of us in Spain have done, to call ourselves simply anarchists. In our conversations, in our conferences and our press, we do discuss economic questions, but these questions should never become the cause of division between anarchists.

Errico Malatesta and Max Nettlau also adopted the "anarchism without adjectives" position. Nettlau viewed both the communistic and individualistic tendencies in anarchism as vital. And, as Avrich paraphrased his argument, "economic preferences will vary according to climate, customs, natural resources, and individual tastes, so that no single person or group can possess the correct solution." Nettlau made this case in 1914 in *Freedom and Mother Earth*. Tarrida del Marmol, he wrote,

used it in November, 1889, in Barcelona. He directed his comments towards the communist and collectivist anarchists in Spain who at the time were having an intense debate over the merits of their two theories. "Anarchism without adjectives" was an attempt to show greater tolerance between anarchist tendencies and to be clear that anarchists should not impose a preconceived economic plan on anyone -- even in theory. Thus the economic preferences of anarchists should be of "secondary importance" to abolishing capitalism and the state, with free experimentation the one rule of a free society.

...The roots of the argument can be found in the development of Communist Anarchism after Bakunin's death in 1876....

Quickly Communist-Anarchist ideas replaced Collectivist Anarchism as the main anarchist tendency in Europe, except in Spain. Here the major issue was not the question of communism (although for Ricardo Mella this played a part) but a question of the modification of strategy and tactics implied by Communist Anarchism. At this time (the 1880s), the Communist Anarchists stressed local (pure) cells of anarchist militants, generally opposed trade unionism (although Kropotkin was not one of these as he saw the importance of militant workers organisations) as well as being somewhat anti-organisation as well. Unsurprisingly, such a change in strategy and tactics came in for a lot of discussion from the Spanish Collectivists who strongly supported working class organisation and struggle.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A.3.8 What is "anarchism without adjectives"? *An Anarchist FAQ*.

Anarchism without adjectives reflected the consensus of a majority of anarchists who perceived

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"we cannot foresee the economic development of the future" and so started to stress what they had in common (opposition to capitalism and the state) rather than the different visions of how a free society would operate.<sup>3</sup>

Voltairine De Cleyre, who was to popularize the label in the United States in the context of the feud between individualists and communists, met del Marmol in London in 1897.<sup>4</sup>

### **Errico Malatesta**

Errico Malatesta, as recounted by Max Nettlau in *A Short History of Anarchism*, argued that it was not right for anarchists "to fall into strife over mere hypotheses." He treated the European split between Bakuninist collectivists and communists as largely one of emphasis and method. The important thing, he argued, was that -- regardless of the formal economic model advocated by different schools of anarchism -- "a new moral conscience will come into being, which will make the wage system repugnant to men [and women] just as legal slavery and compulsion are now repugnant to them." Under those conditions, "whatever the specific forms of society may turn out to be, the basis of social organisation will be communist." The important thing was to stick to first principles -- to "give post-revolutionary society a direction towards justice, equality and liberty" -- and leave them to work out the specific applications.<sup>5</sup>

In an article in *La Révolte* in 1889 he wrote:

But in all these matters it is necessary to draw a line between that which is scientifically demonstrated and that which remains at the stage of a hypothesis or a prevision; it is necessary to distinguish between what must be done in a revolutionary way, that is by force

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<[https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Anarchist\\_FAQ/What\\_is\\_Anarchism%3F/3.8](https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Anarchist_FAQ/What_is_Anarchism%3F/3.8)> (accessed July 26, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> James J. Martin, *Men Against the State* (Colorado Springs: Ralph Miles Publisher, Inc., 1953, 1970), pp. 149-150.

<sup>5</sup> A.3.8 What is "anarchism without adjectives"? *An Anarchist FAQ*.

and immediately, and that which shall be the consequence of future evolution and must be left to the free energies of all, harmonized spontaneously and gradually. There are anarchists who recognized other solutions, other future forms of social organization, but they desire like we ourselves the destruction of political power and of individual property, they desire like we ourselves the spontaneous reorganization of social functions without delegation of powers and without government, they desire like we ourselves to struggle to the last, up till the final victory. These are also our comrades and brethren. Therefore let us give up exclusivism, let us well understand each other as to the ways and means and let us march ahead.<sup>6</sup>

This distinction between what is proven and what is hypothetical, Nettlau wrote, included the distinction "between those things upon which we can and in fact must agree today and those which only experimentation under new conditions, after the revolution, can teach us how to settle."<sup>7</sup> In a London speech in 1890 he relegated

all this difference of economic opinion to the time after the revolution, and even then this difference should only lead to fraternal emulation to spread the greatest social happiness; when everybody will observe the results of experimentation, the question which need not divide us today will be decided.<sup>8</sup>

## **Joseph Labadie**

In America "Anarchism Without Adjectives" arose against the background of a rancorous dispute between largely native-born individualist anarchists and the communist anarchists (of whom a major portion were foreign-born). The individualist-communist split was personified in the feud between Benjamin Tucker and William Most, with Tucker refusing to recognize the communists as anarchists and Most taking a mirror-image position on individualists.

Several thinkers in Tucker's individualist circle attempted to fill in areas that were lacking in Tucker's thought, and bridge the ties between him and the

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<sup>6</sup> Max Nettlau, *Errico Malatesta: The Biography of an Anarchist* (New York City: Jewish Anarchist Federation, 1924). Hosted at Anarchist Archives <[http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/malatesta/nettlau/nettlauonmalatesta.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/malatesta/nettlau/nettlauonmalatesta.html)>. Accessed February 15, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

communists and radical labor movement. In so doing they also laid the groundwork for Anarchism Without Adjectives.

Joseph ("Jo") Labadie came from a background as a movement socialist and labor activist, and was much more actively sympathetic to organized labor than Tucker. He started out as a writer for several Detroit socialist and labor papers, and maintained his relations with them after he became a regular contributor to *Liberty* in the early 1880s (for example, remaining secretary of the Socialist Labor Party's national board after he began writing for Tucker's magazine).<sup>9</sup>

He gradually became disillusioned with the sectarianism of the various socialist parties and shifted towards the individualists' version of anarchism. But at the same time his interest in the labor movement grew. He spoke at assorted labor conferences in favor of an anarchist political stance as an alternative to democratic socialist and parliamentary approaches, and felt he had had a real impact on some major figures in the Detroit labor movement in dissuading them from a focus on party politics<sup>10</sup> (thus possibly contributing to the general anti-political current that later found its expression in the Western Federation of Miners and Industrial Workers of the World).

