

The State of the Spectacle:
A Post-Anarchist Investigation Of
The Problem Of State Reification

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Declaration

STATEMENT 1

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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To my dear mother, Dr. Karine Karapetian

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ABSTRACT

The State is simultaneously a key concept in a variety of social sciences, and an ultimately ambiguous and abstract “entity”. In State-theories, Statist discourses and representations the State already pre-exists the practices of its theorising and representation, while there is quite a degree of ambivalence and difficulty with regards to what the State itself is. In effect, those very theories and representations end up *reifying* that very “State”, which they attempt to understand and unmask. In political and international theory we still need to cut off the King’s head. The problem of reification of the State, thus, becomes the nucleus of this investigation. In a journey through classical anarchism, and works of Max Stirner and Guy Debord, this thesis unpacks the problem of State reification. It demonstrates that apart from expressing a theoretical and discursive difficulty, the problem of State reification is complexly interwoven with cultural and psychological processes involved in identity formation, alienating dynamics of theological politics and conditions of existence within societies of the spectacle. The recurrent aporias associated with the existence of the State bring the investigation to the final analysis where it becomes clear that spectacular configuration of sovereignty draws its convincing power not so much from the discourses of social contract and the divinity of the sovereign, but in reference to the established and untraceable knowledge that “there is a State”. Sovereignty is, therefore, a derivative of a more profound problem of State reification.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: The Problem of State Reification

Whether we immoralists are harming virtue?
Just as little as anarchists harm princes.
Only since the latter are shot at do they again sit securely on their thrones.
Moral: morality must be shot at. (Nietzsche 1968:§36)

“We need to cut off the King’s head:
in political theory, we argued, that has still to be done.
We need a political philosophy that isn’t erected around the problem of sovereignty”
(Foucault 1980:121; my emphasis).

The State is the most important, perhaps even the originary concept in a wide variety of political studies. It will be demonstrated how the singularity of this self-referential sign functions as a causal predicate that predetermines relations, inter-actions, interpretations, political imagination, the epistemological taxonomy and ethics in politics. Without it, it would be indeed difficult, though not impossible, to engage in many types of political debates; not the least, in the debates about the death of the nation-state. In epistemological condition marked by an absence of this concept, interpretations and re-interpretations of political reality itself, in one theoretical or ideological fashion, or another, would become seemingly unimaginable. If there was no such concept as the State, many other concepts surrounding it would cease making sense. In light of the absence of this universal, many particular practices of particular individuals and human agents would appear not only as absurd, but would lose their ethical, legal and moral bases. Without the notion of the presence of the State, ethics would be

radically different and every political practice would seek a new representation, taxonomy and evaluation. Furthermore, almost all ideologies rely on the notion of the State to an extent that it is perceived as either a vessel for revolution, or the object of revolutionary conquest, or, yet for others, a target for revolutionary demolition. Indeed, a lot in political studies and everyday life relies on this central concept. Yet this very concept of the State, upon which so much relies, which always simulates a pure presence, and promises the ultimate clarity and sharpness intrinsic in its discourse and notion, is one of the most vague, abstract and ambiguous concepts there is.

In autumn of 1917, just before the Russian Revolution, Lenin touched on a subject that caused a major rift between the Bolsheviks and Anarchists. He observed, ‘...nearly all political disputes and differences of opinion now turn upon the concept of the state’ – and more particularly upon ‘the question: *what is the state?*’ (Lenin 1943:639; my emphasis). In that work Lenin discussed this problematic concept, and established a deeper and a more sophisticated understanding of how the State works and its role in the revolutionary cause. However, one thing that Lenin did not give us is a clear satisfactory answer to the very seminal question that he posed. This is a pattern that can be witnessed in numerous State-theories and mainstream International Relations: the State is taken for *granted* and as a point of departure (Abrams 1988; Kortright 2004; Wight 1966; Weber 1995:1; Bartelson 2001:3,5). Thus, we have the initial puzzling paradox: in State-theories the State pre-exists the practice of theorising, while there is quite a degree of ambivalence and

difficulty when one demands a single definite answer as to what the State itself is.

Following Lenin's observation, a few decades later Philip Abrams made a further observation, which narrows down the problem of this thesis,

‘...fifty years of asking the question [‘what is the State?'] have not produced any very satisfactory or even widely agreed answers. At the same time the sort of invocation of the state as an ultimate point of reference for political practice... have become steadily commonplace. We have come to take the state for granted as an object of political practice and political analysis while remaining quite spectacularly unclear as to what the state is. We are variously urged to respect the state, or to smash the state or to study the state; but for want of clarity about the nature of the state such projects remain beset with difficulties’ (Abrams 1988: 59).

Abrams admitted that there *is* the state-system and that there *is* the state-idea, which could easily be mapped and defined, yet he was puzzled by the fact that ‘the entity’ itself that stands over and above them, and animates them, is somewhat elusive. The repeated fruitlessness of the attempts to grasp the nature of the State's existence and to formulate a reliable understanding of State-being, which would be both agreeable in trans-disciplinary and satisfactory in practical terms simultaneously, suggests that a search for new definitions of State-being would be doomed to the fate of the previous attempts. Instead, this warrants a discussion on the *becoming* of the State –

that is to say, what makes the State-idea into a present and an omnipotent State-being?

There are numerous schools of thought and theories that have taught us about the role of the State, its history, how it works and in whose favour. But, what makes the State become real; or at least, what makes us take the appearance of and claims regarding its reality as proofs of its presence per se? What causes the State-effect? How, and more profoundly, why does the process of State-reification become possible?

This thesis does not see its purpose being a new definition of the State – that is not its goal. Indeed, from the ontological standpoint that this thesis will adopt in a short while, definitions of the State-concept, no matter how much clarity and precision they aim at, only end up assisting the problem of State reification. This thesis will attempt to study not the metaphysical “what is the State?”, but instead, address the problem of State-reification itself: *How and why does the process of State reification become possible?*

Precisely because State theories start by adopting the existence of the State as their departing point, as was claimed above, that we cannot use them for the purposes of an investigation that attempts to unmask the problem of the reification of the State. It will mean to work from scratch. Instead of taking the State as already there prior to the practices of its theorisation, representation and reification, and theorising the rest of political reality thereafter, this thesis will depart by assuming an ontological model whereby

there is *nothing*, no foundational universals, no State to start with. The important thing to recognise and decipher is not so much the lack of materiality of the State, but the implicit logical contradiction involved in a territorial (and recently extra-territorial) jurisdiction being logically posed as a dynamic agency in theory, as a presence in everyday life and as a party with overriding interests in ethics. The reversed pattern of a post-metaphysical mode of inquiry, which was proposed above, automatically renders the ‘what’-question as insignificant and immediately raises a more profound ‘how’-question: if there is no State as objective reality to start with, *how* does it become constituted and reified as the objective political reality itself?

If we start with the above modular assumption, in attempts to grasp the nature of the State’s existence, one must ask not what it is, but *how can it be killed*: how its absolute *existence* can be brought to absolute *non-existence*. In other words, if we knew the method of how the existence of something can be brought to its non-existence, we would be able to form an idea of what it is and what is the nature of its existence.¹ As a result, we will be able to witness how something that is non-existent becomes a would-be almighty existent being; that is to say, during that kind of investigation we would be able to map-out the pattern of *State-reification*, which is what this thesis is after.

¹ Even though not formulated explicitly in the following works, my influence toward such method of enquiry is taken from the Nietzschean tactic of enquiry that can be best named a “*polemi*?”. A further discussion specifically regarding this method of enquiry toward the Being will be found in chapter six. My own influences in this direction come from the following works: Nietzsche *Genealogy of Morals* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, Stirner’s *Ego and Its Own* Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx*, Deleuze and Guattari’s non-dialectical and non-negotiating concept of ‘war-machine’ and ‘war-model’ in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

It will mean taking on board and reviewing those schools of thought that have primarily aimed at the destruction of the State, and particularly, those theories that do not take the State as a fixed and given core reference unit. One tradition that has been problematising State-reification to a greater degree than other political philosophies is *philosophical anarchism*. In understanding what is the State today it is important to consult the political theory that has set it as its primary enemy – no doubt anarchists would have spent quite a substantial amount of effort in attempts to understand and grasp the being of its primary enemy. It is partially because of this point that anarchistic thinking is inherent in this project.

Thus, to be absolutely clear, this project is an attempt to pose and highlight the process of reification of the State as a problem and to investigate how, why and under which conditions it takes place. Because of the post-metaphysical nature of the posed question pertaining to the concept of the State, the inquiry starts with consulting insights of classical and philosophical anarchist thinkers in attempts to identify and reserve a set of ontologically compatible and logically coherent departing points for further inquiry (The latter part of this introduction shows the reasoning behind this move in more detail). The inquiry then proceeds with a focus on works of Max Stirner and Guy Debord who can be best located within the anarchist tradition or, rather, at the margins of it. With these insights as well as by utilising more recent achievements and debates, the project aims to grasp the cultural, psychoanalytic and semiotic processes involved behind the problem of State

reification. This is why this project can be located within the poststructural-anarchist (post-anarchist) current.

The discussion regarding the vitality of anarchism for the purposes of this thesis and the reasoning behind such a move will take place shortly, and prior to proceeding with a more general discussion as to how this thesis will deal with the problem, some more elaboration is needed regarding the problem of State reification itself. Therefore, this introduction is presented in two main parts. The first part (immediately next section) will elaborate and discuss the problem of State reification itself. Once the problem is properly posed, the second major part of this introduction will outline how the problem of State reification will be dealt with. In that part of the introduction the reader will be given a taste of how the argument will proceed. Additionally, in that part the ontology, assumptions and premises will be laid out; the methods will be outlined; and the progression of the argument will be briefly discussed leading up to the outline of the thesis structure.

The Problem of State Reification

So what is the problem of State reification? Firstly, one must be introduced to the problem of *reification* itself. Reification implies regarding or treating an abstraction as if it had concrete or material existence. As a result of that, it also carries a meaning of implicit discursive realisation of the given abstraction. The word *reification* itself comes from Latin *res* and *re*, which

means “*thing*”, and to reify means to make something abstract more concrete and real. During the course of this thesis it will become clear how the problem of reification is interweaved in the production of political reality, but the problem of reification itself was originally a philosophical one.

Philosophical Problem of Reification

To start with, reification implies an improper treatment and categorisation of something – it is about turning that nebulous “something” into an *object*, and even worse – a *subject*. Thus, there are various types of reification that in turn lead to deeper problems. For instance, Marx himself problematised reification on many occasions. Here is just one example, ‘[t]hese labourers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce... an appendage of the machine’ (Marx and Engels 1967:87). Many Marxist thinkers saw the problem of reification reaching into objectification of human beings. The argument was that it was no longer the labour service that was the marketable commodity, but the human being *as a whole*, including his private and personal aspects. In this case the problem of reification is that of turning a subject into an object.

Later on Georg Lukacs in *History And Class Consciousness* saw reification as an inherent feature of commodity relations within capitalism. ‘Just as the capitalist system continuously produces and reproduces itself economically on higher and higher levels, the structure of reification progressively sinks more

deeply, more fatefully and more definitively into the consciousness of man' (Lukacs 1997: 93, quoted in Kortright: 2004). In Lukacs' view relationships between people are mediated not simply by commodity-objects, but by commodity-forms, which are produced by the structure of reification (Lukacs: 1997). This is yet another type of reification, which works through initial *abstractification*. The original essence of the being is initially blurred, or ontologically reduced, and then out of this "blur" a new being is constituted. We will see the same pattern in the myth of Plato's Cave below.

The type of reification that this thesis will be dealing with, is of a slightly different nature. The problem of State reification would be closer to the variety of reification known as *hypostasization* – a practice and a process of philosophical construction and realisation of abstract concepts into would-be existent *and* higher beings, and treating them accordingly thereafter.² Hypostatizing means "[t]o attribute a separate or higher reality to something, thus abstracting it from its relationship of dependence on other things" (Clark 1976: 6). It is about presenting the object atomistically – as *in itself* – as if it had no relations with the context within which it was presented and/or produced.

The myth of Plato's cave is one of the earliest examples of the problem of reification and it is useful as it gives a taste of the basic problems involved.

² In fact in chapter six of this thesis I would take the argument further by arguing that the problem of state-reification is deeper than mere hypostasization and that it is a case of anthropomorphisation as a manifested case of how representing the abstract creates the real.

Plato's Cave

Let us think of what happens in Plato's cave (1987:278-86) as an example of hypostasization and reification³. The projection of a three-dimensional Original object creates a two-dimensional image. Thus, in effect, we have an initial case of ontological reduction of the original object. The original object is not being consumed as itself (in fact, the authentic object is not being consumed at all), but what becomes the consumed is the two-dimensional shadow that originally a three-dimensional Original helps to produce. Thus, initially we have a process of *abstractification* and ontological reduction of the Original. However, in the midst of this process something else happens: the spectators, *while being in the context of the cave*, in their imagination *collectively* create and realize a *New* real being (which is not the Original object) out of the illusion that the Abstraction helps to produce. The New being is neither the Abstracted, nor an object that bears a resemblance to the Original – it is a *New* and *as-if* existing being that bears neither an epistemological and ontological relation, nor resemblance to the Original and the Abstracted.

What happens in Plato's cave is a simple example of reification. There are important things to remember about the ontic qualities of the newly generated being. Firstly, the New being does not exist, but only *as-if* exists. At the same time, precisely because of the "*as-if*" quality of its existence, the existence of the New being is ontologically higher than the existence of the Original object and that of the Spectator. Secondly and subsequently, the

³ I should state that this is my re-reading of Plato in light of the posed problem.

New being is not present, but is only *as-if* present, and more present than any body or thing in the Cave (precisely because of the context of the cave within which presence of the new being was experienced). Thirdly, the New being has no image of itself because the Abstracted image is that of the Original which bears no ontological or epistemological relation to the New being: the Abstracted image is only a *temporary* attestation to the presence/existence of the New being, and once the shadow-image is gone the New reified being still retains its existence and presence.

The above discussion on reification inside Plato's cave bears important initial implications for a study of State reification. From the deduced points one and two it follows that to talk of the presence/existence of the State is to talk of the presence/existence of the ghost (Stirner 1844; Derrida 1994); and that will be investigated in chapter four. Obviously, the study of the State points in the direction of a metaphysical mode of enquiry. But the task of the study of State reification must be to by-pass and evade the metaphysical terrain. In other words, we must be interested in not what the State is, but how and under which conditions the State is constituted and reified as that which it is presented, theorised and experienced to be. One must study how the State-idea and State-sign function in the process of constituting and reifying the State, instead of simply taking the State for granted as the departing point for theorising. That is what will be done with the initial helping hand from Max Stirner, who, as will be demonstrated was among the first thinkers to be concerned with the problem of turning the State into a pure presence at the expense of the existence of the Self. The third point from the above

discussion paves the way for yet another discussion of the following type: if we want to map out the presence/existence of the State, we must map out the signs of the State that are present or temporarily become present, and in turn investigate their semiotic relationship with the alleged signified essence, or at least how and under which conditions that relationship is constituted and gains semiotic coherence. That will form a basis for and the theme of investigation in the later discussion on Guy Debord, the concept of the Spectacular in chapter five and the final chapter on micropractices of reification of the State.

On The Obscure Origins of Reification

The origins of the problem of reification are indeed hard to trace. Even though in the myth of Plato's cave we see the most simplistic outline of the process of reification, that was not the problem for Plato. In the myth of the cave what we have is the original problematisation of the *illusion*, and not of simulation (which will be an important part of the discussion in chapters 5 and 6). Since in Plato's myth there was an outside to the cave, the problem of illusion proved to be a fertile ground for rationalism and transcendentalism. However, reification itself became an issue for Nietzsche and gained a new concern for many post-metaphysical thinkers to follow, but that is not to say that the problem was not there for quite some time. Stirner, for one, had already outlined this political problem and there will be a thorough discussion on that in chapters three and four. However, the more one searches for the

origins of reification the more obscure and untraceable they seem. In one way, it goes back to Plato's manifestly rough, though influential and constitutivist assumptions regarding the treatment of universals and particulars in his *Dialogues* (Plato 1970) – a specific logic that later legitimated Aristotle's unconvincing jump from a view of the State as such an abstract universal as *association* (Aristotle 1962:25), to a view of the State as an *object* (Aristotle 1962:26) (equated with a botanical plant to be studied through a near-morphological method), when he argues that “the state belongs to a class of objects” (Aristotle 1962:28). The same confusion permitted Vattel to apply natural law to the international context, thus deducing a State being an *agent* (Vattel 1758). At the same time, one may see a constitutive effect in discourses that treat the State atomistically, as opposed to holistically – a view in which the State exists by itself, *in itself*, having seemingly no relations with broader pictures involving factors such as class-antagonisms, hermeneutical and discursive practices, as well as the simulating practices that substantiate the appearance of its existence.

Ultimately, reification is as old as language. Implicit in the problem of reification is the realist assumption in philosophy that everything that can be thought of and represented as a *word* must have an existence of some sort, or else it would not have been represented in the first place. This is what is known as ‘logic of representation’: language stands as the indicator (signifier) of the pre-existing empirical reality (signified); there is a relationship between the two in a way that the signifier always refers back to the signified (Saussure

1974).⁴ Thus we are stepping into endless metaphysical territories based on the old assumption that discourses and signs represent the real instead of constituting it. The classical view in this logic of representation is that things pre-exist the act of their representation. State theories and representations of the State often follow the same logic – they take it as already granted. For the purposes of this thesis, following that path will mean repeating the problem of State-reification again. A real breakthrough came with the post-modern view that the signifieds are not as stable as they were said to be and it is the *sign* that constitutes the essential signified (Baudrillard 1993, 1994; Debord 1967). In other words, it is the discourse about X and the representation of X, that constitutes the very being of X. This is best manifested in the works of Jean Baudrillard’s concept of simulacrum, which is the sign that refers back only to itself, and in the midst of this tautology simulates and constitutes its own signified (Baudrillard 1994).

The above few paragraphs present a very brief outline of the philosophical problems involved in reification itself. It is important to note, however, that these point outward, instead of directing us toward a narrowed down problem. The more one looks into the philosophical aspects of reification and its origins, the more one enters into seemingly endless metaphysical riddles that pose interesting questions, but not useful answers and thus repeatedly pose the danger of diverting us from the problem at hand, which is

⁴ It must be noted that Saussure did not see this relationship as natural, but only as a cultural phenomenon. The idea that the logic of representation is natural, that is to say, that things pre-exist and we only represent them afterwards is something the origin of which is hard to pinpoint, though it is present in various versions as early as Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (Aristotle 1966) and more so in Plato’s *Dialogues* (Plato 1970).

the problem of State reification. From the conducted research it became evident that the philosophical problem of reification is intimately tied up with a great many mysteries and paradoxes of modern philosophy. A set of future investigations in that direction may be helpful, but are not doable within one thesis. However, the problem of State reification seems precise and focused enough to be dealt with within a thesis. Even though there will be plenty of philosophy in this thesis, it will be utilised with a view to substantiate the particular arguments in view of the original problem.

In order to avoid going in increasingly divergent philosophical and particularly metaphysical spirals and circles, one has to have a set of stable premises – premises that would be as firm as an ontological standpoint. One way of bypassing the logic inherent in reification (the idea that everything that can be thought of and be represented as a word must have a priori existence) is to pose an ontological assumption that would invert the same logic. It was Max Stirner who in 1844 put forward a radical proto-existentialist ontic proposition that all of the things that are expressed as words and constitute the reality as we know it are ultimately unreal and inexistent: they do not express the true essence of the being, but rather re-make it; and that the only existent being, which is the particular unique Self or Ego, is one that can never be expressed in a word (Stirner 2000:314; also 1976:346). Stirner's claim was above all about abstract political concepts, such as the "State", "fatherland", "legality" and so forth, which form core referents for ideologies and regimes. With the help of such an ontological standpoint the arguments of the thesis will be immune to philosophical assumptions that redirect us

back into metaphysical reifications. It means that we will be able to look at the State not as an object or a being pre-existing representation and processes of reification, but as a sign that is constitutive of its signified and of political reality in light of its would-be presence.

Evolution of the Spectacular Order: after the Cave

Such illusions using light and shadows as a means to projection of some basic discourse have been around for quite some time. These are equally present in Central and East Javanese *wayang kulit*, because the two-dimensional image does bear a resemblance to reality, but manifestly only a *metaphorical* one, and never a direct relationship. In other words, they do not simulate the resemblance. The anthropomorphised characters in *wayang kulit* performances are, as a rule, abstract concepts to start with: they represent a ghostly (*wayang*) side of the being or the nature of the being and not the being itself.

With the rise of modernity technologies of illusion evolved into the technologies of simulation. When on December 28, 1895 in the basement lounge of the Grand Cafe on the Boulevard des Capucines in Paris, the Lumiere brothers projected cinematic images of a train pulling into a station – reportedly, people ducked and covered, screamed and ran out, believing that the train was about to overrun them. This is an interesting episode in human history for it shows how the sign of the real substituted for the real, was

effectively *experienced* as the real itself. This is the basic essence of the spectacular order (in which the gaze is the dominant sense) and simulation that Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard outlined respectively (Debord 1967; Baudrillard 1993; 1994). It was no longer a ghostly being hinting at its presence through an animated shadow, and it was not a fixed unmovable image of realists' representation. Now it was both realist *and* animated, while neither bearing an ontological relationship with the original, nor displaying its history of production and its produced nature – something that Jean Baudrillard would call the *hyperreal* (more real and close to the spectator than the real itself (Baudrillard 1994:1-3)).

By the late 1950s the TV set was not so much a luxury as an integral part of every decent bourgeois household's living room. An antique postcard shows that as early as late 19th century the Victorians were already perceiving a technological advancement that would compress time and space in such a manner that a realistic visual and audio experience of the event would become possible without presencing and witnessing it. And it did become possible with advancement of live broadcasting, culminating with then-struggling and little-known CNN⁵ securing rights to broadcast the Gulf War *as it happened* and *when it happened*. Gulf War became the evening entertainment reality-TV show. Instead of the classical role of the as-if hidden voyeur following the typically cinematic three-act fiction of the unfolding love-story, the spectator could now follow the missile as it flew and at the same time as it flew. The spectator was now placed in the role of an overt participant of the Spectacle:

⁵ At that time Cable News Network (CNN), which was launched in 1980 was a rather young and relatively unknown subsidiary of the struggling Turner Broadcasting System (TBS).

being as-if right there, as-if right then. It was now the CNN projecting the whole monopolised package of what the Gulf War experience was. Thus, the full experience and knowledge of exactly what happened during the Gulf War and exactly how, became entirely that which CNN projected. “CNN’s Gulf War” became the dominant conceptualisation and knowledge of how and what Gulf War itself was: the self-referential signifier created and reified the signified. Given these spectacular conditions of experiencing, the Gulf War could as well have been shot in a studio⁶, and we would never know – it could as well have never happened (Baudrillard 1995). Ultimately, within these conditions of experiencing the political reality the untruth can easily be passed for truth, and vice versa.

At this point it is worth recalling Guy Debord’s observation that became the milestone for post-modern thinking on politics:

The entire life of societies in which modern conditions of production prevail announces itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation. (Debord 1966:§1)

The theory of the Society of the Spectacle, which will be looked at in chapter five, was influential particularly in Baudrillard’s theory of the Simulacra and Hyper-reality. The theory outlined by Plato through a metaphoric myth of

⁶ It is worth mentioning a recent documentary by William Karel which documents how Nixon recorded a back-up address to the nation in case the moon landing failed, and how Stanley Kubrick was commissioned to shoot a footage of a man walking on the moon in case the footage from Apollo 11 was not suitable for broadcasting, which is what eventually happened (Karel 2002)

the Cave must not be confused with the problem of simulation or Spectacular Order. What Plato was talking about is the basic problem of *illusion*, since at the end of the day according to Plato there is a transcendental reality outside of that illusion. What people like Guy Debord outlined is a theory of cultural industry and cultural imperialism whereby the reality is repeatedly produced and stabilised.

In fact, one may be excused for the view that the philosophical problem of illusion, when translated into an everyday experience, only further suspends and diverts a critical engagement with the much grander game of simulation. Baudrillard calls it the *Alibi Effect*, claiming that the simulacral order in modern capitalist societies maintains its status of being the Real by establishing specific cases and zones of un-reality and illusion, whereby the spectators would be very conscious of the fact that what they are experiencing is not real and is essentially an illusion. Baudrillard brings the Watergate scandal and particularly, Disneyland as an example: it is supposed to be a zone of unreality, imagination, fiction and a fairytale, and the spectators know that that is exactly what it is. What is important is not what happens to the spectator inside these zones, but the experience that he/she has when exiting the zone of constructed illusion: the spectator leaves the world that he knew was an illusion and enters back into the “real” world, *as-if* the latter is not an equally constructed world of illusions. Thus, the problem of illusion *per se*, in

effect, does not question the reality at required critical level, as much as it affirms that very reality by ritually and routinely creating alibis in its favour⁷.

The most distinguishing feature of the problem of illusion that separates it from the problem of simulation is the transcendental consciousness that the former subscribes to. Theories of the spectacle and simulation, on the other hand, start precisely by eschewing the transcendentalist divide between illusion and reality, between phenomenal and noumenal, between reality and the Real. Instead, they concentrate on how that which we know to be the objective reality of everyday life is created or constituted.

Thus the problem is ontological, because we are talking about reality and a question of what exists and what does not; and about the criteria for existence.

Anthropomorphisations of the State

Further tendencies that hijack critical engagements with a multitude of political and international problems are manifested in the treatment of the State as a core referent unit, as a “thing” and an object, and, even worse, in cases of more ideologically-nationalist and fetishist conceptions, as a *subject*

⁷ This is not entirely original of Baudrillard. As it will be demonstrated in chapter five it was precisely this alibi effect of the Spectacle that is upheld by specifically illusionary, retrospective and fictional character of museums and cinemas, that inspired the Situationists and Debord. That is why they sought to destroy the boundaries between the “museum-areas” and the rest of the Spectacle.

and as an *agent*. If we think of State reification as a mappable constitutive practice rather than as a representation of the pre-existing reality, there must be early instances of State reification in realms other than 20th century political and International Relations theory. It was not out of thin air that Vattel represented the State as an *agent* (1758) – an influential and a *constitutive* work for the foundations of modern international law and for the preambles of the United Nations Charter (Beaulac 2004). Neither did “Uncle Sam” or “Mother Russia” emerge as a coincidence. In other words, State reification must be treated as an evolving *tradition* that has repeatedly manifested itself through repeated constitutive practices of representing the State through a human shape – *anthropomorphisation* of the State. There are numerous examples of such treatment of this abstract concept, which in Occidental tradition can be dated back to antiquity.

For instance, earlier occurrences of anthropomorphisations of the State invariably employ notions of innocence through a female body. In Shakespeare’s poem *Rape of Lucrece*, the act itself is equated to rape of the State as means of demonstration of the intensity of the loss of pride involved in the loss of the State. Here Lucretia, wife to Roman general Collatinus, is reputedly the most chaste woman in Rome and it is precisely for that fact that Etruscan prince, Tarquinius sees the challenge of raping Lucretia as the culmination and completion of the conquest of the Roman state.

In yet another example, James VI of Scotland, later, James I of England in *The True Law of Free Monarchies* and in his inauguration speech to the

parliament made the following, seemingly odd, argument: King is a husband and Kingdom is a wife. Thus, he maintained, he was already *married* to Scotland, and him becoming the King of England would mean having more than one wife (something that is more of a ‘Mohammadian’ way), which in turn led him to the argument that he can either marry only one kingdom/wife, which will have to be a united kingdom, or he will have to marry England after becoming a different person himself (King James VI and I 1994: 62-84; see also Hadfield 1998). The argument does seem quite strange, but when the very coherency of a most significant part of his political speech relies on such odd metaphor, the logic implicit in it does warrant questioning. There is even earlier trace of such representational logic. When Elizabeth I was asked as to when she planned to get married, she displayed a plain golden ring on her finger claiming that she was already married – to her kingdom.

This practice of referring to a State as a being to be married to, was actually played out as a regular ritual in the Venetian Republic. The Doge, which is the title of the elected leader of the Venetian Republic, would perform the following seemingly strange ritual on an annual basis. Behind his throne, there was a window overlooking the Venetian lagoon. Once a year the Doge would display a plain golden wedding ring to persons surrounding him and then approach the window behind his throne and throw the ring into the

lagoon. These were well-organised and seemingly significant rituals performed for centuries until Napoleon's conquest in 1797.⁸

In Herodotus' *Histories* Europa is originally not a continent but an Asian princess abducted by Zeus and impregnated with Minoan seed while in Crete and then released into a barbaric wilderness (Herodotus 1992: book IV). In fact, Greek mythology presents us with an early anthropomorphising fabric in political and international thinking. It is as early as in ancient Greek representations of the State that we find a multitude of examples whereby particular states and realms are closely associated with particular Gods in a specific manner that permits reference to a State as an anthropomorphised agent. Thus at the basic level of the implicit logic of representation involved, there was nothing original when Thomas Hobbes famously depicted the political body – the Leviathan, in a human shape and consisting of little bodies of its subjects.

However, Hobbes' painting of Leviathan was preceded by another fragment from the tradition of State-reification. One must look at the *Rainbow Portrait*,⁹ which is one of the most haunting and disturbing of monarchs' portraits. The painting depicts Elisabeth I standing and staring at the viewer. In her right hand she holds the rainbow, which looks more like a transparent petrol hose. One of the eyes of Elisabeth looks at us with clear reluctance and lack of enthusiasm, while the other half of the face stares with clear intention of

⁸ I owe the last two examples to Rebecca Nesvet's thesis on English Renaissance Theatre (Nesvet 2004).

⁹ *Rainbow Portrait* is in the collection of Marquess of Salisbury and is on display at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire. The painting belongs to the period of 1600. The painter is unknown.

making a serious and glaring point. At first, it seems that the strangely haunting feel of this painting is generated by the interplay of these contrasts in her gaze. Only when the viewer notices that he is being watched not so directly by Elisabeth herself, but by a multitude of eyes that cover her gown, that one realises where the overall spookiness of the depicted body's presence comes from. There is a strange inversion here: the spectator is being watched by the painting. The whole arrangement is designed to make a number of strong and convincing points as a set of truisms that holds their presence, existence and convincing power across time: this is the body of the State, it holds the rainbow – the covenant between earth and heavens and the promise of peace and prosperity in its right hand, while its left hand is marked with a serpent – the symbol of pure and absolute knowledge. The whole painting is crammed with symbolic details suggesting purity, virginity, stasis, manhood and several other details, which are hardly coincidental, though not significant enough for our discussion. However, it is not so much the statement of this painting that is important here, but the ritual that it plays out: *how* and by which method does it convince us of the validity of its statements? The presence of the body of the State would not hold its convincing power if not for the “spookiness” and goose bumps that it incites. As Agamben has put it, ‘the religious belongs entirely to the sphere of psychological emotion, that it is essentially has to do with shivers and goose bumps’ (Agamben 1998: 78). The more one looks at this painting, the more one realises that it works toward a dual purpose of making significations on one hand, and securing their validity by means of haunting on the other (Graziani 1972). If not for the overall haunting effect that this painting projects, we could say that this is

the painting that depicts Elisabeth. However, it is because of the very *spectrality* that extends from this painting, that the being of Elisabeth I blurs into the being of the State, to an extent that one becomes the other. This is not a portrait of Elisabeth I, but a painting that depicts the *presence* of the State.

The peculiar tendency of such State reification finds its new expression even in modern theories of the State: suddenly the State is animated as an agent who has a will and a mind of his/her own – the basic Cartesian prerequisite for rational existence. From the earlier conceptual representations the theoretical representation of the State inherits a similarly peculiar conceptualisation of an “agent” and of a “body” with its own “head” and “organs”. It is precisely in the problem of State reification that one may discover the obscure reasoning for attributing *agency* to the State – a peculiar tendency that found its theoretical purchase more in the disciplines of International Law (Beaulac 2004) and International Relations than in any other fields (see Erskine 2001: 67). In fact an earlier instance of depicting the State as a *self-conscious* agent can be found not in Bodin, but in Vattel’s concept of sovereignty, which was formulated within the context of international law by drawing interpretative lines with natural law theory (Vattel 1758; Schmitt 1985:17; Beaulac 2004:esp. ch.7). The same logical tendency is clearly present in Aristotle(1962:26-8).

The tradition of State reification reaches its highest level in Hegel, who literally saw the State as an ‘organism’ (Hegel 1991:290). For Hegel the

absolute, the culmination of the dialectical process, is embodied in the figure of the State, which, for him, was seen as the embodiment of freedom (Hegel 1991:88,192), actuality of ethical ideal (Hegel 1991:257), rationality and the absolute resolution to alienation – something that he proudly called ‘the human artefact’ (Avineri 1972:11). Hegel tells us, ‘The state in and for itself is the ethical whole, the actualization of freedom, and it is the absolute end’ (Hegel 1991:279).

However, whether we are faced with a case of objectification of the State or a case of hypostatisation and anthropomorphisation of it, all these are invariably manifestations of the same problem of reification of the State.

The State as an Object and the State as a Subject

There are three interesting conceptualisations of the State worth reviewing before proceeding with the overall argument.

One conceptualisation of the State is that of an ‘object’. This view is associated with Marxists like Lenin (1919), Trotsky (1909, 1917, 1931) and is expressed into a more systematic theory by Louis Althusser (1971). The State, here, does not act but is a material site acted upon or within. For Althusser the State does not have a subjectivity of its own, rather the State is a location/object through which actors can change society, provided that it is in hands of the right people – the proletariat (Althusser 1971).

The basics of this view, as we will see, are highly contested by the classical anarchists. The simplest way to describe the disagreement is through a metaphor. For Marxists the State is like a machine that can be driven in any direction depending on who the driver is. For anarchists the State is more like a train, which drives only in one direction regardless of the driver. As a theoretical extension of Lord Acton's classical proposition that 'power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely', in anarchist view, the State has its own momentum and its own agenda that consumes all other intentions. It needs to be said that neither the Marxist, nor the classical anarchist conceptions of the State as an object are satisfactory enough for the purposes of addressing the problem of State reification since there is already a presupposition of the State *in itself*.

The other conceptualisation is that of the State as a 'subject'. This school of thinking is associated with Weberian theorists. Here the State has a subjectivity of its own. Since the State is separate from the society, the bureaucrats have a split subjectivity. On one hand their subjectivity is framed by the social realm. On the other hand their subjectivity is framed by the State interests. Thus bureaucrats by expressing the interests of the State become the face of the State. Therefore a personality-orientated focus within liberalism culminates in view of the State as an institution or a constellation of institutions with its own subjectivity (see Kortright 2004).

The problem in this view is that it relies on a nebulous concept of ‘State interests’ and ‘national interests’ as if they are a natural given phenomenon; apart from assuming the State, it also assumes such things as the “nation” and “community”, something that has been questioned (Hindess 1996:157-8) and effectively contested (Anderson 1983; Weber 1995). It is important to remember that because liberalism and anarchism (libertarian socialism) originate from the same libertarian tradition, many classical anarchist thinkers have subscribed to such a view of the State. The important premise in this view is the separation between the State and society, and it is this classical anarchist dichotomy that will be questioned, contested and rejected in this thesis.

The Reification of the State

Having explored the problem of State-reification it is worth pointing at alternative views, which maintain that the State and sovereignty is actually constituted by the discursive and theoretical practices. The notion of discursive practice is mainly associated with Michel Foucault. For Foucault *discursive practice* is not something that takes place only at the grassroots, but when the persons at the spotlight speak as if they were the experts on the subject matter. That is also why the King’s decapitation is a matter of theoretical difficulty. It is a theoretical difficulty because the presence of the King is reified by the theorists, but it also means that the presence of the King, if at all possible, must also be untied by a theorists or analysts. Similarly

Cynthia Weber calls the discursive practitioners the ‘interpretative community’ (Weber 1995:4). According to Richard Ashley,

Despite the fact that the state is an intrinsically contested, always ambiguous, never completed construct – a construct that is itself always in the process of being imposed in the face of never-quieted resistances – theoretical discourse of the anarchy problematique must ‘find’ the state to be a pure presence already in place, *an unproblematic rational presence already there*, a sovereign identity that is *self-sufficient source on international history’s meaning* (Ashley 1988:231; my emphases).

At the same time, Cynthia Weber sees the production of state and sovereignty as a theoretical and interpretative practice on part of the ‘interpretative community’:

‘...while the word sovereignty denotes a state of being – an ontological status – sovereignty in fact expresses a characteristic way in which being or sovereign statehood may be inferred from doing or practice. It is not possible to talk about the state as an ontological being – as a political identity – without engaging in the political practice of constituting the state. Put differently, to speak of the sovereign state at all requires one to engage in the political practice of stabilizing this concept’s meaning... - to write the state’ (Weber 1995:3).

By now it may seem as a cliché, but it is a fact of the matter that remains: theories of the State and political debates inside and outside of contemporary

academic circles tend to take the State *for granted*. The State is taken as the unquestionable point of departure for modes of theorising that, in effect, evade deeper critical engagement with complexities involved. In other words, the tendency is to think of the State as *always already there* and to represent it thereafter, as if the State itself is an objective reality existing prior to practices of its representation and reification. Jens Bartelson further confirms my point:

‘The phenomenon of statism reflects a basic ambivalence concerning the question of authority which prevails in modern political discourse. On the one hand, modern political discourse ceaselessly questions the form and content of authority, its legitimacy and proper boundaries. On the other, modern political discourse makes questions about the ultimate foundations of authority difficult to ask, let alone answer. So while the state is usually thought to be *the* [(emphasis original)] institutional expression of political authority, *there is a strong tendency to take its presence for granted*, while its actual manifestations in political theory and practice are criticized from a variety of ideological viewpoints’
(Bartelson 2001: 3; my emphasis)

Cliché it may be, but there is indeed quite a bit staked on the question of whether to take the State for granted, as an object with ontological qualities of its own and as an existent preceding acts of its reification, or not. To start with, at stake is the reality itself: many concepts surrounding the concept of the State would appear meaningless and the structure of the current reality

would crumble. The interpretation of political reality would be radically different if not for the assumed presence of the State. Furthermore, there is a major question of ethics and justifications that is intimately tied up with the notion of the presence of the State: quintessentially same *in-itself* practice can be treated differently, depending whether we view it through the prism of State-sovereignty or not. Last but not least, it involves ultimately micro-political issues of self-interpretation and self-identification and the question of how much responsibility a subject wishes to keep on himself/herself on one hand, and how much of that bad faith needs to be swept under the carpet of the abstract notions such as “the State”.

* * *

Dealing With the Problem

Anarchism, despite being among those theories that has, as it will be argued, unwillingly assisted State-reification, also has an interesting element running throughout its discourse: a refusal to accept authority *as a matter of principle*. Precisely because of this point, anarchist arguments are at odds with the *Statist discourses*. I owe the concept of ‘Statist discourse’ to Jens Bartelson who defines it as *a discourse that presupposes the State and that would not make sense in its absence* (Bartelson 2001: 182, 7). In Bartelson’s analysis most of modern political discourse, including and especially IR, is statist. It is this ontological

standpoint of anarchist rejection of authority/sovereignty that both has been the logical basis for various accusations of inconsistencies against anarchist theories, and is the interesting puzzle that forms the departing point for this investigation. Why such a radical attitude? And how can it help us understand the State and State reification? It has been the basic classical anarchist thesis that the state exerts its control by power that is beyond the economic and materialist analyses. Furthermore, it has been an anarchist thesis that statism holds the same ontological dynamics as religion, and that this “religious” and “intellectual” power of the State is what supersedes economical, material and physical power of the State (Malatesta 1995). As Agamben has put it, the disregard of this factor ‘...is the reef on which the revolutions of our century have been shipwrecked’ (Agamben 1995:12).

Some versions of anarchism, like for instance that of Mikhail Bakunin, arrive at the standpoint outlined above by initial separation between the State and society, a rejection of Social Contract theory and a subsequent argument that the basis for post-Enlightenment sovereignty is still marked by inherently theological dynamics (Bakunin 1871, 1989, esp.1876, 1990, 1989c). As will be demonstrated in subsequent dedicated chapters, this point is also clearly present in Max Stirner’s work (1844): Stirner explores the spectral experience of the State at a deeper psychological level. So ideas and ideological power for anarchist theory are a priority. Unlike Marx, for example, who saw the State emerging as a result of agrarian mode of production and generally as an epiphenomena of the given mode of production, many classical anarchists had alternative narratives regarding the origins and the essence of the State,

which were later repeated by post-structuralist protagonists. One such conception is that it is a mode of domination through ideas: domination, violence and oppression pre-existed those practices that interpreted, theorised, logicalised and presented them as “necessary”, “natural” or “normal” phenomena. Whether it is Jean Bodin’s theory of God-given sovereignty (Bodin 1967), or the classical Social Contract theory, or yet the systematic representational and discursive practices in everyday life, these are a set of theoretical practices that constitute the State by adding a prism of sovereignty and legality through which one looks at the same political phenomena. This way of looking at the State is almost commonsensical among many anarchists such as Kropotkin, Bookchin, Malatesta and Stirner, and is further articulated in Deleuze’s concept of ‘overcoding of a society’ (Deleuze 1999). This is a view which is only possible if the State as such is not taken for granted. A branch of anarchism that David Miller dubbed ‘Philosophical Anarchism’ (Miller 1984), more than any other renditions of anarchist thought, is marked by this very rejection of authority *as a matter of principle*, rather than as a logical conclusion. This point suggests that anarchism rests on an *ontological* foundation that is radically different from those of Statist discourses. By exploring and unpacking this philosophical anarchistic rejection of authority and state-sovereignty as a matter of principle, the thesis will be able to demonstrate an alternative to the ontology of ‘statist discourses’ and will equip us with a *working basis* for mapping out the problem of State-reification. Before I proceed, some further elaboration is needed regarding exactly how is the exploration in this direction useful for the purpose of this thesis.

Abrams made a significant observation for our attempts to study the State:

‘If there is indeed a hidden reality of political power a first step toward discovering it might be a *resolute refusal* to accept the legitimating account of it that political theorists and political actors so invitingly and ubiquitously hold out to us – that is, the idea that it is ‘the state’ ‘ (Abrams 1988: 64; my emphasis)

In other words, what Abrams is asking for is a political philosophy that would adopt a departing point whereby the authority is not taken for granted. Only having adopted such a radical standpoint may one be able, according to Abrams’ research, to uncover the nature of State’s existence and subsequently reflect on political phenomena critically. More recently, John Hoffman has argued that divorcing sovereignty from the State may halt the mutually constructive, though inherently absurd, relationship between the two concepts in a way that may open up the possibility of post-statism (Hoffman 1997). It is precisely because of the fact that the refusal to take the State, authority and sovereignty for granted runs throughout philosophical anarchist thought (Thoreau 1849; Zerzan 1988), that anarchism may equip us with a working basis in addressing the problem of State-reification.

What Abrams was asking is not entirely original. The concern was already there with the advent of Marxist inspired critical theory. As Hoffman records,

‘...for at least two decades since the Second World War, the state itself became a highly contested term. In the 1950s and 1960s a

whole range of theorists – from behaviouralists to linguistic philosophers, from radical democrats to pluralists – all contended that the state represented a problematic term within political theory. The state was linked to sovereignty, and the view was taken that political theory should dispense with the conceptual services of *both* (Hoffman 1997:11; emphasis original).

Yet such a conceptual move was not as easy as it may have seemed at the time. In fact, the aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that the complexity involved is more far reaching than a logical manoeuvres can achieve. As Abrams comments on the Marxist attempts to dispense the State as a theoretical category,

‘[t]he most remarkable feature of recent Marxist discussions of the State is the way authors have both perceived the non-entity of the State and failed to cling to the logic of that perception. There seem to be compelling reasons within Marxism for both recognising that the State does not exist as a real entity, that it is at best an ‘abstract-formal’ object..., and for nevertheless discussing the politics of capitalist societies as though the State was indeed a thing and did ‘as such, exist’. (Abrams 1988: 69)

Abrams has reminded us that as far as the debates surrounding the concept of the State are concerned, we are still back at square one, and this is precisely what Michel Foucault’s vital, though by now clichéd, remark is all about:

‘We need to cut off the King’s head: *in political theory*... that has *still* to be done. ...We need... *a political philosophy that isn’t erected around the problem of sovereignty*’ (Foucault 1980: 121; my emphases).

