# Anarchism

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2005

The anarchist tradition has been sharply divided in its relationship to religion, spirituality and nature. On the one hand, the mainstream of Western anarchism has in general been atheist, anti-religious and anti-clerical, and has looked upon religion as a supernaturalist negation of the natural world. On the other hand, there is a long history of anarchistic thought and practice having strong spiritual or religious dimensions, and very often these have taken the form of nature spirituality. The following discussion will examine first the more familiar anti-religious perspective of modern Western anarchism, then various anarchist tendencies across history that have held a spiritual view of reality, and finally, some contemporary anarchist views that exhibit both standpoints.

Almost all the major European classical anarchist theorists opposed religion and defended a secularist, scientific and sometimes positivistic view of nature against what they saw as religious obscurantism and other-worldliness. Max Stirner (1806–1856), the major individualist anarchist theorist, dismissed religion as a belief in illusory "spooks" that undermined the individuality and selfdetermination of the individual. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), the first important social anarchist theorist, stated that the concept of God was contradictory to rational thought and to human freedom, and that social progress is proportional to the degree to which the concept is eliminated. The anarchist anti-religious viewpoint is perhaps most widely associated with political theorist and revolutionary Mikhail Bakunin (1813–1876), who proclaimed, "I reverse the phrase of Voltaire, and say that, *if God really existed, it would be necessary to abolish him*" (Bakunin 1970: 79–80).

For Bakunin, religion denigrates human nature and the world, and is a means of oppressing humanity. In his view, it is a negation of nature, since it exalts a supernatural and transcendent reality and devalues the material and natural. He claims that there is an objective naturalistic basis for religion: it arises essentially out of the human being's feeling of absolute dependence on an eternal and omnipotent nature and out of primitive fear of its awe-inspiring powers. He contends that it begins with the attribution of this power to fetishes and ends with its concentration in an all-powerful God, which he sees as the reversal and magnification of the human image itself. Religion is thus essentially a misunderstanding of nature. The system of social domination makes use of this confusion to keep people in a state of subjection and submissiveness through the alliance between the coercive power of the state and the ideological power of the Church.

The large anarchist movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in general shared the atheism and anti-clericalism of its theoretical founders. The Bakuninists of the First International (International Working Men's Association, 1864–1876) fought to make the workers' movement officially anti-religious, and the large anarcho-syndicalist movements in southern Europe and Latin America defined themselves in part through their strong opposition to a generally reactionary and hierarchical Church and clergy. The Spanish Revolution (1936–1939), the most important event in the history of the anarchist movement, was marked by fierce opposition to the Church, to the extent of the desecration and burning of churches and harsh treatment

of clergy. The Spanish anarchists largely shared Bakunin's view that religion was based on a denial of the natural world. Yet a kind of nature spirituality emerged even within their milieu. This tendency was expressed in a cult of the natural, the romanticizing of nature, and practices such as health-consciousness, nudism and vegetarianism. In this regard, the movement was influenced by the anarchist philosopher-geographer Elisée Reclus (1830–1905), who developed a non-theistic but holistic and spiritual view of nature, advocated animal rights, and wrote of the sublime and inspirational qualities of the natural world.

When one turns to the positive relationship between anarchism and spirituality, one finds a wealth of evidence in many cultures of the world. Some have found one of the earliest anarchist philosophies of nature and human nature in the ancient Chinese classic, the *Tao te Ching* of Lao Tzu (ca. fourth century B.C.E). Daoism is the philosophy of the tao, or way, a term that refers both to the source of all being, and to the path of self-realization of all beings when they are allowed to act freely and spontaneously according to their nature. Lao Tzu presents a vision of nature and human society as an organic unityin-diversity in which the uniqueness and creative activity of each part of the whole are valued. The natural world is seen as a dynamic balance (symbolized through the complementary polarities of yin and yang) that produces order and harmony when not disrupted by human aggression and domination. Lao Tzu describes this natural harmony in poetic terms: "Heaven and Earth unite to drip sweet dew. Without the command of men, it drips evenly over all" (Lao Tzu 1963: 156). Coercive and authoritarian social institutions are shown to destroy natural balance and the generosity of nature and produce disaster not only for the surrounding natural world, but also within human society itself. The ideal society is depicted as a decentralized, egalitarian community in which all value the "Three Treasures" of compassion, simplicity, and humility. Lao Tzu was a harsh critic of the violent, hierarchical society of his own day, and laments the injustices and inequities that are created in human society by the pursuit of political and economic power. He declares that "[t]he Way of Heaven reduces whatever is excessive and supplements whatever is insufficient. The Way of Man is different. It reduces the insufficient to offer to the excessive" (Lao Tzu 1963: 174). For Lao Tzu, the pursuit of wealth, power and egoistic gratification must be rejected in favor of a way of life based on "non-action" or "actionless action" (*wu-wei*), by which is meant activity that is in accord with one's own Tao or way, but which respects the ways of all others.