As Dyer Lum was to do, Labadie attempted to bridge the gap between Tucker's individualism and the labor movement, first with the Knights of Labor, and then with the quasi-syndicalism of the Western Federation of Miners and I.W.W. Although he largely abandoned the socialist approach to party politics and discouraged the labor movement from diverting its energies in that direction, unlike Tucker he was optimistic about the prospects of labor organization to secure a reduction in hours without decreasing pay or speeding up production.<sup>11</sup>

Labadie played a leading role in organizing the Michigan Federation of Labor in 1888, and became its first president. During the 1890s, he refused to distance himself from anarchists in the labor movement despite the involvement of anarchists in the attempted assassination of Henry Clay Frick and the successful assassination of McKinley. Although he condemned the latter act, he expressed sympathy for the motivations that led to it, explaining violent acts as "natural consequences of the existing political

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<sup>9</sup> Martin, *Men Against the State*, pp. 243-44.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 244-45.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 244-45.

system and the oppression of labor."<sup>12</sup>

But most importantly for our purposes, he rejected Tucker's agenda of anathematizing communists from the anarchist movement. As he stated in an 1888 issue of *Liberty*, "It is immaterial whether one be a Communist or an Individualist so long as he be an Anarchist. Anarchy, as I see it, admits of any kind of organization, so long as membership is not compulsory."<sup>13</sup>

## **Dyer Lum**

About all of any substance that James J. Martin has to say about Dyer Lum, despite his being "one of the most interesting and important figures in the American anarchist movement," fills a total of about half a page in *Men Against the State*. Lum

established relations with both its major wings during a hectic ten years of association, but always remained close to the individualist philosophy... His career as a participant in the labor movement grew out of his reflections on the Pittsburgh riots during the 1877 railroad strike, but before Haymarket had swung over to the extreme left position of the anarchists and mutualists, impressed with the possibilities of cooperation in economics.

Following the arrest of Parsons in Chicago, Lum revived the *Alarm* late in 1887, changing much of its editorial policy to fit in line with that of *Liberty*, in which he had been writing for some time. Henceforth he carried on in the interests of the individualists, dwelling especially on the occupation and use land tenure, and the mutual bank money ideas, in works of his own and in the journals of others. Along with Tucker, he expressed the conviction that force was not necessary to effect a revolution, nor was there any proof that its use was even generally successful.<sup>14</sup>

Beyond this, the material on Lum below comes largely from Frank H. Brooks's article on his thought.<sup>15</sup>

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12 Axel B. Corlu, "LABADIE, JOSEPH A. (1850-1933)," *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working Class History*, Vol. 1. Eric Arneson, ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), p. 760.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 245n; the full context can be found in his Cranky Notions column in the April 14, 1888 issue *Liberty* <<http://fair-use.org/liberty/1888/04/14/cranky-notions>>. Accessed February 16, 2016.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 259-60.

15 Frank H. Brooks, "Ideology, Strategy and Organization," *Labor History* 34:1 (1993).



Dyer Lum was by far the most labor-friendly of the individualists. Like Labadie, he tried to bridge the gap between Tucker's circle and the labor movement. And like Voltairine de Cleyre, he also tried to bridge the gap between native individualists and immigrant communists and syndicalists. Like Tucker and the other individualists, Lum came from the general culture of New England reformism, and participated in many of its currents before he arrived at anarchism. He was involved with the Labor Reform Party in the 1870s, and worked as a bookbinder and labor journalist. From this involvement he made connections with the Greenback Party and the eight-hour movement. Under George's influence he blamed the U.S. government's land grants to corporations and its restrictions on homesteading for much of labor's dependent position. From the Greenback Party, Lum moved on to the Socialist Labor Party in 1880, and by the mid-80s was involved in the International Working People's Association. But unlike most others in the International, Lum analyzed capitalism from a radicalized laissez-faire perspective much like that of the individualists.

Heavily influenced by Proudhon, Lum gravitated toward a mutualist theory of economics closer to mainstream Proudhonianism than to Tucker's individualism. Accordingly, he had a vision of anarchist unity much like de Cleyre's. His economic views were an unusual combination of laissez-faire and the Chicago labor movement's hatred of the "wages system." He perceived that the electoral disasters of the Socialist Labor Party and Greenback-Labor Party had left a leadership vacuum in the radical labor movement, that could be filled by anarchists if they were smart enough to make their message relevant to labor.

From 1885 on, as Brooks described it, Lum tried to fuse "working-class organization, revolutionary strategy, and mutualist economics" into a united radical movement "designed to make anarchism a magnet to radicalized workers." He did not wish to unite the various groups behind any dogmatic party line, but only to create ties of affinity between them and enable them to work together tactically in "a pluralistic anarchistic coalition."

Lum rounded out his economic vision with the principle of producer cooperation, not only at the level of artisan production, but in large-scale industrial associations. In the latter regard he viewed labor unions not only as a weapon against existing evils, but as the nucleus of a future industrial organization formed around the "associated producers."

In the post-Haymarket atmosphere, the anarchist movement was torn by dissension as individualists like Tucker reacted harshly to their perceived differences with immigrant communists. Nevertheless Lum continued to hope for improved relations between the two camps. He met de Cleyre in this period.

In the 1890s, he placed increasing stress on "inoculating trade unions with anarchist principles." He became closely associated with the AFL and was on Gompers's personal staff. His pamphlet *The Economics of Anarchy* was designed to introduce workers' study groups to mutual banking, land reform, cooperation and other mutualist practices. He also supported the Homestead and Pullman strikes, and the wave of strikes that led to the formation of Haywood's Western Federation of Miners.

Lum deserves much credit for fusing so many disparate strands of radicalism into a uniquely American ideology. He tied a radical vision of working class power to a fairly sophisticated understanding of classical and mutualist economics, framed -- like de Cleyre's pamphlet "Anarchism and American traditions" -- in terms of traditional American populist symbols.

Lum, in the meantime, had on his own adapted a tolerant position, treating matters of economic system as secondary to the elimination of the state.<sup>16</sup>

And as de Cleyre was to do in "Anarchism and American Traditions," Lum appealed to the radically libertarian republicanism of the Revolution, especially to the rhetoric of Paine and Jefferson, as precursors to the native populist strands of anarchism.

Dyer Lum, according to Hippolyte Havel's biographical sketch, was also "undoubtedly the greatest influence in shaping [De Cleyre's] development."<sup>17</sup> That's the perfect segue into the next section.