That the monarch’s decapitation is, before anything, a *theoretical* difficulty and a matter of discursive practice, is Foucault’s stipulation that political and IR scholars tend to overlook. It is a matter of working toward a way of theorising that would help us look at the world without repeating the dangers of the statist discourses and re-constituting the State. Why is this important? Because, as Bartelson claims, to take the State’s presence for granted and to theorise through the medium of the concept of the State, already *constitutes* the State and the sovereign authority of the State, which in turn means that any subsequent critical engagement with the State itself will only lead to a stalemate (Bartelson 2001: 1-29). For purposes of IR and politics it means adopting a view of the political authority of the State that is not based on the presupposition of the presence of the State – a view that is not only non-State-centric, but also one that does not feature the constitutive usage of the concept of the ‘State’ at all.¹⁰

Reading through conclusions of Foucault’s genealogical studies on attitudes towards madness and crime, and his magnum opus on *The Order of Things*, one is able to see that Foucault was asking for something indeed very simple: a body of ethical theory that would be *practice-specific* rather than morally-centred and morally-predetermined by presuppositions of conceptual predicates. Thus, it is as if Foucault instructed the future theorists to work toward ‘a

¹⁰ This is also why this is a study of State reification and not a study of the State.

political philosophy that is not erected around the problem of sovereignty’, since as he once admitted, theories of the State for him were ‘the indigestible meal’ (Bartelson 2001: 28). I, on my part, take Foucault’s comment regarding King’s decapitation, as homework. If we need to cut off the King’s head in political theory, if we need a political philosophy that is not erected around the problem of sovereignty, then we need a working basis that rejects political authority as a matter of its ontological foundation and departing point. In simplest words it means stripping State from its sovereignty and then evaluating the presence of the State in a non-metaphysical manner; that is to say, instead of “what is the State?”, raising a more profound question of how does the sign of “the State” produce the convincing effect of sovereign presence and a sense of order? That is why for this purpose I see no better place to start the investigation than to consult the political thought of anarchism and philosophical anarchism in particular. I will demonstrate that classical anarchism partly does fulfil this task in the way that it rejects the social contract and presents alternative narratives (such as Bakunin’s theory of *Tacit Contract*), in a way that it approaches the State and in a way that it treats sovereignty, to mention just a few capacities of anarchism. That is why, it will be argued, an anarchist philosophical system, despite its limitations, *can* provide us with a working basis toward a political philosophy that is not erected around the problem of sovereignty.

It is true that none of the anarchists thus far have claimed that there is no State as we know it; in fact, to various anarchist ideologues, those who defined anarchism and set the criteria as to what being an ‘anarchist’ implies,

such a claim may, at first instance, appear as non-anarchist at all. Anarchists do provide an interesting theory as to how the State evolved and how it operates and to which ends, however they seem suspiciously silent about defining the State, and where there are attempts at a novel definitions, they are often presented in a metaphorical way. Anarchist theorists treat the State as an unsettled and abstract concept. They always mention the State as a “blurry” entity, the boundaries of which are hardly clear. Take for instance the working definition by Murray Bookchin, a prominent twentieth century green anarchist thinker,

"The State is a hybridization of political with social institutions, of coercive with distributive functions, of highly punitive with regulatory procedures, and finally of class with administrative needs (Bookchin 1982: 124).

Here Bookchin starts with a view of the State being a constellation of institutions only to go on and blur it even further. Ultimately, for Bookchin the State is not merely a constellation of bureaucratic and coercive institutions, but *a state of mind*, ‘an instilled mentality for ordering reality’ (Bookchin 1982: 94) – similar to Foucauldian notion of *governmentality* (to be discussed in chapter six). This view of the State is not peculiar to Bookchin only, but resonates in one rendition or another throughout many anarchist works. It is this ontological basis of anarchism of not taking the State for granted that is valuable to this thesis. This understanding of the State as an ‘abstract concept’ – concept that evades definitions, is not a drawback for anarchism, but the point of my departure. That is why the next chapter will be dedicated to classical and philosophical anarchism.

It must be noted that anarchism is far from a monolithic body of thought and that there is a great diversity within it. As Perlin once suggested '[t]here are perhaps as many anarchisms as there are anarchists' (Perlin 1979:v). There are, however, some lines of thinking that are present in most anarchist arguments, which can be plausibly termed as 'the anarchist tradition' or 'the discourse of anarchism'. The refusal to accept authority as a matter of principle throughout the anarchist tradition, is more than just an attitude and a code. In fact, this attitude forms an ontological basis for anarchist sensibility of ethics and political reality. Because of this, I will treat anarchism not so much as an ideology or a theory, but as a *philosophical system* in its own right – a system with its own ontology.

One of the thinkers within the tradition of philosophical anarchism, namely Max Stirner, will deserve more attention than others. Stirner will provide us with premises that will sharpen the working basis for the rest of the enquiry. Stirner will also form the bridge to various post-modern thinkers such as Foucault, Deleuze and Baudrillard, and Situationists such as Guy Debord.

Max Stirner was a thinker in first half of nineteenth century who demonstrated that ideas themselves, and to be more precise mode of thinking and identities, can be a form of domination in a way that they subjectify the being to the empty sign. In his main work, *The Ego and Its Own*, he formed a critique of metaphysics and initiated the first psychoanalytic mode of inquiry, which outlined *how* ideas come to possess and oppress people, or to put it in

Foucault's famous formulation in the foreword to *Anti-Oedipus*, how we willingly participate in our own domination. Stirner's work came as a critical response to Feuerbach's anthropocentrism, which sought to reject God and to place "Man" in the centre of the ethical and philosophical universe. Stirner has argued that humanism and anthropocentrism leads to the same oppressive problem of essentialism and alienation as the idea of God, because now it superimposes the infinite and metaphysical model of the perfect cleric, perfect citizen, perfect man – something that a finite man can never fulfil. Metaphysics of something that is not fulfilled, something that is still missing becomes the *drive* and the *impetus*. Thus, a subject finds himself in a condition of *permanent* alienating separation with the essentialist ideal of what one *ought* to be. In Stirner's psychoanalytic model the subject spends an entire life trying to fulfil this constructed essence, though without success. In effect, he ends up in ontological self-reduction and the reification of the sublime spectre. For Stirner this drive of *becoming* and *fulfilling* the higher Sacred-metaphysical essence is constitutive of modern identities. Thus, in Stirner's work we find an outline of the disciplinary micro-political mechanism that in effect works at the process of State-reification. As Stirner writes,

‘With ghosts we arrive in the spirit-realm, in the realm of *essences*.

‘What haunts the universe, and has its occult, ‘incomprehensible’ being there, is precisely the mysterious spook that we call highest essence. And to get to the bottom of this *spook*, to comprehend it, to discover *reality* in it (to prove ‘the existence of God’) – this task men set to themselves for thousands of years; with the horrible impossibility, the endless Danaid-labour, of transforming the

spook into a non-spook, the unreal into something real, the *spirit* into an entire and *corporeal* person – with this they tormented themselves to death. Behind the existing world they sought the ‘thing in itself’, the essence; behind the *thing* they sought the *un-thing*’ (Stirner 2000:40).

In Stirner’s psychoanalytic model the subject is diverted from its own existence, and instead is preoccupied with illusional ends and the existence of the spook. Thus, the subject is systematically reminded of unfulfillment and unfulfilled “prophesy” of becoming. Consciousness of this constant imperfection of the self is alienating and leads the self to search for and find a false self-perfection in reification of the higher sign that presents itself as a spectre, as if it was always there. Thus one reduces himself into a subordinate ghostly being, and creates and elevates the as-if real being out of the nothingness of the ghost. The above is only a brief description of Stirner’s psychoanalytic model and a more elaborated discussion will take place in chapters three and four. Stirner’s work helps us understand not only the psychological aspects of State-reification, but also how ideologies work and how the social machinery is fuelled in societies erected around the sign of the State.

The focus on Stirner’s work leads us to deeper questions regarding sovereignty, politics of the Self, dynamics of difference and repetition, states of ordinarily and states of exception, a society entirely predicated and constituted by the sign, and so forth. Stirner puts the thesis on a trail which is

later explores the problem in greater depth. Chapter four, will be dedicated to exploring sovereignty, though still in Stirnerian vein. Here the argument will be enriched an analysis of the relationship between sovereignty and sacredness and its role in State reification.

It is important to bear in mind that Stirner did not argue that the State as such does not exist. Nevertheless, he demonstrated that its power is not as centralised as it was traditionally perceived (which is an important step in this discussion), and that State's existence is supported by a increasingly dispersed omnipresent legitimating discourse, the 'fixed idea', which unifies and functions in the same pattern as any other ideology. It is this micro-political legitimating discourse that must be confronted first in attempts to do away with the State.¹¹ Thus, the State, it will be argued, overcodes and saturates the Social fabric to an extent that the classic anarchist dichotomy between the State and Society is no longer relevant: the society and the State are now one to an extent that it is hard to pinpoint where the State actually is, and an effective resistance cannot spring from the social. This is what Foucault referred to as 'the end of sovereignty' (Foucault 1991), a process that was noticed by classical critical thinkers like Herbert Marcuse (1964) and is repeatedly being suggested by investigations in governmentality (Foucault 1991; Dean 1999). At that point classical anarchism can go no further, for it relies on defending the social from the Statist, and the social can, by now, be regarded as the lost ground. So what happens next? This is where Guy

¹¹ Individual or the Ego, for Stirner, is not an actuality, but only a possibility – a possibility because the first revolution must be the revolution in the politics of the Self. It must me a rebellion against the Statist identity. Thus, the Individual for Stirner is the site where an outside to the totality of the State may be forged.

Debord's concept of the *Spectacle* and the *Society of the Spectacle* can help. Chapter five will, therefore, discuss Guy Debord's key works.

With the legacy of the Situationist International and particularly with works of Guy Debord, we have a whole new way of looking at State-reification in a non-transcendentalist manner. The seminal observation to Debord's theory of the spectacle is that 'everything that was lived directly has moved into a representation' (Debord 1966:1). The symbol of the State is no longer fixed, but now animated. What we are looking at is not the representation of, but at the image of the State that is experienced as State's presence. The location of one's being and self-interpretation as a political subject gains a whole new dimension – a passive *observer*, a mute subject to the Spectacle's simulacral monologue about itself. Reality is constructed not as a result of talking about it or writing about it, but by a fictional image that gains its convincing power of existence by being *animated* and by being consumed as *in itself*. With the help of Debord we will be able to demonstrate that State reification and State fetishism are intricately related with transformations of in commodity fetishism in the way that the image is consumed for the object, while the object is purposefully cut off from its history, context, factors that produce and present it and the class interests that create those factors. Reality has become images, while the real behind the images is no longer relevant. There is no longer any necessity for imaginative process of reification – the Image is already there, and it simulates the realness of its being as a Living being, by *Animation*. Thus there is a new, would-be perverted, theory of Being applicable within the confines of the society of the spectacle – only that

which appears at the spotlight of the spectacle exists. Thus we have a whole new dimension to the problem that tormented Stirner, namely the fact that the Spectre gains the highest anthropomorphised existence, while the existent corporeal Self is reduced to a ghostly existence.

The important aspect of Debord's theory is its non-transcendentalist character: the spectacle is all there is; it is the reality because there is no outside to it. A situational discourse that presents itself outside the spectacle's spotlight is therefore rejected, since it does not make sense within the spectacle.

With Debord's insights Foucault's suggestion that the spectacle was a temporary phase in the development of the carceral society (Foucault 1975: 293-308) is challenged. Spectacularisation of practice and symbolic signification, it will be argued, are still integral and *key* elements of the governing – to such extent that the entirety of the State is now composed of it.

Stirner and Debord bring us to a point where the Spectacular State itself is revealed. This will be outlined in chapter six following Debord's insights and the insights of one of his followers, Jean Baudrillard. There is no State, but only the presence of its animated appearances, which convincingly simulates the existence of the State. Since there is no outside of the Spectacle/Simulacrum, reification, to put it in Debord's words is 'the choice already made'. We can no longer claim that people create it themselves in

their own imagination, but that it is created and presented as a living being by a spectacular order, to which there is no outside. Here everything that appears as a representation exists. It is now a Postmodern Political Condition where anything goes: the signifieds are no longer stable or essential, and the signifiers are infinitely substitutable. This brings us to a point where inversion or 'subversion of the spectacle' is possible: it is just as easy to say that there is no State, as it is to say that there is a State. The problem of State-reification is not a logical problem to which one can find logical solutions. It is played out as a multitude of psychological rituals and mind-games that one is systematically subjected to. As Agamben has put it,

‘...the dissolution of the ban, like the cutting of the Gordian knot, resembles less the solution of a logical or mathematical problem than the solution of an enigma. Here the metaphysical aporia shows its political nature’ (Agamben 1995: 48).

Toward the end of chapter six it becomes evident that the Spectacular State is the predicate node that systemises phenomena into a continuum of logicalised and justified experiences. The new function of the State-sign, thus, is to help the society of the spectacle to explain itself to itself. It is a way for the society to explain its genesis to itself against that which is always already there. This presence, it will be argued, is successfully simulated by the Spectacular State.

Without the State as a sign the political spectacle would not make sense, existing political reality would crumble, relationships between political concepts would disappear and many political concepts would no longer make

sense, which in turn means that one will have to start to look for new ways to cope with freedom, choice, political responsibility, and find new ways of making sense of phenomena and human finitude, without a resort to metaphysics of categories, and only with a resort to existential ontology.

The next chapter will be investigating the resources of the classical and philosophical anarchism in search of a working basis and potential answers to the problem of State reification. Chapter three will be dedicated to an exegesis of Max Stirner's work and his psychoanalytic framework. Chapter four will explore the sovereignty/sacredness link and the alienating dynamics of theological politics. Following that Debord's work outline of the society of the spectacle will help us in exploring the relationship between State reification and commodity fetishism in modern societies. That will be followed with the chapter six where a converging discussion with regards to the recurrent aporias associated with the existence of the State will be discussed, thus drawing the necessary conclusions for the problem of State reification.

CHAPTER 2

Classical Anarchism on Authority and State

The previous chapter outlined the basic problem of State reification. It was argued that in order to address that problem we need a point of departure that does not take the State for granted. In addition, it was argued that the anarchist tradition could offer us a potential working basis for addressing that problem. This chapter examines some of anarchist thought and then evaluates its significance for the purposes of this thesis. Firstly I look at anarchism as set against the timeline of its evolution. It is argued that anarchism at its basic level is the reverse image of the logic of Statist discourses. Then I look at the structure of classical anarchist arguments and argue that the categories of the “Natural” and “human nature” are problematic (it is a limitation of classical anarchism that will need to be overcome later on in the thesis). Once that is done, the anarchist rejection of Social Contract leads to with an alternative theory of the State. An investigation of philosophical anarchism then takes place, through brief exegeses of William Godwin, Henry Thoreau and Robert Paul Wolff, followed by a brief commentary on philosophical anarchism. It will be argued that the anti-authoritarianism of anarchism, in not taking the State for granted, can help us look at the State without the prism of sovereign authority. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the achievements and limitations of classical and philosophical anarchism, thus highlighting the problem of the autonomous individual and power, which paves the way for the succeeding chapter.

What is Anarchism?

The first few lines or even the entire first paragraph from Kropotkin's article written for the Encyclopaedia Britannica in 1905 and 1910 are the most common source for the definition of anarchism to this day:

"ANARCHISM (from the Greek *an-* and *archē*, contrary to authority), the name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government – harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilised being. In a society developed on these lines, the voluntary associations which already now begin to cover all the fields of human activity would take a still greater extension so as to substitute themselves for the State in all its functions. They would represent an interwoven network, composed of an infinite variety of groups and federations of all sizes and degrees, local, regional, national and international temporary or more or less permanent - for all possible purposes... and, on the other side, for the satisfaction of an ever-increasing number of scientific, artistic, literary and sociable needs. Moreover, such a society would represent from an ever-changing

adjustment and readjustment of equilibrium between the multitudes of forces and influences, and this adjustment would be the easier to obtain as none of the forces would enjoy a special protection from the state.

If... society were organised on these principles man would not be limited in the free exercise of his powers in productive work by a capitalist monopoly, maintained by the State; nor would he be limited in the exercise of his will by a fear of punishment, or by obedience toward individuals or *metaphysical entities*, which both lead to depression of initiative and servility of mind" (Kropotkin 1993:7; my emphasis).

This definition is sufficient for anyone who is interested in anarchist ideology, particularly in anarcho-communism. It tells us that anarchism is name of a 'theory of life and conduct' in a society rid of the obligation to obey 'metaphysical entities'. However, there is a lot more to the story of anarchism than this.

When attempting to introduce and outline anarchism, almost all scholars come across the same set of difficulties (see Miller 1984: 2-4). One difficulty is tracing the origins of anarchism. The other difficulty is understanding what anarchism is in itself: whether it is an attitude, an ideology, a movement, a political philosophy, an analytical theory, a way of life with its own level of consciousness and ethical codes, a constellation of political theories with a lowest common denominator, or whether it is something else. Simultaneously with the second difficulty there is yet another intricacy of having to define

anarchism – to provide a brief outline of anarchism that would be sufficient for future reference. It is also worth mentioning that anarchism is an amorphous political thought with many branches and schools,¹ and this factor further contributes to these difficulties.

The above are just a few of the initial problems associated with making sense of anarchism. One way of bypassing these difficulties is to treat anarchism as an ideology. In that way one would easily be able to pinpoint the origins of anarchism in late-nineteenth century Europe, read the key texts by Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin, remind ourselves of the anarchist revolutions in Spain, Ukraine and Russia, and claim to have told the entire story of anarchism, the short life of which ends around 1936 (see Vincent 1995). Such a simplistic narrative of anarchism might save us a great deal of delving into the often-messy theoretical, analytical and historical dimensions of anarchism. However, the view that the anarchists are an extinct species whose claims made sense and found political purchase only in the context of the crescendo of revolutionary upheavals of industrialising Europe is misleading. An equally misleading view of European anarchism is that it was a radically anti-Statist branch of Marxism with no theory of its own (See Miller 1984); as well as the view that figures like William Godwin and Mikhail Bakunin suffice to provide a basic reading of this body of thought. As Clark and Woodcock argue one must guard against simplicity when discussing the topic (Woodcock 1962:7; Clark 1978:4). In fact,

¹ To name just a few, there are anarcho-individualism, mutualism, anarcho-gradualism, collectivist anarchism, anarcho-communism, anarcho-syndicalism, unionism, platformism, green-anarchism(s), anarcho-feminism(s), Tolstoyanism or anarcho-pacifism and many more. It is also worth remembering that not all anarchists are left-wingers. On the other end of political horseshoe there is also anarcho-capitalism, which advocates minimal government (see esp. Nozick 1974). This line of thought was particularly influential in forming the Libertarian Party in the USA. The interests of this thesis, however, are undoubtedly with the left-wing progressive and anti-capitalist anarchism.

many conclusions that tend to sweep anarchism as naïve utopianism, Clark argued, originate precisely from an oversimplified understanding of anarchism and of the technical terms involved in the discussion (Clark 1978:4-6). Moreover, a simplified outline of anarchism as an ideology would hardly yield anything of use for a thesis that is concerned with the problem of State reification.

The difficulties and complexities involved in outlining anarchism, however, already suggest pointers for understanding what we are dealing with. When Miller was faced with the difficulty of making sense of anarchist ideology, he resorted to something that would seem a shortcut: ‘We must face the possibility that anarchism is not really *an* ideology, but rather the point of intersection of several ideologies’ (Miller 1984:3; emphasis original). There is of course a lot more to anarchism than its ideology or, to be more precise – ideologies; it can also be seen as the crossroad between many theories, analytical frameworks and political philosophies. I would suggest that a better conception of anarchism, and one that would help us understand it to a greater extent, is not as merely a body of thought or only a political philosophical tradition, but rather as a *political philosophical system* with its own ontology, concepts, analytical models and categories, tables of values and ethics, all of which are radically distinct from and contrasting to the political philosophical system of Statist discourses.

Anarchism seems to be a constantly developing and self-refining tradition that finds historically specific expressions. It would, therefore, be most appropriate to frame the brief introduction to anarchism in parallel to its history, so as to

place it in the right context. Since anarchism is not a monolithic body of thought, this method will help us distil not a “pure”, “unified” or “authentic” version of anarchism², but that element of anarchism, “philosophical anarchism”, which runs throughout its history and which is most valuable for addressing the problem at hand.

Indeed, anarchism is neither a new phenomenon nor, unlike liberalism and Marxism, a young political doctrine. It is impossible to understand anarchism outside its history, which goes as deep as the roots of community and philosophy itself, and is as old as the idea of governance. We can already see an anti-authoritarian current in the ancient philosophical dichotomisation between the *nomos* (man-made laws and conventions) and *physis* (natural law), an opposition which was central to pre-Socratic philosophising, and which still reverberates in contemporary philosophy (see especially Derrida 1992; Agamben 1995)³. In Kropotkin’s view this dichotomy remained inherent in all aspects of human evolution. In his *Modern Science and Anarchism* Kropotkin argued that ‘[f]rom all times two currents of thought and action have been in conflict in the midst of human societies.’ These are, on the one hand, the ‘mutual aid’ tendency, exemplified in tribal custom, village communities, medieval guilds, and in fact, all institutions ‘developed and worked out, not by legislation, but by the creative spirit of the masses’, and, on the other hand, the

² Gaus and Chapman have anticipated extracting something that could be termed as ‘authentic anarchism’ out of the range of diverse anarchist doctrines, theories and analyses presented in XIXth edition of *Nomos*, which was dedicated to anarchism (Gaus and Chapman 1978: xvii-xlv). Not surprisingly the attempt was more ambitious than successful.

³ Derrida starts out from the opposition between the *nomos* and the *physis* (p.8) and transforms this opposition into the distinction between *law* and *justice*, which informs the rest of his discussion. In the case of Agamben, the distinction between *nomos* and *physis* returns in the form of the distinction between *zōē* and *bios*.

authoritarian current, beginning with the ‘magi, shamans, wizards, rain-makers, oracles, and priests’ and continuing to include the recorders of laws and the ‘chiefs of military bands’. ‘It is evident that anarchy represents the two of these currents... We can therefore say that from all times there have been anarchists and statist.’ (quoted in Woodcock 1962:35-6)

The best exponents of the tradition that many commentators view as the earliest forms of western anarchist thought are the Epicureans, Stoics and Cynics (Marshall 1984:66-73). Furthermore, the Manichean tradition opposed attempts to create artificial order by means of authority and advocated the natural order of an organic society (Newman, S. 2001:8; Solomon, R. C. & Higgins, K. M. 1996: 122-3). Starting from 7-6th century BC, Taoists, especially Lao Tsu, advocated non-interference with the natural development of events (Miller 1984:3), and presented the earliest written body of philosophy that explicitly disagreed with any ‘artificial, contrived activity that interferes with natural and spontaneous development’ (quoted in Marshall, P. 1992: 55). The argument was that the natural law presents itself as a constant flux and un-comprehensible chaos, which reaches the extent of being an order in itself, while an artificial interference with that order results in its disruption and ever-aggravating disorder.⁴ In ancient Greek philosophies clear anti-authoritarian tendencies can be identified not only in the Cynic tradition of Diogenes, but also as early as the pre-Socratic works of Sophocles’s *Antigone* and Heraclitus’s *On Nature*. The latter argued that stability is merely a case of false appearances

⁴ There has been an extensive scholarship that had explored the relationship between anarchism as a political philosophy and Taoism. As Peter Marshall records the symposium on Taoism and Anarchism in *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 10 (1983), ‘the consensus of the contributors is that Taoism offers a workable form of anarchism’ (Marshall, P. 1992: 672).

and interpretation, and that world order is in a constant flux, which nothing ever could hope to stop; an interference that aims to tame this flux will result in destructive events.

Records of organised anti-authoritarian resistances are common in many societies at various periods. For instance, the earliest formation of Christian communities in first and second century Armenia were motivated especially by a highly anti-authoritarian sentiment (Kropotkin 1910:11; also Proriv 2004). Between the fifth and eleventh centuries, until the collapse of the fourth dynasty of kings-of-kings, we see the evolution of new waves of anti-authoritarianism in Armenia, as manifested in especially Borborit, Messalian, Pavlikian and Tondrakian movements, which resisted the feudals, monarchs, and monasteries for confiscating lands from the peasants, and imposing external laws, taxes and conscription on communes which had been free and self-governing for centuries.

For Michael Taylor ancient instances such as these as well as contemporary communitarian examples within developed States, such as Kibbutzim, are valuable historical examples that can teach us a lot more about concepts such as anarchy, community and the evolution of the modern State, than purely inductive and imaginative accounts such as the classical social contract theories of Plato, Hobbes and even Rousseau (Taylor 1982:33-38). As for anarchist theorists, examples such as these stand as an attestation that anarchism is not a phenomenon peculiar only to late-nineteenth century Europe, but is something that originates from and stands as an attestation to more *organic* and inherent

features of human nature, such as Bakunin's concept of the 'instinct to rebel', and of social laws (Kropotkin 1910:10). As Kropotkin has argued, 'Anarchism originated among people'; from the laws that had governed human evolution and human processes (quoted in Woodcock 1962: 35).

This exposition of ancient anarchistic and anti-authoritarian philosophies and movements could continue. So why concern oneself with the ancient renditions of anarchism? There are several important points to note. Firstly, I would like to accentuate the theme of *physis* (the law of Nature), which classical anarchist thought relies heavily upon, though sometimes in different versions; and which will be important for later analysis.

Secondly, a history of ideas confirms that anarchistic currents, thinking and philosophies are as old as the ideas of governance and authority, and older than the idea of the modern State. Partly from this observation Michael Bakunin deduced the idea of an 'instinct to revolt', which he believed to be an integral feature of human nature, and which he saw as the drive for human progress and for the inevitability of recurrence of increasingly refined anti-authoritarian resistances in future. It is also from this observation that thinkers like Kropotkin and Tolstoy saw anarchy as a mode of social relations inherent in social laws (Kropotkin 1910; Tolstoy 1990). Furthermore, if anarchism is older than what we know as the modern Westphalian State, this also suggests that anarchism, in order to be understood properly, is to be identified not with its dominant ideologies and its opposition to the modern State, but with the opposition to that which existed before the modern State, which the modern

State has inherited and made an effective use of – sovereign authority. It is precisely the *anti-authoritarian discourse* that runs through anarchism's history that stands as its basic and definitive feature. Ron Carrier goes behind the traditional understanding of anarchism by suggesting that 'anarchism should be understood as aiming at the abolition of all forms of domination' (Carrier 1993). Even though many contemporary commentators would view anarchism as being opposed primarily to the institution of the modern State, this discussion shows that a more appropriate understanding of anarchism is as an opposition to a series of exploitative, coercive, monopolistic and hierarchical social relationships *concealed* by Statist concepts like *authority*, *sovereignty* and *the State*. A discussion of what exactly *authority* entails for anarchists and why it is seen as being problematical, and how this is central for this thesis will take place during the discussion on philosophical anarchism.

Thirdly, we see that anarchism springs from an anti-authoritarian attitude. It does not have a unified central body of theory. It does not have a single authoritative theorist as is the case with Marxism. Instead, its theory is constantly evolving in order to address historically specific problems associated with sovereign authority.

It is now time to move on to the classical anarchist tradition as a mode of distinct politics as it emerged in western European political thought in the early socialist movement of the nineteenth century. The importance of this episode of anarchist history is that here we witness the development of theoretical and analytical arguments, rather than assertive comments and visions in the style of

the foundational political philosophies. Anarchist thinkers and activists argued and indeed continue to argue that it is necessary *and* possible to overthrow coercive and exploitative social relationships, and to replace them with non-hierarchical, self-managed, and cooperative social and economic forms. Anarchism thus gave new depth and a renewed vigour to the socialist struggle for the ideal of freedom.

The origins of European anarchism are often associated with the rise of the Libertarian tradition, which, of course, is an offspring of the Enlightenment (esp. Godwin, W. [1798] 1949, and Morris, W. 1891). While this view is not entirely wrong, still, what it does is peg anarchism's origin entirely to the Enlightenment's Libertarianism, thus omitting the preceding evolution of anarchism that was already in place on the one hand, and its *counter-Enlightenment* element on the other. It is worthwhile mentioning that near-anarchist (anti-authoritarian and communitarian) views were already at work in various groups like the Ranters, the Diggers and the Levellers in the English revolution (Marshall 1993:96-107) or in anti-modernist Razin and Pugachev uprisings in Russia, which did not carry a libertarian discourse. Furthermore, Robert Hollinger, while tracing the evolution of postmodernism, makes the following comment, which is valuable here for it mentions the other side of anarchism as well:

A movement known as the *counter-Enlightenment* arose at the beginning of the 19th century, first in German *romanticism* and in a variety of the movements including *existentialism* in philosophy, modernism in *literature* and the *arts*, and *anarchism* in politics... The

counter-Enlightenment defended religion⁵, traditions, customs, myths, and common experience and values against the Enlightenment attacks and in turn severely criticized the Enlightenment's emphasis on science, reason, secularisation, capitalism, and modern economic individualism (Holliger 1994:2-3; my emphasis).

Therefore, anarchism is initially an offspring of the Enlightenment's Libertarianism, while carrying some elements of the counter-Enlightenment movement as well. At the outset of the nineteenth century Libertarianism was gradually split in two: classical Liberalism on one hand, and *Libertarian Socialism* on the other: the former saw positive aspects to capitalism's development, and the latter was completely against it, but both were equally anti-authoritarian and anti-Statist. Libertarian Socialism is the old name for Anarchism, though some anarchists, like Chomsky, still use it.

Though classical anarchists in their arguments use Marx as their straw man, it was through the engagement with Marxism that much of modern anarchism's theoretical development took place. Thus despite its rich historical tradition, the engagement with Marxism gave the modern anarchist doctrine the specific

⁵ Anarchist approaches to religion are diverse, but always radical in either direction. While some anarchists attack only the institutionalised and centralised practice of religion, others totally reject religion and advocate absolute atheism. Other anarchists maintain that whichever religion is to be followed or whether to be followed at all, should be left up to individual choice and is of nobody's concern but of that particular individual. Others, build their anarchism entirely on Christian moral foundations. Some adopt a near-iconoclastic opposition to representation of God and maintain that God is beyond representation and understanding, thus drawing a distinction between God and Religion. Leo Tolstoy, for instance, advocated Christian values, though was critical of the religious institutions becoming the medium between the individual and the religion. In this view the oppressive role of the institutionalised religion comes through its inevitable exercises of political power through its influence on the people's views or through its alliance with the state machinery, which then determines, defines and licenses the logic of the superstructure. (see Tolstoy 1990; Bakunin 1998).

direction it has today. Alan Carter makes an interesting point: "...whereas many of Karl Marx's theoretical claims were offered as a response to anarchist thinkers (for example, Max Stirner and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon), some anarchists (in particular, the Russian Mikhail Alexandrovitch Bakunin) developed their view in opposition to Marx's" (Carter, A. 2000: 230).

It is worth recalling that the original rift between Marxism and Anarchism sprang out of the dispute over the question of the State in the revolutionary and then transformatory period. Marx's program was to facilitate the takeover of the means of production on behalf of the working class by taking over the state machinery and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. Then, according to Marx's strategy, this newly established proletarian State was supposed to dissolve itself over an unspecified period of time, thus leading to an egalitarian and non-authoritarian society.

Bakunin strongly objected to Marx since he viewed such a development as inevitably leading to a new form of oppression. This is an important point as it marks the initialisation of the earliest form of analytical anarchism (see Carter 2000). What Bakunin examined was the way in which the hierarchical power relations, which are inseparable from any form of modern State, inevitably crush the revolutionary purpose of those who take over the state machinery. The state in its totality, Bakunin deduced, was a mechanism that operates by the same fixed logic, which renders the question of the interests of those who are at its head rather irrelevant. Domination, oppression, marginalisation, wars and so

forth, Bakunin argued, are not the results of bourgeois ownership, but are inevitable outcomes of the State regardless of which class is in power.

This is why many anarchist thinkers (after Marx) repeatedly reject the possibility of a good, humane or rational State, something that many a Marxist and Critical theorist are still in search of.

Thus, the primary opposition of classical anarchists was to both the State and capitalism. Bakunin's famous words remind us of the backbone of anarchist critique of classical Marxian thought,

Freedom without Socialism is privilege and injustice, and Socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality' (in Maximoff 1953:269).

This is why long before the Bolshevik Revolution in the Russian Empire on the one hand, and the evolution of late-modern corporate capitalism in western societies on the other, anarchists insisted that both the State and Capitalism had to be abolished *simultaneously*. This abolition, in anarchist view, was to be complemented by a politics of voluntarily association, mutual aid, decentralization and communal directly-democratic self-governance.

Since the turn of the twentieth century and especially since the 1960s, the anarchist critique has widened into a more generalised condemnation of domination and hierarchy. This has made it possible to understand and challenge a variety of social relationships — such as patriarchy, racism, and the devastation of the planet's ecology, to mention a few — while confronting political and economic hierarchies. Given this, the ideal of a free society

expanded to include sexual liberation, cultural diversity, and ecological harmony, as well as directly democratic institutions.

Anarchism is not a static tradition: it is an on-going project that is constantly evolving. In the light of political changes it constantly finds new affirmations of its old claims, and sharpens its critique of the State, hierarchy, oppression, exploitation and domination. By the same token, anarchism enriches itself with new philosophical and political theories. For instance, it has benefited a lot from such developments as Existentialism and Critical Theory, and this thesis too is a work that starts from anarchism and brings in many poststructuralist or postmodernist insights. Anarchism's refusal of all forms of domination renders it historically flexible, politically comprehensive, and consistently critical — as evidenced by its resurgence in today's global-justice, anticapitalist movement. Still, anarchism has yet to acquire the rigor and complexity needed to comprehend and transform the present.

An-Archē and Anarkhós

There is one more aspect of anarchism's history, which, I believe, is not unrelated to understanding State reification, and which is why it warrants mentioning. It is not about the origins of anarchism, but about the origins of the word "anarchism".

“Anarchism” was not called thus until the nineteenth century when Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in 'dialogue with a philistine' in *What is Property?* (1840), proudly declared himself ‘*an anarchis*’ – a hitherto unheard word. That statement was intended as a subversive shock directed at the ancient Greek foundations of western political thought and at the commonsensicality of nineteenth century politics. That neologism was indeed taken as a shock for it bore immediate signification with what was the most dreaded and despised concept since Aristotle – *anarchy*, which at that time meant nothing more than the complete and ruthless chaos of the state of nature. Proudhon was famous for making seemingly shocking and paradoxical statements, which, when elaborated, made more sense than what other socialists had to offer.

Now, Proudhon’s statement is important for it takes us to the very origins of the term: not to late-nineteenth century Europe when anarchism was already a fully organised movement and ideology, but to ancient Greece. As was said earlier, Proudhon’s statement was intended as a shock: he brings out a cogent argument worthy of applause, and then intentionally names himself with this seemingly vile and abominable word. By using this hitherto unheard word (anarchist) with pride, he effectively plays out a subversive game that highlights the earliest assumptions of modern political thought, which are now taken for granted, questions them and, as a result *inverts* the established conceptual hierarchy.

So where does the word “anarchy” come from? The mainstream of ancient Greek thought was characterised by the conviction that justice and civilised life

is only possible within the confines of the State (*politeia*). Many concepts, like for instance ‘civil society’ (*politiké koinonía*), civilization (*polítizmos*), society (*politeia*)⁶, ‘citizenry’ (*politeuma*) and the very adjective ‘political’ (*politikos*), which are often taken in contemporary Statist political theory at face value, were etymologically formulated as an extension of that very conviction/assumption in such a manner that they would make little or no sense outside of the concept of the State (*politeia, kratos*). At the same time, a proper concept had to be formulated that would stand as the inferior, the opposite or, to use Derridean jargon – the Other, to the stasis of the State, and which would systematically stabilise and affirm the meaning of the privileged concept of the State. Thus the concept of ἀν ἀρχῆ (an-arkhē) and ἀναρχοσ (anarkhós).

An-archē stands for a condition and a way of life. *An-archē* is not ‘anarchy’; the word ‘anarchía’ (anarchy) comes in with its negative connotation much later in Modern Greek as a derivative of the wisdom expressed in the hierarchicalised dichotomy between *politeia* and *an-archē*. Though the traditional definition of anarchism draws on a more classical meaning of ‘archy’ (as in *monarchy* and *oligarchy*, meaning leader, chief, ruler, master and generally one who holds control and representation), thus implying that anarchism is of an implicitly anti-hierarchical disposition (Kropotkin 1910:7; Malatesta 1891), the authentic Greek meaning of ‘archē’ is *origin* and *beginning*. Therefore, *an-archē* originally meant a condition of existence without origin – without the very thing that, in Aristotelian tradition, separates a privileged politically qualified life of *nomos*

⁶ Note that while the opposition between the State and Society is central to classical anarchism, in Ancient Greek (katharevousa) there is no distinction between the two concepts: both concepts “State” and “Society” are expressed in the same word *politeia*. The word *krátos* (State) emerges later and is part of Modern Greek.

from a life of an apolitical animal in *physis*. The pre-Roman walls of Athens, for instance, were not only a defensive measure but also bore a symbolic signification of this very distinction: it was a way for the citizen to remind himself of the superiority of his own way of life. Thus, apart from signifying a condition of existence and a way of life⁷, *an-archē* was a word signifying the physical and conceptual space beyond, between and outside the States, where *nomos* (man-made laws and conventions) did not apply – a space void of the Statist conception of everything political.

With the same token we have the figure of *Anarkhos*, who, from the citizens' point of view, is not so much an individual, but rather more like a life-form of some inferior sort. *Anarkhos* would be a “person” who either would make a conscious choice not to live inside the polis or would be intentionally excluded. Though the latter is not practiced today and is actually prohibited by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 15, Clause 2), in ancient Athens dispossession of citizenship was regarded as the highest punishment, even higher than the death penalty, since it meant taking away the political aspect of life and thus de-grading the person into a life that is not worth living. Exclusions were quite rare, but when such decisions came through, they would be spectacularised as full-scale and ritualistic ceremonies. Aristotle referred to the *Anarchos*-s as ‘lawless dangerous beasts’ (quoted in Marshall 1993:66); ‘... free and equal individual, a character that had once been cast in Aristotelian

⁷ It is worth recalling that Kropotkin defined anarchism as the name given to a theory of life (Kropotkin 1993:7).

tradition as, quite literally, an idiot⁸, and an unpolitical being' (Walker 2001:27). Most of these people, however, would consciously choose to live in *an-archē* for they despised the elitist values and ethics of the city-life. These renegades and nomads would form their own communities of free and equal individuals and live their lives with little worry about what citizens and theorists had to say about them.

Therefore, what we find in the concepts of *an-archē* and *anarkhos* is not only the origins of anarchism, but also the origins of Statism, for latter does not make sense without the former. Both *an-archē* and *anarkhos* were, therefore, constructed concepts to help Statist city-dwellers to periodically interpret themselves and their way of life as somewhat superior, civilised, socially integrated and political – something to help find a false sense of pride and maybe even fetish. From the above discussion we also see the earliest instances of State-reification and the multitude of complex practices that it involves: we already see that as early as in ancient Greece the State was not a given thing, but something to be periodically created, interpreted, stabilised and re-affirmed. It is at the origins of the conceptualisation of what “anarchy” is, that it is suggested that State-reification is a deeply micro-political matter of self-justification, ritualistic spectacularised practices such as exclusion, symbolic significations such as the walls of Athens, and stabilising interpretative speculations (*theoria*) delineating the inside from the outside, the *nómos* from the

⁸ In ancient Greece *idiot* (idiotis), meaning “private person”, was a category for a city-dweller, who was wealthy enough to possess slaves and tools, but would refuse to share them at request of other citizens. This was seen as quite an anti-social behaviour, and thus the negative connotation. In addition, *idiotis* would be someone who would not be interested enough to attend or be invited to public debates. Though, *idiotis* is someone who would still be a citizen the word reflects an anti-social and apolitical side of the character.

physis, the superior Statist life from inferior an-archic life; because, as it will be argued later in this thesis, outside of these *theoria*-s there is no State.

The next section will be an exposition of the classical anarchist theory. I will then move on to philosophical anarchism. After that is done, I will look at the achievements, implications and importance of anarchist theory for this thesis on the one hand, and its possible limitations on the other, which will lead on to the next chapter.

Classical Anarchism and the Category of the Natural

Now that we have outlined the origins and evolution of anarchism and the word ‘anarchy’, let us turn to the examination of more specific anarchist arguments.

The traditional political philosophy of anarchism is associated with works of three central figures of anarchism: Michael Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin and Pier-Joseph Proudhon.⁹ There is, however, also Max Stirner, who is still seen as quite a controversial figure and who has been marginalized by anarchists due to quite unsophisticated readings of his work. In my thesis, however, Stirner is

⁹ There will not be an elaborated discussion on Proudhon in this thesis. He does offer a theory that could help in understanding the problem of State reification, though that would be radically different from the angle that this thesis adopts. Furthermore, Proudhon is a thinker significant enough to occupy a space of a whole separate thesis.

given more importance than other anarchist thinkers and therefore he is allocated a separate chapter, which follows this one¹⁰.

Just as any classical political philosophy, traditional anarchist methodology and arguments derive their rationale from a particular characterisation of human nature (Koch 1997:95-6). What follows for now is a brief exposition of how concepts like “natural order” and “human nature”, and the category of “natural” figure among the work of some of the classical anarchist thinkers.

William Godwin (1798),¹¹ who is known to be the earliest Western-European anarchist philosopher, had developed the thesis that marked the founding principle of anarchism. He stepped out of the confines of traditional political thinking that took the State for granted as an inevitability. He was the first to render the quest for the best *form* of the State as fruitless, and instead argued that the problems are not rooted in the form of the State, but in the very existence of the State in the first place.

Godwin further argued that the will to truth and justice are intrinsic to human nature. Thus, the progressive process, which is fuelled by a universal capacity to reason, would inevitably perfect human nature. When this ‘maturing’ of human nature has taken place, he argued, there would be no political space left for the

¹⁰ As it was said earlier and as it will become more and more clear during the development of the argument, this thesis can be best located at the margins of anarchism. We have embarked onto an examination of classical anarchist thought so as to identify its valuable insights relevant for later discussion, as well as to recognise its weaknesses so as to overcome them later in attempt to address the problem of State reification.

¹¹ Influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution, William Goodwin (known as the father of English anarchism) was ‘a singularly tough-minded utilitarian’ (Miller, 1984:18) writing “within the theoretical framework of individualism and rationalism associated with the eighteenth century Enlightenment” (Carter, A. 1971:1).

government. This argument operates within a philosophical doctrine of 'necessity', which holds that the occurrence of every event and the posture of every order bears a spatial and temporal necessity, and serves the purpose of some grand cause according to which the universe as a whole functions.

A similar, though not entirely the same, line of thought is present within the early American individualist anarchist tradition as expressed in the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1874) and Henry Thoreau (1937). Just as Godwin, Emerson's view was that "...the form of government, which prevails, is the expression of what cultivation exists in the population which permits it" (1874b: 237). He conceptualised history as a continuous progress that would culminate in the evolution of a political being that would not require enforced governance:

"Without hurry, without rest, the human spirit goes forth from the beginning to embody every faculty, every thought, every emotion, which belongs to it in appropriate events... Epoch after epoch, camp, kingdom, empire, republic, democracy, are merely the application of his manifold spirit to the manifold world" (1874a: 1).

The feature of the doctrine of 'necessity' is also expressed in Emerson's persuasion that "[t]o educate the wise man, the State exists; and with the appearance of the wise man, the State expires. The appearance of the character makes the state unnecessary. The wise man is the State" (1874b: 244).