Despite these apparently anarchistic or libertarian tendencies in Lao Tzu's thought, some have interpreted him as a defender of the traditional system of rule and even as an advocate of manipulation of the people for authoritarian purposes. For example, the eminent Chinese scholar D.C. Lau interprets the *Tao te Ching* as a rather eclectic collection of writings that has a primarily ethical rather than mystical or philosophical import, and which does not question the concept of political rule. In his view, passages concerning the sage or ruler apply to any follower of the Tao, but are also specific references to an enlightened and skillful "ruler," in a quite literal sense. Social

ecologists Murray Bookchin and Janet Biehl have contended that ancient Daoism is merely a form of regressive mysticism. They attacked the idea that the *Tao te Ching* has any anarchistic implications and contend that all references to rulership should be interpreted in an entirely literal sense.

The second great ancient Taoist philosopher, Chuang Tzu, has sometimes been seen as even more radically anarchistic than Lao Tzu and equally ecological in outlook. Chuang Tzu warned against the impulse to eliminate chaos and impose order on the world, which in his view leads ultimately to great destruction. He took a perspectivist position on knowledge and truth, and emphasized, often through humorous or ironic anecdotes, the fact that each being has its own good and perceives reality from its own ultimately incomparable point of view. He rejected human-centered views of reality and the tendency to project human meanings and values onto the natural world. Though the specifically political implications of Chuang Tzu's thought are far from clear, his Daoism has been interpreted as one of the most consistently anarchistic critiques of the domination of humanity and nature and of the egocentric and anthropocentric mentality that underlies domination.

Some have also found a deeply anarchistic dimension in both ancient Buddhism and also in various schools in later Buddhist history. Original Buddhism as established by the founder Shakyamuni Buddha (ca. 563–463 B.C.E.) came out of a questioning of both the social order (the caste system) and the ideological basis (the authority of the Vedic scriptures) of ancient India. It also rejected the idea that any authority, whether a person or written document, could lead one to truth, and that it must instead be reached through direct personal experience. The central Buddhist idea of non-attachment can be given an anarchistic interpretation. Although historical Buddhism has been to varying degrees influenced by inegalitarian social institutions, its goal of non-attachment can be seen as an attack on the foundation of political, economic and patriarchal domination in the desire to aggrandize an illusory ego-self. According to such an interpretation, the ideal of the *sangha* or spiritual community is seen as an anarchistic concept of association based on compassion and recognition of true need, rather than on economic and political power and coercive force. Similarly, Buddhist mindfulness, an awakened awareness of present experience, is seen as implying a sensitivity to the realities of nature and human experience, as opposed to appropriating and objectifying forms of consciousness. The Buddhist tradition is vast, and has been developed in many directions, but it is not difficult to discover in the Buddhist concepts of awakened mind, non-attachment, and compassion an implicit critique of material consumption and accumulation, coercive laws, and bureaucratic and technocratic forms of social organization.

Nagarjuna (ca. second century) is often considered the most important Buddhist philosopher since Shakyamuni Buddha. Indeed, he can plausibly be interpreted as the most theoretically anarchistic thinker in the history of philosophy. His radically destructive or deconstructive dialectic reveals the contradictions in any formulation of truth or attribution of substantiality to any being. The only "truth" for Nagarjuna

consists not in ideas or propositions, all of which lead to contradiction, but rather in the practice of universal compassion and nonattachment. His rejection of the imposition of dualistic and objectifying categories on an internally related and "dependently arising" reality can be seen as an affirmation of the non-objectifiable wholeness and self-creativity of being and nature.