## **Voltairine De Cleyre**

Despite her admiration for Benjamin Tucker's sharp intellect, Voltairine de Cleyre was troubled by the divisive effects of his dogmatism. In a 1907 letter, she referred to him as "sending his fine hard shafts among friends and foes with icy impartiality, hitting swift and cutting keen -- and ever

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<sup>16</sup> Martin, pp. 150-151.

<sup>17</sup> Hippolyte Havel, "Introduction," *Selected Works of Voltairine De Cleyre*, edited by Alexander Berkman (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1914), p. 12.

ready to nail a traitor." In response to these concerns, and to a concern for anarchist unity she shared with Lum, she adopted the "anarchism without adjectives" label.<sup>18</sup>

Although she did not invent the term, de Cleyre -- who came from a background in Tuckerite individualism -- had by the turn of the century been identified as the primary exponent of "anarchism without adjectives" in America.

In an 1893 dialogue between "The Individualist and the Communist," her individualist interlocutor's economic doctrine was summarized almost verbatim from Tucker's exposition of the Four Monopolies in "State Socialism and Anarchism":

But one of the three factors in production is free. Laborers are free to compete among themselves, and so are capitalists to a certain extent. But between laborers and capitalists there is no competition whatever, because through governmental privilege granted to capital, whence the volume of the currency and the rate of interest is regulated, the owners of it are enabled to keep the laborers dependent on them for employment, so making the condition of wage-subjection perpetual. So long as one man, or class of men, are able to prevent others from working for themselves because they cannot obtain the means of production or capitalize their own products, so long those others are not free to compete freely with those to whom privilege gives the means....

Can't you see that since the hired man does not willingly resign a large share of his product to his employer (and it is out of human nature to say he does), there must be something which forces him to do it? Can't you see that the necessity of an employer is forced upon him by his lack of ability to command the means of production? He cannot employ himself, therefore he must sell his labor at a disadvantage to him who controls the land and capital. Hence he is not free to compete with his employer any more than a prisoner is free to compete with his jailer for fresh air.<sup>19</sup>

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18 Martin, p. 145.

19 De Cleyre and Rosa Slobodinsky, "The Individualist and the Communist: A Dialogue," *Twentieth Century*, February 9, 1893. Reproduced by Shawn Wilbur at *Contr'un* <<http://libertarian-labyrinth.blogspot.com/2007/02/voltairine-de-cleyre-two-articles-on.html>>.

In her article "Anarchism," published in *Free Society* in 1901, her position sounded a bit closer to anarchism without adjectives. She argued -- in language much like David Graeber's -- that anarchism was primarily about eliminating privilege and allowing human beings to work out consensual economic and social relations as equals, without any power differential by which one could impose their will on another. No particular economic scheme would necessarily follow from such a situation; she was willing to respect whatever outcome emerged from the open-ended process of mutual relations between equals.

This is the particular message of Anarchism to the worker. It is not an economic system; it does not come to you with detailed plans of how you, the workers, are to conduct industry; nor systematized methods of exchange; nor careful paper organizations of "the administration of things." It simply calls upon the spirit of individuality to rise up from its abasement, and hold itself paramount in no matter what economic reorganization shall come about. Be men first of all, not held in slavery by the things you make; let your gospel be, "Things for men, not men for things."

Socialism, economically considered, is a positive proposition for such reorganization. It is an attempt, in the main, to grasp at those great new material gains which have been the special creation of the last forty or fifty years. It has not so much in view the reclamation and further assertion of the personality of the worker as it has a just distribution of products.

Now it is perfectly apparent that Anarchy, having to do almost entirely with the relations of men in their thoughts and feelings, and not with the positive organization of production and distribution, an Anarchist needs to supplement his Anarchism by some economic propositions, which may enable him to put in practical shape to himself and others this possibility of independent manhood. That will be his test in choosing any such proposition, - the measure in which individuality is secured. It is not enough for him that a comfortable ease, a pleasant and well-ordered routine, shall be secured; free play for the spirit of change - that is his first demand.

Every Anarchist has this in common with every other Anarchist, that the economic system must be subservient to this end; no system

recommends itself to him by the mere beauty and smoothness of its working; jealous of the encroachments of the machine, he looks with fierce suspicion upon an arithmetic with men for units, a society running in slots and grooves, with the precision so beautiful to one in whom the love of order is first, but which only makes him sniff - "Pfaugh! it smells of machine oil."

There are, accordingly, several economic schools among Anarchists; there are Anarchist Individualists, Anarchist Mutualists, Anarchist Communists and Anarchist Socialists.<sup>20</sup>

She criticized the "fanatical adherents" of each school who believed that "no Anarchism is possible without that particular economic system as its guarantee." She argued, in response, "that all these economic conceptions may be experimented with, and there is nothing un-Anarchistic about any of them until the element of compulsion enters and obliges unwilling persons to remain in a community whose economic arrangements they do not agree to."<sup>21</sup> She speculated that the various economic systems might be "advantageously tried in different localities. I would see the instincts and habits of the people express themselves in a free choice in every community; and I am sure that distinct environments would call out distinct adaptations."

In the same article it becomes evident that De Cleyre's view of "anarchism without adjectives" implies more than the simple peaceful coexistence of different economic models of anarchy. The differences between the economic models themselves are blurred. She went on to argue that the more equal distribution of wealth, abolition of land monopoly and widespread ownership of tools would tend to break up both population centers and productive organizations into small, self-governing groups, with the endless variety of their expedients for cooperating with one another and coordinating production likely being too complex to easily classify with standardized labels. The practical differences between individualist cooperation and communist economic organization would therefore become increasingly indistinct.<sup>22</sup>

In her description of the likely development of an anarchist communist society, she sounds more like William Morris than Benjamin Tucker.

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<sup>20</sup> De Cleyre, "Anarchism," in *Selected Works*, pp. 100-102.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

It appeals to the plain sense of the workers, by proposing that they who now consider themselves helpless dependents upon the boss's ability to give them a job, shall constitute themselves independent producing groups, take the materials, do the work (they do that now), deposit the products in the warehouses, taking what they want for themselves, and letting others take the balance. To do this no government, no employer, no money system is necessary. There is only necessary a decent regard for one's own and one's fellow-worker's self-hood. It is not likely, indeed it is devoutly to be hoped, that no such large aggregations of men as now assemble daily in mills and factories, will ever come together by mutual desire. (A factory is a hot-bed for all that is vicious in human nature, and largely because of its crowding only.)