Mikhail Bakunin too deduced his arguments from initial presuppositions regarding Natural Law and human nature. He believed that human nature is marked by three faculties: human animality, critical rationality and the "instinct

to rebel”, which operate within the context of free will and Natural Law (Bakunin 1998:12). The Social Laws, which Bakunin’s collectivism is based upon, are a product of Natural Law: As Bakunin wrote, the laws of society “should not be confused with political and juridical laws proclaimed by some legislative power, laws that are supposed to be the logical sequelae of the first contract consciously formed by men” (Bakunin in Dolgoff 1980:129). The definitive features of human nature, argued Bakunin, incorporate an aspiration toward the absolute ideal of ‘freedom’ and a faculty that he baptised as the “instinct to revolt” or “desire to rebel”, which he saw being suppressed and degenerated by forces of the State and capitalism. However, since Bakunin, who once called himself ‘a fanatical lover of freedom’ (Bakunin 1971:1), was confident that freedom was nothing but an absolute ideal, he believed that the instinct to rebel could never be entirely eradicated by the State. As Rudolf de Jong, drawing on Bakunin, recently remarked, ‘... if some selective virus killed off all the world’s anarchists tomorrow, as well as their ample literature, anarchism as an idea would re-emerge in every kind of society’ (Ward, C. 1996: 53). The instinct to revolt, Bakunin argued, is an inseparable feature of human nature and the driving force of any possible insurrection, while the love of the absolute ideal of freedom directs resistance and insurrection inevitably against the State. Through the outline of the process of suppression and degeneration of “the instinct to revolt”, Bakunin demonstrated the depoliticising effect that the State has on its subjects.

Peter Kropotkin, who was initially a geographer and an anthropologist, challenged Social Darwinism by observing that survival was enhanced not by

competition, but cooperation (Kropotkin 1972). 'Mutual Aid' was intrinsic to animals, Kropotkin argued, but more so to the human species, which is why, he maintained, humans evolved further than other inhabitants of the planet. He historically analysed social formations such as village communities and explained the rise of the modern State, which in Kropotkin's view became possible through the defacement of the organic perceptions of space, distance and time-cycles. This became possible by the double process of parting between time and space on one hand, and spatial and temporal compression on the other (Kropotkin [1896] 1997).¹² The consequence of this double process is a set of immense estrangements, the most powerful resolution to which becomes the State. 'Mutual Aid' is distorted and diminishes in its importance and scale of practice with the rise and increased activities of the institutions that aim at controlling and manipulating the social order, one of which is the State. This results in an erosion of people's sense of community and political being. Likewise, the sense of identity becomes fragmented and void of meaning, creating an empty ontological space, which is then swiftly filled by the State. People, then, start participating in and comprehending politics solely through the medium of the State. The State, thus, monopolises all social spaces, identities and perceptions. The imagination of all alternative social organisations becomes invariably framed by the State in such a way that a State or institutional hierarchy of some sort becomes an inseparable feature of alternative visions.

¹² An extension of this thought can also be found in Harvey's concept of "time-space compression" as a key factor in changes of social organisation (see Harvey, D. 1989: *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into The Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford : Basil Blackwell; also see Harvey, D. 2000: *Spaces of Hope*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), and Giddens' concept of 'time-space distanciation', which implies "the conditions under which time and space are organized so as to connect presence and absence" (see Giddens, A. 1991: *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity)

More recently, Chomsky's thesis on linguistics concluded that there must be something that could be termed 'human nature' because of innate mass schematisms, which enable a human child to learn a language. Chomsky further argues that this human nature is *creative* because of the ability of human child to construct a sentence from a primitive set of data and to use language in a creative way (Chomsky & Foucault 1974).

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon claimed that the idea of private property is not natural to the human condition (Proudhon 1966: 251). Furthermore, in Proudhon's work one witnesses again the logic that there is a negative correlation between the extent to which the society is enlightened and capable of rationalising on the one hand, and the need for oppressive state authority on the other.

These are examples of the earliest anarchist currents that believed in jettisoning government and the idea of the State through the power of reason, until Stirner first claimed that the idea of reason and an exposition of human nature were in themselves predicates from which the idea of the State was induced and continuously reproduced in such a manner that modes of domination become increasingly subtle. I will come back to Stirner's thought in more a focused discussion in the next chapter.

As has been shown most of the modernist tradition of anarchism rejects the view of human nature as a site where the causes of political problems could be found. In other words it takes notions of human nature and Natural Law for granted as a point of departure that is pure and uncontaminated by the

workings of power (Newman 2001:37-42), and constructs a series of structuralist theories thereafter. Most classical anarchist arguments start from the premise that human nature is benign and only appears wicked because of the political context within which it operates.¹³ Thus, we see that indeed many of the classical anarchist arguments are based on the idea of “Natural”. Herbert Read suggested that while Marxism is based on economics, Anarchism refers repeatedly to “nature” (Read, H. 1949). While this seems an obscure generalisation, it suggests one of the sources where the idea of “Laws of Nature” in classical anarchist discourses could be coming from. It is from this idea that the first principle of philosophical anarchism springs: no one individual has a *natural* right to impose his will on another. No human being has the right to command, think for and compel or coerce another human being without *proper* consent of the former to one action or another. Thus, domination is seen as un-Natural. Likewise, individuals are granted absolute freedom by *Laws* of Nature and therefore all forms of oppression and domination, and institutions and frameworks that are designed for oppression and coercive imposition of a will, are seen as *illegitimate*.

As it was argued earlier these notions of human nature and Natural Law are an extension of the classical philosophical concept of *physis*. Indeed in classical anarchism the reliance on a specific interpretation of *Natural Law*, a dangerously metaphysical concept, reaches the extent of being constitutive of the classical anarchist standpoint as well as of many of its analytical frameworks.

¹³ Post-structuralist Anarchist political thought rejects the assumption of innocence of the oppressed fostered by Castoriadis and the political philosophy of anarchism in general. May contends that such assumption “is not anarchist enough” (May, T. 1994, p. 43)

Subsequently, the specific view of the notion of *human nature* – another metaphysically and hermeneutically acute category, figures to an extent that it causes classical anarchism more vulnerability than analytical sharpness. Because of the seeming reliance of anarchist arguments on this essentialist notion its arguments can be and indeed have been easily refuted by a simplistic presupposition that the human nature is essentially evil. This then means going in circles over and over again with no productive outcome. Therefore, this generic “natural” element of anarchist discourse seems to be one of the limitations, which will be discussed in the final analysis, and which I hope to challenge in the course of this thesis. This challenge is necessary because there is more to anarchism than the seemingly naïve logic of its earliest thinkers, and also because this logic does not help capture the complexity involved in the broader problem of State reification. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the problem of analytical reliance on *physis* as the pure point of departure is not a limitation only of anarchism, as much as of the broader philosophical and theoretical enterprise within which classical anarchism gained its early theoretical categories.

Rejection of Social Contract theory as an explanandum

Another important feature that runs through various, though not all, anarchist theories is the outright rejection of the Social Contract as the explanandum for the evolution and founding of governments and States. Succinctly put, this is a theory that narrates the formation and justifies the existence of the States by

referring back to a hypothetical period in human history when men lived in a state of nature and came together to form a State for the purpose of safeguarding themselves from nature and in order to gain higher returns from collaborative and coordinated labour. Of course these contract theories are *not* homogeneous, and the Social Contract appears with more specific details, nuances and even contrasting differences among various thinkers like Hobbes (1996) and Rousseau (1762), but the basic models of the origins of society and the government run into discursive regularities of inductive theorising – similar to the logic outlined above.

Some anarchist commentators, who like to include almost every prominent western thinker within anarchist ranks, have gone as far as to include Rousseau as the first European anarchist. Rousseau might have seemed quite critical of the institution of government, but that does not make him an anarchist.

Let us look a little closer at the anarchist position on the theory of Social Contract. A few anarchist theorists have accepted the Social Contract theory as an explanation of the evolution of States, but not as a justification. This is the case because of the classical anarchist conviction that the States have no right to exist, and Miller brings in the old Augustinian adage, ‘Without justice, what are states but bands of robbers?’ (Miller 1984:5) This premise already highlights themes of authority and power that will be discussed after the section on philosophical anarchism. As far as the Social Contract theory is concerned, there is a general mistrust of this theory because what is at stake is not just a

hypothetical and fictional explanation of the formation of the States, but also a theoretical justification of their existence based on that fiction.

Miller suggests that the anarchist rejection of the Social Contract is primarily informed by the Lockean concern for the descendants of the persons who were party to the initial contract. After all why should the descendants of those persons who formed the alleged social contract be held responsible for what their forefathers agreed to? (Miller 1984:5-6). However, there is more to anarchist concerns over this theory.

For Stirner this rejection is even more immediate than it is for Locke, for in questioning the theory of Social Contract Stirner goes as far as to question the concept of contract *per se*: “why should one be held responsible for the blunder that he was fooled into before?” There are deeper issues of power and subjectivity which inform Stirner’s position and which will be discussed in the next chapter. But for now it is worth pointing out that in Stirner’s analysis the individual is not an autonomous indivisible self-conscious agent in the context of quantitative power relations that he is or can be conscious of, as is the assumption of Social Contract theories. For Stirner the subject is not immune to the subtle traps of power.

Most anarchists like Stirner, Bakunin and Kropotkin, however, would not accept the view that there was a contract in the first place. The anarchist who was most critical of this theory was Bakunin. Bakunin’s radical critique of Social Contract theory appears almost in every writing and speech where he gets

close to the theme of the foundation and formation of States (Bakunin 1980:102-47, esp. 129, 133; 1989a; 1989b). For example the lengthy introduction to his *Statism and Anarchy* is dedicated to examining the historical formations of each of the European states, just to demonstrate that there are always more complex and particular political issues involved than can be explained by a theory such as the Social Contract.

Bakunin rejected Social Contract theories both as the explanation of the evolution of modern societies and States, and as an ideal to help forge a future just society. As Bakunin wrote in his little known lecture “The Rise and Decline of the Bourgeoisie”,

In every Congress of the [International] Working-Men[’s Association] we have fought the individualists or false-brother socialists who say that society was founded by a free contract of originally free men and who claim, along with the moralists and bourgeois economists, that man can be free, that he can be a man, outside of society.

This theory revealed by J.-J. Rousseau – the most malevolent writer of the past century, the sophist who inspired all the bourgeois revolutionaries – betokens a complete ignorance of both nature and history. It is not in the past, nor even in the present, that we should seek the freedom of the masses. ... In the past there has never been a free contract. There has only been brutality, stupidity, injustice, and violence – and today still, you know only too well, this so-called free contract is a compact of hunger and of slavery for the masses,

and the exploitation of hunger for the minority who oppress and destroy us.

The theory of the free contract is just as false from the standpoint of nature. Man does not voluntarily create society, he is involuntarily born into it. He is above all a social animal. Only in society can he become a human being, that is, a thinking, speaking, loving, and wilful animal (Bakunin [1871] 1992:47).

Furthermore, Bakunin's rejection of Social Contract theory seems to be informed by his understanding of Statist logic. Despite the State law's (*nómos*) claim of representing and always working toward justice (*dikeê*), Bakunin saw the movement of the two directed in opposite directions. For *dikeê* one is innocent until proven guilty, while according to the logic of *nomós* and of the Social Contract one is always already guilty until proven innocent. For Bakunin it is the notion of original sin that animates this logic:

The State, then, like the Church, starts with the fundamental assumption that all men are essentially bad and that when left to their natural liberty they will tear one another apart and will offer the spectre of the most frightful anarchy wherein the strongest will kill or exploit the weaker ones (Bakunin 1953:144)

Since anarchists like Bakunin and Kropotkin see morality and rationality as emanating not from external sources and institutions, but as intrinsic to human nature, they place confidence in the sufficiency of the *physis* of social laws. Because of this view anarchists start with the fundamental assumption, and

proceed with a logic that moves in contrastingly opposing direction to that of the Social Contract theory's logic quoted above.

Bakunin saw the individual being involuntarily born into the sphere of Natural and Social Laws. These he argued were constitutive of men, but not of citizens. The Social sphere, as Bakunin saw it, was present in every aspect of human activities, just as the State was struggling to monopolise each of those activities. Thus, Nature and Society for Bakunin were intrinsically pure and to be defended from the State. For instance, we can see this in his remarks on language, which, Bakunin was confident, was the pure foundation of the Social sphere

...For thought is inseparable from speech; no one can think without words. Even if you are alone with yourself, perfectly isolated, you must use words to think. To be sure, you can have conceptions which represent things, but as soon as you want to consider something you must use words, for words alone determine thought, giving the character of thought to fleeting representations and instincts. *Thought hardly exists before speech...* These two forms of the same activity of the human brain are born together. Thought is therefore impossible without speech. But what is speech? It is communication. It is the *conversation* of one human individual with many other individuals. *Only through this conversation and in it can animalistic man transform himself into a human being*, that is, a thinking being. His individuality as a man, his freedom, is thus the product of the collectivity (Bakunin [1871] 1992:47; my emphases)

It is obvious that Bakunin takes words for granted without any analysis of the relationship between the signifier and signified, and without any suspicion that signifieds can be destabilised. Since text, for Bakunin, is pure and stable, then the Social sphere that it creates must be pure too. This view that informs the classical anarchist duality of “Society versus State” is problematic and it will be challenged in chapter 5. Nevertheless, it does not infringe the classical anarchist rejection of Social Contract theory and does indeed show where anarchists like Bakunin are coming from.

As a theoretical alternative to the notions of Social Contract and free contract Bakunin suggests a notion of the *Tacit Contract*. According to this theory not only were people made to remain silent at the point of the contract, but they were not aware what they were faced with. At that time, Bakunin argues, there was no Social for there was no language. Therefore, the Social Contract could not have been formed, for as soon as there was language the Social sphere, which would resist and reject authoritarianism, would be born. Tacit Contract is not so much a theory, but a notion – a counter-proposal for an alternative narrative to the Statist account of its own genesis. In discussing the Tacit Contract Bakunin claims that while there never was a contract, at some recent point in time its historical actuality was announced thus, in turn, constituting our knowledge of it (Bakunin 1980:102-47). As Bakunin writes,

A Tacit Contract! That is to say, a wordless and consequently a thoughtless and will-less contract! A revolting nonsense! An absurd fiction, and what is more a wicked fiction! An unworthy hoax! For it presupposes that *while I was in a state of not being able to will*, to think, to

speaks, I bound myself and my descendants – simply by reason of having let myself be victimized without any protest – into perpetual slavery (quoted in Newman 2001:43; my emphases).

Thus, we have the basic standpoint of classical anarchist rejection of Social Contract theory. This standpoint is vital for it will return in chapter six in my analysis of State reification, as an element of critique not of a theory outlined in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but of a discursive formation that operates as integral component of the spectacular State in upholding the continuum of everyday life. For now, the question that naturally springs to mind in the light of the rejection of Social Contract theory, is what do classical anarchists replace the Social Contract theory with? If the State did not originate from a contract, how did it originate?

Anarchist Theory of the State

The best way to understand the anarchist theory of the State is through its reversal of the Marxist conception. Anarchist thinkers have claimed the direct opposite of Marx, and particularly Engels', version of the theory of the State; this opposition seems to include every aspect and every theme surrounding the concept of the State.

For Marx and Engels the State is a derivative of social forces. It is an epiphenomenon of the capitalist mode of production and the economic power

of the bourgeois class (Newman 2001:25). Thus, in the Marxist view, the State springs from the social sphere, from bottom up – the same movement as in Social Contract theories. Similarly, for Lenin the existence of the State is the attestation to the actuality of Class antagonism; the State is ‘A *product* of the irreconcilability of Class antagonism’ (Lenin 1919; my emphasis). In the view of anarchists like Bakunin, the movement of power is the other way round. Anarchist analyses are from top down – from the State to society (Newman 2001:25; Carter 2000).

Of course Marxists see the State as an evil, an evil that must and will be destroyed eventually with its replacement with a commune-ist un-authoritarian society. However, the evil of the State in Marxist analysis is always *secondary* to the evil of Capitalism precisely because the State is viewed as a derivative of the bourgeois ownership of capital and means of production. Since the State is seen as a secondary problem springing from the originary problem of bourgeois ownership of capital and the means of production, it will wither away, they argue, after the ownership of capital and the State are in the hands of the proletariat. That is the basic logic of Marxist account of the State and it makes sense in the context of Marx’s analytical framework.

For anarchists, on the contrary, the State is seen to be as problematical as Capitalism. In fact, it is the State that constitutes the primary problem, and Capitalism is seen to be its derivative and therefore a secondary problem. In anarchist theories the State chooses and facilitates the mode of production by privileging those relations of production that would be best in benefiting State

power (Kropotkin 1910:7; Carter 2000). It is not the dominant class that rules through the State, but the State that rules through the dominant class. When the bourgeois class is destroyed the State will forge a new class to insure the perpetuation of its existence and continuation of hierarchies and domination. Thus, the State, according to anarchist theories, has its own logic, its own momentum and its own heading independent of the one who heads it (Newman 2001:26).

From this sharp difference in views we see a set of other opposing opinions. For Marx the modern State came out of the French Revolution and the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie (Newman 2001:26). For anarchists it came out of broader religious and cultural formations such as Reformation (Bakunin 1876), the dominance of the Roman law in European peninsula, the rise of feudal law and the alteration in perception of time cycles and community's space (Kropotkin [1896] 1997). The emphasis on religion is particularly important in anarchism. As Bakunin famously said, 'The State is the younger brother of the Church' (quoted in Cutler 1992:20). Bakunin, however, saw the influence of religion primarily in historical alliances of the Church and the State, which gave the notion of divine, or God-given, sovereignty to the rulers (Bakunin 1989b; 1998). Through works of diverse anarchist theorists one witnesses the view that it was precisely the evolution of this "divine" side of sovereign authority, whether attributed to monarchy or republic, that made it absolute and that led to the Modern State. As Bakunin writes,

'We are convinced that theology and politics are both closely related, stemming from the same origin and pursuing the same aim under

two different names; we are convinced that every State is a terrestrial Church, just as every Church with its Heaven – the adobe of the blessed and the immortal gods – is nothing but a celestial State’ (Bakunin 1953:143-4).

Stirner’s view of the role of religion in politics was more to do with spectral and religious experience and its psychological aspects in experiencing the “object” of State.

So why do these two schools of socialist thought have such opposing views regarding the State? In the first instance it seems that this is because of differing priorities: one places more emphasis on the ‘proletariat’ and the other is more concerned with a broader category of ‘society’. This is not the primary cause but it does have its impact: Marxism opposes the bourgeois ownership of capital, while anarchism opposes Statist integration into and monopolisation of the social sphere. Furthermore, though both are following an inherently dichotomous logic, the types of dichotomies differ. Marxism subscribes to a positive dialectical model, while classical anarchism, with exception of Bakunin’s negative dialectics, is inherently dualistic in its basic models. Thus, for Marx a new society can be achieved utilising the old Statist structures, while anarchism places more emphasis on structures and advocates their total destruction. Nevertheless, it seems that at the crux of these contrasting views are competing conceptualisations of *power* and how it works. The Marxist emphasis tends to fall on power that is quantitative material and economic. In anarchist theories, on the other hand, the concept of power figures in a more undefined and fluid sense. For anarchists power emanates predominantly from

non-economic and autonomous sources, and thus anarchism analyses power in its own right (Newman 2001:37). For anarchists power is not necessarily material power. Thinkers like Stirner and Bakunin, for instance, would place greater emphasis on the power of ideas, ideals and ideologies in amassing the population, though to brand these anarchists as idealists would be quite misleading. Malatesta for one identifies what he calls “intellectual power” as being the more significant of the State’s powers – more significant than physical power and economic power (Malatesta 1995:19).

Anarchists do not advocate a society without any power relations whatsoever. While there is no escape from ‘power’, anarchists argue, political practice and institutions can be reorganised in a non-hierarchical way such that the dangers associated with ‘power’ can be defused or minimised. This is achieved precisely by doing away with hierarchical structures and absolutist political concepts. Therefore, aiming at decentralisation and dissemination of power, and protecting the notion of diversity, anarchism advocates fragmentation and de-structuring of unitary and larger notions of political communities. In the anarchist vision political community would not function according to structurally hierarchical and sovereign logics but is a system that has as its nexus a decentralised and disseminated sense of power relations, which do not function through institutionalised rigidities.

Thus, from the above discussion we find a completely different basic theory of the State, which at the dawn of twenty-first century might not appear as novel as it was in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, at its most basic logical level it

does seem useful in providing the basis for understanding State reification. As we have seen, anarchists like to look at human development in broad epochal scales. Anarchists have rejected the notions of Social Contract, Government contract, free-contract and social pact as the explanandum for justifying and authorising authority. Likewise, they have rejected theories of sovereignty that ascribe a divine and God-given aspect to sovereign power. Instead, anarchists have claimed that that which we call the State was originally a band of robbers that maintained their control by direct quantitative force and threat – thus originally there was no State. Only later did these bands of robbers start producing legitimating and authorising discourses, such as theories of sovereignty, which gave them the authority which the State allegedly has. In essence, however, States remained what they have originally were, and the power of the State, anarchists argue, still depends on the convincing power of these *legitimizing discourses*. For instance Proudhon called the State a “pretext” for interpreting the violence of governing practices as just and moral (Proudhon 1923:294). Whether God-given or contract-based, both versions of the theory of Social Contract, for anarchists, are doing nothing less than *legitimizing* violence and domination, and *monopolising that legitimation*. This trail of anarchistic thought is vital in the broader context of understanding the problem of State reification: there never was a Social Contract, the concept of the State was imposed *from top down*, by force, afterwards hiding, mystifying and glorifying the origins of the State, and discursively legitimating itself precisely by such discursive formations as Social Contract theory.

Philosophical Anarchism

Before we proceed a short summary of what the chapter has done so far is in order. This chapter set out to provide a departing point for the overall thesis. It was argued that anarchism carries a set of important elements that can help us in examining the problem of State reification. At the outset a brief discussion of anarchism took place in the context of its history and the evolution of its standpoints and analyses. It was argued that understanding anarchism solely as an ideology does not help us in this thesis and that a more fruitful conceptualisation of anarchism is as a politico-philosophical system with its own ontology, codes, tables of values and ethics. With the same token, it was argued that pegging anarchism to nineteenth century Europe mishandles the anti-authoritarian current that runs through and defines the anarchist tradition: it redefines anarchism as being opposed to the State only, while I have argued that the anti-authoritarianism of anarchism exceeds that opposition and enables us to stop taking authority and sovereignty for granted, which is crucial for addressing the problem of State reification. It was further demonstrated that anarchism is as old as the Statist notion of politics and is the Other side – the mirror image of the Statist political coin. It was then demonstrated that classical anarchism relies heavily on such categories as Natural Law and human nature, which are always open to interpretation and are too metaphysical to serve as a departing point for critical engagement with the problem of this thesis. This category of the “natural” also informs the divide between the categories of “State” and “society” which is seen as problematic, and which will be brought into question later on. The chapter then moved on to outline the classical

anarchist rejection of Social Contract theories that claim to explain the formation of the State. The anarchist critique of these theories was that they do not really explain the historical formation of the State, but instead in effect justify the violence and existence of the State. This line of thought is important to this thesis for it directs us toward a claim that these theories serve as *legitimising discourses* that play an important part in reification of the State. This type of understanding is already implicit in the classical anarchist theory of the State, which views the concept of the State as being imposed from above, while its authority and existence being stabilised by theories of sovereignty that carry the logic of Social Contract at its discursive basis.

The next part of the chapter introduces philosophical anarchism, which will serve as the outline of the anti-authoritarian element of anarchism. This is valuable because it does not take authority and the State for granted. The discussion of philosophical anarchism will be followed by an analysis of the themes presented in this chapter, which will consider which of the elements of classical anarchism are to be taken to the next stage in the thesis and how.

The term *Philosophical Anarchism* was first coined by Benjamin Tucker – an American anarchist thinker and activist of late-nineteenth, early-twentieth century. Philosophical anarchism questions the idea of authority itself. While the divide between the State and Society animates classical anarchist thought, Philosophical Anarchism is informed by the duality of the Individual on one hand and the State on the other. That is to say, it focuses upon the relationship between concepts of the autonomy of individual being and authority of the

State. Likewise it looks at the possibility of the concept that in libertarian anarchist literature figures as “individual sovereignty”. The discussion of authority is integral to philosophical anarchism, and I hope to extract valuable elements for the purposes of this thesis.

In this chapter we have seen that anarchism has many diverse branches. Philosophical anarchism, however is the intersection between them. As Miller stresses

[P]hilosophical anarchism... is not a variety of anarchism in the sense in which individualist and communist anarchism are varieties: it does not encapsulate any model of anarchist society, nor any recipe for destroying the state and other coercive institutions. It is rather a philosophical attitude, a way of responding to the authority (Miller 1984:16).

It is hard to pinpoint which thinkers are philosophical anarchists and which are not, and the question of what is being counter-posed against the State is not really a reliable criterion. Philosophical anarchism should rather be understood in terms of a line of thought that is present among most anarchists both with egalitarian and libertarian concerns. It may seem that in juxtaposing individual autonomy with State authority philosophical anarchism is inherently individualist. However, this is not the case. Anti-authoritarianism is inherent in all forms of anarchism; the question is why oppose authority. Thus, this juxtaposition, which is inherently ontological, is there in order to encourage broader questions on anarchist ethics and principles.

Even though the first anarchist thinker to have incorporated the line of philosophical anarchist argument was the utilitarian libertarian William Goodwin, early elements of ‘philosophical anarchist’ line of argument can be traced in Kant’s proposition that the problems associated with humanity are incorporated by men’s immaturity – “inability to use one’s own understanding without the guidance of another” – something that needs to and can be transcended (Kant 2000:54-60). Benjamin Tucker, William Godwin, Henry Thoreau, Josiah Warren, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Herbert Read, Robert Paul Wolff and most importantly Max Stirner, are some of the forerunners of philosophical anarchist lines of thought. Philosophical anarchism, or the anti-authoritarian discourse of anarchism, seems to be the uniting point and the crossroad between various anarchists. As Faure argued,

“...there is not, and there cannot be, a libertarian *Creed* or *Catechism*.

“That which exists and constitutes what one might call the anarchist doctrine is a cluster of general principles, fundamental conceptions and practical applications regarding which a consensus has been established among individuals whose thought is inimical to Authority and who struggle, collectively or in isolation, against all disciplines and constraints, whether political, economic, intellectual or moral.

“At the same time, there may be – and indeed there are many varieties of anarchist, yet all have a common characteristic that separates them from the rest of humankind. This uniting point is *the negation of the principle of Authority in social organisations and the hatred of all*

constraints that originate in institutions founded on this principle.”(Faure, S. 1977: 62)

Therefore, what we refer to as anti-authoritarianism is precisely the negation of authority as the departing point; that is to say, a negation that there is such a thing as authority. Miller points at the central ethos of philosophical anarchism:

‘Many anarchists have been attracted by the view that no man can ever rightfully exercise political authority over another, that is have a right to issue directions which the other has *an obligation to obey*. Since the state, especially, appears to depend on the belief that its directives are to be taken as authoritative by its subjects, it can easily be seen how corrosive is the attack on the principle’ (Miller 1984: 15; my emphasis).

This is one of the valuable aspects of classical anarchism: in negating authority as the originary assumption anarchism is enabled to question the State at every corner, in each of its manifestations. In other words, it is the very element of anarchism that makes it the reverse image of Statist discourses. It is precisely because of this aspect that anarchism does not take the State for granted and is able to view the State *not as a State*.

David Miller examined philosophical anarchism by investigating three positions (utilitarian, individualist and neo-Kantian) with the help of three thinkers respectively: Godwin, Stirner and Wolff. The following brief investigation will follow a similar path, partly out of the dissatisfaction with Miller’s analysis. Stirner is not examined here because he is allocated a separate chapter dedicated

entirely to his work, and another chapter concerned with the continuation of his line of thought with regards to sovereignty. In what follows I will examine the thoughts of William Godwin, Henry David Thoreau and Robert Paul Wolff. That will be followed by a commentary on philosophical anarchism, which leads to the conclusion that will take us to the next chapter.

William Godwin

William Godwin was the first thinker to advocate ‘the state of nature’. *An Enquiry concerning Political Justice, and its influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (1793)¹⁴ was one of the most influential books to appear in Britain which at the time was very close to a revolutionary outbreak. The writings of Godwin influenced many leading British socialists, including Thelwall, Place and Owen, as well as poets like Blake and Shelley. Though Godwin’s *Political Justice* is no doubt the most important of his works, in order to grasp the thought of this early-anarchist it is necessary to take into account his other writings, so that the themes that appear in his magnum opus in relative obscurity become clearer.¹⁵

The three pillars of his argument were the supremacy of Reason, the ‘doctrine of necessity’ and a particular view of human nature. In early works like *History of Commonwealth* and *Life of Caucier* Godwin’s belief in universal determinism and the doctrine of ‘necessity’ was deductively projected onto his political philosophy and his interpretation of history. Briefly, the doctrine of necessity holds that every object and event (even the existence of government) has its

¹⁴ Revised editions of this book appeared in 1796 and 1798

¹⁵ Other notable works of Godwin are *The Enquirer*, *Thoughts on Man* and *Adventures of Caleb Williams*.

particular necessary role at a particular space and time, and that those necessary phenomena were placed there and then by a universal determinism. People's intellects start from a position of absolute ignorance and build up knowledge through impressions, memory and associations (Godwin 1940 vol.1:94; Clark 1977:13). Godwin rejected the idea of innate knowledge and instincts and maintained that 'Characters of Men Originate in External Circumstances'. Though Godwin maintained some faith in human reason, which was a fashionable thing at the time, he never fully accepted the idea of metaphysical freedom and free will. Like Hume, Godwin stressed that necessity operates in nature but not in 'the constitution of our intellects'. For Godwin much of one's intellect is shaped in response to the external experiences of childhood – the period when the intellect, according to Godwin, is most susceptible to adopting opinions and stabilised knowledge. This is where Godwin derived one of the most important aspects of his philosophy – the idea that people should be allowed an inviolable sphere of private judgement (the private space that, according to Godwin, is violated and pervaded by the government). Having sided with Hume, Godwin was convinced that the universe functions according to rational laws, that it is possible to rationally and scientifically bridge the antecedents and consequents, and that the same event will take place provided that its precursors are similar or identical. In Godwin's understanding, the possibility, regularity and continuity of progress is closely related to the observation of scientific progress. Thus, *causality* and *necessity* make things easy for Godwin: scientific progress in the past is a good ground for expecting general progress in other aspects in the future. It is easy to see why this thinker has often been regarded as being an anarcho-gradualist: government has

emerged out of necessity to contain the negative implications of 'state of Nature' (though it has produced new evils); people deserve as much freedom from the government as the degree of their enlightened private judgement permits them; and when progress fully unfolds there will no longer be political space for government. Let us not subject this late eighteenth century thinker's theoretical background to criticism in light of the Western philosophical achievements of the twentieth century, but let us look at his anti-authoritarian arguments.

Godwin argued that men should subject the choice between various actions (even the choice between obeying and disobeying the Government) to rational examination so that every action taken benefits the 'general good'. Thus, as we see, the philosophical anarchist juxtaposition between the individual and government is set in order to deduce ethics in favour of a separate concept, in this case – the concept of 'general good'. Godwin continues to argue that, nevertheless, whether to follow the principle of 'general good' or not should again be left to private judgement. Being a convinced utilitarian, Godwin places everything, including and especially the concept of government, under scrupulous cost/benefit analysis and further maintains that government should be judged according to utility. The government, Godwin argued, has certain useful functions, such as maintaining general order. However, the functioning of the government, Godwin proceeds, has caused many other harms¹⁶, and therefore in order to understand whether government is necessary at a

¹⁶ Some of the drawbacks that Godwin concentrates upon are loss of individuality, equality both in terms of political significance and welfare, egotism and greed that spring from the hierarchical structure, and opposition of people(s) against one another.

particular space and time, one needs to analyse its positive and negative implications. Though Godwin recognised that democracy is a more just form of governance, he saw dangers associated with representation in national assemblies and therefore was more in favour of a fragmented decentralised democracy of local assemblies.¹⁷ For Godwin, the gradual political progress culminates in a form of political and economic egalitarianism with the return of individuality and individuation continuously encouraged on behalf of newly installed social values.

Despite being a philosophical anarchist, Godwin does not adopt a position as radical as that of Stirner or Thoreau. Neither is a bold line between the Government and the Individual drawn, nor is war declared on the concept of Government. Nevertheless, the philosophical anarchist features in Godwin's argument are that authority destroys individual autonomy, directs human actions and corrupts both those who have happened to be at the bottom of the political structure and those who came to dominate it too. Some traces of philosophical anarchism can be identified which will be valuable to this thesis later on. The first valuable point is that, like most anarchists and especially anarcho-gradualists, Godwin argued that the political transformation was possible only after progress in the public mind has taken place. Thus, change in political opinion must precede and not follow socio-political change. The second important philosophical anarchist aspect of Godwin's argument is the idea of the primacy and independence of private judgement. Every individual, Godwin argued, should have an inviolable sphere of private judgement,

¹⁷ Godwin simply suggested this vision, but does not elaborate on how would those local assemblies function specifically and on how to decentralise the political organisation.

freedom of political enquiry and continuous communication, which were the prerequisites for possible progress. The primary reason for Godwin's dissatisfaction with the idea of government came from his observation that governments increasingly violate the integrity of the individual's private judgement and have an unstoppable urge to seek more power and control, to spread their influence into every possible aspect of human life and thus to destroy 'rationality, autonomy and the possibility of full self-realisation' (Clark 1977:296). Another observation that Godwin had made was that governments constantly seek measures to justify and immunise their actions, that is to say, to raise the idea of Government to an ideal concept that cannot be questioned. Therefore, Godwin criticised theories that would attempt to justify the source of authority, such as social contract theories. As Bakunin did later, Godwin maintained that subjects are not able to offer their authentic consent since the presence of dominant force and leadership already pervades and predetermines their private judgement and therefore the decision. Godwin argued that individuals who had independent private judgement could not possibly have accepted the social contract.

The most interesting aspect of Godwin's thought is his argument that obeying and disobeying the government is a *choice* – a choice to be made at every point by private judgement. It is interesting because in such utilitarian positing it is as if there is no such thing as authority and sovereignty, and particularly the unquestionable character of sovereignty involved at all. Of course Godwin is conscious of these, but it seems that he theorises as if authority in itself did not exist so as to look critically at whether there is any reason for authority to be

obeyed. In other words, he asks whether there are any other reasons for obeying authority, other than because of the mere fact that it is authority.

To sum up, on the one hand Godwin believed in the primacy of the inviolability of private judgement – he argued that while the sphere of private judgement is being increasingly pervaded by the government, it should be left intact, which would permit people to think for themselves and to act according to their own morality. On the other hand Godwin rejected the idea that a just society can be based on a contract and that it can be governed justly by National Assemblies. This is because the decisions of National Assemblies, legislations and laws are always designed to invade the sphere of private judgement. The rejection of contract is based on the argument that a skilful orator may talk the individual into agreeing with contract, which he would not have done if his private judgement had been left intact. What we have, it seems, is a contradiction: on the one hand the individual is autonomous and potentially self-governing, and on the other hand we have a view that the individual's sphere of private judgement is pervaded by the government. So is the individual autonomous or not? This is a contradiction inherent in Godwin's work, which he seems to resolve by applying the doctrine of *necessity* to government: governments exist until the individual is enlightened enough to govern himself. To me the doctrine of necessity does not seem convincing enough and the above contradiction remains: is the individual autonomous or is he subjected to more subtle works of power that produce his subjectivity? I will return to this question at the end of this chapter.

Henry Thoreau

Thoreau is famous for his radical and uncompromising statements. Perhaps the most influential political writing of Henry Thoreau is his essay *Civil Disobedience* written in 1849.¹⁸ The citation Thoreau is famous for says,

‘“That government is best which governs least”... Carried out, it finally amounts to this... “That government is best which governs not at all”; and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have’ (Thoreau 1937:789).

In Thoreau’s view, the government ‘... is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will’ and is ‘a sort of wooden gun to the people themselves’ (Thoreau 1937:789,780). The primary political obligation, according to this philosophical anarchist, is ‘to do at any time what I think right’ (Thoreau 1937:791). The State machinery violates that right, and this in turn has its own negative implications in the environment outside immediate individual concerns. The State transforms men into machines, where one’s right no longer matters; into a ‘mass of bodies’ to an extent that individuation is no longer welcomed or possible; into ‘agents of injustice’, subjects that are alienated from their own common sense, morals and conscience; reduced to ‘a level with wood and earth and stones’ thus being made to serve the State merely as raw materials (Thoreau 1937:791). Thoreau then continues,

‘and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. Such command no more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as

¹⁸ Originally called *Resistance to Civil Government*

horses and dogs. Yet such as these even are commonly esteemed good citizens. Others – as most legislators, politicians, lawyers, ministers, and office-holders – serve the state chiefly with their heads; and, as they rarely make any moral distinctions, they are as likely to serve the devil, without *intending* it, as God. A very few – as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the great sense, and *men* – serve the state with their consciences also, and so necessarily resist it for the most part; and they are commonly treated as enemies by it. A wise man will only be useful as a man, and will not submit to the ‘clay,’ and ‘stop a hole to keep the wind away,’ but leave that office to his dust at least’ (Thoreau 1937:792; emphasis original).

Wars are only announced by States, and what ‘enable[s] the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood’ is the obedient submission of ‘good citizens’. That is the seminal idea that leads Thoreau to his proposal for the tactical deconstruction and fragmentation of the State. In other words, it is not unity that keeps the State together, but obedience; since the State is empowered by the idea of obedience, it is this very idea that Thoreau targets. Thus he writes,

‘All machines have their friction; and possibly this does enough good to counterbalance the evil... But when the friction comes to have its machine, and oppression and robbery are organized, I say, let us not have such a machinery any longer... If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth – certainly the machine will wear out. Break the Law... Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine’ (Thoreau 1937:792-7).

Hence, he proposes continuous *civil disobedience* – to break the law, to resign from office and so forth. Whether this tactic is of any use today and whether it bears any political significance or relevance is not as important as the structure that he posits.

Thoreau places the individual against the State, not as equals, but as notions directly opposing and alien to each other. For Thoreau being individual is a higher concept than that of the State – an ontological separation that is also present in Stirner – ‘we should be men first and subjects afterward’ (Thoreau 1937:790). As Thoreau declares,

I am too high-born to be propertied,

To be a secondary at control,

Or useful serving-man and instrument

To any sovereign state throughout the world (Thoreau 1937:791-2).

He radically rejects the possibility of compromise between the Individual, who questions and does not accept the legitimacy of the State on the one hand, and the State that continuously strives to spread its control over empty spaces on the other. Thoreau, however, does not wish to stop at this point, which other philosophical anarchists, like Godwin, are not prepared to cross. For Thoreau freedom of thought, opinion and enquiry is not enough. ‘How can a man be satisfied to entertain an opinion merely, and enjoy *it?*’ Thoreau asks, ‘Is there any enjoyment in it, if his opinion is that he is aggrieved? ... Action from principle, the perception and the performance of right, changes things and relations’ (Thoreau 1937:796). ‘I simply wish to refuse allegiance to the State’, he announces, ‘to withdraw and stay aloof from it effectually. I do not care to

trace the course of my dollar [he talks about tax payments], if I could, till it buys a man or a musket to shoot one with – the dollar is innocent – but I am concerned to trace the effects of my allegiance. In fact, I quietly declare war with the State, after my fashion, though I will still make what use and get what advantage of her I can, as is usual in such cases' (Thoreau 1937:804).

Thoreau's argument is almost entirely informed by his individualism in a return of dualistic thinking. This dualism is expressed in terms of the self on the one hand and the State on the other, and, to be more precise, in terms of the diverse individualist ethics versus the unanimous ethos of obedience to the State; individuality versus citizenship. And there is no abstract notion of a higher general good, as is the case with Godwin, in favour of which the duality is posed. Here the duality is there quite simply to defend the production of the self. It is a duality and not a dialectical opposition because there is no reconciliation between the two: there can be either the State (which must inevitably be absolute) or the Individual, which cannot be sovereign but can be gradually worked towards by repeated practices of resisting obedience to the absolute. But we also see that this duality is primarily an ontological and nominalist one: the State and the Individual cannot be reconciled simply because they are ontologically different concepts; they subscribe to different logics and move in different directions.

In 1970, Robert Paul Wolff published a book with a daring title – “*In Defense of Anarchism*”. As a reply to Wolff, Jeffrey Reiman published “*In Defense of Political Philosophy*” (1972), to which Wolff responded with a new edition including a revised introduction (1976). Reiman then replied to this one as well (Reiman 1978), and a ‘cease-fire’ between the two seems to have been established.¹⁹ However, besides what seems to have been an angry brawl, reminiscent of nineteenth century philosophy debates, between these two theorists, the debate awakened many interesting discussions at the time. Even though quite clearly Wolff’s views on some of the crucial anarchist points can be disputed, his work was widely read and it played an influential role in reawakening academic interest in anarchism in the 1970s.

As the framework of his argument, Wolff poses the political philosophical problem of a clash of two concepts – the supreme ‘authority’ of the State and the moral ‘autonomy’ of the Individual. Being a disciple of Kant, Wolff maintains that moral autonomy is an overriding obligation of every individual, and arrives at the conclusion that ‘a morally legitimate State is a logical impossibility’. In an attempt to reconcile the two, he engages in a search for a *legitimate* State, that is to say, a State which is authorised by individuals. He proceeds with attempts to resolve that problem in favour of democracy by exploring its purest form – Unanimous Direct democracy. However, since the

¹⁹ Wolff’s *In Defense of Anarchism* was and still is quite popular. Due to great demand the first edition by itself sold over a hundred thousand copies (1998: xii). Since then Wolff’s book was published several times, each edition with new preface but the original text and the format remained unchanged.

practicality of this form it is not great, Wolff complicates the issue by exploring 'Representative democracy', highlighting the chance of misrepresentation on domestic and especially international levels, and then 'Majoritarian democracy', showing the effective injustice to the minority interest groups, which are suppressed by the authority of the majority. The impracticality of the Unanimous Direct Democracy and the failure of conventional democratic models of authorisation through majoritarianism and representation, to accommodate the individual moral autonomy and to legitimise the State at the same time, lead Wolff to resolve the original dilemma by turning his argument in favour of what he calls "anarchism"²⁰. The importance of Wolff's argument, however, is not only in highlighting the way that existing political establishments could hardly be called *democratic* in their theory and practice, or in his theoretical evaluation of democratic theory, but in the core argument that political philosophy is unable to resolve the clash between moral autonomy and authority. Hence, since moral autonomy is an overriding obligation of each individual, no authority can be compatible or accountable in relation to moral autonomy.

Wolff starts by examining the concept of authority, which is the *right* to be obeyed. He understands the State in Weberian terms as 'a group of persons who are *acknowledged* to have supreme authority within a territory – acknowledged, that is, by those over whom the authority is asserted' (Wolff 1970:5). Here, he openly uses Social Contract theory, whereby the State is authorised by the

²⁰ Wolff is not advocating a traditional form of anarchism. What he refers to as 'anarchism' or 'philosophical anarchism' is a priori duty of every individual to maintain their moral autonomy and therefore not having the obligation to obey the authority. Reiman calls this "Wolff's anarchism".

subjects, and by so doing, he opens up a gap in his argument. Ironically, Wolff is prepared to accept authority which is legitimised. The precondition to the legitimacy of authority and commands is set: if authority and the commands that originate from it are based on a social contract and if autonomous individuals consent to it, then that authority is legitimate.²¹ However, in that way he leaves his work vulnerable to the critique of Miller, Reiman and many other non-anarchists as well as, and especially, anarchists themselves. These will be explored later on.

Wolff admits that we, human subjects, are not fully morally autonomous. The hidden messages behind the images²², social structures underlying our relationships²³, the idea of habitually following the tradition - doing something because we have been doing it for centuries, these and many more are factors that influence our daily actions without undergoing a thoughtful examination of moralities behind those actions. Wolff, however, does not stop at behaviourism and calls for constantly thinking about autonomous individual morality prior to undertaking an action.

However, when examining the concept of autonomy, Wolff starts by relying on the Kantian assumption that men are metaphysically free and on Kant's argument that 'moral autonomy is a combination of freedom and responsibility; it is a submission to laws which one has made for oneself' (Wolff 1970:14). It is

²¹ At this point, it is worth recalling that most anarchists reject the Social Contract following the Bakuninist tradition.