The anarchist tendencies in Buddhism were developed furthest and synthesized with certain aspects of Daoism in the Chinese Ch'an (meditation) School of Buddhism and in its Japanese version, Zen. Zen questions all authorities, including political, intellectual and spiritual ones, and insists on the absolute priority of direct personal experience. Lin-Chi (Rinzai) (d. 866) the founder of Ch'an, is known for his shocking admonition, "Whether you're facing inward or facing outward, whatever you meet up with, just kill it! If you meet a Buddha, kill the Buddha. If you meet a patriarch, kill the patriarch!" This iconoclastic maxim is a classic Zen statement of the radically anarchistic view that none of our concepts of substantial realities (including even our most exalted concepts) can capture the nature of an ever-changing reality that constantly surpasses all categories and preconceptions. Inherent in this outlook is a deep respect for the integrity of nature and a desire to allow nature to express itself without human domination. Zen painting and poetry (much in the tradition of Daoist art) are noted for their focus on nature and on the numinous power of things themselves.

Anarchistic forms of spirituality have not been limited to Asian traditions, but have also emerged periodically through the history of Western religion. The Joachimite tendency in medieval Christianity is perhaps the most striking example. Joachim of Fiore spoke of the "Third Age" of world history, the Age of the Holy Spirit, which would supersede the rule of law and authority and usher in the reign of universal freedom and love. The Movement of the Free Spirit, which emerged out of the Joachimite and millenarian traditions, is often considered the most anarchistic tendency within medieval and early modern Christianity. The movement originated in the thirteenth century and spread widely across central and Western Europe during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Its most radical tendencies rejected the established Church, the state, law, private property and marriage. Its social outlook was at times a rather curious combination of a radically anarchistic quest for freedom and an elitism that justified an instrumental view of non-members and of things in nature, and a ruthless destructiveness toward all who stood in its way. Nevertheless, it often strongly affirmed nature and the natural. The Adamite tendency in particular saw believers as existing in a "natural," prefallen condition, and others spoke of exercising "natural freedom" and following "natural desires." They practiced nudism and free love, held property in common, and waged relentless war against their surrounding enemies. The anarchistic interpretation of the Free Spirit is best known from Norman Cohn's classic work, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. The Free Spirit also plays an important role in anarchist theorist Fredy Perlman's critique of civilization, *Against History*, and Situationist Raoul Vaneigem devoted an entire book to the movement.

A more recent expression of an anarchistic spirituality within the Christian tradition is the radical religious vision of Romantic poet William Blake (1757–1827). Blake stressed the sacredness of nature, its organic qualities, and the need for humane treatment of other beings. He was one of the most important early rebels against the mechanistic, objectivist, reductionist worldview that came out of Newtonian science. His rejection of the dominant mechanistic worldview is encapsulated in his well-known plea, "may God us keep / From Single vision and Newton's sleep!" (Blake 1988: 722). His attack on the patriarchal authoritarian God and a spiritually degraded world, and his creation of a new radically utopian mythology can be interpreted as an anarchistic critique of the state, early capitalism, and any ideology or social imaginary based on hierarchy, domination, and the repression of desire, the body, and nature.

Although nineteenthand early twentieth-century European anarchism was generally anti-religious, even there one finds a more overt religious tendency, primarily under the influence of the famous novelist and pacifist anarchist Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910). Tolstoy's conception of God was not the naively anthropomorphic image that other anarchists attacked, but referred rather to the whole of reality and truth. Furthermore, he believed that the true essence of Christianity is found not in a transcendent Supreme Being or an afterlife with rewards and punishments, but rather in Jesus' teaching of universal love. For Tolstoy, an acceptance of this teaching satisfies the human longing for meaning in purpose in life, and has farreaching implications for one's relationship to both society and nature. First, it results in a dedication to complete nonviolence in society, including an absolute anarchistic rejection of participation in the state, which Tolstoy saw as the most monstrous form of organized violence and coercion. Furthermore, it requires a nonviolent stance toward the whole of nature, a refusal to inflict suffering on sentient beings, and a practice of ethical vegetarianism.