The notion that men cannot work together unless they have a driving-master to take a percentage of their product, is contrary both to good sense and observed fact. As a rule bosses simply make confusion worse confounded when they attempt to mix in a workman's snarls, as every mechanic has had practical demonstration of; and as to social effort, why men worked in common while they were monkeys yet; if you don't believe it, go and watch the monkeys. They don't surrender their individual freedom, either.

In short, the real workmen will make their own regulations, decide when and where and how things shall be done. It is not necessary that the projector of an Anarchist Communist society shall say in what manner separate industries shall be conducted, nor do they presume to. He simply conjures the spirit of Dare and Do in the plainest workmen - says to them: "It is you who know how to mine, how to dig, how to cut; you will know how to organize your work without a dictator; we cannot tell you, but we have full faith that you will find the way yourselves. You will never be free men until you acquire that same self-faith."

As to the problem of the exact exchange of equivalents which so frets the reformers of other schools, to him it does not exist. So there is enough, who cares? The sources of wealth remain indivisible forever; who cares if one has a little more or less, so all have enough? Who cares if something goes to waste? Let it waste. The rotted apple fertilizes the ground as well as if it had comforted the animal economy

first. And, indeed, you who worry so much about system and order and adjustment of production to consumption, you waste more human energy in making your account than the precious calculation is worth. Hence money with all its retinue of complications and trickeries is abolished.

Small, independent, self-resourceful, freely cooperating communes – this is the economic ideal which is accepted by most of the Anarchists of the Old World to-day.<sup>23</sup>

In this regard she fits in well with a number of other thinkers -- Kropotkin, Ward, Ostrom, Graeber -- whose thought I've treated in previous studies as examples of "anarchists without adjectives."<sup>24</sup> The specificity of practical human experience trumps ideological labels. The primary phenomenon is actual, individual human beings, dealing with each other as equals to work out agreeable solutions to their common problems. As Graeber was later to show, when people work together in this manner, with nobody in a position to impose their will on others through armed force, the solutions they come up with are unlikely to fit into any ideological Procrustean bed. The result, rather, is likely to be a blend of whatever ad hoc, self-expedients -- "markets," "common pool resources," "everyday communism" -- people come up with to suit their unique situation. The separate strands will be hard to tell apart. Likewise, with De Cleyre it's hard to see where the individualism ends and the communism begins.

The differences between European communists and native-born American individualists, she argued, were largely a matter of different historical experience and social memory.

As to the material factor which developed this ideal among Europeans, it is the recollection and even some still remaining vestiges of the medieval village commune -- those oases in the great Sahara of human degradation presented in the history of the Middle Ages, when the Catholic Church stood triumphant upon Man in the dust. Such is the ideal glamored with the dead gold of a SUN which has set, which

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.

<sup>24</sup> *Legibility & Control: Themes in the Work of James C. Scott*. Center for a Stateless Society Paper No. 12 (Winter-Spring 2011) <<http://c4ss.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/James-Scott.pdf>>; *Governance, Agency and Autonomy: Anarchist Themes in the Work of Elinor Ostrom* Center for a Stateless Society No. 16 (Winter 2014); *David Graeber's Anarchist Thought: A Survey*. Center for a Stateless Society Paper No. 17 (Winter-Spring 2014) <<http://c4ss.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/graeber.pdf>>; *The Anarchist Thought of Colin Ward*. Center for a Stateless Society Paper No. 18 (Summer-Fall 2014) <<http://c4ss.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/colinward.pdf>>.

gleams through the pages of Morris and Kropotkin. We in America never knew the village commune. White Civilization struck our shores in a broad tide-sheet and swept over the country inclusively; among us was never seen the little commune growing up from a state of barbarism independently, out of primary industries, and maintaining itself within itself. There was no gradual change from the mode of life of the native people to our own; there was a wiping out and a complete transplantation of the latest form of European civilization. The idea of the little commune, therefore, comes instinctively to the Anarchists of Europe, -- particularly the continental ones; with them it is merely the conscious development of a submerged instinct. With Americans it is an importation.<sup>25</sup>

Individualism, on the other hand, she described as the doctrine of

those who hold to the tradition of political economy, and are firm in the idea that the system of employer and employed, buying and selling, banking, and all the other essential institutions of Commercialism, centering upon private property, are in themselves good, and are rendered vicious merely by the interference of the State. Their chief economic propositions are: land to be held by individuals or companies for such time and in such allotments as they use only; redistribution to take place as often as the members of the community shall agree; what constitutes use to be decided by each community, presumably in town meeting assembled; disputed cases to be settled by a so-called free jury to be chosen by lot out of the entire group; members not coinciding in the decisions of the group to betake themselves to outlying lands not occupied, without let or hindrance from any one.

Money to represent all staple commodities, to be issued by whomsoever pleases; naturally, it would come to individuals depositing their securities with banks and accepting bank notes in return; such bank notes representing the labor expended in production and being issued in sufficient quantity, (there being no limit upon any one's starting in the business, whenever interest began to rise more banks would be organized, and thus the rate per cent would be constantly checked by competition), exchange would take place freely, commodities would circulate, business of all kinds would be

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<sup>25</sup> De Cleyre, *Anarchism*, p. 108.



stimulated, and, the government privilege being taken away from inventions, industries would spring up at every turn, bosses would be hunting men rather than men bosses, wages would rise to the full measure of the individual production, and forever remain there. Property, real property, would at last exist, which it does not at the present day, because no man gets what he makes.<sup>26</sup>

Individualism is closer to the historical experience of the ordinary American (at least the white American, she qualified -- not black slaves and descendants of slaves). The individualist anarchist tradition phrases the issue not in terms of Property being theft, but opposes state-enforced monopoly to "real property" (i.e., "to the producer the exclusive possession of what he has produced."<sup>27</sup>

And between these two extremes lies the synthesis of mutualism (truth lies not "between the two," but in a synthesis of the two opinions"), which she saw as the closest approximation to the truth. It sounds remarkably like the program of Lum and Labadie:

Anarchist Mutualism is a modification of the program of Individualism, laying more emphasis upon organization, co-operation and free federation of the workers. To these the trade union is the nucleus of the free cooperative group, which will obviate the necessity of an employer, issue time-checks to its members, take charge of the finished product, exchange with different trade groups for their mutual advantage through the central federation, enable its members to utilize their credit, and likewise insure them against loss. The mutualist position on the land question is identical with that of the Individualists, as well as their understanding of the State.