²² Here Wolff uses the example of policeman commanding and the subject automatically obeying – 'the mere sight of a uniform is enough to make us feel that the man inside it has a right to be obeyed' (Wolff 1970:7)

²³ One of the examples that Wolff uses is a friendly advice.

worth noting that Wolff does not account for factors that come to shape one's morals, such as societal milieu, religion, fear and so forth, and looks at the man as a conceptual end-product only. This is a fundamental assertion that shapes his understanding of *autonomy* and guides him to develop arguments for it later on. Since man is free to develop his own morality, Wolff argues, and since he is free to choose between actions, he is responsible to himself for all the actions that he undertakes. The argument here relies on the premise of conscience – freedom is realised by submission to laws that one has made for oneself and one cannot break those laws, simply because of conscience. One can go against the laws of the state but one cannot go against one's own morality since that would mean going against himself/herself. Thus Wolff's argument relies on this dual presupposition of an autonomous individual with his own morality on one hand and the concept of conscience on the other. The problematic pillar of the argument is the neo-Kantian premise that takes for granted men's metaphysical freedom to develop their own morality. The whole argument can be turned against Wolff if one assumes that men do not possess that which he sees as free will in the political realm.

The neo-Kantian assumption leads Wolff to argue that 'the autonomous man, insofar as he is autonomous, is not subject to the will of another', though 'men can forfeit their autonomy at will', deliberately or ignorantly (Wolff 1970:14). How so? In case of deliberateness, Wolff brings the example of forfeiting the responsibility over one's life by trusting a doctor, but he is short of examples that are more political. A contradiction, however, arises in the case of ignorance. How can one refuse to acknowledge one's capacity for choice? How

can men ‘refuse to acknowledge [responsibility]’ and ‘forfeit their autonomy at will’ while ‘simply failing to recognize [their] moral condition?’ Wolff sees this as an instance whereby ‘...a man can decide to obey the commands of another without making any attempt to determine for himself whether what is commanded is good or wise’ (Wolff 1970:14). At the same time, one may wonder whether the man that Wolff is talking about is truly ‘autonomous’ and whether a truly autonomous man would consciously give his autonomy up, if he had known, that is to say, if he was *conscious* that he had autonomy in the first place (which is, as we have seen, something that most anarchists like Godwin, Bakunin and Thoreau would reject). But since autonomy and responsibility are synonyms in Wolff’s vocabulary, things fall into place. Wolff omits the question of self-consciousness, simply by his earlier assumption of metaphysical freedom. Thus, obeying a command under circumstances whereby the action is one that the autonomous man would have happened to do in any case, or under circumstances whereby having evaluated the nature of the command rationally, one follows it, are not cases of *obedience* or *acknowledgement of authority* in Wolff’s sense. ‘Obedience is not a matter of doing what someone tells you to do. It is a matter of doing what he tells you to do *because he tells you to do it*’.

Wolff’s understanding of ‘autonomy’ and the arguments for it are channelled through the notion of obligation to “self-imposed” morality. The equation of man’s autonomy with responsibility to himself, whereby ‘himself’ stands for the morals that allegedly, were made by nothing/no-one else but himself, frames the discourse into an incapacity to allow for higher degree of political individuation. Ironically, Wolff is not saying that the only way that his

argument for autonomy can seem viable, or the only way that anarchic autonomy functions in his imagination is through the authority of moral obligations. As far as the issue of ‘autonomous morality’ is concerned, Wolff does not seem to be looking for a pure form of autonomy, self-consciousness and individuation. He is not in search of self-sovereignty, which may allow the individual to become conscious of and to rise above the structures that come to shape its morality thus jeopardising its integrity, but he slips through an easy metaphysical gap by ‘inventing’ and ‘interpreting’ the concept of autonomy. By doing so Wolff ‘unconsciously’, leaves a gap for concepts such as ‘morality’ and ‘political justice to autonomy’ to function in society as a systematic repression of individual political freedom.

Reiman’s critique, which would have been more in order had it been called *In Defence of the State*, appears to be rather limited. Wolff is firstly attacked over the position of his argument, which “begins and ends in moral waters, never reaching political shores” (Reiman 1972:xxiv). Reiman constructs his argument upon his reading of the distinction between the political anarchism and philosophical anarchism – something that Wolff in turn does not feel the need to elaborate on in his work. Transforming the moral realm of State evaluation to a ‘political’ one creates the premise of Reiman’s critique. By separating the notions of ‘moral authority’ – a term invented by Reiman, and ‘political authority’ – the right to use coercion, Reiman maintains that if the latter could be morally justified then a legitimate State is possible and there cannot be an a priori argument to reject the legitimacy of the State (Reiman 1972:xxv). The weakest point in Wolff’s logical chain, as Reiman identifies it is the connection

between the rejection of moral authority and the rejection of political authority (Reiman 1972:34-5). It needs to be noted that Wolff does not distinguish between these two types of authority and places authority in general under a priori scrutiny. What Reiman does is morally justify political authority - the existence of laws and use of coercion in order to enforce them for maintaining public security – something that many philosophers, ranging from Plato to Hobbes, have done, and something that classical anarchism has been challenging. Thus, Reiman attacks classical anarchism but not philosophical anarchism, and not only does he fail to answer the fundamental question of Wolff, but he only strays from it.

Miller, however, does not seem to disagree with Wolff's essential arguments that the commands of the sovereign State must not be taken for granted and that a constant evaluation of actions according to individual morality is needed. Neither does Miller disagree with Wolff's scrutiny of democratic theory and practice. Wolff, however, is criticised over the point when he, in accordance with neo-Kantian tradition, admitted that anarchists should consistently accept one form of legal government, which is unanimous direct democracy based on Free contract (Wolff 1970:22-7). Only those laws are passed which every member of the community agrees to. And *if* every party has agreed on a rule then no one must break it. What if the rule has been broken (let's say, under the influence of alcohol), Miller asks – should the individual then obey the command, which is validated by the Contract? Miller examines a community which is based on Social Contract theory and asks “How, then, can he [Wolff]

exclude contractual obligations as reasons for action, and, this being conceded, how can he exclude authoritative commands²⁴ which originate in contract?”

Miller may be contested on two points. Firstly, it seems that Miller has misread Wolff of 1976. In reply to Reiman’s *In Defense of Political Philosophy*, which was a critique of *In Defense of Anarchism*, Wolff takes back his claim about the possible compatibility of anarchism and unanimous direct democracy (Ritter 1980:173), and by so doing he further stresses the point of his initial work: *individual autonomy and any form of authority are incompatible*. It is crucial to think about how and why Wolff introduces unanimous direct democracy as the sole solution of the problem of political philosophy. Democracy in theory (not in Aristotle’s theory but in Liberal Democratic theories) is a framework whereby the individual, just as he is the ruler over himself, is the ruler of his political environment and simultaneously, the politically ruled one. If it was a community of truly autonomous Individuals, the precise point is that no laws at all would be unanimously agreed on.

‘Since by the rule of unanimity a single negative vote defeats any motion, the slightest disagreement over significant questions will bring the operations of the society to halt. It will cease to function as a political community and fall into a condition of anarchy (or at least into a condition of non legitimacy)’ (Wolff 1970:24).

In this case, the authority of unanimous direct democracy would become illegitimate. However, strictly speaking, if Wolff assumes that disagreement would halt the operation of society and would stop the functioning of a political

²⁴ Wolff argued that ‘for autonomous man, there is no such thing, strictly speaking, as a *command*’ (Wolff 1970:15)

community, he cannot be regarded as an anarchist. His argument could become useful if taken beyond its original meaning, toward an anarchist understanding that the only way in which an anarchistic unanimous direct democracy would function would be through not passing any laws or contracts, thus maintaining it only as a framework the primary function of which would be to ensure that no authority is authorised. Even if we were to imagine hypothetically (for the sake of examination only) the smallest possible political community, which is formed consciously and willingly by two autonomous Individuals, the very fact that they would *have to* agree on *every* issue would not be in accordance with maxims of individuality and autonomous morality. This by no means makes political community an impossibility or a factor that infringes individuality. The general anarchist claim that individuality and the development of its faculties is only possible in society needs to be recalled. The Anarcho-Individualist contention that individuality and community are two compatible and mutually enhancing concepts is worth pointing out at this stage. In exploration of the anarchist goal – ‘communal individuality’, Ritter maintains a cautious position of not allowing society to infringe individuality, and upholds Godwin’s contention that public censure, by stimulating self-consciousness, encourages individuality, enriches personality and channels the strengthening of the self (Ritter 1980:31).

As a means to his critique Miller narrates an exemplar of two individuals (Jones and Davies). Here Jones *authorises* Davies and this is where he (Miller) runs into a second problem. The problem is that he sees the example as a contractual community only and wonders about the *obligations* and *commands* that are *legitimated* by it. It is further doubtful whether this type of thing would happen if

Jones were an autonomous self-conscious Individual in the first place. It is important to remember that anarchists reject not only the existence of a Social Contract or the argument that formed the basis of communities in the past, but also the arguments that the Social Contract *should* become the basis of free community. However, Miller's critique of Wolff is legitimated by latter's employment of contract theory in his precondition for legitimate authority and his search for a legitimate State. By binding his critique into the framework of contract theory Miller does not allow for the expansion of the scenario of two Individuals into a case of more expanded process-based community – he does not allow for social interactions between them. Only by means of this rigid model does he manage to prove the indispensability of governance. After the authoritarian relationship between Davies and Jones is transformed into contractual one he maintains an understanding of this newly formed community in terms of obligation validated by contract, but does not move beyond this in order to examine possibilities of friendship, identity, responsibility or alternative political community which is not necessarily governed by fixed contract or law. It is not Miller, however, who needs to be criticised for this problem, but Wolff himself, who allows for a contract. The argument here could be long as it may swing back to the fundamental issues of morals and responsibility, though the temptation to move beyond the realm of the case study of Wolff needs to be tamed. Criticising Wolff as a philosopher, who admits that unanimous direct democracy accommodates individual autonomy, says nothing about core philosophical anarchist claim that autonomy and authority are incompatible.

Wolff is arguably wrong in his argument that unanimous direct democracy based on a Social Contract is the only point where ‘autonomy’ and ‘authority’ are reconciled. It could be said that it is the point where ‘authority’ and ‘what-Wolff-means-by-autonomy’ are reconciled; or that it is not reconciled perfectly, but in a much better way than in other established democratic frameworks. Wolff limits the viability of unanimous directly democratic communities to only two instances. One is ‘a community of persons inspired by all-absorbing religious or secular ideal’ and the other comprises ‘rationally self-interested individuals’, where consensus is realised by a progressive will to cooperation. Understanding a political community in terms of or even beyond spatial (or not necessarily spatial) and temporal (or even temporary) interaction with no prior or subsequent agreement, becomes impossible because of the rigid confines of defined spatiality and consistent temporality within which Wolff attempts to reconcile the authority of the State and moral autonomy. In this way, alternatives are strictly alienated.

There is a need to draw a clear distinction between Wolff’s notion of ‘autonomy’ and the philosophical anarchist notion of ‘Individual’. Perhaps an easy formulation of the distinction the two could come through the analogy of the distinction between ‘autonomy’ and ‘sovereignty’. Wolff is engaged in a Platonic search for the reconciliation of individual moral autonomy and State authority. Since his argument is bounded by the assumption that individuals are free to determine their own morality and thus the neo-Kantian obligation to keep it autonomous, he is still trapped in the understanding of political community as a balance between freedom of actions and obligatory

responsibility. Thus, Wolff is more or less happy with unanimous direct democracy based on a Social Contract as a criterion that would make the State *de jure* and would authorise and legitimise its actions. But since unanimous direct democracy is not very practicable in making the State legitimate or progressive Wolff examines other frameworks of democracy, which overcome the rigidities of unanimity and direct participation in making the State more legitimate. Thus, what Wolff is doing is complicating the criterion for authorisation of authority to an extent that it would be practically inapplicable.

The argument that authority and autonomy are incompatible, however, does not make anarchy an impossibility or impracticability. In fact, this incompatibility highlights the anarchistic claim that a political community does not necessarily need to be governed by legal constraints, that it already practices self-governance at levels not yet conquered by the State, and gives taste of what an anarchist(ic) alternative might look like.

Wolff's problem is that he imposes the idea of behaving as autonomous individuals being an *obligation* in itself. Instead, it would be much fairer to say, "If we are to be individuals, then we must follow the will of the Ego"

'Insofar as a man fulfils his obligation to make himself the author of his decisions, he will resist the state's claim to have authority over him. That is to say, he will deny that he has a duty to obey the laws of the state *simply because they are the laws*' (Wolff 1970:18).

Having said that autonomy is the primary obligation of the Individual, Wolff should perhaps not have engaged in search for a 'legitimate' authority. Instead, in order to follow title "In Defense of Anarchism", Wolff might be better to have proceeded with an attack on the concepts of authority and obedience by examining the practices that constitute them in the first place. Wolff's argument is then turned against itself when he tries to move from theory to practice. He could have focused on his theoretical critique and not continued to invent "more democratic" alternatives, which contradict his original theoretical framework (Wolff 1970:34-7; 78-82).²⁵ Despite the many weaknesses of his essay, Wolff, however, should be praised for reiterating the Kantian premise that no authority should be taken for granted (Kant 1784) and that every authority and command is to be evaluated by reason before obedience (Godwin 1798). Wolff has touched the taboo – the sovereignty of the State, and by prioritising the moral autonomy of the Individual and examining the modes of modern democracy he has put under question the moral and practical cogency of modern democratic practice.

Wolff should, nevertheless, be given credit for his important call for continuous critical evaluation of 'obedience' and commands, and to 'achieve autonomy wherever and whenever possible' (Wolff 1970:17). He effectively demonstrated that *de jure* authority is a contradiction in terms. He examines the concepts of authority and autonomy as contending equals, thus looking at the State not as a

²⁵ Having concluded that moral autonomy and authority are incompatible and that state can be legitimised or authorised, Wolff proceeds with suggesting a direct democracy through instant voting over legislations, discussed by representatives, with the help of modern technology. It is important, however to recall Bakunin's critique of plebiscites.

source of authority as such, but as a *de facto* practice only, which in its turn is a major step forward in unmasking State-sovereignty and State reification.

Commentary on Philosophical Anarchism

We have thus examined three episodes from philosophical anarchism.

To show some of the moralities of philosophical anarchism it would be easy to draw on two situations that Wolff used. The first is that of a robber who demands one's wallet, while holding one at a gunpoint. The second situation is when a citizen is routinely made to pay his taxes or follow the instructions issued by the State. Both examples involve issues of power and autonomy. The way in which an ordinary upright citizen on the one hand and a philosophical anarchist on the other would respond to choices of whether to hand in the wallet or not, or whether to obey the laws of the State or not would be quite similar, of course, if we assume that both men are prudent and rational under conventional understandings of these terms. The fate with which one is threatened by a gun is worse than the suffering of losing money. Likewise, it might be worth obeying the State sometimes, rather than facing the annoyance of legal penalties that might follow from disobedience. The difference between an ordinary citizen and the philosophical anarchist is embedded in their *approaches* to those situations, which can be explained through their understanding of *power* and *authority*. In other words, it is likely that both characters would respond in a similar fashion, but the difference is in their respective views of the situations. In the first situation both men would hand in

their wallets because they would recognise the fact that the robber has *power* over their lives. In the second scenario, the ordinary upright citizen would pay his taxes and regularly go to the ballot box on the Election Day because he recognises the *authority* of the State. In other words he would obey the authority because it is authority. The philosophical anarchist, on the other hand would do it out of the same logic as the one that made him hand the wallet to the robber. The philosophical anarchist recognises the fact that just as the robber, the State has the *power* but not the *authority*. Thus, philosophical anarchism can be best characterised by a philosophical response to authority and by negation of sovereignty. Therefore, philosophical anarchism is better understood not in terms of ‘no one or nothing can have the legitimate authority over an individual’, but rather in terms of ‘*no one can ever be under an obligation to obey*’ (Miller 1984:18).

Effectively, philosophical anarchism does not infringe State functioning, since every democratic state by its nature operates on principle of “you can be, think, talk or write what you want as long as you do as I say”. At the same time, the purpose of philosophical anarchism is to remove the spectacles of ‘sovereignty’ from public perception, or in our case, from a political theory that is still erected around the problem of sovereignty. The nature of State actions and its morality would then appear in direct contrast to discursively established interpretations of ‘collective good’. Philosophical anarchism opens up an important possibility for political theory as well as for this thesis. In the previous chapter I argued that in order to address the problem of State reification, we need a point of departure that does not take the State for granted. What we have witnessed

running through the discourse of philosophical anarchism is the very attitude of not taking the State for granted in a specific manner that can serve as that very departing point in investigating State reification. If *de jure* authority is a contradiction in terms; if the State is not authorised, could not have been and cannot be authorised; if the State is to be obeyed because of its power, but not because of its sovereign authority, then we can start looking at the State anew having divorced it from its primary feature that has been inhibiting a sober engagement with it. We are enabled to look at the State without sovereign authority. Just as philosophical anarchism has been looking at authority not as authority *per se*, we can start viewing the State not as a State.

Conclusion: achievements and limitations

In this chapter we have looked at anarchism. I would not want to claim that I have looked at the core anarchist arguments, but only at those highlights that I think will be important for later theoretical discussion. I have also briefly looked at the origins of anarchism so as to place this chapter, as well as the direction of the entire thesis, in the right context. The three important themes that we have looked at are the idea of *natural* that classical anarchism heavily relies upon and the dichotomous logic that almost always accompanies it; the rejection of social contract theory and the presentation of an alternative, classical anarchist, narrative about how the State emerged and how it functions;

and the anti-authoritarianism that is integral to the anarchist tradition and that is best manifested in the tradition of philosophical anarchism.

Anarchist State theory, just as any other State theory, analyses how the State operates, but not what it is. It too, thus, participates in the discourse *about* the State. It takes the State as being there, *but not for granted*. In other words, anarchist thinkers when theorising how the State works often treat it as present, but not legitimately present. This is the effect of philosophical anarchism that runs throughout anarchist sensibility. At this stage, it is a matter of recognising that the State has and exercises power, but not authority or sovereignty. This anarchistic attitude is the advantage in addressing the problem of State reification critically: we must recognise that the State is an actuality and a problematical actuality, a recurrently justifiable actuality, but never a *just* actuality in itself.

Paine's separation between the State and government reverberates throughout anarchist thought. While the government is an institution and a practice, the State is a nebulous abstract "thing" that exists in legitimising and justifying representations of it. Anarchists seem to be quite aware of this fact when they emphasise the *idea* of the State and Statism, as a mode of social relationships and as a mode of making sense of politics, rather than of the institution of the State as such.

As it was demonstrated, classical anarchist arguments, in one variant or another, rely on a notion of "natural" and a particular view of "human nature". It was

also demonstrated that classical anarchism, just as much of classical political philosophy, inherits this framework of reference from the ancient hierarchicalised opposition between the *physis* (the Natural Law) and the *nomos* (man-made laws and conventions), between *an-archē* and *politeia*, between the Social and the Statist. In the view of statist philosophers the *physis* does not provide a sufficient *guarantee* of order, which is why *nomos* is and should remain prevalent (Hobbes 1996). In the view of libertarians, and anarchists included, the *physis* was privileged over the *nomos* so as to avoid the destructive and disruptive effect of the latter. This dichotomous logic is often problematic. It transforms the original opposition between the *physis* and the *nomos* into a series of oppositional categories that weaken the analytical side of anarchism, thus making it appear as an ideology: good/evil, natural/unnatural, justice/law, Social laws/Statist laws, Individual/State, autonomy/authority. This tendency is best manifest, as we have seen, in philosophical anarchism.

Another limitation is that the categories of the “natural” and “human nature” seem increasingly obscure and ambiguous. What if there is no such thing as human nature? What if human nature and natural law are yet another set of analytical categories that we resort to in order to avoid a deeper and more critical engagement with a series of complexities? If human nature indeed exists, what if it exceeds the opposition between good and evil, what if it resists dichotomising? What if it is a discursive formation to help the dominant class in the production of the very legitimating discourses and reificatory practices that we are trying to disentangle? As I have argued, the concept of human nature and the category of “natural” are too open to interpretations and too

metaphysical to serve as a stable basis for critical engagement with a concept that is in itself highly metaphysical. This is one of the limitations of anarchism that this thesis will seek to avoid.

Another problem that we have seen particularly with Philosophical Anarchism is that it has a simplistic notion of power. It will not permit the level of critical engagement necessary for understanding how and why the State is reified. Let us recall Wolff's examples where one is confronted by a robber who demands one's wallet, and where the State demands and collects taxes. An ordinary citizen would comply with both demands because in his eyes the former has *power* and the latter has *legitimate authority*. A philosophical anarchist, as we said, would comply with both demands because he would recognise that both the robber and the State have *power*, but not authority. Thus, one is *conscious* of the power of the State to direct one's actions in one way or another. The notion of power used in philosophical anarchism is that of a simple quantitative capacity – one that ignores the more subtle exercises of power, such as disciplinary power for instance. What we need at this stage is a more complex conceptualisation that embraces the qualitative workings of power – *power* as a capacity to influence, condition and direct one's actions without one being conscious of it. The limitation of philosophical anarchism is that in posing the question of power relations between authority and individual, it does not see the type of power that exceeds this opposition – in other words, in treating the individual not as a possibility but as an atomistic actuality it is not able to see the working of the type of power that pervades and produces the individual.

It seems that philosophical anarchism is on the right track, but it is asking questions that do not permit it to get far enough. If we employ the understanding of power as something that pervades and disciplines the individual instead of simply influencing the choices given to the autonomous subject, we can then pose the question of why the ordinary citizen sees the State's actions as legitimate, why does he view authority as authority *per se*, and the State as the State? Put differently, we would be able to see the production, stabilisation and reification of the State. We have seen the difference between the philosophical anarchist and the citizen, but what creates that radical difference? Or, in other words, how does power produce the citizen and the view of authority, and how does the legitimating discourse gain its convincing power?

These are the type of questions that cannot be ignored in addressing the problem of State reification. In order for the State, authority and sovereignty to be taken for granted, what is necessary is a specific type of individual, who would take them for granted – a type that is not, as according to anarchist tradition, “natural”, but is systematically produced and disciplined.

For the materialist approach the concept of power is understood primarily as the economic power. While anarchism recognises economic power, it places a specific emphasis on political power and the power of ideas that underlies practices. Therefore the discourse of sovereignty in itself (the claim to power of right) is seen as form of power. As Newman had demonstrated,

“Anarchism... has, through its confrontation with Marxism, opened the way for a critique of ... noneconomic forms of power. By breaking the hold economic determinism had on radical political theory, anarchists have allowed power to be studied in its own right. Anarchism has freed political power from the economic, and this makes it important for political theory” (Newman, S. 2001: 37).

What we have also seen in this examination is that the character of the autonomous individual is inherent in many renditions of philosophical anarchist thought. That view is critically insufficient for the purposes of seeing State reification as a problem and for addressing that problem. If we embrace the qualitative notion of power in our analyses, that is to say, a power that pervades and produces the individual, then we can no longer hold on to a view of an indivisible individual that is autonomous. It would, however, be misleading to say that classical anarchism is entirely based on the presupposition of autonomous individual. Because it places emphasis on the non-material power of the State (with such concepts as intellectual power or hypnotic power, or psychological power), it would be fair to say that classical anarchism always finds itself at the margins of liberal frameworks. Classical anarchism always did cast doubt on the notion of autonomous individual. We can see this element returning throughout anarchist history. If we recall, even the works of an early anarchist thinker like Godwin contained this aporia.

Now, if we eschew such analytical categories as the autonomous individual, the social contract as an explanandum, authority as in itself, and human nature, and

if we adopt more broad and subtle notion of power, then we will have to replace the classical anarchist framework with a radically different one. There is, however, a thinker in anarchist tradition who eschewed the presupposition of an autonomous individual and constructed a new, early psychoanalytic and existentialist approach that will inform the next steps in our investigation. That thinker is Max Stirner – let's see how his intervention can help.

CHAPTER 3

MAX STIRNER: An Exegesis

Introduction

The previous chapter examined the anti-authoritarian tendency of classical anarchist approaches to the State. It was argued that classical anarchism can provide a working basis for seeing State reification as a problem and for addressing that problem. This is the case, it was argued, because anarchism does not take the State for granted – anarchism looks at the State as if it did not have sovereign authority. However, towards the end of the previous chapter we came across various analytical categories within anarchism, such as human nature, the category of the “natural” and the autonomous individual within the context of quantitative power, which were seen to hinder a critical engagement with State reification. It was decided that in order for the investigation to proceed these categories and especially the category of autonomous individual have to be abandoned. In fact, the category of autonomous individual as a result ceases to make sense the moment that one takes into account more subtle and qualitative notions of power that pervades and shapes the supposedly autonomous and indivisible individual – something that classical anarchism was already anticipating, though it did not really put forward a decisive theory that would capture such a model. If we recall, the rejection of social contract theory was replaced by anarchist narratives such as the top-down enforced “Tacit Contract” on one hand, and the maintenance of the notion of autonomous

individual on the other, these were precisely the two clashing factors that animated an internal contradiction, and in turn led anarchists to place emphasis on non-economic and non-material forms of power. If authority is not authority as such, as it was demonstrated through the study of philosophical anarchism, then there must be something that makes it *convincingly* appear as authority and function as authority. This is something that cannot be critically investigated within the analytical confines of autonomous individual and quantitative power, which is why we are moving on to Max Stirner.

The purpose of this chapter is to focus on an exegesis of Max Stirner's thought as formulated in his main work *The Ego and Its Own*¹. The reason why I want to dedicate one entire chapter and most of the next chapter to this one book is because of my dissatisfaction with the way that Stirner is generally being read; only a small number of scholars seem to have noticed in Stirner's work something a lot more profound than mere nihilism and egotistical selfishness (Deleuze 1983:159-162; Clark 1976; Carroll 1974; Derrida 1994; Newman 2001). The primary purpose of this chapter is not to present Stirner himself, but to outline my own reading of Stirner's work. Of course, I will not be able to engage with the whole of Stirner's thought, due to the constraints of the word-limit, and will, therefore, focus only on the themes that are relevant for understanding State reification.

¹ This is the name of the English translation (Cambridge 1995; 2000) though it was first translated as *The Ego and His Own* (1907). Some commentators have argued that a more productive translation for *Der Einzige und Sein Eigentum* would be '*The Unique One and Its Properties*'.

In October 1844, seven hundred and fifty copies of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* by the then unknown Max Stirner² evaded censorship and started circulating in Berlin. This book has been described as ‘the most revolutionary book ever written ... a veritable breviary of destruction, a striking and dangerous book ... dangerous in every sense’ (Huneker 1909:371). Yet after reading it the verdict of the Saxon Minister of the Interior’s was that it is quite simply ‘too absurd to be dangerous’ to the existing order and the hunt for the copies was rescinded. Many commentators in decades to follow have commented more or less along these two opposite lines.

For anarchists themselves Max Stirner is a controversial figure – sometimes even seen as a figure of embarrassment. Some anarchists, like Kropotkin for instance, would even deny that Stirner is an anarchist simply because his concept of *egoism* is read literally, simplistically and at face value. In this chapter I will demonstrate that there is a lot more to Stirner than the conventional notion of egoism as a simplistic rejection of morality.

Stirner’s psychological anarchism suggests that the attachment to ideological and institutional structures of political authority reflects an attachment to deeper and more general frames of authority. This perspective indicts as merely ideological those branches of anarchism, and of all political theory, which fail to take account of the nature of the individual’s relationship to particular regimes of domination. These ideologies operate exclusively in an abstract realm of

² ‘Max Stirner’ is a pseudonym. The real name of this author was Johann Caspar Schmidt.

ideas and do not come to grips with social and psychological reality. As Saul Newman pointed out,

‘Perhaps the most important question for Stirner was not how power comes to dominate us, but why we allow power to dominate us – *why we willingly participate in our own domination* [the problem raised by Foucault³]. These were problems that neither anarchism nor Marxism could address’ (Newman 2001:55; my emphasis).

Writing in the middle of nineteenth century Stirner outlined the working of the type of power that became the primary concern for philosophers like Foucault and Deleuze. Stirner was trying to develop a type of phenomenology and philosophy that would not start with presuppositions. The two generally useful aspects of Stirner’s thought are the concern for the view of an autonomous indivisible individual that can be used as a unit of analysis (as a counter-thesis to which Stirner brings the concept of the *Ego*) on one hand, and essentialisms – the idea that essences are pre-given, stable and independent of factors that produce and present them, on the other. Though he did not call it this, what he developed is the earliest psychological model accompanied with a proto-existentialist ontology. What Stirner demonstrated is the way in which ideas themselves can become very powerful forms of domination. According to Stirner’s psychoanalytic model the idea of the higher, the absolute, alienates and reduces the self into a ghostly existence, thus internalising in him the dependency on and *reification* of the abstract idea (spook) into the Absolute being – in this case, the State.

³ See Foucault’s preface to Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*

Der Einzige

A Saxon minister might have considered Max Stirner's book to be too absurd to be dangerous, as it talks about ghosts, apparitions and phantasmagoria, but it still is not easy to maintain an indifferent stance toward the product of Stirner's self-creation.⁴ It is definitely not a conventional academic piece. Nevertheless, the thoughts expressed in it provide many valuable insights. It is written in a surprisingly simple manner that avoids usage of complicated technical terminology; in fact Arnold Ruge, a left Hegelian contemporary, commented on it being 'the first readable book in philosophy that Germany has produced' (in Leopold, D in Stirner 2000: xiii). *Der Einzige* is laid out in the style of Stirner's conversation with the reader, whereby Stirner takes one through a journey of his self-destruction and self-creation anew.

Stirner explicitly shocks with his use of language and text, with his uncompromisingly destructive nihilism, with his bitter existentialism and with what would seem a highly arrogant world-view: '...fools who suffer from the fixed idea of morality, legality, Christianity, and so forth, and only seem to go about free because the madhouse in which they walk takes in so broad a space' (1993: 24). Not surprisingly, *The Ego and Its Own* immediately excited a squall of reviews and furious criticisms that often came in the form of mocking texts rather than cogent counter-arguments.

It has been generally accepted that Stirner resolutely belongs to the Young Hegelian tradition. However, as it will be demonstrated, this category does not

⁴ That writing *Der Einzige* was a practice of nihilistic self-enjoyment on behalf of Stirner, was the argued by R.W.K. Paterson, 1971: 286-310

quite apply to this thinker. He is rather the inaugurator of a new type of philosophy and political philosophy. When examined closely, Max Stirner's thought, besides being the earliest formulation of an existentialist epistemological framework, also offers the earliest rendition of *non-transcendentalist critical theory* (a method of analysis that does not base itself on the tension between illusion and reality, reality and the real, untruth and truth and so forth), generally referred today as 'post-modernism'. In addition what further makes this thinker important is that he is the first one in the occidental philosophical tradition to initiate a psychological method of inquiry, a step that splits the indivisible unit upon which the classical political philosophy and State theories are founded – a step that has usually been attributed to Nietzsche and Freud.

The Ego and Its Own did not enjoy the fame of *The Communist Manifesto*, and perhaps that was not its purpose in the first place, though Laurence Stepelevich suggests we are at 'the beginning of another cycle of interest in Stirner' (1974: 325). What that book did accomplish, however, is to influence the development of such thinkers as Marx and Engels, and more so, Nietzsche and a whole variety of anarchists, thus enriching the anarchist tradition in many ways. But the most important contribution of Max Stirner to political thought is in his pioneering explorations in the terrain of post-metaphysical thinking, existentialist ontology, existential psychoanalysis, and thus far the only clear outline of what sort of politics these lead to.

Prior to an engagement with Stirner's arguments it needs to be pointed out that this thinker should not be read and analysed in liberal-rationalist, or even Hegelian, terms. As Andrew Koch argues 'the attempts to understand Stirner within the structural confines of a Hegelian ontology cause a serious misreading of Stirner's work' (Koch 1997:95-107). Liberal-rationalism, as John Carroll pointed out, "is a world-view founded on beliefs in rationality, utility, self-help, and progress" (Carroll 1974:13). The basic unit of analysis in the Liberal-rationalist philosophical system is the individual, who is analysed as a self-conscious rational agent. Thus society according to such a world-view is atomised and appears as "an aggregate of individual members having no ontological reality of its own" (Carroll 1974: 7).

As it has been said earlier, according to most commentators, Stirner has been interpreted as the protagonist of selfishness, literal egoism and individualist anarcho-capitalism. However, one can only reach these conclusions by reading Stirner through a Liberal-Rationalist prism, which, as it will become evident, does not apply to him and leads, therefore, toward an inconsistent analysis of his work. The reason for this is precisely because Stirner's work is a psychological investigation, which looks behind and inside the concept of the individual, instead of taking it as a given rational agent.

Left Hegelians and Ludwig Feuerbach

In order to understand Stirner's philosophy, it must be placed in the context of a brief outline of that period in the history of western thought in which he was writing.

The Left Hegelians, or Young Hegelians, with whom Stirner often associated, was not simply a group of German intellectuals or a philosophical club. Rather, they represent an interesting *transitional* stage in the history of Occidental philosophy, and were working on a rather experimental project. The project, in short, was to turn Hegel on his head in one way or another, to overcome religious thinking, to work toward some form of "materialism" [that would be more down to earth and more immediate] and to rid philosophy of its theological and idealist elements. Among Left Hegelians we find such prominent figures as Feuerbach, Moses Hess, Bruno Bauer, Engels, Marx, Arnold Ruge, David Strauss and, of course, Max Stirner. They all had an outstanding understanding of Hegel's philosophy and some of them had been Hegel's disciples in the past.

Evidently, Stirner was an important thinker in this circle, since his criticisms on the subject were taken seriously enough to merit lengthy and engaging replies (Clark 1976:12). One of these is Marx's and Engels' famous *The German Ideology* (1846)⁵, where longest section is dedicated to dealing with Stirner's thought.

⁵ Even though this important work was not published until 1932, it was written between autumn of 1845 and autumn 1846. Stirner's *Der Einzige und Sein Eigentum* came out in October of 1844, though only 750 copies escaped censorship. One of Marx's letters shows that he'd heard about the new

The German Ideology is not so much a product of young Marx's anger and hatred against Stirner, though the former's tone and sarcasm does suggest that, but rather a map that demonstrates how Marx's final views in philosophy were being developed. In that work we can see Marx returning to the same issues over and over again, every time with something new to add and every time as a somewhat reformed philosopher. In fact, as Paterson noticed in his comparison between Marx's 1844 manuscripts and post-1848 works,

‘Thus, from a passionately moral commitment to communism as a humanistic creed, in a relatively short span of time Marx transferred to a sociological affirmation of communism as the historical outcome of objective economic forces’ (Paterson 1971:117; quoted in Clark 1976:13).

Stirner's thinking was obviously influenced by Hegel, and to be more precise, it was a radical opposition to Hegel. However, *The Ego and Its Own*, despite being explicitly anti-Hegelian, is a work inspired as a criticism of some of his Young Hegelian contemporaries. It is indeed worth mentioning that Stirner's critique in *The Ego and Its Own* is directed not so much at Hegel's notion of alienation, or Christian theology, as much as at Ludwig Feuerbach's anthropocentrism. A brief outline of Feuerbach's argument is warranted in order for us to see the direction that Stirner is taking.

book and was anxious to read it in light of Engels' short-term conversion to *Egoism*, which at that time he saw as being useful to communism. However, it took Engels a whole year to obtain a copy of *Der Einzige* for Marx.

An important question for Young Hegelians, which often excited lively debates, was what was supposed to take the place of the Hegelian concept of ‘Absolute’ and ‘Spirit’ in light of their rejection. Ludwig Feuerbach’s thesis as expressed in his *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) was that “God” was an alienating concept; thus, Feuerbach effectively applied Hegel’s reinterpretation of Rousseauian alienation to religion. The alienating effect of religion is in the process whereby human beings surrender and delegate their human qualities (goodness, love, rationality) to an abstract notion, which, for Feuerbach, is God. By this process, Feuerbach maintained, we create and reify God out of the image of Man, and we make him into an almighty being. This should stop, Feuerbach argued, and the human essence must be restored to Man. In order to *overcome religious thinking* and to end alienation, Feuerbach maintained, in philosophy and ethics we have to replace the concept of “God” with an ideal that would be more down to earth. The new ideal that Feuerbach proposed to place in the centre of ethical universe was the category of “Man”, thus inscribing the basic principles of anthropocentrism and humanism. As far as the two ethical standpoints are concerned, anthropocentrism and humanism are not too far apart from each other: in general one sees humans as the superior species, which in turn means that all resources of the planet are legitimately at Man’s disposal, and argues for the prioritisation of protection of the biological aspect of human life over all other possible concerns. Feuerbach argued that the fixed universal human essence, capturing all the good qualities of human being, must be placed in the centre of philosophy precisely because of its humanness. Feuerbach’s anthropocentrism was nothing novel – it was already an increasingly popular liberalist-humanist world-view that put the essence of

‘Man’ in the place of essence of ‘God’. And thus Feuerbach claimed to have overcome the pitfalls of religious thinking.

Stirner’s critique of essence

As far as Stirner was concerned, Feuerbach was not critical enough. Feuerbachean anthropocentrism does not escape the idealistic and metaphysical dangers of religious thinking: it sets the same idealist dichotomy between the individual living the unsatisfactory present on one hand, and the ideal of some promised sublime reward in the form of reunification with the universal human essence on the other. As Carroll points out,

“Stirner passes beyond Feuerbach in his insistence that not only is God or religion a projection of man’s alienated self, but so is every ideal, every cause, every ‘fixed idea’, for they all entice men into following a *spook* which is neither of their creation nor within their power” (Carroll 1974:21).

‘According to Stirner, Feuerbach, while claiming to have overthrown religion, merely reversed the order of subject and predicate, doing nothing to undermine the place of religious authority itself’ (Newman 2001:58; Stirner 1993:58). The alienating category of God is retained and entrenched in a new category of ‘Man’ (the essentialism of what a perfect human being is supposed to be), by positing an essential man and attributing to him certain qualities within some abstracted symbolic order, which is neither the individual’s creation, nor of his/her choosing. In doing so the individual’s corporeity is denied anew

(Stirner 1993:33). For Stirner this is even more alienating because now the human essence that is posited as the absolute is attributed with qualities which have hitherto been attributed to God. As Nietzsche will say later, ‘the ugliest of men, having killed God because he could not bear his pity, is still exposed to the pity of Men’ (see Nietzsche 1969:275-79). For Stirner anthropocentric reshuffling of ethics is more alienating and, in effect, is an even more likely tool for subjugation and reappropriation.

As MacLellan suggests,

‘Stirner can thus be seen as the last of the Hegelians, last perhaps because he was the most logical, not attempting to replace Hegel’s ‘concrete universal’ by any ‘humanity’ or ‘classless’ society since he had no universal, only the individual, all-powerful ego’ (MacLellan 1969:119)

Stirner, thus, seems to have had a broader view of what *religious thinking* involves and of what was at stake in overcoming it. For Stirner it was not the question of *what* was thought of, but *how* it was thought of. Therefore, religious thinking is not thinking of God, but *thinking religiously*: it is a *mode* of thinking regardless of what the idea of God is replaced with. It is a *hierarchical mode of thinking* that places abstract ideals and essences *above* the Self in the stead of God, be that “Human Essence”, the “State”, the Party, the Fatherland, the Race, the Nation, the Class or the “Golden Calf”. It is, therefore, a *pattern* of thinking that elevates into the empty place of the absolute and *reifies*, brings into life, a sublime ideal out of an in-existent *Geist* (spook), while subordinating and

ontologically diminishing the existent corporeal self, and effectively subjectifying the individual to that reified object.

Therefore, whether it is the State, Justice, the representation of God, the Nation, the Class, the Human Essence or any other manifestations of the same “fixed idea”, we must reject each one of them and look for more basic reality that underlies our conceptualisation of them (Clark 1976: 17).

Anti-Philosophy: a philosophy without presuppositions

Eugene Fleischman once interpreted Stirner’s project as “anti-philosophy”, whereby abstract concepts are forsaken in favour of “the world of his immediate experience” (Fleischman 1971:225). Thus Stirner can be seen as the first anti-foundationalist. He is in search of a phenomenology that would not be animated theologically or eschatologically. He is in search of a philosophy with no presuppositions.

‘According to Stirner, the failure of both the old forms of idealism and the new attempts at criticism lie in their presuppositions [not in what they pose as a presupposition, but in the very fact that they have one to start with]. They all stop with presuppositions which depend, in turn, on further, unacknowledged, presuppositions’ (Clark 1976: 18).

In other words, there cannot be an ultimate *pure* presupposition since something further is already presupposed by it, and so on *ad infinitum*. Thus, it seems,

Stirner reverses Hegel's positive dialectical model and looks at the alleged genealogy of the *thesis* in the dialectical triad – how did *thesis* come to be, what is the origin of the *thesis*? At that point Stirner makes a simple twist that paves the way for radical subjectivity that will shake the foundations of idealism's rational origins as symbolised in '*Cogito ergo sum*'. Stirner puts forward a proposition that every presupposition comes as one's *own* thought, and since, in light of the endless spirals of presuppositions mentioned above, a pure presupposition is impossible, we must be looking not for higher "fixed ideas" in various manifestations, but for a more basic reality that produces these subjective thoughts and presuppositions in the first place - *existence*. Thus, he inverts 'I think therefore I am', into 'I am therefore I think', or, to do justice to Stirner, into 'I am' and 'I alone am corporeal' – existence is the primary truth. Thus, Stirner deducts a reference point, the particular individual *Ego*, which he quite logically calls "not a presupposition at all" (Stirner 1963: 150).

Now, the concept of the *Ego* in Stirner's work must not be confused with the concept of Individual. This is the mistaken reading of many Stirner-influenced so-called anarcho-individualists or anarcho-capitalists. On the contrary, the *Ego* is the inverted and internal view of the allegedly indivisible Individual. Everything, all creation of reality, ideas and desires, is happening *inside* this *Ego*, which in turn means that despite all that, it is also a site of potential resistance. The *Ego* is neither a thing, nor an idea, but "something" that cannot be represented and is not static – Stirner calls it the 'creative nothing'. As he puts it, 'I am not nothing in the sense of emptiness, but I am the creative nothing, the nothing, the nothing out of which I myself as creator create everything'

(Stirner 2000: 7). Ego is at the time of Stirner a new and unexplored concept. Thus, what Stirner is calling for and develops is a psychoanalysis-based inquiry.

I would like to stop for a moment in order to elaborate on Stirner's view of the self being the existent and the creator of reality. When Stirner says "I alone am corporeal" it forms a newly deducted departing point not only in terms of his thesis, but also in terms of political philosophy altogether. This is one of the basic premises featuring throughout various renditions of Existentialist tradition: The self exists prior to reality and everything else. This is a major ontological step, since under its premises it is no longer the individual that bends around reality, but reality around the individual. In turn this leads to the primacy of the phenomenological method of inquiry since what the above premise implies is that the individual can and does create his/her world.

The next important thing is not so much the atheistic, but more of a rebellious attitude against the place of the higher Absolute inherent in this statement. A small elaboration is needed here. It seems to me, Stirner by saying "I alone am corporeal" revisits the question of existence through a hidden reference to the name of God. A quote from the Holy Bible is appropriate at this stage for clarification.

"And Moses said unto God, Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? What shall I say unto them?

“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM : and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. (Exodus, III: 13, 14; emphases original)”

Now, the meaning implicit in this statement which does not seem to be too explicit in King James translation and the modern translation, is threefold (which is open to interpretation). One is that God says "I am the only really existing being, which is why I must not have a name, and my name must be unutterable" and the other is that "I am ontologically the highest being", and the third interpretation is that "I am what I am – unique, and I know that and I don't need to change". Thus, though not obvious, this is, it seems, where Stirner derives his "I alone am corporeal" from: it is a rebellion against what he sees as the non-existent reified being that is the creator of all reality and history. It is a matter of Stirner reclaiming and taking back his own existence and sovereignty from God.

This parallel, through which Stirner's *Einzig* struggles with is what he sees as the spectre, is traceable again later in Stirner's work when he attempts to define and name himself and says 'I am the criterion of truth, but I am not an idea, but more than idea, that is, *unutterable*' (2000: 314; my emphasis). Unutterable, just as God's name is unutterable. Unutterable, because the very word that would stand as the signifier would destroy the uniqueness of his being

The discussion that develops once the concept of the Ego is established is indeed unique. It is a sort of phenomenology, but a phenomenology without any presuppositions and by now with eradicated rationalist methods. Stirner is

no longer concerned with the essence of reality and what are things in themselves – it is now a matter of looking at how one creates the world anew in light of the knowledge of existence. Stirner seems to construct a phenomenological method that effectively bypasses metaphysics. By now metaphysics does not interest him, but only how metaphysics constitutes that which we know to be the real, and its role in helping subjects to establish their own domination.