Another important nineteenth-century literary figure in whose work anarchist themes intersect with a spirituality of nature is Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862). In his essay "Civil Disobedience," Thoreau proclaimed the priority of individual conscience over political authority, asserting his view that "that government is best which governs least" and consequently "that government is best which governs not at all." He refused to pay his taxes to the state on the anarchist secessionist principle that he could not recognize as his own government one that was also the slave's government. Although Thoreau's philosophical and religious perspective is usually associated with American "Transcendentalism," it can also be seen as an anarchistic spirituality with affinities to aspects of Daoist, Buddhist and indigenous traditions. Thoreau is best known for his eloquent expression in *Walden* of such themes as the love of and communion with nature, the affirmation of life, compassion for all living beings, and the ills of a materialistic society that is alienated from the natural world and enslaved by its own possessions. His spirituality is perhaps best expressed in the essay on "Walking," which contains his famous statement that "in Wildness is the preservation of the world." Thoreau links wildness, freedom, sacredness, and "the gospel according to this moment," an idea much in the spirit of Buddhist mindfulness. His concern for

and celebration of the particularities of place link him to later bioregional thought, and contain an implicit critique of political and economistic conceptions of reality.

The renowned anarchist geographer Peter Kropotkin has often been looked to as the major source of ecological ideas among the classical anarchist theorists. His concepts of the importance of mutual aid, spontaneity and diversity in both the natural world and in human society have been important in introducing ecological concepts into social thought. However, Kropotkin was in many ways carrying on the work of his predecessor, the nineteenth-century French geographer and revolutionary Elisée Reclus, who had already developed a profoundly ecological philosophy and social theory. Reclus is one of the most important figures in the development of an anarchistic ecological philosophy and spirituality.

Reclus came out of a tradition of radical Protestant religious dissent, his father having been a minister of a socalled "free church" that broke with the Reformed Church. Though he rejected theism, his anarchism can in some ways be seen as a continuation of his religious tradition. Central to his philosophy was a belief in universal love, which in his view must be extended to all human beings, to other sentient beings, and to nature as a whole. His deep respect for the natural world sometimes reaches a level of awe that verges on a kind of nature mysticism. For Reclus, social organization must be based on this love and solidarity, expressed through a voluntary commitment to the good of the community and the Earth itself. In such a system, each individual would be guided to the greatest degree possible by a free conscience rather than by coercion or centralized authority.

Reclus' outlook toward nature is at once scientific, moral, aesthetic, and spiritual. In his monumental 16,000page *New Universal Geography*, and his magnum opus of social theory, *Man and the Earth*, he offers a holistic, evolutionary vision of humanity and nature. Like later ecological thinkers, Reclus finds a harmony and balance in nature, in addition to a tendency toward discord and imbalance. His investigation of the intimate relationship between humanity and the Earth's regional and local particularities anticipates later bioregional thought. He emphasizes the moral and spiritual aspects of humanity's relationship to nature, condemns the growing devastation produced by industry and economic exploitation, and argues that whenever humanity degrades the natural world, it degrades itself. A vehement advocate of the humane treatment of animals and of ethical vegetarianism, Reclus wrote several widely reprinted pamphlets on these topics.

An important though relatively neglected figure in early twentieth-century anarchist spirituality is the German political theorist and non-violent revolutionary Gustav Landauer (1870–1919). Landauer is best known as a martyr killed for his leadership in the Munich Council Republic of 1919 and as the mentor of the Jewish libertarian and communitarian religious philosopher Martin Buber (1878–1965). Landauer's philosophy is rooted in German Romanticist thought and is often described as having mystical and pantheistic tendencies. His major concepts are Spirit (*Geist*), People (*Volk*), and Nation (*Nation*), and his central focus is on the place of the individual in the larger

human community, in nature, and in a greater spiritual reality. Landauer associates Spirit with the search for wholeness and universality, and interprets it as an immanent, living reality, the underlying unity of all beings that encompasses both humanity and nature. For Landauer, the great conflict in history is between Spirit and the state. In his famous formulation, the state is above all a relationship between human beings and it can be replaced by creating new relationships based on cooperation rather than domination. Socialism, which is what he called the free, cooperative society, is not a utopian ideal in the future, but rather something that is already present in all cooperative, loving human relationships and which can expand to encompass the whole of society as more non-coercive, non-exploitative relationships are established. Landauer believed that the cooperative society would be achieved when people left the increasingly dominant corrupt and alienated urban society and returned to the land. The new society was to be based on village communities rooted in their natural regions, in which fair exchange would replace economic exploitation, and in which agriculture and industry would be integrated.