The material factor which accounts for such differences as there are between Individualists and Mutualists, is, I think, the fact that the first originated in the brains of those who, whether workmen or business men, lived by so-called independent exertion. Josiah Warren, though a poor man, lived in an Individualist way and made his free-life social experiment in small country settlements, far removed from the great organized industries. Tucker also, though a city man, has never had personal association with such industries. They had never known

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

directly the oppressions of the large factory, nor mingled with workers' associations. The Mutualists had; consequently their leaning towards a greater Communism. Dyer D. Lum spent the greater part of his life in building up workmen's unions, himself being a hand worker, a book-binder by trade.<sup>28</sup>

In "The Making of an Anarchist" (1907), she again explained the "anarchism without adjectives" position:

Anarchism is, in truth, a sort of Protestantism, whose adherents are a unit in the great essential belief that all forms of external authority must disappear to be replaced by self-control only, but variously divided in our conception of the form of future society. Individualism supposes private property to be the cornerstone of personal freedom; asserts that such property should consist in the absolute possession of one's own product and of such share of the natural heritage of all as one may actually use. Communist-Anarchism, on the other hand, declares that such property is both unrealizable and undesirable; that the common possession and use of all the natural sources and means of social production can alone guarantee the individual against a recurrence of inequality, and its attendants, government and slavery. My personal conviction is that both forms of society, as well as many intermediations, would, in the absence of government, be tried in various localities, according to the instincts and material condition of the people, but that well founded objections may be offered to both. Liberty and experiment alone can determine the best forms of society. Therefore I no longer label myself otherwise than as "Anarchist" simply.<sup>29</sup>

"In Defense of Emma Goldman [sic] and the Right of Expropriation" -- a speech in 1894 on the occasion of Goldman's arrest for encouraging unemployed workers to steal bread -- is an excellent illustration of the way De Cleyre bridged the gap between the individualist and communist traditions. The bulk of the speech is taken up with a defense of Goldman's call for expropriation, and a repudiation of the possessing classes and their claimed property rights. She affirms her agreement with Goldman that "that bread belongs to you," that "you would be morally right in taking it," and

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>29</sup> Voltairine De Cleyre, "The Making of an Anarchist," in Alexander Berkman, ed., *Selected Works of Voltairine de Cleyre* (Mother Earth Publishing, 1914). Reproduced online at <<http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/voltairine-de-cleyre-the-making-of-an-anarchist.muse>>.

that "one little bit of sensitive human flesh is worth all the property rights in N. Y. city...."

In it, once again, she not only promoted an eirenic stance on relations between individualists and communists; she also cast doubt on the practical difference between them. In the course of her lecture she laid out a vision of the future organization of production by federated labor, in language we don't normally associate with the Boston individualists:

As long as the working-people fold hands and pray the gods in Washington to give them work, so long they will not get it. So long as they tramp the streets, whose stones they lay, whose filth they clean, whose sewers they dig, yet upon which they must not stand too long lest the policeman bid them "move on"; as long as they go from factory to factory, begging for the opportunity to be a slave, receiving the insults of bosses and foremen, getting the old "no", the old shake of the head, in these factories they built, whose machines they wrought; so long as they consent to herd like cattle, in the cities, driven year after year, more and more, off the mortgaged land, the land they cleared, fertilized, cultivated, rendered of value; so long as they stand shivering, gazing thro' plate glass windows at overcoats, which they made, but cannot buy, starving in the midst of food they produced but cannot have; so long as they continue to do these things vaguely relying upon some power outside themselves, be it god, or priest, or politician, or employer, or charitable society, to remedy matters, so long deliverance will be delayed. When they conceive the possibility of a complete international federation of labor, whose constituent groups shall take possession of land, mines, factories, all the instruments of production, issue their own certificates of exchange, and, in short, conduct their own industry without regulative interference from law-makers or employers, then we may hope for the only help which counts for aught — Self-Help; the only condition which can guarantee free speech, (and no paper guarantee needed).

Despite all this, she concluded with a contrast between her individualist economic views and those of Goldman in which she stressed her individualism:

Miss Goldman is a communist; I am an individualist. She wishes to destroy the right of property, I wish to assert it. I make my war upon

privilege and authority, whereby the right of property, the true right in that which is proper to the individual, is annihilated. She believes that co-operation would entirely supplant competition; I hold that competition in one form or another will always exist, and that it is highly desirable it should. But whether she or I be right, or both of us be wrong, of one thing I am sure; the spirit which animates EMMA GOLDMAN is the only one which will emancipate the slave from his slavery, the tyrant from his tyranny — the spirit which is willing to dare and suffer.<sup>30</sup>

So -- as with Lum and Labadie -- there seems to be a lot of room for overlap between de Cleyre's understanding of individualist economics and the social anarchist tradition.

In "Anarchism and American Traditions" (1908), de Cleyre stressed the continuities between anarchism and the Anglo-republican tradition running from Trenchard and Gordon through Wilkes to the anti-Federalists, celebrating the "American traditions, begotten of religious rebellion, small self-sustaining communities, isolated conditions, and hard pioneer life" that sprang up between the founding of Jamestown and the Revolution.

She also appealed to the sort of populist symbolism that today would be stereotyped as right-wing and has -- for example the Gadsden Flag -- been almost entirely claimed by the Right in today's political culture. But there was nothing inherently reactionary in those symbols, as any reader of Beard or Jensen could attest.

Among the fundamental likeness between the Revolutionary Republicans and the Anarchists is the recognition that the little must precede the great; that the local must be the basis of the general; that there can be a free federation only when there are free communities to federate; that the spirit of the latter is carried into the councils of the former, and a local tyranny may thus become an instrument for general enslavement. Convinced of the supreme importance of ridding the municipalities of the institutions of tyranny, the most strenuous advocates of independence, instead of spending their efforts mainly in the general Congress, devoted themselves to their home localities, endeavoring to work out of the minds of their neighbors and fellow-

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30 "In Defense of Emma Goldman and the Right of Expropriation: A Lecture. Delivered in New York, Dec. 16. 1894" Reproduced at Anarchist Library <<http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/voltairine-de-cleyre-in-defense-of-emma-goldmann-and-the-right-of-expropriation>>.

colonists the institutions of entailed property, of a State-Church, of a class-divided people, even the institution of African slavery itself.<sup>31</sup>

As David De Leon argued in *The American as Anarchist*, the flower of liberty should be encouraged whether its petals be red-white-and-blue or red-and-black.<sup>32</sup>

And 19th century American economic radicalism of the sort dismissed as "petty bourgeois" -- the Knights of Labor, the cooperative movement, and above the assorted farm populist movements -- was in fact a far cry from reactionary or provincial. Far from being reactionary or hearkening back to an obsolete economic model, the rural populist movements of the late 19th century were often quite sympathetic to urban industrial unionism.<sup>33</sup>