Ontology

In order to understand Stirner's thought one must first grasp the ontological framework that underlies his work. Stirner's radical critique, his ethical system, political critique and the re-evaluation of the Real, come primarily from his attitude toward *being*.

To start with, Stirner's work is revolutionary in the way that it reverses and, in effect, destabilises the key premises of occidental thought since Socrates. For one, Stirner is no longer concerned with the customary search for orders of things, grand narratives, metaphysics, higher purposes and higher essences. Indeed, he dedicates the first part of his book to mapping out how these pursuits have historically limited the individual in ancient and modern times, and eventually led to the fixation of everyday life.

Much of classical political philosophy, and ideologies have been animated and informed by the tension between contending normative categorisations of human nature: between ‘good’ and ‘evil’, or by various renditions of the same dichotomy. In between these categories there is always the presupposition that has distinguished modern political thought – the rational subject. In other words, if the human nature is inherently ‘evil’, then life in the state of nature would be ‘bad’, which is why there is a State. If, on the other hand, the human nature is inherently ‘good’, as many Libertarian, including classical anarchist, traditions maintain, then the State becomes more of an obstacle that needs to disappear (Koch, A. 1993: 327-8).

But what happens to political theory and conceptualisations of the State if we try to escape this conceptual tension between good and evil, set aside the normative categorisations of human nature and even abandon the assumption that there is such a thing as a pre-existing “human essence” altogether? This is precisely what Max Stirner did, thus inaugurating the post-metaphysical thinking that would later develop into existentialism and postmodernism.

For Max Stirner there is no such thing as pre-existing “human nature” outside its interpretations and constructions. Human nature is neither good nor bad, but only weak – it is prone to interpretations and is constructed discursively: ‘In itself nothing is either good or bad, but man only thinks of it thus or thus’ (Stirner 2000: 28). In fact, in the ethical system that Stirner presents there are no concepts of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ at all. The ‘good’ men are as possessed by governing norms, virtues and morals, as the ‘evil’ men are possessed by the

devil. Both are equally possessed, but when one places “ego” at the centre of the ethical universe (as Stirner does) it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish what is good and what is evil. Therefore, in Stirner’s ethical universe there are only ego-enhancing forces and ego-diminishing forces, which in turn leads to reshuffle the social and political mechanisms into psychoanalytic terms.

Besides that, Stirner reverses Descartes’ ‘I think therefore I am’ – the claim that thought is the only valid criterion for identifying agency and existence; the claim that artificially created the Archimedean point in western political-theoretical practice. All of external reality from fatherland and nation to the State and family, according to Stirner is ideas, spirits and ‘spooks’: they do not exist, as they do not fulfil the existentialist criterion for existence - *presence*. At the same time Stirner champions the statements that would give birth to the new radical traditions in political philosophy of the next century: ‘*I alone am corporeal*’ and ‘*I am*’ – existence precedes essence. Thus, Stirner elaborates the new fundament for political thinking, whereby all that can be said is that *the individual exists*. For Stirner, the individual first exists and only then does he process thoughts, constitute himself and the reality around him; he/she first exists and only then thinks, works, talks.

In effect, this is not a debate about which came first, the being or its nature, but an important statement on what is really real and what is produced as reality. ‘A good patriot brings his sacrifice to the altar of the fatherland; but it cannot be disputed that the fatherland is an idea, since for beasts incapable of mind, or children as yet without mind, *there is no* fatherland and no patriotism’ (Stirner

2000: 32; my emphasis). From this point stems Stirner's problem (which is similar to the problem of this thesis at the basic level): while the individual is all that exists, his/her existence is reduced into a shadowy insignificance of permanently unfulfilled essences; and while the universals, ideas and concepts, like the State, do not really exist they operate as the supreme existents, possess individuals, drive masses, make history and basically form the only active forces. How, according to Stirner, this paradox becomes possible will be elaborated later by laying out his 'anarcho-psychological' (Carroll, 1974) method of inquiry.

The Possessed and the Wheels in The Head

In Stirner's reflection of how things are, there are no active agents but only all-encompassing totalising structures, or to put it in his own words – spooks, fixed ideas, words with no real signification, spirits, ghosts and so forth. Since *The Ego and Its Own* is written in a seemingly simple and colloquial language, Stirner resorts to excessive use of metaphors, thus an extensive use of 'the possessed' and 'the wheels in the heads', which is what he uses to elaborate his version of government and how he views the world around him. He speaks to his figurative opponent 'the modern' and/or 'the cleric',

'Man, your head is haunted [possessed]; you have wheels in your head! You imagine great things, and depict to yourself a whole world of *gods* that has an existence for you, a spirit-realm to which you suppose yourself to be called, an ideal that beacons to you. You have a fixed ideal!'(Stirner, 2000: 43; my emphasis).

In the above depiction as in many others it becomes clear that ‘the possessed’ is the theme of ‘docile bodies’, which Michael Foucault would later explore in greater depth (1977). The theme of ‘the possessed’ is further elaborated in the following extract.

‘He who has never tried and dared not to be a good Christian, a faithful Protestant, a virtuous man, and the like, is possessed and prepossessed by faith, virtuousness, etc’ (Stirner 2000: 43-4)... Is it perchance only people possessed by the devil that meet us, or do we as often come upon people possessed in the contrary way - possessed by "the good," by virtue, morality, the law, or some "principle" or other? Possessions of the devil are not the only ones. God works on us, and the devil does; the former "workings of grace," the latter "workings of the devil." Possessed people are set in their opinions (*ibid.* 2000: 44).... "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise," the fundamental maxim of all the possessed.

Through the notion of ‘*the possessed*’, the notions of government and authority immediately gain a new, much broader, connotation: it is not an institution or a specific individual that governs and directs conduct by issuing commands, decrees, acts and laws, but the more subtle and omnipresent idea that ‘possesses’ him/her/it. Such a radical re-conceptualisation of what governs the behaviour is similar to Foucault’s studies in governmentality and indeed bears a significant impact on the conceptualisation of what is the State; but these aspects will be looked at later in the thesis.

Stirner's psychoanalytic framework

What interests Stirner is how the “*idea of*” something sacred, infinite, unknown, incomprehensible, higher and metaphysical comes to shape reality as we know it, and animates modern identities. In other words, he investigates religion's psychological role in motivation.

Stirner sets up a specific category, which he refers to under different names: the higher, the sacred, the fixed idea, the spook, the spirit, the sublime and so forth. This unknown sacred, according to Stirner, exists as a sort of God-shaped *vacuum* or *emptiness*, which is what makes it so alluring – the fact that one can never get to know it *fully* or get reunited with it. The essence of the being that is said to exist in this higher unknown realm is, according to Stirner, constituted by the interplay of two factors. The first factor is its representation through various signs (which do not hold an immediate signified behind them) and language in general (which works only to represent and reify the unreal concepts, but not that which is most profound in a unique being). The second factor is a spectral mode of experiencing the sign and the events.

What haunts the universe, and has its occult, ‘incomprehensible’ being there, is precisely the mysterious spook that we call highest essence. And to get to the bottom of this *spook*, to comprehend it, to discover *reality* in it (to prove ‘the existence of God’) – this task men set to themselves for thousands of years; with the horrible impossibility the endless Danaid-labour, of transforming the spook

into a non-spook, the unreal into something real, the *spirit* into entire and *corporeal* person – with this they have tormented themselves to death. Behind the existing world they sought the ‘thing in itself’, the essence; behind the *thing* they sought the *un-thing* (Stirner 2000:40; emphases original)

Given this framework, the subject starts off with an initial ‘*idea of*’ the higher being and contemplates the full absoluteness of the feeling and the sensation of a total awe that may come from the eventual encounter and the re-unity with that sacred/sublime/ideal. In the midst of these contemplations of conceptual absoluteness, the individual abdicates his/her powers and corporeity and delegates these to the imagined sublime metaphysical object. The subject thus turns his corporeal existence into a spiritual existence. The process of abdicating individuals’ corporeity to the sublime reifies its existence and presence. Thus something that exists as an idea, a spook and as a representation, is reified and obtains absolute existence and presence, while the individual degenerates into a ghostly existence. This, in turn, leads to the construction of a newly imagined world thereafter, and the constitution of the subject’s identity in accordance with his/her relation to the reified being.⁶

Whether there is God or not is not the question that bothers Stirner – in fact, at times his stance on this issue seems to be not as atheistic as one would expect from such a radical existentialist. Stirner is more concerned to see how the patterns of religious amassment and reification are replicated in social spheres

⁶ This framework is outlined in the Part 1, chapter 2 of *The Ego and Its Own*.

beyond theology. He traces the same ideological patterns of reification in Political Liberalism, Socialism and especially Humanism (Stirner 2000: 103; 117; 129-35).

Thus what is important about religion is not only the ethics that it monopolises and stabilises, but the generic psychological method that it employs, which returns in new forms in modern societies. Whether we have a concrete instance of religious psychology or any other ideological play they still serve the same psychological purpose: 'he who places his *essence* above himself' (Stirner quoted in Carroll 1974: 21) is thus *permanently* cut off from the possibility of a good life and self-realisation.

'He who is infatuated with *Man* leaves persons out of account' (Stirner 2000: 83). By elaborating how an individual places his/her essence before existence, Stirner formulates a new type of alienation: the alienation of the self from the self,

'To God, who is spirit, Feuerbach gives the name 'our essence'. Can we put up with this, that 'our essence' is brought into opposition to *us*, that we are split into an essential and un-essential self? Do we not with that go back into the dreary misery of seeing ourselves being banished from ourselves' (Stirner 2000: 33-4).

This ontic condition of *existence* being permanently cut off from and permanently lagging behind the *essence*, forms a powerful social impetus; According to Stirner it is constitutive of modern identities.

Egoism and the Possibility of Ethics and Responsibility

What is opposed to ‘the possessed’ in Stirner’s thought is the concept of *Der Einzige* – the Unique, the I, the self-possessor, the Ego. A precise and detailed outline of egoist ethics would be impossible since for every individual it would naturally be unique. It is a diversity-orientated and a particularist ethical system, which places the Ego at the centre of its universe. Egoism is an ethical system that stands in opposition to ‘possessedness’ – the state of being swayed by the causes and ideologies that are not one’s own. Egoism, which could also be understood as ‘ownness’ (being in possession of the self), is a state of reunification of the self with its existence, once the search for the metaphysics of essence has been eschewed.

‘Just recognise yourselves again, just recognize what you really are, and let go your hypocritical endeavours, your foolish mania to be something else that you are’ (Stirner 2000: 119).

As Carroll spotted, ‘Stirner prefigures Sartre’s central notion of ‘bad faith’, of the individual living at a remove from his ‘true self’, in self-deceit’ (Carroll 1974: 28).⁷

Therefore, instead of having universal essences and a reified at the centre of the ethical system, the egoist places his/her own self at the centre and constitutes the table of values anew thereafter. This must not, however, be confused with the typically bourgeois notion of self-interest, which informs the moral basis of

⁷ This theme of ‘alienation of the self from the self’ forms an important part in Situationist texts, which will be explored later in the thesis.

modern conditions of capitalism and citizenship, and which Stirner ridicules in the character of a 'cleric'. This has been a misreading of Stirner by commentators who have read him on modernist rationalist terms (Marx 1932; Miller 1984:22-5; Woodcock 1962:87-97).

'Stirner views 'good' and 'evil' as artificial indices taken up by individuals to save them making the difficult choices in life; they neatly divide the activities of man into the positive and the negative' (Carroll 1974:28).

In this way a series of universal reifieds, such as the State, the nation, the party, class and so forth, serve as convenient filters for systematically giving one's responsibility away. This particular aspect of his thought will be examined more closely and taken further later in the thesis.

'...The real task is not to rid life of ethics but to rid ethics of its ideological content' (Carroll 1974:38). As it exorcises the ghosts of ideologies and essences, an egoist ethics can bring a sense of the real back closer to the individual. Stirner believed that individuals have a potential to create their own worlds, just as they create and reify objective reality. But precisely due to the way it escapes from the alienation posed by universal essences, Stirner's thought presents a chance for the return of political responsibility.

"If as spirit I had thrust away the world in the deepest contempt, so as owner I thrust spirits or ideas away into their 'vanity'. They have no longer any power over me, as no 'earthly might' has power over the spirit... The thoughts had become *corporeal* on their own account, were ghosts, such as God, emperor, [the State], Pope,

fatherland, etc. If I destroy their corporeity, then I take them back into mine, and say: 'I alone am corporeal'. And now I take the world as what it is to me, as *mine*, as my property; I refer all to myself (Stirner 2000:17).

Furthermore, it seems that Stirner's proposal for an ego-centric ethics offers a revitalised possibility for repoliticisation. This is achieved not only by the sovereign self-creation of the Ego and, thus, reclaiming political responsibility, but also by eliminating the ethical geography between the ego and the alienated world. In a way, the Ego-ist ethics allows for a consciousness that could be summarised as 'this is my world', as elaborated in the paragraph below.

'Not in this self-forgetting, but in the forgetting of this, that the world is our world, does unselfishness, i.e. false egoism, have its basis. Before an absolute, a "higher" world, you throw yourself down and throw yourself away. Unselfishness is not self-forgetting in the sense that one does not think of oneself and is not engaged with oneself, but in another sense, that one forgets the "our" of the world, that one forgets that one is the middle point or owner of this world, that it is our property. The fear and timidity shown toward the world as a "higher" world is the most disheartened, "submissive" egoism, egoism in the form of the slave, who does not dare to grumble, who remains still and "denies himself" -- it is self-denial' (Stirner, 1976: 355).

Conclusion

The Ego and Its Own shows the way in which ideas can become, in themselves, a form of domination. We have seen how the notions of an atomistic individual and human essence have been concealing the fact that the problem of State reification indeed exists. What we have in Stirner's thought is a basic existential psychoanalytic model that maps out the reification of the State – how and why we do it. Stirner shows us not how power comes to dominate us, but why and how people willingly participate in their own domination. By demonstrating how religious, psychological and ideological power pervades the individual and internalises one's dependency on the reification of the Absolute higher, we have dissolved the notion of the autonomous individual as well as the conceptualisation of the State as a pre-existing entity. Furthermore, Stirner presents the State not as a centralised institution, but as a dispersed and omnipresent ethical and mental system, whereby its resolutions of presence (being) indeed puzzle a phenomenological analyst as they follow the logic of the ghost and possession, rather than the logic of corporeality (and this will be further explored in the next chapter). It means that State reification must be an inherently micro-political enterprise. This raises new questions regarding the being of the State that will be pursued in the next chapters, which will build on the achievements of Stirner and take them further.

Max Stirner, and indeed this chapter, must be seen as a point of transition from Left Hegelians to post-modern and psychoanalytic modes of enquiry. That is also the limitation of this chapter. Stirner only gives us a working basis and it is up to us what we will do with it. His argument is often impressionistic and not fully explored: implications are not spelt out. Therefore many of the themes and methods that Stirner initiates but does not elaborate will need to be taken further in this thesis by examining other currents of thought that operate within the same tradition. Applying Stirner's arguments to the problem of State reification as well as taking his thought further with the help of more recent philosophies will be the purpose of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Spectres of Sovereignty

In an Indian tale a young boy survives a massacre of his village, which refused to pay duties to the Dragon who dominated the area. The little boy decides to take revenge for his parents and after years of martial arts training he finally arrives at Dragon's palace and faces the final battle in which he kills the Dragon. Just before the Dragon dies, however, he tells our hero that the task of killing him is a lot more intricate than it seems, after which the body of the Dragon turns into a body of a young man. Joyous with victory our hero decides to stay in the beautiful palace overnight, and when the night passes, he decides to stay for a while longer, and then longer again and so on. When local people arrive in order to pay their tribute, they treat our hero just as they would treat the Dragon, and our hero does not understand why that is happening. When he looks at his reflection in the water, he sees that he himself has become the Dragon.

This ancient tale implicitly carries a question that is central to understanding State reification. If the modern State is only a recent expression of the more profound and deep-rooted regimes of ascendancy, what does it mean to kill the State? To put it in Foucault's words, what does it mean to cut off the king's head? This question already carries a set of prior questions: what is the State? What makes a State? And, how does it become a State?

In the previous chapter, we have looked at the basic framework of Max Stirner's thought. It was argued that it is the ego that is the creator of the conceptualisation of reality, which is same as saying that it is the creator of political reality. At the same time we have outlined another mode of domination – one that operates through the making of the Self. It was demonstrated how this process saturates the process of the ego's creation of reality, and produces the individual through initial alienation, thus binding the self to an identity that is not of one's own creation, and subsequently internalising within the individual the need for self-subjectification and reification of the State. With the help of this basic existential psychoanalytic model it was demonstrated how ideas themselves can be an effective mode of domination. This type of power immediately left us at odds with the classical conceptualisation of the individual as being autonomous, indivisible and having an essence, and thus we parted with that category. Thus, even though we kept the classical anarchist top-down model of State enforcement, we have also revealed how the individuals' desires are channelled in the direction of participation in their own domination. And we have outlined Stirner's basic psychoanalytic model that suggests how and why State self-subjectification and State reification take place.

While the previous chapter focused on the existential psychoanalytic aspects of Max Stirner's work (which is hardly noticed by most commentators), this chapter will focus on the debate that Stirner is more famous for – a discussion about ghosts and spectres.

What this chapter will attempt to highlight is the mystic and metaphysical characteristics of the State's presence, and the ubiquitous (as opposed to centralised and institutionalised, as usually conceived) body of the State. Quintessentially, this will be a discussion on sovereignty, and as it will be demonstrated, to speak of the *phantomatic presence* of the State is not only relevant to the theme of sovereignty, but is central to it. Put differently, to try to untie the aporia inherent in the notion of "ghostly presence" would also mean cracking the logic by which sovereignty presents itself as a convincing discourse.

John Carroll was first to recognise 'that Stirner initiates the method of *psychological* thinking which has usually been attributed to Nietzsche, the method to be developed most fully and systematically by Freud' (Carroll 1974:16). What awaits further recognition is that Stirner's work initiates an enquiry into the psychological origins of the overriding patterns of human political *thinking* and *experiencing*, and their relationship to specific regimes of ascendancy. What has not been approached and recognised is that Stirner's work is directly concerned with the psychological foundations of *sovereignty* and hierarchy; and the specific *logic* that makes them functional and reproductive.

From the outset, however, I feel obliged to clarify what I mean by "sovereignty". This is necessary not only because the concept of sovereignty is itself quite a messy one, but also because different persons use this word to signify different things. Therefore, while the whole chapter is in itself an elaboration of this concept, a brief sketch is in order so as to allow for better understanding of the discussion to follow.

What I mean by sovereignty is not the territorial integrity of the nation-State. It is rather a term that I use to signify how the subjectified (or the possessed) subject views the idea of and the sublime sign of “the State”, how one experiences the presence of “the State”. In other words, it is a mode of political thinking (which is the return of Stirner’s notion of *religious thinking*) and experiencing, which is necessarily hierarchical, and which always carries an intense mystical undertone. Thus, at the basic level, it is still a certain characteristic that the sign of “the State” claims (is claimed) to possess. I do not assert this to introduce a new notion of sovereignty here. I am still looking at the same concept of sovereignty, but from a slightly different angle.

Why Sovereignty?

The problem of sovereignty is not only in the way that it shapes identities and desires, but also that it is like a spectacle, or a prism, through which one looks at political reality. Practices that are identical in what they perform (for instance robbery, purposeful killing or terrorising) appear different and often carry opposing meanings depending on whether they were carried out by the sovereign one or not. Sovereignty, thus, is not irrelevant to the problem of State reification for it plays a decisive role in interpreting the political reality in accordance with the Statist paradigm.

But the problem of sovereignty also suggests a certain mistake within the classical anarchist thought. The problem of sovereignty is a problem which classical anarchist thought always tries to get at, but never to the degree of

criticality that would be required for the problem of State reification. Leo Tolstoy was perhaps the anarchist thinker whose thought had more impact on the direction of the world politics than that of any other anarchists – I am referring to the influence that Tolstoy’s anarcho-pacifism and the tactic of non-violent-action had on Gandhi and which in one way or another helped India achieve the status of a sovereign state; or to use popular terminology – ‘become independent’ (for ideological link between the Satyagraha movement and Tolstoy see Marshall, P. 1992: 422-427; Burba, D. 2000; Tolstoy, L. 1999). We may also recall the contributions of Bakunin-the-theorist and Bakunin-the-activist, Kropotkin, Proudhon, Makhno, Berkman, Tucker, Menzler and many more theorists and activists from the martyrs of Haymarket in 1886 to the more recent anarchist battle of Genoa. We may ponder the role that the political philosophy of anarchism, anarchist ideology and anarchist activism have played directly and indirectly in influencing the course of political events in a minor or in a grand scale in shaping the resolution of ‘where-are-we-now’. The history of anarchism is vast, and so is its theoretical and historical role. However, despite the sizeable role that anarchism has played as an intellectual and a political movement, it has never managed to direct political events into a terrain not marked by the logic of sovereignty. To say more, if we are to think of the retrospective role of anarchism in terms of its ideological denomination of ideas of justice, civil rights, liberties, equality and so forth, it has often assisted those very revolutionary/transformatory forces that proved to be sovereignty-affirmative, and thus in a way endorsed those transformations of the concept of sovereignty that continuously make it ever more progressive and subtle.

State sovereignty and institutionalised hierarchy as the distinctive mode of international and political relationships mark the epoch of *political* modernity. Skocpol's thesis was that revolutions do not weaken the State, but further reproduce it in a new *form*, while only reaffirming its sovereign *character* (Skocpol 1994). From the perspective of the anarchist theory this political paradox of modernity places under suspicion progressivist interpretations of history¹, and further problematises the possibility of any future progress either through the medium of revolutions as conventionally understood on one hand, or gradual transitions and transformations on the other. The disregard of the *logic of sovereignty* (on behalf of anarchism-the-movement and many radical revolutionary forces), as the decisive factor in the reproduction/reformulation of the sovereign superstructure and the politics of sovereignty in the aftermath of social revolutions/transformations, is the classic anarchist theoretical explanation of these blunders. Giorgio Agamben convincingly elaborates why we should be looking at sovereignty, and to be more precise, at the logic of sovereignty. He argues,

‘The problem of sovereignty was reduced to the question of who within the political order was invested with certain powers, and *the very threshold of the political order itself* was never called into question. Today, now that the great State structures have entered into a process of dissolution and the emergency has, as Walter Benjamin foresaw, become the rule, the time is ripe to place the problem of

¹ The progress thesis was initiated by Condorcet (1795) *L'Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, who was in turn influenced by Turgot's powerful development of optimism and thus a linear paradigm of history. Such interpretations of history ('whig' school) are distinctive characteristics of political thoughts of Kant, Hegel, Emerson, Godwin and many others including IR theorists; for examples of such interpretation of international history see Clark, I. 1984.

the ordinary structure and limits of the form of the State in a new perspective. The weakness of [classical] anarchist and Marxian critiques of the State was precisely to have not caught sight of this structure and thus to have quickly left the *arcanum imperii* aside, as if it had no substance outside of the simulacra and the ideologies invoked to *justify* it. But one ends up identifying with an enemy whose structure one does not understand, and the theory of the State (and in particular of the state of exception, which is to say, of dictatorship of the proletariat as the transitional phase leading to the stateless society) is the reef on which the revolutions of our century have been shipwrecked' (Agamben 1995:12; my emphases).

Agamben's comment about anarchism might be unfair, if not poorly informed. So far in this thesis, I hope, I have shown that anarchism does very much call the very *threshold* of political order itself into question, and that it does place an emphasis on the ideological and simulacral justificatory elements of State theories (as it was discussed earlier in the anarchist rejection of Social Contract theories). And that is why I added "classical" in front of "anarchist" in the above paragraph. Because of this generality, Agamben seems to level a critique at anarchism by means of the very arguments that define the cornerstones of the anarchist thought itself. However, Agamben is right to have spotted the fundamental flaw associated with the Marxian critique and understanding of the State. Agamben's paragraph represents how anarchists starting from Bakunin would criticise Marxian thought. And it is this reply to Marx that came to define the foundation of anarchism, namely the critique of the *idea* and the limited *political* critique which understood transformation solely in terms of

taking over the State machinery, but did not account for the state of exception by means of which it aimed to do that – not accounting for the problematic of the logic of sovereignty that reaches deeper than an analysis of relations of production may comprehend. However, Agamben already suggests that the problem of sovereignty is a lot deeper than usually conceived, and this warrants a discussion of sovereignty.

There is, however, a valuable tendency within the classical anarchist intellectual project, which goes back to its origins and therefore is inherent in anarchism, despite the directions that its intellectual and tactical developments take. While classical anarchism recognises the importance of material factors, it nevertheless stresses the criticality involved not in the political institutions and structures as such, but in the logical and ideational matrices that underlie them. Despite being relatively un-updated by many of the philosophical developments of the late twentieth century, the true value of anarchism is in its inseparable and therefore relentless attempts to evaluate the State *as-if* it did not have sovereignty, while treating both State and sovereignty not as naturally given and justifiable phenomena, but as abstracts that can be evaluated for their own justificatory and constitutive roles.

Let us recall the original disagreement between Marx and Bakunin, which came to inspire and write much of anarchism's intellectual and practical agenda as a tactical code of political resistance. This disagreement was over the question of the State. While Marx saw the objective of a socialist revolution being to cease bourgeoisie ownership of the means of production by taking over the State

machinery, anarchism sought a *popular insurrection* that would not be *led* by few vanguards, but on the contrary would stem from below, from the masses regardless of class, from diverse social groups of diverse backgrounds and as a result of diverse practices. Thus we may say that the objective of anarchism is not to replace the ‘bad’ State with a ‘good’ one, but to abolish *the idea* of State², *the idea* of necessity of government, institutions and bureaucracies, *the idea* of the inevitability of hierarchy, and the general *idea* that these are inseparable from the notion of political community altogether.³ In other words, the task of an anarchist insurrection is to rebel against and to overcome these *ideas*.⁴ Thus the questions: how did these ideas come into being, how did these discourses come to solidify as the governing paradigm of a universal code of political practice, and more importantly, how is it that the reproduction of the idea of the State is already secured prior to the stage of revolutionary aftermath? It may seem that the question of sovereignty is at the crux of explanations. Essentially, what is central to this chapter is not the concept of sovereignty *per se*, but that specific mode of political thinking and phenomenology that produces and re-produces it in a new guise – *the logic of sovereignty*.

Without a stable (or stabilised) sovereignty the State would not be a State. It would not exist at all. Sovereignty is the very *convincing* aspect of State’s

² In the sixth chapter I attempt to rethink the traditional notion of the State. Following from Stirner’s revision of thoughts, concepts, structures, ideas as *reified* and anthropomorphised spooks, the argument there continues to claim that there *is* no State. It does not *exist*, though is *present* as an overall *state of mind*. The State is just a static/state-ic/fixed *idea* that lubricates the everyday functioning of the system of hierarchical relationships and reproductive sovereignties.

³ Much of Bookchin’s concern has been the notion of *hierarchy* in political communities. See especially Bookchin, M. 1971: *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, Berkeley: The Ramparts Press; and Bookchin, M. *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*, New York: Black Rose

⁴ This is why anarchist theory stresses the importance of revisiting the atomistic treatment of the notion of ‘individual’ (or ‘subject’), that has been presupposed as the basic unit of analysis and as a self-governing and consenting ‘thinking unit’, without holistic reference to the possibility of more subtle notions of power at work.

presence and existence, and this chapter is concerned with what makes it so convincing. As it was demonstrated earlier, classical anarchists rejected Social Contract theories as a basis for sovereign power. Partly because of this, classical anarchism is in a position not to take the State for granted. It was said that philosophical anarchists, in particular, do not evaluate the State through the spectacles of sovereignty, and thus judge the State actions for what they are in themselves. (Of course, anarchists do not dispute that the State is generally *taken* to be sovereign, but that is a separate issue that will be addressed in the course of this chapter.) Instead of Social Contract theories, it was argued, anarchists present an alternative set of narratives whereby the State is enforced from top down, following which discourses of sovereignty are produced and established in order to *convincingly* justify the existence of the State. As Stirner put it, '[t]he power of words follows that of things: *first one is coerced by the rod, afterward by conviction*. (Stirner 2000:306; my emphasis). By interrogating sovereignty, I will argue that the convincing power of the logic of sovereignty does not convincingly *justify* the existence of the State, but merely convincingly simulates the *existence* of the State, which is a lot more profound.

Furthermore, in understanding the evolution of the State and sovereignty, instead of using Social Contract theories and economic factors, anarchists like Bakunin and Stirner place more emphasis on deeper cultural enterprises, in particular, *religion*. Stirner, especially, had this emphasis as he examined religion's psychological role in evolution of the modern State and sovereignty. By utilising Stirner's argument I will show that the problem of sovereignty is neither metaphysical, nor evolutionary (as contractarians would put it), but that

it is a question of ontological and psychological dependency, similar to religion in the way that it still effectively employs the transformed and secularised notions of sacredness and spectrality.

Repetitions of Sovereignty

The problem of sovereignty runs through the history of the political. In a way we can trace the same religious and psychological dynamics involved in sovereignty not only in acts of sacrificing one's life in war, but also in prehistoric man's first act of sacrifice to the unknown ungraspable higher. In this section by utilising Stirner's thought, I will try to outline the dialectic of sovereignty whereby the forms of governance and signs of the State continuously change, while the sovereign character of politics remains and becomes increasingly more subtle and harder to trace.

Most of part one of *The Ego and Its Own* forms a historiography of mankind that is not set against a timeline, but evaluated in terms of modes of experiencing and comprehending reality. For Stirner each epoch is marked by specific hegemonic logic and a mode of experiencing that simultaneously marks the epoch's strength by delimiting its political horizons, and, at the same time, its vulnerability as it would give way to a new mode of experience and, therefore, to a new epoch. This is how the history unfolds in Stirner's view. However, despite such an understanding of history, Stirner is puzzled by the epoch of

modernity. The dominant mode of thinking in this epoch is a constant clinging to some notion of “the higher being”. Stirner observes the course of evolution of a mode of thought that is not capable of comprehending existence without prior identification of the self in its relationship with some notion of the ‘the higher being’ that is necessarily ‘sacred’. Leopold makes an important note:

‘Stirner constructs a lengthy and unorthodox genealogy of the moderns, not only in the mundane sense of tracing a linear progression through modes of experience, but in the Foucauldean sense of trying to unsettle by demonstrating that modernity fails to escape from the very thing that it claims to have outgrown – namely religious modes of thought’ (Leopold 2000:xix).

Now, according to Stirner’s model, the dominant mode of experience creates space for an alternative mode of thinking to emerge and, thus, to establish a new epoch. But this is not the case with modernity. What is peculiar to modernity is that every attempt at breaking away from thinking in terms of the sacred, though it succeeds in transforming the many categories of social organization, instead of disrupting the hegemonic logic of modernity, only reproduces it in a stronger and *reaffirmed* version. In other words, what Stirner seems to argue is that the systems of modernity advance as a requirement of their state of constant crises – *Reformations* – in such dialectical fashion that their *image* and *form* on one hand, and their *essence* on the other, become increasingly delineated. The reformations and transformations renovate the *image* and modify the *form*, while the *essence* either stays the same, or becomes increasingly subtle and untraceable. Of course, Stirner does not claim that this process is peculiar to modernity alone, but only that in modernity this process is more

complex, for it no longer operates by the logic of exclusion, but that of integration. By this observation of recurrent change and progress of forms that work in line with affirmation of the core essence (fixed thinking mode) Stirner identifies modernity as an epoch marked by this complex dialectic of endless repetitions that utilises revolutions and dissidents for its own affirmation. It is this returning religious thinking, the hierarchical logic – thinking in terms of the ‘fixed ideas’ and spectral modes of experience that poses the problem.

The dialectic outlined reveals the capability of the modernistic political system to repeatedly affirm its *sovereign/sacred* essence while altering its forms and images, while re-presenting itself in an increasingly subtle manner; this demands a more serious handling of the themes of futuristic-vision discourses. This delineation, or divergence, between *forms* and *essence* suggests that the *transformations* of political communities thus repeats the reformulations of the politics of hierarchy and sovereignty in a new guise. Thus, what forms is a view of history as a divergent spiral of repetitions revolving around the single line of sovereignty: transformations and re-transformations of political community as a process corresponding to the reproduction of ever-strengthened, but ever-more-subtle sovereignty.

This is why after looking at the *ancients*, then the *moderns*, Stirner’s last chapter of part one – *The Free*⁵, comes to the conclusion that that the group of Young

⁵ The Free was a circle of Young Hegelians and other intellectuals of the time (Bauer, Ruge, Feuerbach, Engles) meeting regularly for philosophical and political discussions. In Young Hegelian vein the Free saw themselves as a generation of intellectuals that have managed to come to the resolution of basic problems of political philosophy and put to end the philosophy of history as it were. Stirner used to visit these discussions.

Hegelians who like to think about themselves as “*The Free*” are in essence the same *Moderns*. He later applies the same method to unmask the repetitious tendency of Liberalism and Communism (Stirner, M. 2000: 278).

Sovereignty came to monopolise not only knowledge, identity and reality, but also how a subject is going to apprehend political experiences and which lessons he will learn from them. In other words, sovereignty has monopolised political phenomenology. From now, politics is no longer a realm one can take part in, but is seen as something that just happens, like a natural phenomenon, somewhere out there in the unknown realm of the ‘higher’ sublime and ungraspable.

Sacredness of the Fixed Idea

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Stirner revealed a new form of domination – one that is inflicted not through coercion, but through ideas and conviction. Thus in search of identity the subject inevitably ends up creating an idea out of pure absence, and then fleshing it out, reifying it and fixing his/her mind on the dominant discourse of the higher, sublime and sacred object. Thus the idea remains fixed because one’s identity, meaning and self-interpretation are entirely stabilised by it.

What is the Fixed Idea? Stirner goes into a lengthy genealogy and destructive critiques to unmask the contextual emptiness of institutions of the ‘fixed idea’

that appear in front of our eyes as reality and common sense. It is a *'geist'*, a phantom, a spook, a spectral shadow, a specific mental state, a specific logic and a specific mode of phenomenology, which is preinstalled into all aspects of social spaces and structures. It systemises institutions, norms, and therefore controls modes of discourse comprehension, loyalties, mentalities, lifestyles, identities and desires. Importantly, this enables the 'Fixed Idea' to conquer and control the superstructure. It is a complex concept that is present under many categories, headings, masks and silhouettes. The 'Fixed Idea' is a simulacrum that is at work everywhere and at all times, in different images but in the same essence/nature, which slips out of our comprehension without being noticed; that is why it is problematical to name and pinpoint what it is. However, if one reads the patterns of Stirner's use of the notion of 'Fixed Idea', the best matching operational definition for it would be 'discourse'.

For Stirner each epoch evolves due to, is marked by and functions according to some specific mode of experiencing and comprehending reality (phenomenology) and therefore a specific way of thinking (logic). This is why he introduces the concept of a "Fixed Idea". It might seem that throughout the book Stirner is fighting with Feuerbach's humanism and anthropocentrism, or the institutionalised practice of Christianity or that of any other religion, or Man as a God, or the ideas of the State or the spectres or the spooks etc, but it seems that above all these his target is this notion of a 'fixed idea'. All of the above and more are not the primary objects of his critique but merely various categories and instance of the same 'fixed idea'.

Stirner speaks to the modern:

‘Man, your head is haunted; you have wheels in your head! You imagine great things, and depict to yourself a whole world of *gods* that has an existence for you, a spirit-realm to which you suppose yourself to be called, an ideal that beacons to you. You have a fixed ideal’(Stirner, 2000: 43; my emphasis).

For Stirner the moderns are ‘those persons who cling to the higher, and (because the vast majority belongs under this head) almost the whole world of men, as veritable fools, fools in a madhouse’ (Stirner, 2000: 43). The fixed idea is ‘an idea that has subjected the man to itself – an alleged ‘truth’ that must not be doubted; ‘... the majesty of people [anthropocentrism, humanist essentialism, modern practice of representative party politics], which we are not to strike at; virtue, against which the censor is not to let a word pass, that morality may be kept pure ... morality, legality, Christianity, and so forth’. In other words, the ‘fixed idea’ is a mode of thinking that conceptualises social relations in terms of naturally and unavoidably hierarchical dualities (master-servant relationships) and is therefore unable to conceive alternatives to conventional political community in terms other than those of hierarchical social relationships. Stirner refers to a specific political phenomenology, which permits, welcomes, desires and fleshes out the system of social hierarchies – *the hierarchical logic*. In Nietzschean vocabulary the closest terminology to the ‘hierarchical logic’, though not entirely the same, is the ‘slave mentality’. This hopeless dependency on a system of hierarchical logic is the first barrier to alternative methods or ways of social organization, as it limits the spectrum of political imagination to a degree that all alternatives are either rendered as unviable (*logic*) or are attached with various moralistic labels (*norms*) (see

Kropotkin, 1970; Walker, R.B.J. 1993). It is this hierarchical logic, an idealistic mode of thinking of freedom in terms of fixed ideas and spectral modes of experience that is the prime reason why the hierarchies reappear.

What Stirner highlights is the way that humans are ontologically inert in the system that will provide them with an identity even if an artificial one and an assurance of diachronic stability even if it is non-existent. The phenomenology of constant clinging to some notion of a higher being and identification of the self in relation to some abstracted and later reified object of the 'higher' is settled as the dominant mode of everyday political life. It is worth recalling a Biblical story, that outlines the same problem: Moses climbed the mountain to receive God's ten commandments, leaving the people to wait at the foot of the mountain, and upon his return he discovered that they had created and started worshipping a golden calf. The spectral phenomenology makes the majority of people so inert, so attached to the system that they would fight to protect it even and especially when its epistemological essence as an abstraction is unveiled. 'Touch the fixed idea of such a fool, and you will at once have to guard your back against the lunatic's stealthy malice' (Stirner, 2000: 43). Stirner does not stop his analysis with merely disrupting the habit of identity, but extends his critique to attribute a 'sacred'/sovereign status to this 'fixed idea' of the hierarchical logic.

'Undislodgeable, like a madman's delusion, those thoughts stand on firm footing, and he who doubts them – lays hands on the *sacred!* Yes, the 'fixed idea', that is the truly sacred!' (Stirner, 2000: 44).

Now, how are these concepts of “the higher”, “spirit”, “sacred” and “fixed idea” relevant to our discussion? Even though the specific word ‘sovereignty’ appears only three times throughout *The Ego and Its Own*, it seems plausible to argue that the entire work is concerned with this particular concept. What Stirner refers to as the ‘sacred’ is in the modern context the ‘sovereign’. To further establish the link between the two concepts we may consult a 16th century philosopher, Jean Bodin.

Bodin helps not only to provide this link between the two concepts, but actually allows substitution of the term ‘sacredness’ with the term ‘sovereignty’ in order to denote the same political concept. In Bodin’s account, sovereignty is the divine virtue of the State. My claim here is not that sovereignty is actually the terrestrial nexus of the grace of God, or that it is perceived as such by popular masses today, but that the *idea of the State* in the modern world involves the same status of absoluteness and temporal infinitude as the institutions of religion (the alleged nexuses of God) did at the time of Bodin. This point is further affirmed not only throughout Stirner’s work, but also figures in one way or another among classical anarchist thinkers (see Bakunin 1989b, 1876; see also Joll 1966). This point further returns in Nietzsche (esp. 1969:75-8 and 1968) and even Schmitt (1985). Just as the institutions of religion formed the epicentre that the masses would cling to, and just as the ‘sacred’ objects of affiliation would write identity, today sovereignty formulates the essence of modernist political practice. In this respect, the classical problem of political philosophy, formulated as a search for the reconciliation of individual autonomy and political authority, is irrelevant in attempts to understand such an absolute and

sacred concept as sovereignty. Instead, the case seems to be that of an ‘ontological contract’ between the politically destabilised and alienated subject and the symbol that stands for sovereignty, by terms of which sovereignty dictates political reality, identity and desires in exchange for the provision of an illusion of safety.

It is worth recalling Carl Schmitt’s insights that sovereignty is ‘a borderline concept’; that it is necessarily a ‘*total*’ concept and that ‘[i]t is precisely the exception that makes relevant the subject of sovereignty, that is, the whole question of sovereignty’ (Schmitt, C. 1985: 6). In crudest terms, while the church had the *absolute* and *exceptional* control over norms and minds and exercised an ultimate power by drafting the blueprints of what is moral and what is not at the time of Bodin and Stirner, today the guidelines of social behaviour and the ethical codes are charted by sovereignty.

In the meanwhile, there was a transition that allowed the ‘fixed idea’ to change its image. Today the ‘fixed idea’ comes in form of state sovereignty, with the state being its normative mechanism, and statism being its superstructure. Thus, we may say that if we were to translate the concept of the ‘fixed idea’ into contemporary political jargon, it would have to be known as *sovereignty*.

Sovereignty and Christianity

Let us now look at the reason why Stirner attacks religion and religious institutions. It is worth noting that it is not only Christianity that falls under

Stirner's critique, but also Judaism and Islam; thus in general, institutions of religion. 'His own interest is directed at the hitherto unapproached question of motivation: what is religion's psychological function?' (Carroll 1974: 22). Unlike in Nietzsche, it is not the ethic of Christianity specifically that Stirner attacks, but the specific effect of any instance of institutionalised religious practice – namely the establishment, proliferation and universalisation of the spectrapolitical discourse, phenomenology and thinking, under which the a notion of a 'sacred' can be established in politics, and under which a politics of sovereignty can become possible. What makes the State 'sacred' in the eyes of the modern and grants it 'political divinity' and therefore unlimited political right – the right to decide on exceptions, is the modern meaning of *Sovereignty*.

Bodin was the first theorist of sovereignty to exemplify this point by drawing a direct relation between God and the idea of Sovereignty. After God, Bodin believes, there is nothing greater than the sovereign. The sovereignty of sovereign is the manifestation of their very divinity, and he even pictures them as God's vassals on earth. In this respect, Bodin's account of sovereignty is that of a *virtue*. Schmitt affirms the point: 'sovereignty is the highest power, not a *derived* power' (Schmitt 1985:6; my emphasis). Stirner would not be happy with such formulation. For him there is a clear demarcation between what is earthly, sensuous and vain on one hand, and what is divine and real being on the other.⁶ Furthermore, the very fact that divinity is based on such a robust epistemological pillar as *belief* and not such an unstable and questionable object

⁶ Despite Stirner's persistent attack on Christianity and the idea of God, if one reads Stirner carefully, there is no evidence that Stirner is a complete atheist. His is a critique of the role that the idea of God has played in social structures and politics.

as knowledge gives sovereignty the unlimited right over every possible aspect of politics – for *unlimited time*.

What Stirner and Nietzsche were doing was attacking not simply Christianity or God, but the notions that came to be the exemplars of ‘the sacred’ – the hegemonic paradigms of theology that were then cast onto politics, and therefore the formulators of the key ideology of the time – the ‘fixed idea’ – the ideology of necessity of, search for and clinging to some notion of *the higher* and *the Sacred*.

‘He expands the domain of the *religious* to include abstract idealism of the type represented by Feuerbach’s humanism. Whether the ideal is specifically Christian or not it serves the same psychological function for the individual’ (Carroll 1974: 21).

We may therefore say that Stirner’s task is to initiate a psychological enquiry into the origins of the mode of thought that permits, enables and reproduces the idea of ‘sacred’ in politics – let us refer to it as Sovereignty:

‘The critique operates on the ideological veneers which distort human communication, which inhibit individual fulfilment and enjoyment, and thereby preclude self-realization. It is directed at the unconscious causes of the attachment to religious, moral, and political ideologies, and the effects of the resulting self-deceptions. In its own way, taking ideology as the primal and generative structure of authority, it is profoundly anarchist; it sets itself the task of demolishing what it sees as the most powerful ideologies of its own period in history’ (Carroll 1974: 17).