Undoubtedly, one of the most important influences on modern anarchist spirituality throughout the world is Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948), who is widely known for his principles of nonviolence, cooperation, decentralization, and local self-sufficiency. Gandhi summarized his religious outlook as the belief that God is Truth, or more accurately, that Truth is God, and that the way to this Truth is through love. He also states that God is "the sum-total of all life" (Gandhi 1963: 316). At the roots of Gandhian spirituality is the concept of *ahimsa*, which is often translated as "nonviolence" (paralleling the original Sanskrit), but is actually for Gandhi a more positive conception of replacing force and coercion with love and cooperation. Similarly, he is sometimes called an advocate of "civil disobedience," but he defined his approach, *satyagraha*, as a more positive conception of "nonviolent resistance" to evil, including the injustices of the state.

Although Gandhi did not absolutely reject all participation in the existing state, he rejected the state as a legitimate form of social organization, advocated its eventual elimination, and strongly opposed its increasing power. He warned against looking to the state to reduce exploitation, arguing that its concentrated power and vast coercive force necessarily does great harm and destroys individuality. In place of the centralized state, he proposed village autonomy or self-government, community selfreliance, and local production based on human-scale technologies, ideas that have been enormously influential on twentieth-century eco-anarchism. Gandhi was also a critic of Western medicine, which he saw as dependent on concentrated wealth and sophisticated technologies, and advocated instead "nature cure" in which the cheapest, simplest and most accessible treatments are used.

For Gandhi, the principle of *ahimsa* was to be extended throughout the natural world. Humans should make an effort to avoid inflicting physical or mental injury to any living being to the greatest possible degree. Accordingly, Gandhi advocated ethical vegetarianism and had a deeply held belief that the Indian tradition of cow protection

was of great moral and spiritual value. One of his most oftenquoted statements is that the greatness and moral progress of a nation can be judged by its treatment of animals. Although his concern was often expressed in terms of the welfare of individual beings, he sometimes expressed more strongly ecological concepts, as when he warned of the dangers of human abuse of nature using the image of nature's ledger book in which the debits and credits must always be equal.

After Gandhi's death, Sarvodaya, a movement based on his spiritual, ethical and political principles emerged. Vinoba Bhave (1895–1982), the leading figure in the movement for many years, taught absolute nonviolence, social organization based on universal love, decision making by consensus, the replacement of coercion by the recognition of moral authority, and the minimization and eventual abolition of state power. Vinoba's social philosophy was fundamentally anarchist and communitarian. In pursuit of the movement's goals he pursued a policy of asking landowners to donate land to the poor (Bhoodan, or "gift of land") and of establishing village cooperative agriculture (Gramdan or "village gift"). Over a decade, Vinoba walked 25,000 miles across India and accepted eight million acres of Bhoodan land. The history of the Sarvodaya movement is recounted in Geoffrey Ostergaard and Melville Currell's study, *The Gentle Anarchists*.

Among contemporary thinkers, the celebrated poet and essayist Gary Snyder has probably had the greatest influence in linking anarchism, spirituality and nature. He has also been a major influence on the contemporary ecology movement in showing the ecological implications of Buddhist, Daoist and indigenous traditions. Snyder has connected the concepts of "the wild," "wild nature" and "wilderness" with the Tao of ancient Chinese philosophy and the dharma of Buddhism. For Snyder, the concept of "the wild" implies a freedom and spontaneity that are found not only in undomesticated nature, but also in the imagination of the poet and in the mind of the spiritually attuned person. He expresses the anarchic nature of the Zen mind in his statement: "the power of no-power; this is in the practice of Zen" (Snyder 1980: 4).