Although quite sympathetic to Dyer Lum and his "Economics of Anarchy," De Cleyre was critical -- as her skepticism above about the likelihood of large factories under anarchy would suggest -- of his workerism and emphasis on organizational mass, and the technological assumptions behind it. In language very close to that of thinkers from William Morris and Pyotr Kropotkin to Lewis Mumford and Ralph Borsodi, she set forth the liberatory and decentralizing potential of electrical power as an alternative:

Unless I am very much misinformed the so-called "Boston Anarchists" consider the present immense massing of workmen together in shops and factories (a characteristic feature of our present conditions constantly emphasized by Socialists) as an outgrowth of the introduction of steam power and its complicated machinery; that the whole system is therefore liable to be again revolutionized the moment steam is superseded by some superior agent, say electricity, which can be utilized by the workman at home or in small shops, where the slavery of the large factory can give place to the independence of the individual....

Lum, however, believed that the factory represented not only power and machinery but division of labor and as division of labor appears as

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31 Voltairine de Cleyre, "Anarchism and American Traditions," *Mother Earth* 3, nos. 10-11, December 1908-January 1909. Reproduced at <<http://praxeology.net/VC-AAT.htm>>.

32 David DeLeon, *The American as Anarchist: Reflections on Indigenous Anarchism* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 131.

33 See Chapter III of Norman Pollack, *The Populist Response to Industrial America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962).

a continuous process in all organic life, from protista up, he could hardly conceive a reversal of the law in the case of the social organism. For this reason he laid emphasis upon the coming solidification of industry; and because he did was accused, on the one side, of truckling to Communists, and on the other was claimed as a Communist after his death by the very man who did his best to manoeuvre him out of the editorship of the "Alarm" while living, because of his Individualism—John Most. Possibly Mr. Black may consider this corroborative of his classification of Lum as a Communist; I do not, however, credit Most with stupidity.

With the Mostian exposition of Communism, which sixteen days before his death he declared "logically leads to and rests upon authority," Lum made no compromise. But between his mutualism and the Communism of Krapotkin the difference is not one of irreconcilable basis, but chiefly one of faith. [Lum saw t]hat there is a distinct difference between government and social administration, that the former tends always to crystalize existing forms, thus fastening on the living the slavery of the dead, while the latter gives free play to all the plastic elements of society, constantly adapting and readapting itself to changing demands....<sup>34</sup>

De Cleyre's economic views left a great deal to experiment: simply eliminate Tucker's Four Monopolies, and let a hundred flowers bloom. But the likely expedients she envisioned small groups resorting to, especially later in life, were hard to distinguish from moneyless communism.

Let it be this way: Let there be an end of the special monopoly on securities for money issues. Let every community go ahead and try some member's money scheme if it wants; — let every individual try it if he pleases. But better for the working people let them all go. Let them produce together, co-operatively rather than as employer and employed; let them fraternize group by group, let each use what he needs of his own product, and deposit the rest in the storage-houses, and let those others who need goods have them as occasion arises.

With our present crippled production, with less than half the people working, with all the conservatism of vested interest operating to

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<sup>34</sup> "Economics of Dyer D. Lum," *Twentieth Century*, Dec. 7, 1893. Reproduced at Anarchist Library <<http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/voltairine-de-cleyre-economics-of-dyer-d-lum>>.

prevent improvements in methods being adopted, we have more than enough to supply all the wants of the people if we could only get it distributed. There is, then, no fixed estimate to be put upon possibilities. If one man working now can produce ten times as much as he can by the most generous use dispose of for himself, what shall be said of the capacities of the free worker of the future? And why, then, all this calculating worry about the exact exchange of equivalents? If there is enough and to waste, why fret for fear some one will get a little more than he gives? We do not worry for fear some one will drink a little more water than we do, except it is in a case of shipwreck; because we know there is quite enough to go around. And since all these measures for adjusting equivalent values have only resulted in establishing a perpetual means whereby the furnisher of money succeeds in abstracting a percentage of the product, would it not be better to risk the occasional loss in exchange of things, rather than to have this false adjuster of differences perpetually paying itself for a very doubtful service?<sup>35</sup>

This view seems to correspond to Malatesta's prediction that, regardless of formal economic doctrines, an anarchist society in practical terms would evolve towards something resembling communism.

In "The Economic Tendency of Freethought" de Cleyre traced all forms of oppression to religious authority. "[U]pon that one idea of supreme authority is based every tyranny that was ever formulated." In her view of Protestantism as a positive step in the evolution towards human freedom she may have been influenced by Stephen Pearl Andrews and more broadly the low church emphasis of the Anglo-republican tradition.

Why? Because, if God is, no human being no thing that lives, ever had a right! He simply had a privilege, bestowed, granted, conferred, gifted to him, for such a length of time as God sees fit.

This is the logic of my textator, the logic of Catholicism, the only logic of Authoritarianism. The Catholic Church says: "You who are blind, be grateful that you can hear: God could have made you deaf as well. You who are starving, be thankful that you can breathe; God could deprive you of air as well as food. You who are sick, be grateful that you are

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35 "Why I Am an Anarchist," *Mother Earth* 3 (March 1908). Reproduced at Anarchist Library <<http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/voltairine-de-cleyre-why-i-am-an-anarchist>>.

not dead: God is very merciful to let you live at all. Under all times and circumstances take what you can get, and be thankful." These are the beneficences, the privileges, given by Authority.

Note the difference between a right and a privilege. A right, in the abstract, is a fact; it is not a thing to be given, established, or conferred; it is. Of the exercise of a right power may deprive me; of the right itself, never. Privilege, in the abstract, does not exist; there is no such thing. Rights recognized, privilege is destroyed.

But, in the practical, the moment you admit a supreme authority, you have denied rights. Practically the supremacy has all the rights, and no matter what the human race possesses, it does so merely at the caprice of that authority. The exercise of the respiratory function is not a right, but a privilege granted by God; the use of the soil is not a right, but a gracious allowance of Deity; the possession of product as the result of labor is not a right, but a boon bestowed. And the thievery of pure air, the withholding of land from use, the robbery of toil, are not wrongs (for if you have no rights, you cannot be wronged), but benign blessings bestowed by "the Giver of all Good" upon the air-thief, the landlord, and the labor-robber.

She challenged this authority, and the social order derived from it, without apology.