In order to bridge Stirner's thought with our own times it may help to recall the thought of his successor – Nietzsche, who referred to the State as the 'new Idol' (Nietzsche 1969:ch.11). "Church... that is a kind of State", says Nietzsche; "[The State] seeketh by all means to be *the most important* creature on earth... and people think it so" (Nietzsche 1969:ch.40). We may understand "God is dead" literally; but we may as well ask Nietzsche what he means by that, and what he means by God; and why specifically God? If we recall in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Zarathustra announces the news of the death of God in the beginning, but we are left unclear as to why and how God died. Only towards the end of the book do we learn that God was killed by the ugliest of men (Nietzsche 1969:275-9). Throughout his texts Nietzsche makes clear that his primary problem is the "decadent" culture of his own and forthcoming times, its morals and its laws deprived of enjoyment and an aesthetical will to power, beauty and life. At the time, the one that came to reprimand those values onto the subjects was the '*ecclesiastical prejudices*' (Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, ch.32), and thus Nietzsche advocates "Disobedience to God which actually means to the priest, to the "the law"" (Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, ch.26).

Nietzsche it seems continues the critique of the political thinking in terms of the 'sacred'/sovereign. If at the time of the 19th century, the Reformed protestant church was the key formulator of the sacred/sovereign politics, today the modern "God" or the "God" of the moderns is the State. Today the exemplar of the dominant paradigm is *Statism* (both in political studies and in IR)– the ideology of and the *ideological force* that produces State Sovereignty; the

everyday *practice* of the sacredness of political authority and the diminution of the individual with liberal democratic representation as the superior resolution to the problem of political philosophy. Sovereignty today writes the agenda of sacred politics. It therefore no longer helps to criticise or attack Christianity or specifically the protestant ethic; neither is it relevant. The late-modern subject is no longer shaped by Christian institutions *directly* to an extent that he/she was in previous centuries. What needs to be acknowledged, however, is that the 'fixed idea' has undergone a transformation that resulted in its re-formulation from the divinity of religious institutions to the sovereignty of the modern State. Christianity as well as other institutionalised religions played a specific role in this transition in the way that they constructed the place that would later be filled by sovereignty. The habitual practices of establishing regimes of truth gave way to the solidification of morals to an extent that it is now easy to categorise phenomena as either 'moral' or 'immoral' without resort to the possibility that those categories could be merely interpretations. Thus milestones have been set directing the righteous to the 'sacred', toward the right and the good, toward the fixed and static idea that the law is the moral law and that the State is sacred (in the modern context – "sovereign"); and those who were to *think* along the lines of a rebel against the established sacred/sovereign fixed idea were pointed in the direction of the 'rebel angel'. It was only when thinking in terms of categorical distinctions between good and evil, between the moral and the immoral, have been set that the notion of sovereignty independent of religious institutions became possible. Once the idea of 'sin' was institutionalised, sovereignty in the modern context was born; moral/immoral and good/evil were translated into upright/unlawful. This

dualistic and moralistic device has always been at hand for those who sought mass political support and has provided a license for one political action or another, and is an important prerequisite for sovereignty as it functions in the modern context. This thinking gave birth to the State, transformed it into the modern State and seems likely to direct the human species further. Drafting the blueprints of such a mode of public thinking is the impact of any institutionalised religion. As Schmitt argues,

All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularised theological concepts not only because of their historical development – in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver –but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts. The exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology. Only by being aware of this analogy can we appreciate the manner in which the philosophical ideas of the state developed in the last centuries. (Schmitt, C. 1985: 36)

Hence, the project of the Enlightenment, in effect, was not to free men from the State but to exorcise the ghost of superstition (upon which the old State was built) and to replace it with a renewed ghost of superstition (sovereignty) as the foundation for the modern State, thus producing the image of the social contract and democracy. A sharp line had to be drawn between moral and immoral – specific and particular notions that would insure the smooth

operating of the system had to be placed into moral categories. To summarise, once the notion of ‘moral’ was in place, the notion of *sovereignty* as we know it today became possible. This is the specific role of religion that Stirner outlines in the evolution of a mentality that would permit the presence of a nonexistent notion to enjoy the status of sacredness in politics.

In criticising Bruno Bauer’s notions of an autonomous individual, Stirner ended up rejecting the possibility of a democratic State. Just like Bakunin, Stirner saw the State as an entity that can never be brought under the control of the subjects that it claims to represent. The State is *something* that has its own logic, its own line of movement, its own heading that is independent of the one who heads it.

Classical anarchists, however, have a slightly different conceptualisation of what the State is and what it is made up of. Classical anarchists like Bakunin, Kropotkin and Proudhon emphasise the bureaucracy and institutionalism of the State. Stirner, on the other hand, works in opposition to idealism, which is why, as we saw earlier, he places more emphasis on the *idea* of the State and the absence of *own will* – the inexistence of the Self (Stirner 2000:174-5). Stirner suggests that the fact that debates are focusing around the theme of forms of State, means that the *idea* of the State itself is not posed as a problem, and divert us from seeing it as such – in effect they assist State reification.

‘The case is the same with modern times. They only changed the existing objects, the real ruler, into conceived objects, into ideas, before which the old respect not only was not lost, but increased in

intensity. Even if people snapped their fingers at God and the devil in their former crass reality, people devoted only the greater attention to their ideas. "They are rid of the Evil One; evil is left." The decision having once been made not to let oneself be imposed on any longer by the extant and palpable, little scruple was felt about revolting against the existing State or overturning the existing laws; but to sin against the *idea* of the State, not to submit to the *idea* of law, who would have dared that?' (Stirner 1907: 84-5)

In the previous chapter we eschewed the notions of pre-existing essence and autonomous subject. Furthermore, the classical anarchist dichotomy between the State and society was placed under suspicion. We also looked at other workings of power, which Newman terms "domination through subjectification, rather than repression" (Newman 2001:64). We saw that through the construction of the model citizen humanism and essentialism effectively work in favour of the State and State reification, while the notion of autonomous individual does not enable us to see this side of power's functioning: 'Stirner suggests, what should be freed is not human essence from external conditions, but the self from human essence, from fixed identities' (Newman 2001:68).

Stirner drew a clear separation between revolution and insurrection. Revolution for Stirner is merely a rearrangement of the status quo. Insurrection, on the other hand is a rebellion against the self, or against the artificially enforced identity of the self (see Stirner 1993:316). As Newman suggests,

‘It may be argued, then, that insurrection starts with the individual refusing his enforced identity, through which power operates: it starts “from men’s discontent with themselves.” Insurrection does not aim at overthrowing political institutions themselves. It is aimed at the individual, in a sense of overthrowing his own identity – the outcome of which is, nevertheless, a change in political arrangements. Insurrection is therefore not about becoming what one is – becoming human, becoming man, as the anarchist argues – but about becoming what one *is not*. Stirner’s notion of individual rebellion involves, then, a process of becoming. It is about continually reinventing one’s own self – an *anarchism of subjectivity*, rather than an anarchism based on subjectivity’ (Newman 2001:67).

Language and Stirner’s nominalism

While some of those that took Stirner’s work seriously noticed that his work is a psychological critique of ideology, knowledge and the State, what has been rarely recognised is that his book is an overall critique of language. One has to look at the book in totality as a puzzle. Stirner advances arguments and critiques, and having denounced all forms of representation and attempts at explanations as being simply ‘ideas’ and ‘concepts’, arrives at what may seem a strange alternative: ‘I am the criterion of truth, but I am not an idea, but more than idea, that is, *unutterable*’ (2000: 314; my emphasis). In other words, Stirner sets a trap for himself. The tactic is that of a suicide bomber: it is self-destructive, but the destruction is annihilating. He knows he will fall into that trap and he knows that he will not be able to get out of it. His objective is not

to escape from this logical trap, but to direct the argument toward it and thus show its inevitability, in order to advance one metanarrative: language is deficient when it comes to representing the inexpressible – the real being. An exposition of this line of thought can be found more recently in Antonin Artaud, who claimed that words *cannot* express that which is most profoundly involved in being (Artaud 1993). It is important to note that Stirner does not demarcate the signifier-signified relationship, which would prove to be a fertile soil for structuralists later on, but already abolishes that relationship altogether.⁷

‘He who cannot get rid of a thought is so far *only* man, is a thrall of language, this human institution, this treasury of *human* thoughts.

Language or ‘the word’ tyrannizes hardest over us, because it brings up against us a whole army of *fixed ideas*’ (Stirner 2000:305).

Language is written by the ‘fixed ideas’ and is not designed to advance a sensible argument against them. There are several implications to this: all arguments advanced to support a higher cause of some sort carry a cunning motif of subjectification; the only true cause is that of the self; by maintaining faith in concepts that claim resemblance to the real, we become ‘prisoners to our own thoughts’; to affiliate one’s identity to one’s thoughts means to become the serf body of the ‘fixed idea’ that governs the epoch and the world, while believing that one is actually free. Stirner’s tactic is effective. The book proceeds not with the complex language of say Heidegger or Sartre, but a language which is seemingly over-simplistic and even colloquial. Stirner does not disclose this intention anywhere in the book, but only tries to provide a hint in his essay ‘*Stirner’s Critics*’:

⁷ This path was later taken up by Deleuze, G. 1994: 262-272

‘Stirner speaks of the Unique and says immediately: Names name you not. He articulates the word, so long as he calls it the Unique, but adds nonetheless that the Unique is only a name. He thus means something different from what he says, as perhaps someone who calls you Ludwig [Stirner addresses L. Feuerbach’s critique] does not mean a Ludwig in general, but means You, for which he has no word.

‘What Stirner says is a word, a thought, a concept; what he means is no word, no thought, no concept. What he says is not what is meant, and what he means is unsayable’ (Stirner 1976: 344-5).⁸

...‘There is no development of the concept of the Unique. No philosophical system can be built out of it, as it can out of Being, or Thinking, or the I. Rather, with it, all development of the concept ceases. The person who views it as a principle thinks that he can treat it philosophically or theoretically and necessarily wastes his breath arguing against it. Being, Thought, I -- are merely indeterminate concepts which take on determination through other concepts, i.e. through the development of the concept’ (Stirner, 1976: 346).

Stirner repeats once again, ‘I rely on nothing’, because it is impossible to rely even on language as a form of representation especially when it comes to speaking of the meaning inside. The medium of language enables juggling with the *names* of *concepts* and the *images* of the *outside* that come as meaningless *concepts*, while abolishing the relationship with the *meaning/content/gist* of the

⁸ The word denoting ‘unsayable’ could also be translated as ‘inexpressible’, ‘unutterable’.

inside, but not with the real existent being. Unimaginable as it may seem, Stirner not only renounces the subject/object dichotomy, but also fosters a possibility of thinking of the unique creative self – the Ego, in terms other than words, logic and predicates (Stirner 1976: 350); a logic that is not hierarchical, not a logic of associations.

Furthermore, Stirner it seems is constantly flippant with language; he ‘exploits etymological connections’ – as, for instance, with the words *Eigentum* (property) and *Eigenheit* (‘ownness’ or belonging to the self, egoism), or manipulating different connotations of such an ambiguous word as *geist*⁹, as a manoeuvre to demonstrate how indelible the rationale of the ‘fixed idea’ is in language. The problem of political logic is encoded in language itself.

Thus what Stirner demonstrates is the process of enslavement and subjectification: concepts are resembled by words (while words are constructed). Words in turn carry with them *norms* and a specific *logic* because of etymological connections¹⁰ and the equivocity¹¹ involved. Now, one thinks in terms of concepts, which are represented by associations, glimpses, images, and also words. One’s thinking pattern becomes the *logic* preinstalled by words and thought becomes trapped by those specific *norms*. Thus when Stirner claims

⁹ ‘*Geist* has a wide range of possible meanings, in both standard and Hegelian usages, most closely related to ‘spirit’. At one point in the text, Stirner suggests that he uses *Geist* as synonymous with ‘thought, conceptions, ideas, faith [*Gedanke, Vorstellung, Ideen, Glaube*]’ (p. 59); footnote quoted from Leopold, D in Stirner 2000: n. 3, p. 326; *Geist* can also be translated as ‘intellect’, ‘mind’, ‘phantom’, ‘spectre’ and ‘spirit’.

¹⁰ Examples: ‘property’ = ‘description’; ‘good’ = ‘commodity’; ‘identity’ = ‘identical’

¹¹ Take for instance the concept of ‘geist’, which could be understood as ‘intellect’, ‘thoughts’ and ‘spirit’. If one believes in unity of or at least relationship between signifier-signified, and if one identifies himself with ‘thoughts’, then he understands the self as a ‘spirit’. Or ‘I’ also denotes the Roman number 1 – the individual is a unit of analysis and a number; an individual counts for one and one only.

that we are prisoners to our own thoughts, he does not claim that someone else is producing those thoughts for us. Instead, his claim is that the mechanisms of thinking ('wheels in a head' which are of identical model) are being installed, and these produce what they are meant to produce: a homologous and repetitious thought (a fixed idea). It seems that it is precisely for this reason that Stirner resorts to 'the use of aphorism and metaphor, the neologisms, the mixture of self-consciously obscure terminology with colloquial language, the excessive italicization and hyperbole... [as a] framework in which philosophical argument is conducted' (Leopold in Stirner 2000: xiii).

If we recall from the previous chapter, Stirner had set existence – or, the corporeality of the Ego – as the ontologically highest reality. From that perspective, ideas are merely a function of that corporeality. Ideas have no existence independent of corporeality of the Ego. If existence, which is not presupposed, is the primary fact, ideas become ontologically a lesser and a derivative reality, since their existence depends on the creator of ideas. Similarly, from this perspective ideas, notions, concepts, abstracts and universals have no objective semiotic essence pre-existing the corporeality of the Ego, which is always unique. As Clark paraphrases Stirner,

'As all ideas are mere thoughts of the ego, so universals have this status. The species, he [Stirner] says, "is nothing". Abstractions like "man" are merely concepts in the mind, referring to nothing objective in reality, for reality consists only of particular things' (Clark 1976:27)

Thus, what one witnesses in Stirner's thought is a strong nominalist tendency that gains its coherence through a rejection of the autonomous subject and objectivity, and instead invites a form of inter-subjectivity, whereby subjectivities themselves are constituted, animated and governed by external factors. In rejecting the ontological primacy of ideas and pegging them to unique subjectivities Stirner rejects universals and the pre-existing objective meanings of those universals.

Before I apply this perspective to the notion of the State, let us look how Stirner's nominalism is manifest in his views on language. Stirner regards all universals, abstracts and essences as merely *words*. The realm of words for Stirner represents the realm of the unreal: all of reality exists as words, words that refer back to artificial and stabilised essences, but not to the thing that exists. Words are thus "human institutions" and "human creatures", which is why they are inherently alienating and alienated from the existent (Stirner 2000:307). Only the unique Ego can never be represented by a word and is unutterable, which is also why it is the ultimate real.

'Before me truths are as common and as indifferent as things; they do not carry me away, and do not inspire me with enthusiasm. There exists not even one truth, not right, not freedom, humanity, etc., that has stability before me, and to which I subject myself. They are *words*, nothing but words, as all things are to the Christian nothing but 'vain things'. In words and truths (every word is a truth, as Hegel asserts that one cannot *tell* lie) there is no salvation for me, as little as there is for the Christian in things and vanities. As the riches

of this world do not make me happy, so neither do its truths. It is now no longer Satan, but the spirit, that plays the story of the temptation; and he does not seduce by the things of this world, but by its thoughts, by the ‘glitter of the idea’ (Stirner 2000:306-7).

Since the ego is the ultimate real, it is beyond signification and description by words. Truth about the ego thus cannot be expressed through words, but can only be found in life.

“Truths, Stirner says, are creatures of the ego : They are the thoughts of the ego given an enduring existence by being “set down in words” (Clark 1976:29; Stirner 1963:347).

However, reification is not only a matter of abstracting reality; as Stirner argues, it is a powerful method of subjectification. As Stirner claims,

‘Essences have their existence in everything sensuous, especially in the word. The power of words follows that of things: *first one is coerced by the rod, afterward by conviction*. The might of things overcomes our courage, our spirit; against the power of a conviction, and so of the word, even the rack and the sword lose their overpoweringness and force’ (Stirner 2000:306; my emphasis).

Put into the perspective of Stirner’s nominalism, the State becomes an idea, a concept, a universal, and, importantly – a *word* that has neither an ontological, nor semiotic reality outside of what the unique subjectivity makes (can make) it be. Furthermore, it is a word, a signifier that does not relate back to a *stable*

signified that would be objective in its nature. Of course this is not to say that the signified that the sign of the State is supposed to represent is not being systematically *stabilised* by various practices. Yet, this does suggest that the signified of “the State” is not always already a pre-existing objectivity.

The Return of Saint Marx

Marx’s lengthy critique of Max Stirner, where he calls him “Saint Max”, can be condensed in three points. He argues first, that Stirner offers a history of ideas without reference to actual events and the social environment in which they take place; second that the individual is an abstract concept without meaning in the context of society; and third that Stirner’s position is ideological because it does not take into account the determining role of the material forces of history – individualism is the ideology of the petty bourgeoisie (Trotter 1997).

Paul Thomas in his *Karl Marx and the Anarchists* (1980), having sided with Marx, nevertheless concluded that the debate between Stirner and Marx should not be seen as a simple question of the isolated individual versus society. The debate seems to be an expression of a broader conflict between concepts of *commercial society at large* and *community*. As Trotter notes ‘Stirner’s concept of Union of Egoists, conceived as coming under the latter category, embraces, according to the ethic of friendship, only small groups where real face-to-face relationships are possible while rejecting the imperative to sacrifice one’s own interests for an abstract social totality, such as nation, race, or class’ (Trotter 1997:2)

Stirner has demonstrated the primacy of the Ego with sharp and logical argument within the rules of the dialectic. As Deleuze noted Stirner's demonstration of the end of the dialectic is not the realisation of the Absolute, but annihilation into absolute nothingness – the nothing: '*Stirner is the dialectician who reveals nihilism as the truth of the dialectic*' (Deleuze 1983:161; Deleuze's emphasis). The concept of the Ego stands for that powerful and all-destructive *nothing* that is the culmination of the dialectic and that resists any further dialectic. As Stirner exclaims in the closing paragraph,

'I am *owner* of my might, and I am so when I know myself as *unique*. In the *unique one* the owner himself returns into his creative nothing, of which he is born. Every higher essence above me, be it God, be it man, weakens the feeling of my uniqueness and pales only before the sun of this consciousness. If I found my affair on myself, the unique one, then my concern rests on its transitory, mortal creator, who consumes himself, and I may say: I have founded my affair on nothing' (Stirner 2000:324)¹²

Thus the Ego is the nothing. It is both all-creative nothing – the creator and, potentially, the re-creator of all reality, as well as the all-annihilating nothing – the absolute unutterable particular, the test of which, no universals can stand.

So where does this leave Marx? For one Marx agrees with Stirner's discovery that the dialectic is the theory of the Ego (see Deleuze 1983:162). Furthermore,

¹² The last line "Ich hab' mein Sach auf Nichts gestellt" – "I have set my affair on nothing" is translated as "All things are nothing to me" in the 2000 translation. The book starts with this line and it finishes with the same line. The same line appears in Goethe's poem "Vanitas! Vanitatum! Vanitas!", which inspired Stirner.

Marx's critique of Feuerbach does take on board the Stirnerian criticism that Feuerbach's human species is still alienating. But when it comes down to criticising Stirner, Marx calls him an idealist and his arguments ideological. Marx claims that the irrationalist core of Stirner's argument is too abstract, and hard to understand and labels it as *religious* (Carroll 1974:73; Trotter 1997:2) and even utilitarian (Marx 1965:448-60). Most commentators who have looked at the clash between Marx and Stirner seem to agree with Marx's story that he did not understand Stirner and that Stirner's argument is confusing. However a suspicion arises that Marx merely *pretends* not to understand Stirner, for as Bakunin once commented Marx was definitely the most thorough and scrupulous reader he had ever met (Bakunin 1989b: 443-4). Furthermore, since Marx employed Stirnerian criticism against Feuerbach in part 2 of *The German Ideology*, there is little reason to believe that when it came down to criticising Stirner himself in part III, Marx would suddenly forget what Stirner's argument was all about. Jean-Michel Rabaté too noticed this; as Derrida comments,

In the conclusion of a book... Rabaté underscores forcefully that
"Marx and Engels pretend not to understand the critical scope of
Stirner's analyses" (see Derrida 1994:192,n.16).

Why does he do that? Why does Marx *pretend* not to understand Stirner? Deleuze says 'for Marx it is a matter of stopping fatal *sliding*' into nothingness of the Ego (Deleuze 1983:162). If all universals and abstracts are annihilated in light of the Ego, the ideal of "classless society" and the intrinsically humanist motive of early socialism turns to ashes at a single blow. Succinctly put, it seems that Marx is very much aware that what is at stake is not a materialist theory *per se*, but his own ideology, which is why he holds on to the last set of

abstracts. Carroll's speculation is that the obsessive character of the part III of *The German Ideology* indicates an unresolved inner conflict within Marx, who used Stirner as a scapegoat for his own bad conscience for not taking up the cause of Homo ludens as seriously as he could have.

Now, Stirnerian ego-istic ethics seem to be more politicising than the ideologically and/or morally animated ethics. Stirner's notion of corporeity of the Ego seems to offer a fresh avenue for political responsibility, that is existential in its nature. Let us return to an argument cited earlier:

The thoughts had become corporeal on their own account, were ghosts, such as God, Emperor, Pope, Fatherland, etc. If I destroy their corporeity, then I take them back into mine, and say: "I alone am corporeal." And now I take the world as what it is to me, as mine, as my property; I refer all to myself (Stirner 2000:17).

If *I* is corporeal, then all abstract notions (such as nation, State, legality, authority) lose their existence, essences and become fluid. The world, thus, becomes one's creation and one's property, which is how a whole new type of political responsibility evolves that is not external, but one's own. Let us recall the letter that Engels sent to Marx immediately after reading *The Ego and Its Own*. Engels wrote,

'You will probably have heard of, if not read, Stirner's book... this work is important, far more important than Hess believes, for instance... the first point we find is true that, *before doing whatever we will on behalf of some idea we have first to make it our cause, personal, egoistic... it is equally from egoism that we are communists...* Stirner is right

to reject the 'Man' of Feuerbach... since Feuerbach's Man is derived from God' (quoted in Neuman 2001:73; my emphasis)

Of course Engels' views on egoism changed as soon as Marx expressed his own opinion on it. Nevertheless, it seems that Engels was approaching something potentially fruitful and something that Stirner would not disagree with. After evaluating this debate Carroll put forward a proposition for "egoist communism", though he did not elaborate it enough. From an egoist standpoint it is not that one should not join any causes. Instead, it is a matter of asking questions like "why should *I* be a member of the Communist Party of Britain?", "does the deep ecology's concern for environmental degradation as a result of consumer society and statism, yield anything for *me*?", "if nationalism, racism, statism, legality, democracy, justice, security, need and private property are merely ideas that are being put forward as effective instruments of subjectification, could there be any other rationale for praxis that would not be based on abstractions?" Put differently, if Marx were to recognise egoism fully, and not only as a temporary weapon against Feuerbach, it would be possible to see that every individual is affected by capitalism and the idea of the State in one way or another; that capitalism and the idea of the State limit more than one class and in more than one way. A theory of revolutionary action that would be more inclusive, participatory, renewable, springing from below and less oppressive could become possible.

Thus, while Marx renounces many of the spooks that Stirner mentions, he hold on to the last set of spooks. Stirner has already told us how ideologies work, how the mystical and the metaphysical elements are essential for effective

motivation; and Marx will need this last set of spooks to forge his own ideology. Two years after writing *The German Ideology* a new pamphlet starts proliferating across Europe, which announces that a *spectre* is haunting Europe. It is one thing to announce a birth of a new movement or of a new organisation, and yet another to declare the presence of a spectral shadow over an entire continent. We can never know how those opening lines of *the Communist Manifesto* were received in the nineteenth century, but in a society where there was no cinema, television or other techniques of mediated and simulated horror, these lines must have instilled either sheer terror or an incredible enthrallment.

The Other Body of the Sovereign: de-spectralisation of the political

As demonstrated earlier, the reconfigured sovereignty would require a specific breed of Men – who would not exercise interrogation of the fixed ideas of sovereignty as a persistent tactic of political practice, and would be prisoners to their own rationalistic mode of thinking – ‘a horrific vision of an ideal type of human being determined by Christian and philosophical ideas assuming a typical occidental shape’ (Turkdogan 2001: 3). The present system works in a manner of an oscillating pendulum – thinking produces sovereignty, and sovereignty reproduces thinking; one affirms the other, while the image and the essence diverge; the image ameliorates, while the essence stays the same, but becomes more subtle. Since the psychology of the need for sovereignty/authority produces the sacred higher being of politics, the problem becomes micropolitical. The source is invisible and materially unidentifiable; it is present in multiple registers, which makes every agency and every aspect of

modern political space agents of the system. In this respect, any possibility of radical change in the nature of the world's political practice has to come not from the classic anarchist ideal of abolishing the State, but from persistent and diverse practises that disrupt the hierarchical logic and the fixed idea of sovereignty. It must not engage in a repetitious practice of revolutions. This is essentially the agenda of the type of resistance that Stirner advocates. But Marx does not agree, and Derrida notes this:

‘Marx seems to be warning Stirner: If you want to conjure away these ghosts then believe me, I beg you, the egological conversation is not enough, nor is the change in the direction of the gaze, nor a putting into parentheses, nor the phenomenological reduction; one must work – practically, actually. One must think work and work it. Work is necessary, as is an account of reality as a practical actuality. One does not chase away the *real* emperor or pope in a single blow by exorcising or by conjuring away the mere *ghostly* form of their bodies. Marx is very firm: when one has destroyed a phantomatic body, the real body remains’ (Derrida 1994:130-1).

Marx levels a would-be “materialist” critique at Stirner:

‘ “everything alien become a mere *appearance*, a mere *conception*”, so that Stirner thinks he can change conditions in the world by mere change of consciousness, rather than having to deal with concrete material and historical realities’ (quoted in Clark 1976:33)

And this is where Marx and Stirner disagree most. For Stirner ghosts do not exist – the notion of spectral presence is a contradiction in terms, an aporia. For Marx, however, spectres do exist and they can be produced just as much as

they can be exorcised: culture is a result of concrete material factors like economic factors. For Stirner, however, as noted, culture is a phenomenon that takes centuries to evolve. How then can the spectre of sovereignty be expected to be exorcised with mere material realities, when it took centuries and even millennia to produce, and when it serves as the very framework within which those very material realities are produced and made sense of?

However, through this discussion the logic of sovereignty already manifests itself. As Bodin wrote, ‘only he is sovereign who, after God, acknowledges no one greater than himself’ (quoted in Ebenstein 1965:350). Now, the sovereign might face physical, material or practical limitations in the implementation or realisation of the decision, but that is a separate issue that is not relevant to understanding the omnipotence of sovereignty. The fact of the matter remains: the decision, right and legality of the sovereign decision is absolute, or else it would not be sovereign as such. Thus the omnipotence of the sovereign does not rest in its practical or physical power, but in the incontestability of its claim to an absolute right. The fact that sovereignty might not be exercised absolutely, has nothing to do with the sovereign’s *claim* to sovereign power. In other words, sovereignty is, before anything, a matter of the *will* and consciousness, and only later becomes an issue that has an impact on practice, material and historical realities. It is, thus, a power in itself, that successfully overrides material power.

However, one may already notice a meaningless tautology implicit in the discourse of sovereignty: sovereignty is absolute, not because it practices

absoluteness or because it is always potentially capable of practicing absoluteness for it always reserves the exception up its sleeve, but because it is sovereign. To shorten this tautology: *sovereignty is absolute because it is sovereign*, or, *sovereignty is sovereign because it is sovereign*.

Where do we find the origins of the sovereign character of the sovereign? This is where the logic of the discourses of sovereignty refers back to the most ambiguous and metaphysical categories, such as God, the people and nothingness (Schmitt 1985:32).

‘This is why it is said in this kingdom that the king never dies. And this saying, which is an ancient proverb, well shows that the kingdom was never elective, and that it has its sceptre not from the Pope, nor from the Archbishop of Rheims, nor from the people, but rather from God alone’ (Bodin, quoted in Agamben 1995:101-2)

Sovereignty is that which presents itself as always already – as a timeless phenomenon. Kantorowicz describes a strange ritual that was played out in medieval France. After the king’s death a wax effigy of his body would be constructed and would be treated just as the real king’s living person (Kantorowicz 1957: ch.7). Kantorowicz also pointed at a similar pagan Roman ritual, where a wax imago, “treated like a sick man, lies on a bed; senators and matrons are lined up on either side; physicians pretend to feel the pulse of the image and give it their medical aid until, after seven days, the effigy ‘dies’ ” (Kantorowicz 1957: 427). The link between the effigy and the king’s body is

not only the perpetuity of royal dignity, but importantly the perpetual character of sovereignty (Agamben 1995:93-4).

While Kantorowicz relates the above ritual to pagan Rome, there are even earlier rituals concerned with the timelessness of the spectre of sovereignty. In the spring season Babylonians would observe the spectacular ritual of what was called the “fire ceremony”, which through cremation of human life affirmed the perpetual character of the king’s rule. Mackenzie contends that in later periods Babylonians and Assyrians would burn mock kings, that is to say, ordinary people presented as kings (Mackenzie 1966:350). However, the ceremony itself goes back to more ancient rituals of burning real kings, which was carried out for the dual purpose of affirming the fact that the kings were incarnations of God on one hand, and on the other hand, as a practice that would perpetuate the reign of the king by withering its spirit by fire, so that the spirit remains and returns in another body. As Mackenzie notes, ‘When Nineveh was about to fall, and with it the Assyrian Empire, the legendary king, Sardanapalus, who was reputed to have founded Tarsus, burned himself, with his wives, concubines, and eunuchs, on a pyre of his palace’ (Mackenzie 1966:350). It is important to note the difference from Egyptian burial rituals and Aryan cremations. Egyptian burial rites were aimed at securing a rich afterlife and safe passage to the Otherworld for the pharaohs, and not their return, while for Aryan fire worshipers (who saw fire as terrestrial element of God and principle of life being the bodily heat) cremations would transfer the spirit *by fire* to Paradise (Mackenzie 1966:49-50). Neither the Egyptian nor the Aryan rituals were aimed at the *return* of the king’s spirit. In the Babylonian and Assyrian rituals,

however, the fire ceremony (the cremation of the king's or the mock king's body) anticipates precisely the return of the king's spirit, whereby sovereignty survives the body of the bearer only to *return* in a new body:

‘When the *ghostly* body of the emperor disappears, it is not the body that disappears, merely its phenomenality, its phantomality. The emperor is then more real than ever and one can measure better than ever his actual power.’

Marx aims at conjuring away one image of the spectre and replacing it with another, but not eradicating spectral phenomenology and religious thinking in politics. This was not necessarily his intention, but rather an outcome of the way he rejected all spooks, only to cling to the last set of spooks. Marx sought to develop an ideology of practice – which involved the reification of the logic of sovereignty alongside the restructuring of material factors and economic ownership. Marx's ontological standpoint (materialism) does not permit him to become conscious of the dialectic of politics of spectrality/sovereignty. Stirner on the contrary wants to break out of the ‘ghost-mentality’ and therefore his work is often seen as a critique of ideology, any ideology (Carroll 1974: 15-100). He sets out to identify and critique psychology of a spectral mode of political experience. In other words, Stirner's practice is a search for the factors that have come to shape the thinking on politics in terms of inexorable sovereignty and hierarchy. Precisely for this reason Stirner repeatedly returns to the view that the state is the arch-ghost. Stirner's political practice is a relentless search:

‘Revolution and insurrection must not be looked upon as synonymous. The former consists in an overturning of conditions,

of the established condition or status, the State or society, and is accordingly a political or social act; the latter has indeed for its unavoidable consequence a transformation of circumstances, yet does not start from it but from men's discontent with themselves, is not an armed rising, but a rising of individuals, a getting up, without regard to the arrangements that spring from it. The Revolution aimed at new arrangements; insurrection leads us no longer to let ourselves be arranged, but to arrange ourselves, and sets no glittering hopes on "institutions." It is not a fight against the established, since, if it prospers, the established collapses of itself; it is only a working forth of me out of the established. If I leave the established, it is dead and passes into decay. Now, as my object is not the overthrow of an established order but my elevation above it, my purpose and deed are not a political or social but (as directed toward myself and my ownness alone) an egoistic purpose and deed" (Stirner 2000: 279-80).

Stirner wants to break out of the *essence* of modern politics, rather than change its image, and that is why his task is much more complicated.

What if the emperor as a body disappears, while the idea of the emperor, the 'phenomenality' and the 'phantomality' of the sovereign lives on? Have not revolutions of the past shown us precisely the problem of sovereignty's return? Is that not what revolutions of our time have turned out to be? Will not sovereignty return in another guise, is that not what democracy already practices on a smaller scale, by training the subject's political imagination to a repetition

of stepping down of one president and the election of the next? As Bodin argued, 'the king never dies'.

In Stirner's view this is the case of 'reformation', whereby sovereignty (the phantomatic body) is fleshed out under a new guise, is reproduced, reformulated, modified. 'Reformation' is the uninterrupted ritual of the ghost of sovereignty, which constantly brings the State into a state of crisis, and resolves it by creating the requirements for revised state, while only reifying sovereignty. Correspondingly, the State becomes invisible, while in the mind of the populace being present – like a ghost. Along these lines sovereignty reforms itself and becomes progressively hypnotic, subtle and delicate to a degree that not only there is no obvious object of resistance, but the objective of resistance in itself appears *as if* inept. As a result, a hierarchical logic (logocentrism) and the logic of sovereignty settle in political community as everyday political 'common sense'. The site of power is not in sovereignty per se, but in the law by which the system in totality operates, the law of repetition – the logic of sovereignty that ensures the repetition of it.

Such argument further upsets the philosophy of the presence of the State. It leads to a suggestion that 'there *is* no State'; the State is not only an omnipresent system, but also just a phantomatic body. This brings into question not only the presence of the state, but immediately demands elaborations on routines of its self-presentation. It demands at least a re-examination of the established notions of the State, and poses questions about the accepted frameworks of Statist modes of theorising. However, that is the objective of chapter six.

What Stirner highlights is that it is neither the government, nor capitalist dynamics, nor the State that are oppressive, governing or controlling, but precisely the *discourses* installed in both micro and macro-systems, that present themselves as if commonsensical.

Conclusion

In the course of this chapter the mystical aspect of sovereignty and the State's presence has been examined. While theories of social contract no longer seem to provide an adequate account of sovereignty or justification for the presence of the State, Stirner's argument brings us back to Bodin's theory of sovereignty in a new way. Bodin's understanding of sovereignty as a divine derivation from God is still an actuality of how sovereignty is experienced micropolitically. (Indeed in chapter six I will take this line of argument further by posing sovereignty as a spectacular derivation from the reified sign of the State's existence – sovereignty as a product of State reification.) Whether it is a case of an ancient monarchy or a newly formed republic, the sign of the State still carries a set of purposefully irresolvable internal contradictions. The first of these is the notion of "spectral presence" of the State, which, from an existentialist point of view appears as a contradiction in terms: it does not exist, and yet it is present – it is not there, while being there. As Derrida notes, 'There is no *Dasein* of the spectre, but there is no *Dasein* without the uncanniness' (Derrida 1994:100).

Using Stirner's thought it was argued that the State is an omnipresent phenomenon, as opposed to centralised and institutionalised entity. The omnipresence of the State is manifest through Statist identities; that is to say

each citizen who is possessed by the State and takes the State's existence for granted is a nexus of the State.

Stirner observes that the State has grown into such a vast, ubiquitous entity that many are led to accept it without question (Clark 1976:71). The State has grown, Stirner argues, from unquestionable acceptance into a "fixed idea", which is sacred and not questionable. What Stirner is proposing is that we should not only stop idolising the State, but also start questioning its very existence. However, the State is accepted without question not only because of its ubiquitous and omnipresent simulation, but also because the concept and its reasoning is embroiled to a degree that asking questions about it does not reveal any plausible answers. Stirner argues that bourgeois theories of the State come into direct opposition with ego-istic notions of existence and values, in a way that they make the State an individual, an organism and the ultimate reality, while the ego is conceptualised as a fragment of the State (Stirner 1993:99).

At the same time our investigation into sovereignty has revealed that it is tied up more with paradoxes, mystical rituals and psychological, metaphysical and theological dynamics than with reasonable justifications. As we said initially, sovereignty is the very convincing basis of the sign of "the State". As Agamben puts it, 'the religious belongs entirely to the sphere of psychological emotion, that it is essentially has to do with shivers and goose bumps' (Agamben 1998:78), which is actually the very factor that presents sovereignty as a *convincing* discourse. The convincing function of the discourse of sovereignty,

however, plays out not in the justification of State actions, but in a conviction that the State exists.

CHAPTER 5

Guy Debord and the Spectacle

Where the real world changes into simple images, the simple images become real beings and effective motivations of hypnotic behavior. The spectacle, as a tendency *to make one see* the world by means of various specialized mediations (it can no longer be grasped directly), naturally finds vision to be the privileged human sense which the sense of touch was for other epochs (Debord 1967:§18)

Stirner gave us a taste of what the reification of the State may involve. In 1844 he wrote,

“... a ghostly world surrounding you everywhere; you are always having ‘apparitions’ or visions. Everything that appears to you is only the phantasm of an indwelling spirit, is a ghostly ‘apparition’; the world is to you only the world of appearances, behind which the spirit walks. You ‘see spirits’ (Stirner, 2000: 36).

These visions, or rather apparitions, nonetheless take place within the superstitious mind, it is a mental activity – that is to say, Stirner was referring to a process of reification that is purely imaginative and self-subjectificatory (ontological). In 1967 Debord demonstrated how this ghostly world of imagined apparitions is systematically and more directly reinforced and further helps reification by the advances in spectacularisation of the modern society.

Stirner was writing in the mid-nineteenth century (there was no moving image, no television, no cinema, no live broadcasts, no aggressive advertising – there was no presence of the moving image in personal space), and though his discussion is still relevant it did not capture the technological advances that would have brought about new methods of subjectification through micro-political reification of political reality. By examining the work of Max Stirner

we have seen how the reification of the State works psychologically and how it is intimately related to *social mediation by ideas*. But this is only half of the picture. At this stage we must take on board Stirner's psychoanalytic framework, which was examined in chapter three, but we must also note that subjectification through ideas must have evolved to employ the same religious mode of thinking, but now with modern advances in capitalist societies. Sartre's early yet still significant work on *The Psychology of Imagination* demonstrated how some kind of an image is always necessary for imaginative and reificatory processes (Sartre 1948:137-174). In other words, the image and visual representation of the being or object is essential in the effective formation of conceptualisation and imagination of the essential forms, precisely because of the reinforcing power that they have on short-term memory.¹ Thus, in order for the economy of subjectifying ideas, ideals, identities and spectres to exercise an effect that would be *convincing* of their presence and rationale, and in order for these to be effectively reified into ontologically higher categories, there must be a preceding economy of images and signs. This theme became central to Guy Debord's outline of the concept of the 'spectacle', which is social mediation by images.

Through the concept of the Spectacle one witnesses a record of a whole new stage in experiencing political reality and what is taken to be real. Debord's work presents us with a more nuanced theory of reification, which is formulated as a theory of cultural transformation – the evolution of the society of the spectacle and the integrated spectacle – that started with shifts in commodity-fetishism and the predominance of the gaze over other senses. In

¹ Sartre attributes this fact to the inherently spatial character of conceptual thinking and association (Sartre 1948:6)

order to place Guy Debord's theory in the appropriate context, I will start with a brief section about the Situationist International. After that Debord's theory of the spectacle will be elaborated with an emphasis on the transformations in commodity-fetishism as a pattern of reification. That will be followed by an exegesis of Debord's later work on what he called the "integrated spectacle".

The Situationist International

The Situationist International was originally an arts movement, though many Situationists still explicitly deny the status of a movement as a way of resisting the canonization suffered by the early avant-garde (Sussman 1989:3). The Situationists were linked to various art movements across Europe, particularly the early avant-garde movements like Dada and surrealism. Just like the Dadaists, Situationists saw art as a revolutionary action, as a means to revolution, rather than a commodity. Just like the surrealists, the Situationists wanted to see a fundamental change in popular consciousness (Sussman 1989:4). It is important to note that situationism only started forming around the mid-1950s as an opposition especially to Dada; that is to say, the Situationists took aboard the achievements of Dada and surrealism, but felt the need to march beyond those.

The immediate predecessor of Situationism, however, was the Lettrist International – a short-lived experimental avant-garde movement in 1950s Paris that made the letter and other signifiers (Morse Code, Braille, flags, hieroglyphs)

the central element in painting, poetry, music and what they called “enlarged” cinema as means to undermining the semantic transparency of the word (Sussman 1989:7; Jay 1994:421). Lettrist works would also include sign/images from popular culture, such as cartoons, often subversively recaptioned. Debord’s involvement with Lettrists had a profound impact on his later work – in dissociating the sign from the signified, the important and more political question for Debord and his Situationist counterparts would later become how does the Spectacle convincingly sustain the illusion of that relationship? The Lettrist International also had close affiliations with COBRA – a group of artists from Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam, who would later become members of the Situationist International. The Situationist International was originally a splinter group within the Lettrists until the dissolution of the latter. The movement gained its name because of the *Internationale Situationniste*, which was their journal and the central organ of their preliminary activities.

At their initial stage (1957-1962) Situationists were focusing on experimental and conceptual art. Situationists saw art itself as a potentially revolutionary activity because of the “unreason” that it carries inherently. Thus, art for Situationists was not an object, but an action, a continuous activity, praxis. This is where the name “Situationist” comes from – constructing situations that would temporarily interrupt the continuum of everyday experience is art in itself. Art, for Situationists, is thus an activity that temporarily changes thinking and disrupts the logical continuum of the established regime. Perhaps the piece that split the Lettrist International and gave birth to Situationist International was Guy Debord’s essay ‘Report on the Construction of Situations’ published

in 1957. Debord called for what he called ‘construction of situations’ as a genre of artistic activity. A constructed situation implies ‘a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organisation of a unitary ambiance and a game of events’ (Knabb 1981:45-6).

Because Situationists had a different conceptualisation of art, their initial action was directed at ‘converting art from a precious, consumerable object to a principle permeating daily life’ (Sussman 1989:4). Situationists were bothered by the way that art, especially critical art, is secluded in museums, galleries, theatres or cinemas. As Guy Debord argued these “museum-areas” because of their temporarily irrational and unrealistic nature, in fact function as an attestation to and affirmation of the realness and rationality of the spectacle that is at large outside museum-areas (Debord 1966:§65). Therefore, they saw the radicalisation of everyday life, a principle inherited from Henri Lefebvre, as a matter of artistic expression that would not be contained or containable within those secluded zones. Situationists argued that all revolutionary activity must be artistic in its nature in order to confront the stabilised notions of rationality and normality upon which the spectacle rests. As the Situationist slogans say, “everything we do must be art”, “art made by all, or not at all” (Trotter 1997:4); or, as they proposed in the manifesto of 1960, ‘Against the spectacle, the realized Situationist culture introduces total participation’ (Situationist International 1960). In fact, Situationists saw conventional art forms – forms that can be contained and commodified – as something to be resisted, even vandalised or destroyed: at times they even saw themselves as an anti-art movement. Similarly, in their 1960 manifesto they proposed the seizure of

UNESCO for its management of culture and bureaucratisation of art at a global scale, which aims on the conservation and reproduction of the past (Situationist International 1960). The proposed method of resistance to art was semiotic subversion in different artistic genres. Therefore, conventional art forms, ones that are commodifiable and marketable, such as painting and cinema, were to be made purposefully absurd and meaningless – not as a representation of the absurdity of capitalist conditions of existence, but as a statement about commodifiable and containable art itself. At the same time a new form of art was to explode beyond the confines of museum-areas and cinema theatres. The city itself was seen as a giant museum containing the artefacts of the capitalist spectacle with subjects, objects and movements as mere components in the motional depiction of consumer culture itself. Since the city was seen as a museum, it meant that situational and Situationist art had to be practiced as means to radicalisation of everyday life in order to turn the current regime against itself. Given this, the artistic task that Situationists set for themselves was to subvert, invert and divert the basic discourse of everyday life by re-appropriating the spectacle's signs and objects into a re-contextualised discourse of the created situation. This was known as *Détournement* (“diversion”) or the “subversion of the spectacle”, which is the ultimate aim of Situationist activity. As Sussman puts it,

Détournement proposes a violent excision of elements – painting, architecture, literature, film, urban sites, sounds, gestures, words, signs – from their original contexts, and a consequent destabilization and recontextualization through rupture and realignment’ (Sussman 1989:8).