For Snyder, such concepts have farreaching political implications. By the early 1970s he had already outlined a bioregional anarchist position that would replace the state and its artificial political boundaries with a regionalism based on lived experience and a knowledge of the particularities of place. Snyder links the spirituality of place with "reinhabitation," the development of an intimate acquaintance with one's locality and region, and the achievement of a larger sense of community that incorporates other life forms. Snyder finds the roots of such a social vision in the Neolithic community, with its emphasis on productive work, the sharing of goods, and the self-determination of local village communities. From the standpoint of such decentralized, egalitarian communities, the state, social hierarchy, and centralized power are not only illegitimate and oppressive, but also a source of disorder and destruction in both society and the natural world. The wisdom of traditional societies has been a widespread theme in contemporary anarchist thought. This is exemplified by a significant "neo-primitivist" current in ecological anarchism that has identified very strongly with many of the

values and institutions of tribal societies. Its proponents argue that for 99 percent of human history human beings lived in stateless societies in which nature spirituality was central to their culture. The nonhierarchical, cooperative, symbiotic and ecological spiritualities of these societies have been taken as an inspiration for a future post-civilized anarchist society.

A strong influence on this current is anarchist theorist Fredy Perlman (1934–1985), who in his influential work *Against His-story, Against Leviathan* depicts (in a kind of radicalized version of the "Myth of the Machine" of social critic Lewis Mumford [1895–1990]) the millennia-long history of the assault of the technological megamachine on humanity and the Earth. Perlman describes early tribal spirituality as a celebration of human existence and nature, and depicts the rise of the ancient despotism that destroyed these societies and replaced their spirituality with a repressive, patriarchal and authoritarian monotheism. He interprets the emergence of such spiritual movements as ancient Daoism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism as a rebellion against social hierarchy and the domination of nature, and describes the processes through which these spiritualities of freedom were transformed in religions of domination. He also outlines the history of anarchistic spiritual movements, including such striking examples as the Taoist Yellow Turbans, a revolutionary, egalitarian movement of the second century.

Similar themes are developed by David Watson, a leading contemporary critic of the technological megamachine. Watson contends in *Against the Megamachine* that in modern societies an aura of sacredness is concentrated in the ego, in the system of technology, and in economic and political power, whereas primal societies have seen the sacred as pervading the self, the community and the world of nature. Primal spirituality was, he argues, an integral part of a system of egalitarian, libertarian and ecological social values. Furthermore, the participating consciousness of primal peoples conceives of humans as inseparable from larger natural and transhuman realities. Thus, primal peoples have had an anarchistic, nonhierarchical view of both society and nature that constitutes a powerful critique of modern industrial society and offers inspiration for future non-dominating ecological communities.

Ideas similar to those of Perlman and Watson inspire a rather large, vigorous and growing anarcho-primitivist or anti-civilization movement. The best-known theoretical spokesperson for this movement is John Zerzan, who presents a withering critique of civilization, industrialism, technology, the state, and even language and community. Anarcho-primitivist ideas often appear in such publications as *Green Anarchy, Live Free or Die, Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* and *The Fifth Estate*. Anarchoprimitivism plays an important role in the Earth Liberation Front, which practices sabotage in defense of nature, and in the much larger Earth First!, which is the most important direct action environmental organization. It is also a significant undercurrent in the anti-globalization movement.

Anarcho-primitivists see an inextricable relationship between civilization and the domination of humanity and nature. One of their central themes is the inevitability of the collapse of industrial society, an event that is often looked forward to with an-

ticipation. Primitivists value all that remains free from the domination of civilization, including remaining wilderness areas and autonomous, spontaneous human activity. They look to tribal traditions and hunter-gatherer economies for examples of an ecological sensibility, a balanced relationship to nature, and an ethos of sharing and generosity. However, they do not in general propose a simple reversion to such previous social formations, which are sometimes criticized for alienated social practices. Many primitivists find inspiration in various nature-affirming spiritual traditions as an alternative to the narrow technical rationality of civilization. These include the spirituality of tribal people, various forms of nature mysticism, a general reverence for life and nature, pantheism, and neo-paganism.