Subvert the social and civil order! Aye, I would destroy, to the last vestige, this mockery of order, this travesty upon justice! Break up the home? Yes, every home that rests on slavery! Every marriage that represents the sale and transfer of the individuality of one of its parties to the other! Every institution, social or civil, that stands between man and his right; every tie that renders one a master, another a serf; every law, every statute, every be-it-enacted that represents tyranny; everything you call American privilege that can only exist at the expense of international right. Now cry out, "Nihilist — disintegrationist!" Say that I would isolate humanity, reduce society to its elemental state, make men savage! It is not true. But rather than see this devastating, cankering, enslaving system you call social order go on, rather than help to keep alive the accursed institutions of Authority, I would help to reduce every fabric in the social structure to its native element.



But to call for the destruction of the existing order is not the same as opposing order. De Cleyre goes on to deny that order is possible only through authority -- through commands backed by force -- and echoes Proudhon's claim that liberty is the mother, not the daughter, of order.

Sometimes I dream of this social change. I get a streak of faith in Evolution, and the good in man. I paint a gradual slipping out of the now, to that beautiful then, where there are neither kings, presidents, landlords, national bankers, stockbrokers, railroad magnates, patentright monopolists, or tax and title collectors; where there are no over-stocked markets or hungry children, idle counters and naked creatures, splendor and misery, waste and need. I am told this is farfetched idealism, to paint this happy, povertyless, crimeless, diseaseless world; I have been told I "ought to be behind the bars" for it.<sup>36</sup>

## **Max Nettlau**

Not only was Max Nettlau an expositor of the "anarchism without adjectives" in Malatesta's thought, as we saw earlier, but he was a leading exponent of that doctrine himself.

Nettlau saw the rival anarchist economic models not only as being sorted out among geographical areas based on local preferences, but as serving a sort of complementary function in the division of labor within society as a whole. Society as a whole would be a blend of varying mixtures of individualism and communism.

...I have been struck for a long time by the contrast between the largeness of the aims of Anarchism—the greatest possible realization of freedom and well-being for all—and the narrowness, so to speak, of the economic program of Anarchism, be it Individualist or Communist. I am inclined to think that the feeling of the inadequacy of this economic basis—exclusive Communism or exclusive Individualism, according to the school—hinders people from acquiring practical confidence in Anarchism, the general aims of which appeal as a beautiful ideal to many. I feel myself that neither Communism nor

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36 "The Economic Tendency of Freethought" (1890), Anarchy Archives  
<[http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bright/cleyre/etf.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bright/cleyre/etf.html)>.

Individualism, if it became the sole economic form, would realize freedom, which always demands a choice of ways, a plurality of possibilities. I know that Communists, when asked pointedly, will say that they should have no objection to Individualists who wished to live in their own way without creating new monopolies or authority, and vice versa. But this is seldom said in a really open and friendly way; both sections are far too much convinced that freedom is only possible if their particular scheme is carried out. I quite admit that there are Communists and Individualists to whom their respective doctrines, and these alone, give complete satisfaction and leave no problem unsolved (in their opinion); these would not be interfered with, in any case, in their lifelong constancy to one economic ideal. But they must not imagine that all people are constituted after their model and likely to come round to their views or remain "unreclaimed" adversaries on whom no sympathy is to be wasted. Let them but look on real life, which is bearable at all only by being varied and differentiated, in spite of all official uniformity....

Neither Communism nor Individualism will ever disappear; and if by some mass action the foundations of some rough form of Communism were laid, Individualism would grow stronger than ever in opposition to this. Whenever a uniform system prevails, Anarchists, if they have their ideas at heart, will go ahead of it and never permit themselves to become fossilised upholders of a given system, be it that of the purest Communism.

Will they, then, be always dissatisfied, always struggling, never enjoying rest? They might feel at ease in a state of society where all economic possibilities had full scope, and then their energy might be applied to peaceful emulation and no longer to continuous struggle and demolition. This desirable state of things could be prepared from now, if it were once for all frankly understood among Anarchists that both Communism and Individualism are equally important, equally permanent; and that the exclusive predominance of either of them would be the greatest misfortune that could befall mankind. From isolation we take refuge in solidarity, from too much society we seek relief in isolation: both solidarity and isolation are, each at the right moment, freedom and help to us. All human life vibrates between these two poles in endless varieties of oscillations.

Let me imagine myself for a moment living in a free society. I should certainly have different occupations, manual and mental, requiring strength or skill. It would be very monotonous if the three or four groups with whom I would work (for I hope there will be no Syndicates then!) would be organized on exactly the same lines; I rather think that different degrees or forms of Communism will prevail in them. But might I not become tired of this, and wish for a spell of relative isolation, of Individualism? So I might turn to one of the many possible forms of "equal exchange" Individualism. Perhaps people will do one thing when they are young and another thing when they grow older. Those who are but indifferent workers may continue with their groups; those who are efficient will lose patience at always working with beginners and will go ahead by themselves, unless a very altruist disposition makes it a pleasure to them to act as teachers or advisers to younger people. I also think that at the beginning I should adopt Communism with friends and Individualism with strangers, and shape my future life according to experience. Thus, a free and easy change from one variety of Communism to another, thence to any variety of Individualism, and so on, would be the most obvious and elementary thing in a really free society; and if any group of people tried to check this, to make one system predominant, they would be as bitterly fought as revolutionists fight the present system.<sup>37</sup>

He saw the tendency to bundle anarchist propaganda with detailed, dogmatic economic models of the future society as harmful to outreach efforts, effectively limiting the general appeal of anarchism by demanding conversion to some particular sect as a condition for embracing anarchy at all.

Freedom is not, as a rule, fully explain[ed] with all its possibilities to the newcomers, leaving them to choose for themselves what form of life they would consider most fully embodying freedom as they feel it, —but it is represented to them in combination with an economic hypothesis as communist or collectivist or individualist anarchism. So the prime and immense truth of freedom is wielded together at once with a hypothesis as to economic and administrative arrangements— which necessarily limits the success of the propaganda. For whom do we really want better—sincere believers in freedom, rebels against all

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<sup>37</sup> Max Nettlau, "Anarchism: Communist or Individualist?—Both," *Mother Earth*. 9, 5 (July 1914) 170-175. Reproduced by Shawn Wilbur at Contr'un, August 10, 2010 <<http://libertarian-labyrinth.blogspot.com/2010/08/max-nettlau-anarchism-communist-or.html>>.

forms of authority or more or less sectarian adherents of complicated hypotheses?...