This subversive activity was achieved by ‘interweaving text in irreverent juxtaposition to appropriated images – ads, provocative pictures of women, comic strips, views of cities, current newspaper photos, scientific charts, and diagrams’ (Sussman 1989:8). As Gil J Wolman and Debord wrote,

‘[t]he literary and artistic heritage of humanity should be used for partisan propaganda purposes. It is of course necessary to go beyond any idea of scandal. Since the negation of the bourgeois conception of art and artistic genius has become pretty much old hat, [Duchamp’s] drawing of a moustache on the *Mona Lisa* is no more interesting than the original version of that painting. We now must push this process to the point of negating the negation’ (Wolman 1956:9).

Thus the project was to destroy the boundaries between secluded museum-areas and the rest of the spectacle. This is why the Situationist artists saw a need to turn the streets into an arena for art and politics, thus constructing art and politics that could not be contained in secluded zones like the museum, the cinema or the parliament.

This activity was also carried out in cinematic experimentations. Lemaitre, for instance introduced the notion of “syncinema”, whereby the actual actors from the film would be introduced in person to the audience, thus closing the gap between the passive spectator and the object of his/her gaze. He also presented *An Evening at the Movies*, which projected images of hypergraphs onto the bodies of the spectators – reversing the projection, the gaze and the notion of the screen (Jay 1994:422). However, the first “film” by Debord in 1952,

Howlings in Favour of Sade, went farthest in causing the expected scandal even among avant-gardists, especially after its screening in the Institute for Contemporary Art in London. The initial version of the film had chiseled images and an unsynchronised soundtrack, as an attempt to question or undermine the illusion that the cinematic representation caused. However, the final version of *Howlings in Favour of Sade* became a disparate continuum of monotonous statements between four voices. The monotonous conversation itself hardly made any sense, and Sade was not even mentioned apart from in the title. When they spoke, the screen was white, and when they were silent, which took four-fifths of film's eighty minutes, the screen was dark. The experience of watching such a "film" is absolutely debilitating and torturous, but as early as this Debord is formulating the elements of his analysis of being the subject of the spectacle: at the basic level the spectacle is boring and we are *forced* to watch and accept it by the conditions of being part of the spectacle.

By 1962 the negation of the concept of art as a separate exhibitable enterprise had reached its strongest. At the fifth conference of the Situationist International in Göteborg (Sweden) Raoul Vaneigem said,

‘It is a question not of elaborating the spectacle of refusal, but rather of refusing the spectacle. In order for their elaboration to be artistic in the new and authentic sense defined by the SI, the elements of the destruction of the spectacle must precisely cease to be works of art. There is no such thing as situationism or a Situationist work of art. Once and for all. ...Our position is that of combatants between

two worlds – one that we don't acknowledge, the other that does not yet exist' (Knabb 1981:88).

As it was noted, urban sites were seen as a general site of struggle. One important aspect of Marxian and anarchist thinking that Situationists inherited was the understanding that modern society already carries elements of its own demise – elements which can always be turned against the existing regime and which can be used in the evolution of a new society. As the Situationist International grew and spread across Europe the preliminary task was to search for and identify some of the endless multitude of those elements, and to divert their discourse against the logic of spectacular regime. Everyday life, the urban spatial environment and mass consumption were seen as loci of spectacular micropractices, which also meant that they could be used as loci of revolutionary struggle. For instance, Debord argued that while the spacious boulevards of Paris were constructed for the practical purpose of the effective urban deploying of troops and as sites for the spectacular military parades, they could also be used against the spectacle in the participatory Festival by the masses (Debord 1957). The same signs can carry alternate meanings depending on the situational context in which they are presented. The spectacle, Debord argued, '...isolates all it shows from its *context*, its past, its intentions and its consequences', which is how it maintains its coherence (Debord 1988:28; my emphasis). And it is precisely this re-contextualisation of the object of gaze that was needed:

'Transformations would take place in quotidian, everyday uses of the city and its buildings, in a revitalisation of art through a negation of its traditional values, and in a subversive appropriation of

dominant, mass-media representations (film, advertising, newspapers and so forth)' (Sussman 1989:4).

In the similar manner, Situationist guerrilla artists would spread and penetrate the loci of spectacular micropractices in order to invert the discourses that the original signs were supposed to convey. Constructing situations became a matter of not only interrupting the continuum of everyday experiences, but also the normal expectations that accompany them.

It may seem that the Situationist activity was ultimately naïve, if not silly. So why go to all this trouble? For one, there is the old anarchist recognition that the revolution must spring from below and from the masses (and not be mediated by experts), which in turn meant that Cultural Revolution had to take place spontaneously and before the actual revolution and not afterwards as a repressive enterprise on behalf of the militarised machine. Situationists were also successful in sparking of the events of May 1968 in Paris as well as many other uprisings across the European peninsula. However, in order to understand the rationale behind the Situationist activities one must look at their analysis of how the spectacle functions and exercises itself in everyday life. In what follows I will try to construct an exposé of the Situationist analysis of the spectacle focusing on the works of Guy Debord. This will then be linked to the problem of reification in my final analysis.

The Spectacle

The authorship of the concept of ‘the society of the spectacle’ or ‘spectacular society’ belongs to Guy Debord (1992, 1988) – a filmmaker, social critic and activist, who was a prime figure in the Situationist International and a theorist who is associated with anarchism of the second half of the twentieth century or ‘the second-wave anarchism’ (Moore 1997:158).

What is the Spectacle? This concept figures largely throughout Situationist texts, but is best expressed in the Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967). Succinctly put, the Spectacle is the social relationship mediated by images. The “Spectacle” is the key concept in Debord’s critical system. The impression that one is left with from reading Debord’s and other Situationists’ texts, is that the concept of the ‘spectacle’ resists one specific definition, but is outlined as a generic concept through an analysis of how it functions. This concept can be understood as an ideological exposition of a multitude of concepts: reality, politics, the mode of social relation, a type of discourse, ‘a world vision which has become objectified’ (Debord 1967:§5), ‘a social relation among people, mediated by images’ (Debord 1967:§3), ‘the totality of new techniques of government’ (Debord 1988:2), a model of everyday life and so forth. It is precisely due to its omnipresence that the concept is left with a multiplicity of definitions, and where a positive statement regarding “the spectacle” and “the spectacular” is given, it rather tends to elucidate of the patterns of its operations.

Guy Debord starts his *Society of the Spectacle* by a quotation from the preface to the second edition of Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*:

‘But certainly for the present age, which prefers the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original, representation to reality, the appearance to the essence... *illusion* only is sacred, *truth* profane. Nay, sacredness is held to be enhanced in proportion as truth decreases and illusion increases, so that the highest degree of illusion comes to be the highest degree of sacredness’.

The opening paragraph of *The Society of the Spectacle* states, ‘[i]n societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation’ (Debord 1967:§1). Throughout the book Debord explores and places a particular emphasis on transformations in the experiencing of the object of reality. He is not so much concerned with being observed, as much as with being the observer. Extensive representation and technological advances have transformed the role of images and representations, as well as the way that the modern subject comprehends them: images no longer represent reality, they are no longer neutral descriptive mediums between reality and the subject; now they play a constitutive role – they are the totality of that reality.

‘The images detached from every aspect of life fuse in a common stream in which the unity of this life can no longer be reestablished. Reality considered *partially* unfolds, in its own general unity, as a pseudo-world *apart*, an object of mere contemplation. ...The

spectacle in general, as the concrete inversion of life, is the autonomous movement of the non-living' (Debord 1967:§2).

However, it must be emphasised, '[t]he spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images' (Debord 1967:§4). Thus, what we have here is the return of the very apparitions of the non-existent spectre that Stirner has talked about, but now in the form of images. The relationship of the observer and the observed sublime object of the image is still the same as in Stirner's critique of religious modes of experiencing – the relationship is still hierarchical and the object is still sublime, in the way that the subject does not see anything else more than it sees the spectacle. The spectre, however, is now presented as more real and ontologically higher since it is no longer an abstract idea, but an image, and moreover, an animated image, which is consumed and experienced not as the presence of the image, but as the presence of the thing signified.

The Spectacle emerges out of the initial *separation*. Separation is a rather complex concept, though it figures a lot in Debord's works and therefore needs explaining. Separation implies, primarily, the separation between individuals, which grows into a generic culture, whereby the political and communicative role of public spaces is eroded. It is a concept that denotes the erosion of the ultimately basic, passionate and political side of human communication, the social sphere and public spaces. In his film *Society of the Spectacle* (1973) Debord re-appropriates a scene from an advertisement where a couple find themselves seated in a futuristic living room, embracing, and watching a television image with a smile on their faces, while Debord's voice-over narration comments 'The

spectacle reunites the separate, but reunites it *as separate*' (Debord 1973; 1967:§29, emphasis original). What Debord is saying is quite simple: the subjects think that they are united in presence of each other, while their attention and communication is not directed at each other so as to achieve a relationality through communication, but at the image re-presented by the TV set, which resolves the separation in favour of the truth of the spectacle and reification of the signified. The subjects are united only in the context of the spectacle and in the presence of the spectacular image, while they remain ultimately separated. Therefore, unity in such conditions can only be attained through the reification of the image into reality. Thus, what appears in the spectacle, not only replaces, but, in fact, is the relation between individuals: subjects associate with each other *through* the reified. That is how the spectacle mediates the relation among people – it is the new phenomenological instrument of unification that presents itself as the central organ of political reality.

‘The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as all of society, as part of society, and as *instrument of unification*. As a part of society it is specifically the sector which concentrates all gazing and all consciousness. Due to the very fact that this sector is *separate*, it is the common ground of the deceived gaze and of false consciousness, and the unification it achieves is nothing but an official language of generalized separation’ (Debord 1967:§3; emphasis original).

This is how ‘separation is itself part of the unity of the world’ (Debord 1967:§7).

Later on, in his analyses of Panopticism Foucault noted that the separation between the inmates of the panopticon was a crucial factor in making effective the disciplinary practices that the central tower of the panopticon was supposed to exert (Foucault 1991:201, 250). This was achieved by the very structural design of the building: the inmates would be separated by the walls in such a way that they would not see other inmates, but would only see the central tower of the panopticon and would only be watched by the central tower.

The being/sign presented through the spectacle becomes more real than the observer. This is the case because the spectacle has the monopoly to appear and also because the observer is not in the sublime limelight of the spectacular presentation – one does not and cannot see oneself:

‘The spectacle presents itself as something enormously positive, indisputable and inaccessible. It says nothing more than “that which appears is good, that which is good appears”. The attitude which it demands in principle is passive acceptance which in fact it already obtained by its manner of appearing without reply, by its monopoly of appearance’ (Debord 1967:§12).

The subject can therefore “see”/imagine itself only in his/her relation to the spectacle. The reification of the being/sign presented spectacularly as the signified of the image is therefore an integral part of self-identification and identity formation within the context of the spectacle.

Hardt and Negri suggest that '[i]n the society of the spectacle, what was once imagined as the public sphere, the open terrain of political exchange and participation completely evaporates. The spectacle destroys any collective form of sociality – individualizing social actors in their separate automobiles and in front of their separate video screens – and at the same time imposes a new mass sociality, a new uniformity of action and thought' (Hardt and Negri 2000:321-2).

Information becomes the ultimate voyeur's commodity in advanced capitalist societies. It allows reality to be abstracted, bought, sold and controlled. The images are an extension of commodity fetishism that gain a sublime and sacred status. Jay's comment helps provide a new bridge between works of Debord and our earlier discussion on the reification of the sacred higher in Stirner's thought, as it outlines the key reason why the image becomes the object of worship:

'...the urban festival, re-establishing the "right to the city," was still a viable possibility, once the commodity fetishism of the modern spectacle was undermined.

'That visual experience would become a major battlefield in the service of revolution was inevitable, because of the strong link between any critique of fetishism, Marxism or otherwise, and that of idolatry. Insofar as commodities were the visible appearances of social processes whose roots in human production were forgotten or repressed, they were like the idols worshiped in lieu of the invisible God' (Jay 1994:419).

Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, once dubbed "the Das Kapital of the new generation" (Jay 1994:426), is a relatively short book, which consists of 222 paragraphs presented in ten chapters. Though it presents itself in the style of the populist *Little Red Book*, it is not an easy read. In fact from the first sight it appears that it is nothing more than the author's experimental play with text and grammar. However, since it was one of the key texts that inspired many activists in Paris May 1968 events, and since it is regarded as a text that formed a new, would-be post-modern, mode of critique of capitalism, it warrants a closer look.

The first thing that strikes the eye of a reader is that it analyses and theorises using its own terminology – concepts like 'Spectacle', 'Spectacular order', 'Spectacular Society', 'Situation', 'Separation' and so forth, in such a way as if there is nothing outside it, and as if the reader is already supposed to know what is meant by these concepts. It is an interesting move, for it seems to stand as a recognition that a critique of the totalising system cannot be effectively formed using the structures, notions and language that are already accepted in its own discourse. As Debord argued,

When *analyzing* the spectacle one speaks, to some extent, the language of the spectacular itself in the sense that one moves through the methodological terrain of the very society which expresses itself in the spectacle. But the spectacle is nothing other than the *sense* of the total practice of a social-economic formation (Debord 1967:§11).

The usage of this style already provides an answer to the then-fashionable and still important question: If capitalism is an ever growing, integrating and totalising system that pervades new aspects of human activities as it develops, what would be the space where an effective outside to it could be formed? For classical critical thinkers like Marcuse and Adorno the *potential* of this space is with art and philosophy. From the point of view of Situationists, including Debord, who formed their movement initially as an opposition to surrealism and Dadaism, the revolutionary potential of art was lost – and that development was seen as one of the indicators of the rise of the Spectacular order and of the society of the spectacle.

‘Dadaism wanted *to suppress art without realizing it*; surrealism wanted *to realize art without suppressing it*. The critical position later elaborated by the *Situationists* has shown that the suppression and the realization of art are inseparable aspects of a single *supersession of art*’ (Debord 1967:§191).

This is why art was seen as something to be overcome. Thus Debord adopts a non-transcendentalist view of capitalist totality: there is nothing outside the spectacle. An outside, however, can be formed *within* the Spectacle, using the tools and methods of the spectacular order, but inverting or subverting the discourse that the sign is originally intended to convey (Debord 1957).

Commodity Fetishism and Reification

In Debord's view capitalism has reached a stage whereby its structure is upheld not by the centrality of production, but by the centrality of consumption. In other words, it is no longer production in the name of profit that fuels the system, but consumption in the name of consumption. Thus, it is consumption and particularly, a specific mode of consumption that defines modern day capitalism. The evolution of the 'Society of the Spectacle' or what later became known as the consumer society, radically reshuffles the conceptualisation of structure within capitalism. For one, the divide between agent and structure is no longer relevant. Equally inapplicable are Bakunin's and the classical anarchists' separation between the State and society, which views the latter as the uncontaminated point of departure or the space which resists the State. Why is this the case? Because the mode of consumption that is inseparable from the spectacle is that which prefers the image over the real thing, and the image is consumed instead of the real and as the real itself. This spectacular culture conquers the agent and makes it part of the structure, which is why there is no separation between the two.

As Hardt and Negri point out 'Similarly, the notions that politicians function as celebrities and political campaigns operate on the logic of advertising – hypotheses that seemed radical and scandalous thirty years ago – are today taken for granted. Political discourse is an articulated sales pitch, and political participation is reduced to selecting among consumerable images' (Hardt and Negri 2000:322).

It is vital to remember that Debord's explanation of the evolution of the contemporary spectacle is not only the dominance of the gaze and visual sense (as a generic cultural formation in arts, politics, literature etc.) and technological advancements in spectacular presentation and proliferation, but predominantly transformations in commodity-fetishism and reification.

Commodity-fetishism is relevant to our discussion not only because of its integral role in consumer culture, but also because it is an expression of broader set of transformations in the way the subject consumes, experiences and reifies the object (in our case the sign of "the State"). In other words transformations in commodity-fetishism overflow and conquer the cultural realm, which in turn brings a fetishistic dimension to reification. As Georg Lukacs noted as early as 1923,

"The commodity can only be understood in its undistorted essence when it becomes the universal category of society as a whole. Only in this context does the reification produced by commodity relations assume decisive importance both for the objective evolution of society and for the stance adopted by men towards it. Only then does the commodity become crucial for the subjugation of men's consciousness to the forms in which this reification finds expression.... As labor is progressively rationalized and mechanized man's lack of will is reinforced by the way in which his activity becomes less and less active and more and more contemplative' (Lukacs 1971: 86)

The aspect of commodity-fetishism that is vital for understanding the fetishist dimension of reification and which also gives birth to the society of the spectacle is the way that the object is presented. As Debord put it,

‘Beyond what is strictly secret, spectacular discourse obviously silences anything it finds inconvenient. It isolates all it shows from its context, its past, its intentions and its consequences. It is thus completely illogical’ (Debord 1988:28)

That is to say, the spectacular relations between the observer and the consumable object relate back to how and why Situationists attacked consumable and commodifiable art. In spectacular relations, while placed in the spotlight the object is presented as *in itself* – atomistically. It is an object, rather than a product. It is an object that is cut off from its history, from its origin, from the context of forces and conditions that produce it or led to its production, or the production of its image; it presents itself *as if* it has existed timelessly and perpetually without any relation to the labour that produced it, presented it and spectacularised it. The fact that it is cut off from its history makes possible for it to be defined (Nietzsche 1967:ch.2, §xiii), gain a new meaning and later get reified. It is thus ‘specifically the sector which concentrates all gazing and all consciousness’ (Debord 1967:§3). In the following passage Debord explains how the spectacle governs through commodity fetishism; that is to say, how this understanding of commodity is transformed into mechanisms of control:

The spectacle is the moment when the commodity has attained the *total occupation* of social life. Not only is the relation to the commodity visible but it is all one sees: the world one sees is its

world. Modern economic production extends its dictatorship extensively and intensively. In the least industrialized places, its reign is already attested by a few star commodities and by the imperialist domination imposed by regions which are ahead in the development of productivity. In the advanced regions, social space is invaded by a continuous superimposition of geological layers of commodities. At this point in the "second industrial revolution," alienated consumption becomes for the masses a duty supplementary to alienated production. It is *all the sold labor* of a society which globally becomes the *total commodity* for which the cycle must be continued. For this to be done, the total commodity has to return as a fragment to the fragmented individual, absolutely separated from the productive forces operating as a whole. Thus it is here that the specialized science of domination must in turn specialize: it fragments itself into sociology, psychotechnics, cybernetics, semiology, etc., watching over the self-regulation of every level of the process (Debord 1967:§42).

In the Situationist account reification becomes the main obstacle to Revolution, consciousness and un-authoritarian society. Not only is reification the obstacle, but it is installed into society as a new mode of subjectification in order to eliminate the anti-Statist aspects of leftist thought. The following paragraph from Debord summarises how commodity-fetishism and State-fetishism are inter-related:

The spectacle is the existing order's uninterrupted discourse about itself, its laudatory monologue. It is the self-portrait of power in the

epoch of its totalitarian management of the conditions of existence. The fetishistic, purely objective appearance of spectacular relations conceals the fact that they are relations among men and classes: a second nature with its fatal laws seems to dominate our environment. ...If the social needs of the epoch in which such techniques are developed can only be satisfied through their mediation, if the administration of this society and all contact among men can no longer take place except through the intermediary of this power of instantaneous communication, it is because this "communication" is essentially *unilateral*. The concentration of "communication" is thus an accumulation, in the hands of the existing system's administration, of the means which allow it to carry on this particular administration. The generalized cleavage of the spectacle is inseparable from the modern *State*, namely from the general form of cleavage within society, the product of the division of social labour and the organ of class domination (Debord 1967:§24).

The chain of transformations was initiated with the shift in the sense of property and possessions from merely functional to ontological categories. For Debord that early form of commodity-fetishism was the seed that eventually paved the way for the development of spectacular relations. The first phase of the domination of the economy over social life brought into the definition of all human realization the obvious degradation of *being* into *having*. The present phase of total occupation of social life by the accumulated results of the

economy leads to a generalized sliding of *having* into *appearing* (Debord 1967:§17). Thus if Being and Appearing have been equated as a result of this double transformation, then everything that appears implies a Being, which generates the false consciousness of the spectacular order. And this is precisely the case with the State which fabricates its 'being' by a repeated presence of signs and symbols: flags, cenotaphs, leaders, policemen, CCTV cameras etc.

Transcendentalism/non-transcendentalism

In terms of the history of ideas Debord's thought stands in the passageway between transcendentalism and non-transcendentalism.

The non-transcendentalist element in his thought can be best summarised as the argument that there is nothing outside the spectacle: even though it is the world of appearances, there is no truth outside that which appears. The world of appearances is all the reality there is. 'Reality rises up within the spectacle, and the spectacle is real' (Debord 1967:§8). This is why, as Debord put it, 'one cannot abstractly contrast the spectacle to actual social activity' (Debord 1967:§8). Despite the cognisant divide between reality and the image, the spectacle envelopes both, which means that even the transcendental real is permeated by it (Debord 1967:§7). As mentioned earlier, whereas the classical capitalist intention, Debord argued, was to reduce being into having, what marks an important transformation in capitalist culture is that being now is equated with appearing. Thus, everything that appears exists. Only that exists

which appears. In the conditions of inter-individual separation and alienation the omnipresence of signs makes the spectacle more real and existent than the individuals themselves.

The transcendentalist current that still runs in Debord's thought is interesting as it does not resemble the metaphysical transcendentalisms of Enlightenment thinkers. In other words, there is no ultimate real, which is still unknown and still to be found. It is rather an alternative real that one must create in the midst of the spectacle by constructing specific situations that will aim at subverting, inverting and diverting spectacular discourse.

The concept of 'the spectacle' is not a transcendentalist concept. In other words,

'It is not a supplement to the real world, an additional decoration. It is the heart of the unrealism of the real society. In all its specific forms, as information or propaganda, as advertisement or direct entertainment consumption, the spectacle is the present model of socially dominant life. It is the omnipresent affirmation of the choice *already made* in production and its corollary consumption. The spectacle's form and content are identically the total justification of the existing system's conditions and goals. The spectacle is also the *permanent presence* of this justification' (Debord 1967:§6)

The Integrated Spectacle

As a result of the failure of the 1968 attempt at revolution, Debord published *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (Debord [1988] 1990). In this work he argued that everything that he said about *The Society of the Spectacle* back in 1967 was still true, with a minor amendment: the spectacle, he argued, has now evolved into the *Integrated Spectacle*.

The challenge of the radical left that proliferated across Europe in 1960s, 70s and early-80s had led the spectacle to evolve and advance so as to envelope and engulf these tendencies. As Debord put it in his later observation,

‘... [t]he spectacle has thus continued to gather strength; that is, to spread to the furthest limits on all sides, while increasing its density in the centre. It has even learnt new defensive techniques, as powers under attack always do’ (Debord 1988:3).

So, what is it about the integrated spectacle that the classic concept of the spectacle did not have? What point has it reached, that it had not reached previously? (Debord 1988:4) The new paradox of the spectacle is that ‘No one today can reasonably doubt the existence or power of the spectacle’ (Debord 1988:5). In other words, Debord argues that the public is by now very much aware of the very facts of politics, which early spectacle was working hard to conceal. In fact, the spectacle no longer makes any secret about itself or its character. Yet the paradox is that while the public is very much aware of the spectacular character of politics, its response remains that of passive acceptance, observation and even celebration. The argument is that by now the

spectacle makes no secret of the fact that politics is all about “spin”, appearances, hypocrisy, mafia, secret services, injustice and media, and yet while previously such an exposé would be met by discontent, now the public passively accepts these absurdities as a normal and natural course of events. Debord’s explanation of this is not only the consumer culture that capitalism persistently produces and exports, but also the disciplinary practices that the spectacle exerts – the mediation of the comprehension of reality is also a conditioning of that comprehension.

‘In all that has happened in the last twenty years, the most important change lies in the very continuity of the spectacle. This has nothing to do with the perfecting of its media instruments, which had already reached a highly advanced stage of development: it means quite simply that the spectacle’s domination has succeeded in raising a whole generation moulded to its laws. The extraordinary new conditions in which this entire generation has effectively lived constitute a precise and comprehensive summary of all that, henceforth, the spectacle will forbid; and also all that it will permit (Debord 1988:7).

In 1967 outline of the theory of the society of the spectacle, Guy Debord distinguished two rival and successive forms of spectacular power: the *concentrated* and the *diffuse*. As he explains their functioning again in his later work,

‘Both [types of spectacular power] floated above the real society, as its goal and its lie. The former, favouring the ideology condensed around a dictatorial personality, had accomplished the totalitarian

counter-revolution, fascist as well as Stalinist. The latter, driving wage-earners to apply their freedom of choice to the vast range of new commodities now on offer, had represented the Americanisation of the world, a process which in some respects frightened but also successfully seduced those countries where it had been possible to maintain traditional forms of bourgeois democracy' (Debord 1988:8)

Debord argues that a new form of spectacular power evolved as a means of containment of resistances by embracing them and that this is a new mode of domination and not a dialectical synthesis. We thus see the return of Stirnerian dialecticism in his analysis of experience of the higher: the forms change thus simulating dialectical evolution, while the spectre of sovereignty remains and integrates in increasingly subtle manner. This is the *integrated spectacle*, which has evolved out of the victory of the diffuse over the concentrated spectacle, and which has tended to impose itself globally (Debord 1988:8).

The *concentrated spectacle* is associated with modernist regimes (Bolshevik, Nazi, Maoist), where the State is routinely celebrated in parades, slogans and symbolisms, while the general population remains aware of the propagandistic and artificial nature of the spectacle. The *diffuse spectacle*, on the other hand, the origins of which Debord pins to the United States, is associated with more subtle and dispersed cultural productions and cultural imperialism, whereby the parading of its own reactionary achievements stems from the social sphere itself and thus occurs in multiple registers. The *integrated spectacle*, Debord argues, is a

uniquely European extension of the diffuse, which also combines elements of the concentrated:

‘...the fruitful union of the two has learnt to employ both these qualities on a grander scale. The former mode of application has changed considerably. As regards concentration, the controlling centre has now become occult: never to be occupied by a known leader, or clear ideology. And on the diffuse side, the spectacle has never before put its mark to such a degree on almost the full range of socially produced behaviour and objects. For the final sense of the integrated spectacle is this – that it has integrated itself into reality to the same extent as it was describing it, and that it was reconstructing it as it was describing it. As a result, this reality no longer confronts the integrated spectacle as something alien. When the spectacle was concentrated, the greater part of surrounding society escaped it; when diffuse, a small part; today, no part. The spectacle has spread itself to the point where it now permeates all reality’ (Debord 1988:9)

There are several characteristics by which Debord distinguished the integrated spectacle from its predecessors. I will focus on a small number of them.

Acceptance

The predecessor of the integrated spectacle (the diffuse) had already initiated the process of disciplining memory and of the comprehension of reality in the following way: the existence and significance of something continues as long as

the spectacle talks about it – as soon as the debate about it ceases, the public is led to immediately forget that it ever happened or existed.

‘When the spectacle stops talking about something for three days, it is as if it did not exist. For it has then gone on to talk about something else, and it is that which henceforth, in short, exists’ (Debord 1988:20).

This is why the spectacle re-presents political reality in a cyclical and repetitious pattern.

‘The spectacle proves its arguments simply by going round in circles: by coming back to the start, by repetition, by constant reaffirmation in the only space left where anything can be publicly affirmed, and believed, precisely because that is the only thing to which everyone is witness’ (Debord 1988:19).

The integrated spectacle is accepted despite a widespread knowledge of the spectacular character of politics, Debord argues, because it makes sense in its own context:

At the technological level, when images chosen and constructed by someone else have everywhere become the individual’s principal connection to the world he formerly observed for himself, it has certainly not been forgotten that these images can tolerate anything and everything; because within the same image all things can be juxtaposed without contradiction. The flow of images carries everything before it, and it is similarly someone else who controls at will this simplified summary of the sensible world; who decides where the flow will lead as well as the rhythm of what should be

shown, like some perpetual, arbitrary surprise, leaving no time for reflection, and entirely independent of what the spectator might understand or think of it. In this concrete experience of permanent submission lies the psychological origin of such general acceptance of what is; an acceptance which comes to find in it, ipso facto, a sufficient value' (Debord 1988:27-8)

Experts

'With the destruction of history, contemporary events themselves retreat into a remote and fabulous realm of unbelievable stories, uncheckable statistics, unlikely explanations and untenable reasoning' (Debord 1988:16). This brings political conditions to a point where anything goes and anything can go, at which point Debord introduces the concept of "experts". The primary task of the experts is to speak as experts, to produce the stories as believable, to analyse statistics scientifically, to present unlikely explanations as a likelihood and to stabilise the reasoning upon which the spectacular narrative rests.

The notion of experts does not seem to figure in Debord's earlier account of the diffuse spectacle, and it seems that he is borrowing this concept from Foucault's notion of discursive practice. The following passage from Dreyfuss and Rabinow explain best what discursive practice is:

'The discursive practices are distinguished from the speech acts of everyday life. Foucault is interested only in what we call *serious* speech acts: what experts say when they are speaking as experts. And he further restricts his analyses to the serious speech acts in

those “dubious” disciplines which have come to be called the human sciences’ (Dreyfuss and Rabinow 1983)

Furthermore, the integrated spectacle presents itself as the triumphant victor over, and the guardian against the return of, all previous spectacles, thus making us forget that the integrated is a spectacle too. Thus the integrated effectively employs as its allies terrorism, fascism, dictatorship, ideology and other phenomena that can be hermeneutically contested, which are counter-posed as the spectacle’s enemies in an epistemological affirmation that the new spectacle is the resolute negation of the old concentrated spectacles. In a similar fashion every counter-spectacular tendency is employed as the agent of a negative affirmation of the virtue of the spectacular. That is what Debord means when he reiterates the statement he made back in 1967, ‘yet the highest ambition of the integrated spectacle is still to turn secret agents into revolutionaries, and revolutionaries into secret agents’ (Debord 1988:11).

Fragility of the Integrated Spectacle

Since the integrated spectacle, according to Debord, originates in Western Europe as an extension of more Americanised diffuse spectacle, it repeatedly presents itself as a fragile achievement, something the Europeans fought hard for over the centuries and something that is not enjoyed in other parts of the world. It is an extension of not only the diffuse spectacle but also of Eurocentrism as an expression of perpetual celebration of Enlightenment rationality and the renewed triumph of the republicanism of French Revolution:

‘Once it attains the stage of the integrated spectacle, self-proclaimed democratic society seems to be generally accepted as the realisation of a *fragile perfection*. So that it must no longer be exposed to attacks, being fragile; and indeed is no longer open to attack, being perfect as no other society before it’ (Debord 1988:21).

The integrated spectacle thus repeatedly reminds us of the unbearable character of life before the triumph of the spectacle, technology and democracy as means of its own alibi. It also repeatedly reminds us of wars fought on the European peninsula and of the backwardness of the rest of the world as a means of presenting itself as a fragile achievement to be protected and not to be attacked. This is why by repetitious self-presentation as a fragile achievement the integrated spectacle becomes the most robust and stable mode of domination.

‘For the first time in contemporary Europe no party or fraction of a party even tries to pretend that they wish to change anything significant’ (Debord 1988:21).

The new spectacle no longer makes a secret of its spectacular nature. Instead, it operates by a logic of integration to re-channel all dissident voices not through repression, but by presenting itself as the end of history, which is why no more social progress is necessary.

‘We have dispensed with that disturbing conception, which was dominant for over two hundred years, in which a society was open to criticism or transformation, reform or revolution. Not thanks to any new arguments, but quite simply because all argument has become useless’ (Debord 1988:21-2)

Conclusion

Debord's theory of the Spectacle, it can be argued, is the direct mirror-image of Foucault's analytic of panopticism. The two French contemporaries do not mention or refer to each other. However, it is very clear that they are very much aware of each other's works. They work from opposing directions, but they look at the same problem. What distinguishes them, however, is the direction of the gaze. Foucault looks at the object of the spectacular order, while Debord is interested in its subject. In other words, Foucault is interested in disciplinary technologies of *being observed*, while Debord believes that the problematic disciplinary micropractices are still in *being the observer*. For Foucault man is still an epistemological field constituted by the external gaze, while for Debord man is constituted by the monopolised appearance of the reality that he/she is presented with.

Foucault did recognise that the spectacle was an important stage in the history of modern society. For instance, he analyses a whole spectacularised ceremony of punishment at the outset of *Discipline and Punish*, whereby the body of the criminal was inscribed with the power of the monarch, literally. Citing the 1757 spectacle of Damien's punishment, Foucault called it a 'theatrical representation of pain' (Foucault 1991:14); and the spectacle, in Foucault's view, continues through the period of the Revolutionary guillotine as well. But, in Foucault's view, the spectacle stops with Napoleon, with the rise of institutions, just as the insane were let to roam the street as momentary attestations to the line between

madness and rationality until the evolution of asylums. The evolution of these institutions and of institutionality in general, Foucault claimed, led to sharpening in the line between the madness and civilization, between punitive practices as revenge on the one hand, to punishment as an expression of disciplinary practices; and this line in turn led to dissolution of the spectacle, and the evolution of sovereignty.

In a passage implicitly levelled at Debord, Foucault argues, 'Our society is not one of spectacle, but of surveillance...it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces. We are much less Greeks than we believe. We are neither in the amphitheatre, nor on stage, but in the panoptic machine, invested by its effects of power, which we bring to ourselves since we are part of its mechanism' (Foucault 1991:217).

As Jay argues, 'Foucault may have focused so insistently on the dangers of panopticism that he remained blind to the other micropractices of everyday life that subvert its power' (Jay 1994:415).

For Debord, however, the spectacle is still the dominant disciplinary mechanism because of the primacy of the gaze and visual sense over all other senses that were more significant in epochs preceding modernity (Debord 1967:18). For Debord there is no single notion of the spectacle – it is something that constantly evolves. It evolves from the centralised spectacle

(which is what Foucault meant by pre-institutional punitative spectacles), on to diffuse spectacle that starts around 1920s, and on to the integrated spectacle of the contemporary post-industrial societies. In outlining the integrated spectacle Debord does pay attention to surveillance and he attributes a lot of importance to the fact that the surveillance increases, but that increase does not correspond to the growth of processing of that surveillance. Debord does not deny that we *think* that we are being watched, but ultimately the gaze is still predominantly subjects' and it is still directed *at* the spectacle because the latter is the instrument of unification, of logicalisation and rationalisation of the otherwise absurd, inconsistent and at even non-existent reality and of provision of identity.

CHAPTER 6

Of Spectacular State and the Micropractices of Its Reification

“There is one preliminary problem about the state which is very seldom considered, yet which requires attention if the discussion of its nature and role is to be properly focused. This is the fact that the “state” is not a thing, that it does not, as such, exist. (Miliband 1969: 49)

In this chapter I return to the earlier discussion of the problem of State reification in the light of the argument of the thesis thus far. In the final analysis it will be argued that the ability of the discourse of sovereignty to maintain its convincing character originates predominantly from the problem of State reification – that is to say, from the way that State reification is not seen as an actuality and as a *problematic* actuality, and the spectacular micropractices that present the State as an always already pre-existing political reality. The State exists not because there is and always has been sovereignty. The State does not refer back to sovereignty, as conventionally understood, but the other way round. The argument here will be that the modern configuration of sovereignty refers back to the knowledge that there is a State – a stabilised political reality where the existence of the State is the *predicate*.

Critical theories of sovereignty accentuate the constitutive role of the discursive practices of the theoreticians (Weber 1995; Walker 1993; Ashley 1988; Bartelson 1995; George 1994). While this is not entirely misleading, and while the

problem of sovereignty is indeed tied up with theoretical practices of presenting it as a logical and coherent discourse by the interpretative community, I argue that the problem is a lot more *micro-political* and psychological, in the way that people participate in their own domination and in the way that the problem is tied up with a set of micropractices of reification more than it is a result of entirely discursive practices.

So far we have examined the general classical anarchist position and three other models, which though not conventionally attributed to mainstream anarchism, are relevant. Two of these models came from and were inspired by a specific reading of Max Stirner, and the third model came from Guy Debord's notion of the spectacle. These positions do not contradict each other so starkly as to be ultimately incompatible. They can rather be seen as complementing each other and in this discussion I will try to bring them together in an attempt to resolve the problem of State reification that the thesis addresses.

Let me take the reader through a summary of the accomplishments and moves of the thesis thus far. We started by posing the problem of State reification, which implies the processes of making a real, higher and absolute being out of the State which is neither a human, nor a God. It is a matter of realising an object, a subject and even the highest being out of a non-existent ghost. It was said that Statist discourses take the pre-existence of the State as a departing point and therefore are unable to see that State reification is an actuality, and a problematic actuality. Theories of the State theorise it as if it already pre-existed the acts of theorisation, and thus such attempts at demystifying the existence of

the State metaphysically end up in further attributing to it ontological qualities of its own, and further reify it. It was then argued that in order to engage with the problem of State reification we will need a politico-philosophical system that does not take the State for granted – we needed a politico-philosophical system that would have that type of ontology not as a peripheral element, but as its central and definitive characteristic. Thus, we began looking at classical anarchism and philosophical anarchism. After that examination it was concluded that anarchism in general can be used as a working basis for various reasons, including the way that it rejects Social Contract theories and brings in alternative narratives about the historical formation of sovereign power; and, because it never takes the State for granted and always evaluates State actions without the prism of sovereignty. Nevertheless, we have seen that classical anarchism has its own weaknesses that could hinder our engagement with the problem of State reification. One of these limitations was that classical anarchism often relies on such categories as “natural” and “human nature” in advancing some of its key arguments – these are categories that are always open to interpretation and thus make the position of anarchism rather vulnerable to critiques from those schools of thought that have a directly opposite understanding of human nature and of what is natural. It was further argued that these categories did not capture the more subtle workings of power such as, for instance, the qualitative power that pervaded and shaped the individual internally. Thus, while taking on board some of the achievements of classical anarchism, we turned our attention to the margins of anarchist thought in the search for a position that would be less metaphysical, less essentialist and less humanistic. Therefore, in chapters three and four we examined the political

thought of Max Stirner – indeed, a marginalised figure within the anarchist tradition, and, in chapter five, Guy Debord’s work on the society of the spectacle.

If political analytic of State reification cannot rely on such discourses as the social contract, humanism or the notion of human nature, alternative non-metaphysical models lead to an investigation of State-reification by accounting for psychoanalytic factors that produce the convincing effect that the State is always already there and the convincing narrative about the origins of sovereign power. We saw that Stirner successfully broke out of the traps of humanism and replaced the dichotomous logic of “good and evil” with a basic psychoanalytic model. Nevertheless Stirner did not account for capitalism and for the development of capitalist culture in contemporary society. That is not to say that Stirner’s psychoanalytic model and his analysis of sovereignty and reification are not plausible. We took it on board, but also examined Debord’s work that theorised cultural production and the production of reality in the twentieth-century.

The Problem of State Reification Revisited

The problem of State reification was outlined in the Introduction. It was said that the State is taken as the unquestionable point of departure for modes of theorising that, in effect, evade deeper critical engagement with the complexities

involved. In other words, the tendency is to think of the State as *always already there* and to represent it thereafter, as if the State itself is an objective reality existing prior to practices of its representation and reification. Furthermore, the paradox that served as the original hook for this investigation was that in State-theories the State pre-exists the practice of theorising, while there is quite a degree of ambivalence and difficulty when one demands a single definite answer as to what the State itself is.

The preliminary problem of State reification is that it has hardly been posed as a problem *per se*. The question whether the God exists or not is far more widespread than questions about the existence of the State. Given that political life occupies perhaps a more significant a space than religion, the incontestability of the State's existence seems strange. Moreover, that the production of the State-effect is labour (and not only theoretical labour) and the actuality of everyday life is hardly questioned. This problem is caused partly by methodology – the way that the State is traditionally approached. In theorising the State, it is precisely because theories of the State already take the State's existence for granted – as a point of departure, that they are *already* unable to see that their own acts of theorising in effect only end up constituting the very State that they try to demystify.

The importance of the problem of State reification is that a multitude of factors like *reality and*, as it will be argued, *sovereignty are precisely the derivatives of the fact that State reification is not posed as a problem*. The ability to logically justify an action by such ambiguous reasoning as the “security of the State” or the “interest of the

State” as the highest prerogative, which already assumes that there is such a thing as “the State”, is problematic since it functions through an inherent tautology. It is problematic not only because it is illogical and tautological, but also because it hijacks justice. The representations of the State have successfully concealed the mythical and mystical foundations of the State’s existence by representing it in terms of functionality and practicality. As Kortright notes,

‘Where the convergence of the sacred is most relevant to the State is at the point where the issue of “*legitimacy*” of the institution meets what Max Weber regarded as a crucial part of the definition of the State – its monopoly on the legitimate use of violence within a given territory. The other part of that definition is the State’s embodiment of *Reason* – Hegel’s theory of the State – as in the bureaucratic forms’ (Kortright 2004:4; my emphases).

But the point needs to be taken further. Along with “legitimacy” and “Reason” what is at stake is a whole multitude of fundamental concerns such as the interpretation of political reality, justification, justice, legality and the convincing character of sovereignty. In light of the rejection of Social Contract theories and in light of the post-metaphysical theoretical practice of not taking the State for granted, the legitimising Statist discourses should collapse and sovereignty should lose its convincing power. But there is no sign of such a collapse. That is why a renewed inquiry into the nature of existence of the State – one that is formulated non-metaphysically, by posing State reification as a problematic actuality – is warranted.

As it was said above, State reification is a problem that is partly caused because of the methodology employed. It is a mode of looking at the State that is the issue at this point. Theories of the State and, indeed, classical anarchism have been looking at the State metaphysically – by posing the question “what is the State?” directly. For instance, let us briefly look at Max Weber’s definition of the State – indeed a definition that was favoured by numerous anarchists as well as many other theorists in the twentieth-century. When Max Weber formulated the definition of the State by accentuating violence as its *substance*, that definition in effect became nothing more than a renewed reification of the State (Kortright 2004:4). Such a definition does not see that violence is the end in itself, while there is a surrounding justificatory matrix that already represents that violence as legitimate – that reifies the State. In this way violence in Weber’s definition becomes not a practice in itself as much as a component of that “something else” which already justifies it. This is just an example how even critical engagements with the State only end up further mystifying and reifying it, by asking “what is the State?” directly.

This is why what is needed is a post-metaphysical mode of inquiry. Instead of taking the State as a pure presence pre-existing acts of theorisation, it is a matter of remaining conscious that the presupposition of the State’s existence itself affects and distorts critical engagement with practices that produce and reify the State. This is why strictly speaking theories of the State are unable to evaluate the State’s existence critically. That is why the question that I posed at the start of this thesis was not so much “what is the State?” but the more profound “how does the State get reified?”

The claim that the State does not exist is not new. Though rarely, it has been claimed before (Miliband 1973; Poulantzas 1973; Radcliffe-Brown 1940; Abrams 1988; Ashley 1988; Weber 1995). One may even read Stirner and Debord as proponents of this claim, although, of course the question whether the State exists or not is not the central problem for this thesis.

In an article written in 1977, though not published until after his death, Abrams made an important claim, which needs to be cited as a whole:

‘The state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is. ...The state comes into being as a structuration within political practice: it starts its life as an implicit construct: it is then reified – as the *res publica*, the public reification, no less – and acquires an overt symbolic identity progressively divorced from practice as an illusory account of practice. The ideological function is extended to a point where conservatives and radicals alike believe that their practice is not directed at each other but at the state; the world of illusion prevails. The task... is to demystify; and in this context that means attending to the senses in which the state does not exist rather than to those in which it does’ (Abrams 1988:58).

Though the fact that there is no State has been claimed before, it does not necessarily mean that the same authors who had made that claim in the first place have strictly followed it. For instance, Abrams demonstrates very clearly how both Miliband and Poulantzas arrive at a point where they claim that the

State does not exist, but when the world stops making sense to them they fall back to constructing a different conceptualisation of the social structure, which is essentially a reworded version of the same State. In light of the claim that there is no State social processes, unifying forces and social flows seem meaningless. Posing a question as to how to make sense of these processes is a path that initiates the gradual slide back to a renewed reification of the State. At that point neither Miliband, nor Poulantzas, nor indeed Abrams make the point that it is precisely the knowledge that “there is a State” that *predicates* those processes and the politics of everyday life, as well as systemises the interpretations of those processes.