Indeed, one finds a continuous and strong anarchist current in neo-paganism in general in both Britain and the United States in recent decades. In Britain there are important anarchist and neo-pagan tendencies within the large marginal subculture that centers around the antiroads movement and defends sites that are of natural, cultural and spiritual significance. Both anti-roads activists and neo-pagans often form decentralized, non-hierarchical organizations practicing such anarchist principles as direct action and consensus decision making. Starhawk, one of the best-known neo-pagan theorists and writers, and an important figure in ecofeminism, has emphasized the connection between the nonviolent, egalitarian, cooperative, anti-patriarchal, anti-hierarchical, and nature-affirming values of anarchism and the pagan worldview and sensibility. The pioneering ecofeminist writer Susan Griffin has inspired thinking about these interconnections since her wide-ranging landmark work *Woman and Nature*, published in 1978. Even earlier, the well-known short-story writer and poet Grace Paley had incorporated feminist, anarchist and ecological themes in her works, which also expresses a deep but subtle spirituality of everyday life.

Hakim Bey, one of the most widely read contemporary anarchist writers, has developed an "ontological anarchism" that finds inspiration in esoteric spiritual traditions of many cultures, including Islamic mysticism, sorcery, shamanism, alchemy, and primordial myths of chaos. Bey's anarchic sensibility and spirituality encompass everything related to joy, eros, creativity, play, and "the marvelous." His concept of the Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ) as a sphere in which such realities can be experienced is one of the most influential ideas in contemporary anarchism and has stimulated interest in heretical, dissident and exotic anarchistic spiritualities.

There has also been considerable theoretical discussion of anarchism, nature and spirituality in the context of debates within social ecology. Such well-known exponents of social ecology as Murray Bookchin and Janet Biehl have attacked spiritual ecologies as forms of irrational mysticism that often produce social passivity and sometimes are linked to reactionary or fascist politics. On the other hand, proponents of the value of spiritual ecologies (such as David Watson, John Clark and Peter Marshall) have argued for the importance to an anarchist social ecology of spiritual values that are ecological, holistic, communitarian and socially emancipatory. It has been argued that some social ecologists have uncritically adopted a modernist, Promethean, and naively rationalistic

view of the self and its relationship to the world, and that spiritual ecologies derived from Asian philosophies and indigenous worldviews, among other sources, can contribute to a more critical, dialectical, and implicitly anarchistic view of selfhood and the place of humanity in nature. This brief survey is far from comprehensive, and a fuller account would encompass such topics as Quakerism and other forms of radical Protestantism, the Catholic Worker movement and other tendencies within the Catholic Left, the spirituality of anarchist intentional communities, and the many literary and artistic figures (including such notable examples as poet Allen Ginsberg and novelist Ursula LeGuin) who have had important insights relating to anarchism, spirituality and nature. However, from the examples discussed, it should be clear that anarchist thought and practice have encompassed a wide diversity of approaches to religion, spirituality, and nature. This multiplicity and divergence continues today. Many contemporary anarchists (especially in Europe and in organizations in the anarcho-syndicalist and anarchocommunist traditions) carry on the atheist, anti-religious, anti-clerical outlook of the classical anarchist movement. Others, including many of the young people who have been drawn to contemporary anarchism through direct action movements, have neither great interest in nor particular antipathy to religion and spirituality. However, an increasing number of political and cultural anarchists are developing an interest in spirituality, and many others have been drawn to anarchist political movements and social tendencies through an initial interest in anarchistic spirituality. Consequently, spirituality, and more particularly the nature-affirming spiritualities of Daoism, Buddhism, neo-Paganism, indigenous traditions, and various radical undercurrents within Western religion, play a significant role in anarchism today and can be expected to do so in the future.

## Further Reading


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*See also*: Bioregionalism; Bioregionalism and the North American Bioregional Congress; Blake, William; Buddhism; Daoism; Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front; Ellul, Jacques; Gandhi, Mohandas; Griffin, Susan; Kropotkin, Peter; Left Biocentrism; Le Guin, Ursula; Radical Environmentalism; Reclus, Elisée; Snyder, Gary – and the Invention of Bioregional Spirituality and Politics; Social Ecology; Starhawk; Thoreau, Henry David.

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The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature.
<www.religionandnature.com/ern/index.htm>