I shall now give the reasons why I am skeptical as to the *economic doctrines* generally combined with anarchism. To be sure I myself hold such doctrines and they do not differ sensibly from those held commonly. But I wish it were so clear to all as it is to me that these doctrines are but hypotheses that need not separate for a moment, say, a communist and an individualist. And the anarchist movement ought to be *one*, relegating those economic differences as matters of nearest detail.

Of course many believe anarchism to be impossible without this or that economic basis in which they firmly believe. To this I reply that the purely hypothetical character of these doctrines should prevent exclusionarism from the beginning. Moreover, many misunderstandings are created by discussing the conflicting theories without considering in each case to which epoch of anarchist evolution an author refers. For anarchist society will not be a cast-iron mechanism but necessarily a developing organism to which different means and methods are most conducive at different times. Above all I discern the period of *unsafe* and that of *safe* freedom (relatively) with many interesting links. I mean by this that in the measure as freedom becomes more deep-rooted, its economic basis much change and may safely change. Hence a discussion of the economic systems of anarchy is a must before all state to which period of development it refers.<sup>38</sup>

## **The Question of Anarcho-Capitalism**

As *An Anarchist FAQ* frames the issue,

some "anarcho"-capitalists have attempted to use the tolerance associated with "anarchism without adjectives" to argue that their ideology should be accepted as part of the anarchist movement. After all, they argue, anarchism is just about getting rid of the state, economics is of secondary importance. However, such a use of

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38 Nettlau, Max, 1865-1944, "Some criticism of some current anarchist beliefs," *The Libertarian Labyrinth*, accessed February 18, 2016 <<http://library.libertarian-labyrinth.org/items/show/3172>>.

"anarchism without adjectives" is bogus as it was commonly agreed at the time that the types of economics that were being discussed were anti-capitalist (i.e. socialistic). For Malatesta, for example, there were "anarchists who foresee and propose other solution, other future forms of social organisation" than communist anarchism, but they "desire, just as we do, to destroy political power and private property." "Let us do away," he argued, "with all exclusivism of schools of thinking" and let us "come to an understanding on ways and means, and go forwards." In other words, it was agreed that capitalism had to be abolished along with the state and once this was the case free experimentation would develop.<sup>39</sup>

Leaving aside the contentious issue of whether anarcho-capitalism is "really anarchism,"<sup>40</sup> I agree with David Graeber that -- although markets would be a likely element of a post-state society -- nothing like full-blown "anarcho-capitalism" could survive based on entirely voluntary relationships.

Even what now seem like major screaming ideological divides are likely to sort themselves easily enough in practice. I used to frequent Internet newsgroups in the 1990s, which at the time were full of creatures that called themselves "anarcho-capitalists."... Most spent a good deal of their time condemning left anarchists as proponents of violence. "How can you be for a free society and be against wage labor? If I want to hire someone to pick my tomatoes, how are you going to stop me except through force?" Logically then any attempt to abolish the wage system can only be enforced by some new version of the KGB. One hears such arguments frequently. What one never hears, significantly, is anyone saying "If I want to hire myself out to pick someone else's tomatoes, how are you going to stop me except through force?" Everyone seems to imagine that in a future stateless society, they will somehow end up members of the employing class. Nobody seems to think they'll be the tomato pickers. But where, exactly, do they imagine these tomato pickers are going to come from? Here one might employ a little thought experiment: let's call it the parable of the divided island. Two groups of idealists each claim half of an island. They agree to draw the border in such a way that there are roughly equal resources on each side. One group proceeds

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39 A.3.8 What is "anarchism without adjectives"?, *op. cit.*

40 My own position is that anarcho-capitalism as a doctrine is not part of the historic anarchist movement, but that some individual thinkers who claim the anarcho-capitalist label may be genuine anarchists despite the label, depending on Shawn Wilbur's distinction (made in various discussion forums) between "anarcho"-capitalists and anarcho-"capitalists."

to create an economic system where certain members have property, others have none, and those who have none have no social guarantees: they will be left to starve to death unless they seek employment on any terms the wealthy are willing to offer. The other group creates a system where everyone is guaranteed at least the basic means of existence and welcomes all comers. What possible reason would those slated to be the night watchmen, nurses, and bauxite miners on the anarcho-capitalist side of the island have to stay there? The capitalists would be bereft of their labor force in a matter of weeks. As a result, they'd be forced to patrol their own grounds, empty their own bedpans, and operate their own heavy machinery—that is, unless they quickly began offering their workers such an extravagantly good deal that they might as well be living in a socialist utopia after all.

For this and any number of other reasons, I'm sure that in practice any attempt to create a market economy without armies, police, and prisons to back it up will end up looking nothing like capitalism very quickly. In fact I strongly suspect it will soon look very little like what we are used to thinking of as a market. Obviously I could be wrong. It's possible someone will attempt this, and the results will be very different than I imagined. In which case, fine, I'll be wrong. Mainly I'm interested in creating the conditions where we can find out.<sup>41</sup>

Hence it seems likely to me that whatever society prevails after the retreat of the state and the corporation from social and economic life will be pluralistic, made up of a wide variety of local expedients and ad hoc arrangements -- production for consumption within communist primary social units, commons-based peer production, market exchange, producer and consumer cooperatives community enterprise, micro-villages, Ostromite natural resource commons, etc. But capitalism (as opposed to markets as such), insofar as it requires engrossment of land and resources, and the enforcement of monopolies and entry barriers, will be insupportable without exogenous enforcement by the state, funded by the taxpayers at large.

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41 Graeber, *The Democracy Project: A History, a Crisis, a Movement* (Spiegel & Grau, 2013), pp. 296-297.

## **Conclusion**

These anarchists without adjectives -- and especially Voltairine de Cleyre -- took a general approach that's since been shared by a number of other thinkers. They include the people I mentioned above, that I've done earlier studies on -- James Scott, Elinor Ostrom, David Graeber and Colin Ward -- as well as Pyotr Kropotkin, Paul Goodman and others. What they share is a faith in the capacity of ordinary human beings to work out cooperative arrangements for themselves, and a regard for the various examples of such arrangements throughout history in all their variety and particularity, that transcends cut-and-dried ideological labels. Even when they come from or continue to identify with some sectarian version of anarchism (individualism in the case of de Cleyre, communism for Kropotkin and Ward), their love for specific examples of human ingenuity and achievement comes before their label. All of them take the approach of starting from "anarchy in action" (the title of a book by Ward): looking at what people have actually done, meeting face-to-face as equals to work out solutions to common problems, without worrying about what label -- market, syndicalist, communist -- to assign it.