International Relations

An example of an area where State reification reaches a high degree is the mainstream of International Relations theory (IR). This where “the State” is not simply a site of political struggle, but a *unit* of analysis that becomes an agent, a moral agent, an actor and even adopts an anthropomorphic shape within yet another popular set of Statist derivatives such as “international community” or “society of States”.

The importance of the State for the statist political discourses, of which IR is but an instance, is primarily in its being *the* key concept – the *foundational* and *constituting* factor that informs and predetermines the discussions and theorising in it (Bartelson 2001:7; Derrida 1992). After all, the traditional discipline of IR

is inherently a *statist* political discourse, since it is premised upon the ‘presupposed presence of the State’ (Bartelson 2001:182). Thus political discourse and IR in particular functions because it is based on the simple *presupposition* that there is a State. As Bartelson’s important work demonstrates,

‘... the presence of the state is presupposed by the way the concept of the state functions within modern political discourse, and that this function makes important parts of modern political discourse statist. ...First, it means that there is an inferential connection between the concept of the state and other concepts within modern political discourse, and that the concept of the state is more basic in so far as we can make sense of the state concept without the other concepts, but not conversely. Second, it means that this inferential connection is sustained by the function of state concept within political discourse, in so far as the state is rendered foundational and constitutive through the position of the state concept within that discourse. Third, it means that the state concept conditions the intelligibility of that discourse to such an extent that the conceptual structure of this discourse would suffer from a lack of coherence in the absence of such a concept’ (Bartelson, J. 2001: 5).

If Bartelson is right then, first, it means that in IR (a statist political discourse) all concepts such as ‘anarchy’ or ‘anarchical society’ or the ‘society of states’ or the ‘international community’ are derived from the concept of the State; second, it means that the inferential connection between concepts in IR and frameworks of analyses are sustained by the *function* of the State concept in this

discourse; and, third, it means that the State concept conditions the intelligibility of IR to the extent that IR would cease to make sense or hold any theoretical coherence, or lose the legitimacy of its claim that it theorises the real-world-out-there if one presupposes¹ that there is no State.

This *concept* of the State, which already presupposes its own *being*, and which expresses one State theory (among many possible others), subsequently gives way to *the univocal conception* of what and how international politics is as expressed in numerous IR theories and schools. The logic goes: if, or rather, *since* there are sovereign States, then they that constitute an “anarchy” (Wendt, A. 1992); if there is anarchy, as realists have argued, then this is the factor that shapes the sovereign States (Guzzini 2001); if there are States that are sovereign/free, as idealists have it, then States can be treated as individual units and must be treated like individuals in a traditional Hobbesian sense in the case of idealists. In the case of sociological approaches to IR it thus becomes possible to treat States in a way that Individuals would be treated in sociology (Linklater 1998). In short, these traits from the political philosophy of Aristotelean and Hobbesian schools of treating States as objects or even as individuals, writes the framework of analysis for IR theory.

Thus much of the study of International Relations is conceptualised in terms of Inter-State Relationships. Decades of effort and research were spent in

¹ As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, the presence of simulacral signs do not inform us about the presence of the State, but they only inform us about their own presence. The presence of the State is deduced from the presence of the word ‘State’ or the State concept. Thus the presence of the State can only be *presupposed* out of *nothingness* (Schmitt, C. 1985: 32) as was the case with Hobbes, who was ‘able to construct the unity of the State from any arbitrary given point’ (ibid: 34). Following, this one can not only *presuppose* but actually quite legitimately claim that there is no State.

contextualising IR as relations *between* these would-be entities. What was eventually formed, then, was the conceptualisation of a world comprising of ‘individual States’ (Ashley, R. 1988: 228). With all due respect to serious scholarship, it seems that the achievements of IR theorists can be summarised as nothing more than the *reification* of a concept that was originally hollow – the State – and the premising of a vast intellectual edifice upon this ultimately ambiguous concept as the basic *unit* of analyses, as a given axiom (for few among numerous see Waltz 1959, 1979; Vincent 1974; Bull 1977, 1984; Little 1975; Thomas 1985).

As Suganami demonstrated the *domestic analogy* is the definitive methodological feature of the study of international relations, with the State as a *unit* of analysis being the inseparable ontological axiom within this enterprise (Suganami 1989). As Martin White once said, while political theory is a ‘speculation *about* the state’, international theory is supposed to be ‘a tradition of speculation about relations *between* the states’ (Wight, M. 1966: 17; my emphases); he later argued that “... international theory is marked, not only by paucity but also by intellectual and moral poverty. For this we must look to internal reasons. The most obvious [is] *the intellectual prejudice imposed by the sovereign state*” (Wight, M. 1966: 19(21); my emphases). As Cynthia Weber later demonstrated,

‘...while the word sovereignty denotes a state of being – an ontological status – sovereignty in fact expresses a characteristic way in which being or sovereign statehood may be inferred from doing or practice. It is not possible to talk about the state as an ontological being – as a political identity – without engaging in the political

practice of constituting the state. Put differently, to speak of the sovereign state at all requires one to engage in the political practice of stabilizing this concept's meaning... - to write the state' (Weber, C. 1995: 3).

To conclude this section, the firm commitment to the presupposition of the existence of the State as a unit of analysis has led a field such as mainstream IR to increasingly engage in reifying the State (an object, a subject, an agency, an actor and even a moral agent) and thus constituting the very reality that it sought to make sense of, in a specific way that does not make sense when the existence of the State is posed as a question.

“Polemic” As a Method

However, prior to embarking into the investigation of this key concept, which has evaded conceptual interrogation for some time, I feel obliged to elaborate on the method that I call a “polemic”. This is necessary not as a matter of excuse or justification but as a matter of elucidation of the general mechanism of this chapter's argument. It must be noted that my work here is not polemical – “polemic” is the name for the type of post-metaphysical method that I intend to employ in understanding State reification.

We have understood the theoretical value of Nietzsche's thought as equipping us with the method of genealogy as first outlined in his *On the Genealogy of Morals* and further developed by Foucault (1977). But it seems that another valuable

tool that that book has given us is that of ‘a polemic’, which could well be regarded as a method of inquiry in particular relation to looking at ideational, concepts and predicates in a non-metaphysical fashion (Deleuze 1983:87-93; Deleuze and Guattari 1994). That is what Nietzsche had in mind when he outlined the general guide to ‘how to philosophise with a hammer’ and defined a philosopher as someone ‘in whose presence things get blown apart’. Investigating in a non-metaphysical manner implies instead of looking at a concept directly (the nature of its existence) and instead of asking “*what is*”, treating its existence with suspicion and then analysing “*how is*” – how does the State exist? How does it become a State? How does its existence become known as existence?

Jim George has demonstrated how discursive enterprises have shaped the conceptualisation of political reality, thus ‘establishing the boundaries of legitimate and relevant theory and research and underpinning the “art of the possible” *in policy terms*’ (George 1994:x; my emphasis). The practice of theorising, as a practice of writing the world and a pedagogical practice, is a political practice, which is why it involves a great degree of responsibility (Walker 1994), especially when discursive manufacturing of the State and its reification is concerned. Cynthia Weber supports my point in repeatedly accentuating that ‘fixing’ and ‘stabilizing’ the meaning of the concept of the sovereign State implies ‘to write the state’ - ‘*the political practice of constituting the state*’. This is why she calls this particular field ‘*a site of political struggle*’ (Weber 1995: 3; my emphases). Michael Shapiro’s comments on his polemic could be similarly applied to mine:

“This is a polemical work, aimed at encouraging critical, ethico-political thinking, not at deepening an understanding of what are generally taken as the spaces of the political. It is polemical not in the sense – disparaged by Foucault – of being accusatory rather than dialogic but in the sense – encouraged by Deleuze and Guattari – of treating concepts as normative and political rather than merely cognitive. It is also polemical in the sense suggested by Carl Schmitt’s claim that ‘all political concepts, images, and terms have political meaning’ (Shapiro 1999:1)

Thus it is a matter of acknowledging that “the State” as a concept plays a specific political role not through it being an agent or an acting unit as conventionally understood, but through its presence functioning as a presupposition. This chapter diverges from Shapiro’s approach in that firstly it will have to grasp the cognitive/epistemological aspect of what-is-the-State, and only then will the normative and political workings of the concept come to light.

To make the final point, drawing from Deleuze’s and Guattari’s thought (1994), since the State is a product of conceptual presuppositions, reifications, fetishism, and discursive speculations, since it is a concept and only a concept, the only effective war against it can be conceptual – *a polemic*. This is exactly what Derrida, following Stirner’s thought, calls – ‘chasing out the ghosts’ (Derrida 1994:125-76) and this is what Deleuze meant by the ‘war-machine’ directed against the State (Deleuze and Guattari 1999:353-7). It is only through a conceptual war (the method of polemic) against the concept that its nature

and functioning can be properly understood, which immediately leads me to my seminal, to this chapter, set of questions: what does it mean to fight the State, and if we were to fight and abolish the State, how would we go about doing it? How is the State present? Is elimination of the presence of the signs of the State sufficient to kill it? Exploring this question may suggest answers to another seemingly unanswerable question of this chapter: what really is the State today?

Dissolution of the Boundary Between the State and Society

Marxian account of the State

The anarchist formulation of the State theory was based on initial separation between the State and society as rival categories. Drawing from such understanding, anarchism maintained a top-down model whereby the State was a package of legitimising discourses for the oppression forced on society from without and from above. In fundamental contrast, Engels's theory of the State saw the State as an actual product of society,

"The state is ...by no means a power forced on society from without; just as little is it 'the reality of the ethical idea', 'the image and reality of reason', as Hegel maintains. Rather, it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, these classes with conflicting economic interests, might not

consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power, seemingly standing above society, that would alleviate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of 'order'; and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state." (Engels 1884:177-8)

Such a formulation of State theory later led Lenin to a similar one:

“The state is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. The state arises where, when and insofar as class antagonism objectively cannot be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable”. (Lenin 1919)

For Engels and Lenin the State is not a mean to reconciliation of class antagonisms but a force that places itself above the society in order to compel the disorder that the irreconcilability of class antagonism creates (Lenin 1919). Thereon Leninism recognises that the State is an oppressive apparatus which was created, installed and legitimated by the oppressive class; and that the liberation of the oppressed masses cannot be realised without proper eradication of this “apparatus” that continuously alienates itself from society. This is why Lenin recognised the immediate problem associated with the State in a post-revolutionary period.

For Marx, however, the State is simply an instrument of class domination. However, as Newman has correctly pointed out, Marx ‘...does not formulate a consistent theory of the State, seeing it at certain times as a tool of economic and class domination, and at others times as a relatively autonomous institution

that acts, in some cases, against the immediate interests of the bourgeoisie' (Newman 2001:17). Marx adopts materialism as the primary framework for analysis. For this reason, he sees the State as an instrument of the bourgeois class's domination and as an arrangement to safeguard bourgeois interests and private property. Logically, what this also means, for Marx, is that State is a *neutral* machine that can act in different ways depending on who drives it. If this machine is at hands of a universal class – the proletariat, then domination, alienation and social contradictions will end. This is the origin of Marx's logical deduction of different categories of the State, and this is where, even though he saw serious problems with the State, he draws a possibility of a universal State. What we also see in Marx's thought is the idea that the State can act in different ways. The important aspect to note is that Marxian thought is intrinsically marked by the separation of the State from society, whether it is formulated in terms of Engels' and Lenin's view of the State springing from social processes, or in terms of the antagonistic separation between the State and civil society (Rosenberg 1994).

This view originates from a materialist understanding of the State as emanating from economic power of class relations only, and not power in its own right. And this is why Marx saw oppression not inherent 'in the State apparatus itself, but in the subservience to the interests of particular class' (Newman 2001:25). This is why, unlike anarchists², Marx believed that the liberation of society can only come through the authority of the State.

² Anarchists, as we have seen, maintain that liberation of society cannot originate from practices and hierarchical institutions of authority. Therefore, a revolution by means of the State, in anarchist view, leads to catastrophic ends.

Classical Anarchist account of the State

No matter how insightful the anarchist theory of the State seems, it is noteworthy that it too is trapped in the problem of State reification. In battling with the State as its primary enemy, while being unable to actually define and grasp what exactly and where exactly it is, in effect it too reifies the State. As Nietzsche says in *Twilight of the Idols*, ‘Whether we immoralists are harming virtue? Just as little as anarchists harm princes. Only since the latter are shot at do they again sit securely on their thrones’ (Nietzsche 1895:§36). In separating the State from society, in drawing a distinction between the concepts of State and government, and in attributing a structural deterministic role to the State, classical anarchist theory too can be seen as not altogether innocent when it comes to State reification.

While Engels foresaw the fall of the State as an inevitability brought about by the dissolution of classes, anarchism reversed the predicates: the dissolution of classes is only possible after the abolition of the State, precisely because it is the State’s sovereignty that keeps social hierarchies intact; as long as there is sovereignty, hierarchies will re-emerge no matter which class happens to be in power and no matter what the class interests of the ruling class are. As long as there is the mentality that the government is necessary operating as the regime of truth, anarchists argue, governments and the State will exist and re-emerge. For anarchism the State works the other way round – the movement is in the opposite direction. It is not that the State continuously alienates itself from

society (as Engels saw it), but that it is completely alien to the society from the start, and only later does it work to permeate the social sphere. The struggle, according to anarchism, is between the State and society. And in this struggle the State is invariably stronger because the State has sovereignty at hand, as well as the government's control over media, its monopoly to use instruments of violence, juristic power for normative categorisations, alliance with the church and so forth. In this process, it is not that the State alienates itself from society, but on the contrary, weakens the political will of the society and its socialistic and self-governing aspect and in doing so attempts to permeate, saturate and thus gain absolute control over a weakened society. Thus for anarchism it is a trade-off: a strong State can only coexist with a weak society, where political life is deflated.

While anarchism has a coherent and very important State theory, much of this theory's attention is drawn to how the State operates, but there is little discussion on what the State really is, apart from a few pointers (Carter 2000; Bourne 1998). As I have demonstrated earlier (in the chapter on classical anarchism), anarchism has a much broader notion of the State than Marxism or traditional State theories, because in the anarchist view, the State does not emanate from class relations and modes of production, but on the contrary envelops them and precedes them. For classical anarchism, the State is a much grander entity, which gives way to and determines class relations and modes of production that will benefit it most, not only in terms of efficiency and wealth accumulation, but foremostly in terms of the scale of its capacity to preoccupy, alienate and thus subjugate and subjectify society. Therefore the mode of

production assists the State's evolution and functioning. For classical anarchist thinkers, the State has 'its own impersonal logic, its own momentum, its own priorities: these are... beyond the control of the ruling class and do not necessarily reflect economic relations at all' (Newman 2001:26). As Bakunin reversed Marxian logic, it is not that the dominant class rules through the State, but that the State rules through the dominant class (Newman 2001:27). Thus, for early anarchists the State is an organisation of power that is independent of economic forces. *State comes before capitalism*. Bakunin attributed the rise of the modern State not to the industrial revolution and the rise of the capitalist mode of production, but to Reformation and Protestantism, and in general as a logic of political organisation that replicates the structures of the church and Catholicism. Kropotkin too explained the rise of the modern State as due to a myriad of non-economic factors such as the dominance of Roman law, the public's perception of space and time, and the desire to control, hold power and dominate (Newman 2001:26). Thus according to anarchist theory there were always persons who wished to hold political domination, and only then did they produce discourses (sovereignty, legality, justice, social contract etc) and a specific economic system that would maintain their dominant position as credible. Broadly speaking, anarchism understands the etymology of the State as a something in relation to non-economic power: an abstract notion of power and discourses. Thus, for early anarchists the State is a logic of political organisation, closely tied with, power – economic, but more so, non-economic.

The Classical Anarchist model is an example of the original libertarian theoretical models that have informed much of our social, political and

international thinking. This model is very clearly present throughout the social and political thought of Bakunin. One of the foundational premises of this model is the antagonistic dichotomy between the categories of 'State' and 'society' as an extension of the Ancient Greek dichotomy between *nomos* and *physis*. Bakunin's anarchism rests on this separation: there are State-laws and there are social-laws, which stand in opposition to each other. The State, as Bakunin has repeatedly argued, is constantly working to permeate and conquer the social sphere. Thus, for Bakunin, society must be defended and the State is to be resisted until the State is completely destroyed and a society established whereby social laws replace State laws. As was demonstrated earlier in the thesis, what fuels this resistance and indeed human civilisation, is an intrinsic force that Bakunin calls the 'instinct to rebel' or 'desire to rebel' (Bakunin 1876:9,12).

This basic juxtaposition of State and society formed the theoretical foundation for many anarchist ideologies. Furthermore, this libertarian division between State and society was inherited by many contemporary intellectual traditions as well. For instance in Runciman's view, 'political sociology springs from the separation of the State from the social' (Runciman 1963:32).

However, Bakunin was writing in the middle of nineteenth century when maybe the division between State and society was an actuality. But one has to allow for the possibility and, more so, probability, that many of the conditions of existence and factors have changed, as was the point of demonstrating the transformations in commodity fetishism and the evolution of new Spectacular

regimes of power in the previous chapter. That was an epoch when Bakunin, and many libertarians, socialists, Marxists as well as reactionaries and romanticists contemporaries saw the application of steam power as the culmination of the industrial revolution and the apogee of capitalism itself (Taylor in Marx 1967: 19). Even though the basic patterns of capitalist and Statist practices were outlined, the impression that one gets from reading many of the thinkers of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries is that there wasn't a theoretical premise that would help foresee the evolution of the spectacular society and consumer society, or the more subtle workings of sovereign power that were discussed earlier.

In other words, the classical anarchist model of the initial division between State and society, could be used as a viable framework of reference only at a basic level, and one has to take into account what happened since then. As it was said earlier, Bakunin saw the State gradually attempting to permeate and saturate the social fabric and social laws. However, he believed that collective rebellion arising from all classes, including the peasantry and the lower-middle class, would eventually destroy the State. Nevertheless, it seems that Bakunin was over-optimistic on this last point. In the midst of the very process of the State attempting to permeate and saturate the social fabric, the State was indeed victorious and came to saturate the social fabric to an extent that there was no longer a distinguishable boundary between the society and the State.

What we see in both classical Marxian and classical Anarchist debates is that their State theories are derivatives of a general separation between the State and

Society. But what if we are now faced with a problem that *exceeds* this dichotomy, and renders this dichotomy obsolete? What if we are faced with a more complex problem, which cannot be captured by a simple dichotomy of “State versus society”?

Dissolution of the Boundary

What happens when the boundary between the State and society blurs to an extent that one becomes indistinguishable from the other? As Chris Korten has demonstrated '[t]he line between the two is difficult to draw in practice, and it is with this separation that the State Fetish is constructed' (Korten 2004).

Many anarchists have understood the State not only as a structural but also a specific normative, moral and, in case of Stirner, dispersedly *omnipresent* phenomenon that has been inflicted upon the society by the minority of those people that have sought control and political power and its perpetuation: 'an extraneous burden placed on society' (Marshall 1993:12). Many anarchist thinkers have been persistently drawing the separation between State and Government (following Thomas Paine's separation), and between State and Society (following thinkers like Locke). Upon this separation as we have seen emerged much anarchist analysis of the State, which, following Bakunin's thought, placed distinct emphases on the primacy of political structures. In its rejection of the State and evocation of society, in its rejection of institutionalised government and embracing of the government of social laws,

anarchism has claimed that the society is capable of self-governance without the State. This view, however, was developed in the epoch when social laws were somewhat different from State-laws; when State and society were clearly separate contending categories not blurred by the increasing subtlety of sovereign power, as was discussed in chapter four. Moreover, as discussed in chapter five, the notion of Society of the Spectacle and of the Diffused Spectacle, whereby persons are increasingly separated and imagine an association with other persons *through* the reification of the higher image of the State – a society whereby the reified images of the State mediate social relations, further undermines the boundary between the State and Society. Furthermore, Stirner’s understanding of the State as a dispersed and ubiquitous phenomenon that manifests itself through civil identities as was demonstrated in chapter three, already upsets the view that the State is a separate centralised and unitary entity.

Herbert Marcuse was the first to notice that the integrated working of the system as a whole abolishes the boundaries between ‘spheres of tension and contradiction’.

“The category “society” itself expressed the acute conflict between the social and political sphere – society as antagonistic to the state’...

‘With the growing integration of industrial society, these categories [society, state, individual, class, private, family etc] are losing their critical connotation, and *tend to become deceptive, or operational* terms... --

it is the whole that is in question’. (Marcuse, H. 1964: xiv; my emphasis),

It, therefore, must be recognised that the nineteenth-twentieth century frameworks of analysis of the State (which are based on separation of State and

society) are rather out of date. In that way the *classical* anarchist framework of analysis ignores the possibility that by now not only is the separation in doubt, but that the State's structures, norms and morals have come to be inter-grown in complex way and saturated in social laws as a logicalised common-sense. The reproduction of the State is no longer either a question of the requirements of the organisation of factors of production, nor of an ontological necessity, but a reflection of those values that we take to be 'organic' and 'natural' (but nevertheless saturated by the statist discourse) social laws.

Governmentalised State: sovereignty over population

The Governmentality thesis further undermines the division between the State and society (Foucault 1991; Dean 1999). From a post-anarchist point of view as well, “The State is seen as more than just a political institution, but rather as an abstract principle of power and domination, inextricably linked to rational thought, identity and desire” (Newman, S. 2001: 147).

An achievement of the post-structuralist way of thought in politics is its critique of the dichotomy of individual liberty versus State authority, which came to be the confines within which many political ideologies and much of modernist political philosophy (including the notion of ‘democracy’) were configured, as no longer relevant. Two important contributions in this analysis are Foucault’s lecture on *Governmentality* and his book *Discipline & Punish*. In the lecture on *Governmentality* Foucault traces the transformation of the patterns of governing

population and the emergence of a complex micropolitical mechanism that disciplines the habits of political and economical behaviour, which parallels the conditioning of the population's consent without the necessity of resorting to instruments of violence.

The analysis of Governmentality results in quite unnerving, and dare one say - destructive implications for the achievements of the modern political project. Logically, such teleological and idealistic grand-narratives as 'democracy' understood through the prism of representation, 'political progress' comprehended through a positive correlation with technological progress, and 'freedom' conceptualised through the prism of the State, are rendered as discursive formations designed for enhanced modes of domination.

Governmentality implies training conduct and habits in such a way that subjects will govern themselves and behave in a manner which accords to the rationale and ethos of the political, international, but more so - economic system. It is a form of 'personality modification' and conditions behaviour, or as Foucault himself called it, it is the 'conduct of a conduct'. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon expressed a view that was similar to Foucault's more than a hundred years before him:

"To be governed is to be watched over, inspected, spied on, directed, legislated, regimented, closed in, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, assessed, evaluated, censored, commanded; all by creatures that have neither the right, nor wisdom, nor virtue... To be governed means that at every move, operation, or transaction one is

noted, registered, entered in a census, taxed, stamped, priced, assessed, patented, licensed, authorised, recommended, admonished, prevented, forbidden, reformed, set right, corrected. Government means to be subjected to tribute, trained, ransomed, exploited, monopolised, extorted, pressured, mystified, robbed; all in the name of public utility and the general good. Then, at the slightest resistance or word of complaint, one is repressed, fined, despised, harassed, tracked, abused, clubbed, disarmed, choked, imprisoned, judged, condemned, shot, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed; and, to crown all, mocked, ridiculed, outraged, dishonoured. That is government; that is its justice; that is its morality”

However, Foucault has taken this line of thought further to examine and reveal not what was happening but *how* this was happening. Foucault has shown that the term “government” has ‘ a very wide meaning, for it is also the way in which you govern your wife, your children, as well as the way you govern an institution’ (quoted in Hindess 1996:105). It is a mode of domination, control and direction of actions, which is micropolitical and disciplinary, in one way or another by means of conditioning the populace through various institutions, while making sure that the idea that the subjects are free in their choices is maintained. The important job of Governmentality is to repeatedly produce the consent of the population through producing the perception that the choices they make are their own choices.

In *Madness & Civilization* and *Discipline & Punish* Foucault demonstrated how in the epoch when objectivity and rationality were/are the overriding principles

the emerging and developing discourse of necessity for disciplining, curing, helping, enlightening and normalising had the effect of producing transformations not only in the handling of, attitude towards and treatment of the insane, criminals and “dangerous individuals”, but also extended beyond the walls of those institutions and spread throughout schools, hospitals, workplaces, factories and in broader sense saturated the social-value systems and thus became the accepted ‘regime of truth’ in social functioning. The internalisation of fear by means of the external gaze becomes an effective method of governance and control, which no longer resorts to violence toward the body as much as to a more obscure type of violence toward the soul. In his discussion with Chomsky, Foucault argued:

I believe that political power also exercises itself through the mediation of a certain number of institutions which look as if they have nothing in common with the political power, and as if they are independent of it, while they are not. One knows this in relation to the family; and one knows that the university, and in a general way, all teaching systems, which appear simply to disseminate knowledge, are made to maintain a certain social class in power; and to exclude the instruments of power of another social class. ... It seems to me that the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the workings of institutions, which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize and attack them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight against them.

(Chomsky & Foucault: 1974)

What is implicit in Foucault's argument is the view that the State is not a singular body, but an omnipresent and dispersed system: a Stirnerian notion of the State being a spectral body and a spook. Through the prolonged processes of discursification and commonsensification concrete institutional and systematic practices, such as violence, exclusion, hierarchy, authority and so forth, transmogrify into generic social and micro-political norms. This is what Foucault would call 'trace' (multiple manifestations and practices with discursive regularities) in the way that contemporary institutional and everyday socio-political practices, which we take as accepted, accredited and commonsensical, are the repeating microcosms of a broader economy of discourses within a specific regime of truth.

Of course these discourses and the regime of political truth did not come out of thin air, but was the result of prolonged violent practices. Sociological studies have demonstrated that beginning in the late-eighteenth century the State developed an overwhelming capacity and routine of inflicting and enforcing specifically that set of discourses, norms and codes which are encoded in it (Giddens, A. 1985). Originally, the argument of the State and its reasoning did not draw on sovereignty as such, but on its capacity; and order was maintained by concrete direct violence. Thus we must differentiate between two aspects of sovereign power: a Weberian notion of the sovereign right to use instruments of violence on one hand, and a more Schmittian understanding of sovereignty as the *undervived* power to ascription, decision on exception and a more general definition of political reality. It is precisely through the latter that decades and centuries of disciplining the social psyche resulted in a general social consensus

and consent about the reason of the State and the logification of statism as the uncontested paradigm. As Foucault demonstrated, the role of Social Contract theories was to establish a generic basis for Statist practice – in a way that the logic of Social Contract theories is the discursive predication that manifests itself in governmental practices of everyday life:

‘This art of government tried, so to speak, to reconcile itself within the theory of sovereignty by attempting to derive the ruling principles of an art of government from a renewed version of the theory of sovereignty – and this is where those seventeenth-century jurists come into the picture who formalise or ritualize the theory of the contract. Contract theory enables the founding contract, the mutual pledge of ruler and subjects, to function as a sort of theoretical matrix for deriving the general principles of an art of government’ (Foucault 1991:98).

In this way, all alternative discourses, such as anarchism, became stultified as nostalgic, antiquarian, naively utopian, stumbling and incoherent (Linklater, A. 1998:29); ‘the conditions under which modern political life is made possible by rendering alternatives implausible, dangerous and unthinkable’ (Walker RBJ in Hoadley 2001:3); the foundations of the modern State had been concealed (Derrida, 1992) and the State became the regime of political truth. Succinctly put, Statist discourses turned into self-defining and self-legitimizing repetitions. Not only did the social contract as a historical explanandum, become commonsensical, but the codes of social relationships and interaction became

the exact replica of the code of State's practice. With development of governmentality there is no longer a separation between the State and society.

In this case the State is already the society. We need to abandon the understanding of a State as a unified object of anthropomorphic shape. We need to understand the State rather as a dispersedly omnipresent discursive formation, and thus pose the question regarding the existence of the State. If the concepts of the State and government march together in mainstream political science, there should be certain implications of Governmentality on the concept of the State. Foucault mentioned the concept of the 'Governmentalised State' in his lecture, but did not elaborate on it. Today we have reached a stage when the system can function not only without resort to violence, but also without the actual object of the State being present – the presence of the *sign* as well as the general untraceable knowledge that the "State exists" suffices to produce Governmentality. Now the important question is: how is this possible?

Not surprisingly Foucault relates the notion of governmentality directly to the population. What he emphasises is that the contemporary State need to be understood not as a sovereignty exercised over specific territory, but rather in terms of sovereignty exercised over specific population – a certain *quantity* of people. That is to say that the emphasis of the governmentalised State falls not so much on control over natural resources but over human resources. What this suggests is that the governmentalised State is a certain *state of society*, best characterised by a mass-scale depoliticisation or a specific/static *state of*

population's thinking. Foucault's final analysis of governmentality attributes to it a paramount role that secured the *survival* of the State:

'We live in an era of a 'governmentality' first discovered in the eighteenth century. This governmentalization of the state is a singularly paradoxical phenomenon, since if in fact the problems of governmentality and the techniques of government have become the only political issue, the only real space for political struggle and contestation, this is because the governmentalization of the state is at the same time what has permitted the state to survive, and it is possible to suppose that if the state is what it is today, this is so precisely thanks to this governmentality, which is at once internal and external to the state, since it is the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on; thus the state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality' (Foucault 1991:103)

However, Foucault's point needs to be taken further. Governmentality did not facilitate so much the survival of the State, as its reification. Foucault too, talks of the State as part of reality, the formation of which he analyses. From that perspective the functioning of governmentality and technologies of discipline and domination appear to help the State to survive, be defined and redefined. However, if we assume that there is no State to start with, the role of governmentality immediately appears as nothing else then assisting the production of the State, or in other words, its reification.

An analysis of governmentality is also present in anarchist thought. In 1891 Errico Malatesta, following the Proudhonian conceptualisation of what the practice of 'government' involves, got quite close to what is today known as governmentality. Unlike other anarchists he maintained that the words 'State' and 'government' (as a practice) are more or less the same concepts, whereby the State is a 'more vague way' of what government involves (Malatesta 1995:18) and is 'the impersonal, abstract expression of that State of affairs personified by the government' (in Marshall 1993:21). He went on to portray the State as

'the sum total of political, legislative, judiciary, military and financial institutions through which the management of their affairs, the control over their personal behaviour, the responsibility for their personal safety, are taken away from the people and entrusted to others who, by usurpation or delegation, are vested with the powers to make the laws for everything and everybody, and to oblige the people to observe them, if need be, by the use of collective force' (quoted in Marshall 1993: 20-1).

In this view Malatesta saw the State/government as

'the *metaphysical tendency* which is a disease of the mind in which Man, once having by a logical process abstracted an individual's qualities, undergoes a kind of hallucination which makes him accept the *abstraction* for the *real being*' (Malatesta 1995:18; my emphases).

Thus, as he saw the government's capability to subordinate and dominate as being carried out not so much through 'physical' or 'economic power', but importantly by means of, what he called, 'intellectual power'.

The next step is Kropotkin's important point that the State, besides implying the existence of power above the society, is also a 'territorial concentration and a concentration of many or even all functions of society in the hands of a few'. Kropotkin further points out that the historical mission of the State had been 'to prevent the direct association among men, to shackle the development of local and individual initiative, to crush existing liberties, to prevent their new blossoming -- all this in order to subject the masses to the will of minorities' (Marshall 1993:21)

In the points expressed by Kropotkin and Malatesta there is an important thought: society has been deprived of its primary functions and features, so that people's imagination of alternative modes of association and self-conduct do not move away far from the State – precisely what Foucault meant by the role of governmentality being the commonsensification of the basic contractarian discourse. The State and society, thus, can no longer be separated as rival categories. The State, as a sign, mediates and controls association and communication, in accordance with its own discursive codes. What has evolved is a whole new condition of social relations, association and society as a whole in such a way that society is no longer capable of governing itself *anarchically*, as the early anarchist thinkers believed could be the case (Emerson 1874a; 1874b; Godwin 1798). Nor it is capable of imagining an unauthoritarian and

ungoverned state of being. But, since State laws have saturated social laws, society can and does govern itself *governmentally* with a simple resort to the sign of the State and the knowledge that the “State exists”.

Theorising the State toward the end of twentieth-century, as mentioned earlier, Murray Bookchin conceptualised “The State” as ‘...a hybridization of political with social institutions, of coercive with distributive functions, of highly punitive with regulatory procedures, and finally of class with administrative needs’ (Bookchin 1982: 124). What follows from this is that the State can no longer be understood as a superstructure that is outside the social sphere, but as a system of political logic, a system of values, the modes of operation of which are saturated in and intergrown deep into everyday life and popular morality. It is no longer possible to draw a clear-cut line between the society, the State and the government.

Later in the twentieth-century the anarchist understanding of the State took a new step with Gustav Landauer, who extended this line of thought beyond the simple notions of ‘association’ and ‘jurisdiction’, to argue that ‘the State is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently’ (in Marshall 1993: 21). Murray Bookchin has further pointed out that the State is not merely a constellation of bureaucratic and coercive institutions but also *a state of mind*, ‘an instilled mentality for ordering reality’ (Bookchin 1982: 94) – it is that “state of mind” that mediates the relationship between human beings. Thus, there must be a predicate that animates this mediation of everyday life.

From the point of view of Debord, as discussed in chapter five, these social relations are mediated by the *images* of the State. My argument is that apart from the images and signs into which the State has imploded, there must also be the untraceable episteme that positively affirms that “the State exists” – but more on that later.

So where does this leave us? Subjectification by more qualitative and subtle workings of sovereign power that functions by internalisation of the need for reification within the subject as was discussed in chapter three, the evolution of the society of the spectacle (whereby it is the fetishised image of the State that mediates the social relations) and of the integrated spectacle which is always diffuse, as was discussed in chapter five; the increasingly blurry and untraceable boundary between the State and society – these developments bring us to a point where we can no longer refer to the State as an entity which exists as a unified and unitary agent or even object or an entity. In permeating and saturating the social sphere the State, it seems, has disappeared. In fact, for Abrams it was exactly this process of increasingly indistinguishable separation of the State and society that signalled the death of the State (Abrams 1988:67). In Abrams’ analysis it was precisely the classical separation between the State and society that allowed the theoreticians to treat the State as an object, a separate theoretical category, as an actor and as an agent. My argument at this point is that these processes, which can be summed up as State’s permeation and conquest of the social sphere to an extent that the State itself is no longer identifiable, do not signal the end of the State as such but the realisation of that which the State has always been – a non-existent, a non-entity, a purely self-

referential sign, which always refers back to the untraceable episteme that there is the State.

Presence of the State or Presence of the Signs of the State

As it is evident, both Malatesta and Bookchin in their conceptualisation of the State as a state of mind draw this narrative in specific relation to an *abstracted* political reality. The development of governmentality and the saturation of statist codes of practice into societal realms brings back the question regarding the existence of the State and the nature of this existence. The question ‘What *is* the State?’ can also be reformulated as ‘does the State exist? And if it does, then in which manner?’ At this point I cannot disagree with Heidegger, who took *presence* as the sole criterion for being. As Heidegger argues, we cannot deduce the nature or the kind of existence from mere presence, though presence can inform us that at least that which is present is existent (Mulhall 1996:186-9). And thus we must ask whether the State is present, and if it is, then *how* is it present and *how* is it being presented and, ultimately, presence of what is it that informs us about the existence of the State? Then it will become clear whether we can legitimately treat this being as an object or an anthropomorphised living formation with agency.

The presence of the State and therefore the existence of the State depends on the premise that what is present are signs of the State; that is fair enough

because the State itself cannot be present since, as was established in chapter four it is a phantomatic body, a jurisdiction, a mode of association or even a state of social consciousness and these cannot be present but can only present themselves through signs.

When we think of the word 'State' there are immediately certain associations that come to mind. It is obvious that signs of the State are the policeman's uniform, the CCTV camera, the flag, the topological representation on the political map, the president's or prime minister's image on the television screen, the embassy building, the ambassador's presence, heraldry, the recurrent practices of political rituals and ceremonies and, of course most importantly, *the word* 'State' itself, to list some. These are *particulars* and therefore we cannot say that these are the state in itself, but only the signs of the State. Thus the only thing that we can confidently say at this point is that the presence of the State is known because of the presence of the signs which are said to be, or taken to be the signifiers of the existence of the State. This is very important, for as Sartre has remarked, because of the 'habit of thinking in space and in terms of space' prior to the formation of imagination, prior to imagining there must be certain *images* in order for reified associations to form (Sartre 1948: 4-8).

However, the presence of these signs can tell us only a fragment of the story about the existence of the State. If we seek to identify the existence of the State through signs of the State then we will always run the danger of reifying the State – it is inevitable. In treating signs as attestations to the existence of the State, we will be treating them as if they were *in themselves* – which is precisely

the return of the problem of commodity-fetishism as discussed in the previous chapter on Debord. The signs are read as *in themselves* (cut of from the broader picture of the labour that produces and presents it and the class relations that animate that labour) because if they were read otherwise they would not appear as the signs of the State's presence – the flag would appear as a colourful piece of cloth *produced* and *presented* for the purposes of generating the knowledge that the State exists and is present. In the meanwhile, in treating the presence of the flag as an attestation to the existence of the State, we will be ignoring the broader cultural context that facilitates reification from a piece of colourful cloth into a sacred object and a signifier of *something else*. In either case we are faced with an impasse, and a slide from questioning the existence of the State to further reifying it.

Similarly, we cannot take institutions as attestations of the State's existence. Asking what is the relationship between the judiciary, executive, army, police, civil and other offices, and how these could be related, is another way of asking how the State can be reified.

This means that what we are looking at is the signifier-signified relationship: the relationship between the signs of the State and that which is supposed to be the State itself. This symbolic economy of signs can maintain meaning only under two conditions: either (a) there is a stark relationship between the signs of the State and the State itself (which would mean that there is a State), or (b) the signs of the State do not have a referent (the signs refer back to themselves in a *simulacral* loop only) and the semiotic coherence of this symbolic economy is

maintained by a prior discursive *presupposition that there is a State*. In other words, the two conditions can be paraphrased as, either (a) the signs make sense because there is a State to which they refer, or (b) only after an unquestioned discursive presupposition that there is a State, that the proper semiotic environment is constituted for the presence of the signs, do they make sense.

As Cynthia Weber argued on this matter,

“... the meanings of sovereignty no longer abide by ...a logic of representation (in which referents [signifieds] and indicators [signifiers] are clearly demarcated) but instead abide by a logic of simulation (in which there are no ultimate foundations but instead a chain of interchangeable signifiers). (Weber, C., 1995, xi-xii)

“Theorizing the relationship between state sovereignty and intervention in a logic of simulation (and in a system of symbolic exchange) requires that we cease to assume representational relationships and pose representation as a question. ... how does the representation assumption affect our understanding of the state sovereignty...? For international relations theorists to contribute to understandings of sovereignty, the state and intervention, the failure of representation must be acknowledged and serious consideration must be given to the simulation of sovereignty. ...[she begins] by examining how sovereignty might be simulated in contemporary diplomatic practice and how simulation transforms international relations theories of state sovereignty and intervention.” (Weber, C. 1995, xii)

Weber critiques the signifier-signified relationship between the sovereign State and the domestic community by demonstrating that the very domestic community that the sovereign State is supposed to represent does not exist and is only a discursive construction by essentialist discourses. Thus, in order for the politics of simulation to function the domestic community must be presupposed and the questions regarding representation must not be asked. By rebutting the essentialist domestic community Weber arrives at a conclusion that '[t]he State is a sign without a referent' (Weber, C. 1995: 123)

Simulacra and Simulation

Baudrillard's project on the study of signs in consumer societies is an extension of earlier work by Situationists and particularly Debord. What seems to be the case among many scholars is a gross misreading of Baudrillard's works. 'Simulation' in Baudrillard's works is not a form of illusion as opposed to certain 'real'; it is not a practice of abstracting the true reality. 'It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real itself' (Baudrillard 1999:2). In understanding Baudrillard it is imperative to see that for him it is firstly a matter of *precession by model*. A model must be laid out *first*, and then and only then simulation ('the generation by models of a real without origin or reality' (Baudrillard 1999: 1)) is a practice of realising the world by means of science and technology (Butler, R. 1999: 23-4). Thus first of all there must be statements, theories, discourses and images of the world that tell us that there is

a State and that the world comprises many States, for only then do theories make sense. For instance, a child's knowledge that there is a State and that the world comprises States is primarily constituted not from direct observation of the immediate social and political reality around him or her, but by looking at the images and *models* of the world as presented by multicoloured political maps and globes; it is just as absurd as saying that a painting depicting a pipe is a pipe itself.³ Baudrillard brings a similar allegory mentioning 'the Borges fable in which the cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up covering the territory exactly' (Baudrillard 1994: 1). By mean of this allegory, Baudrillard argues that '[t]he territory no longer precedes the map... [I]t is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory' (ibid). This is what Baudrillard calls 'the precession of simulacra'. Thus first of all there must be a statement that there is a State and that the world comprises many States.

Once this statement is in place, simulacral signs (signifiers that refer not to signifieds, but back to themselves in endless loops) can start appearing. The purpose of appearing then is nothing else but to appear⁴ and in doing so to *simulate* and realise the truth of the earlier statement.

This logically leads us to the argument that present signs exist within a reality that presupposes the existence of the State. Thus it is not signs that tell us about the existence of the State, but rather that reality is pre-ordered by a

³ I am referring to the René Magritte's painting that depicted a pipe accompanied by an inscription underneath that read "This is not a pipe".

⁴ Even though Baudrillard uses this method, it is earlier present in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, who critiqued Kant's drawing a relation between phenomenon and noumenon, thus arguing that the purposes of appearing can be nothing else then appearance itself (xlviii- xlix).

presupposition of the State; first it is a matter of precession by model, signs come in later. It is only because of this constitutive presupposition of the State that signs seem to carry meaning and appear in an ordered relationship to the rest of political reality. Otherwise, this is the political reality: '[o]nly signs without referents, empty, senseless, absurd and elliptical signs, absorb us' (Baudrillard quoted in Weber, C. 1995: 123); otherwise, '*it is the desert of the real itself*' (Baudrillard 1999: 1; emphasis original) where there is no State.

Thus it is no longer the signs, the social systems and sovereignty that precede the concept of the State, but the notion and the word 'the State' that precedes political reality and sovereignty, and constitutes the semiotic environment for the signs, violence, injustice and discourses.

Voodoo and State Fetishism

State fetishism is intimately related to State reification – so much so that one may be excused for taking the view that an element of fetishism is always inherent in State reification.

Let's see how the fetish works. Durkheim examined the process of fetish in an interesting way by looking at religion and magic. The important point is that in religion, magic and voodoo practice objects are invested and imbued with sacred and magical powers. Thus, the objects are associated with meanings that they do not originally carry. In fetish the objects *embody* the meaning which is

not inherent in the object itself, but which is re-invested into it. As a result the object is no longer itself, but is now a signifier of a constructed signified which is altogether alien to the object and has nothing to do with it.

Let's take as a hypothetical example the worship of a totem. It is not the *particular* totem itself that is being worshiped. Neither it is the form of animal (*universal*) that is worshiped. Instead, the object of the totem is being invested with an alien signification that is related neither to the particular animal, nor to the species-form. Thus, we could have a worship of an effigy of a cat, or even the worship of an idea of a cat as an object of worship, while they could signify ultimately unrelated concepts like "fertility", "wind" or "death".

Thus, what we have in fetish is an interesting imaginative play of the logic of associations. Conventionally, that is to say, according to traditional logic of representation, words (signifiers) always refer back to stable meanings (signifieds) – we *associate* words and signs to specific concepts and meanings. However, this is not the case with fetish: the representation of the object does not refer back to a signification of the form of the represented object, but back to a seemingly absurd and irrelevant set of signifieds. As Durkheim, puts it, 'Fetishism lays in the reciprocation of thought into the object and the object into thought' (Durkheim 1965:266). Fetishism therefore is an extension of the logic of association present in representation, linguistic structures and signification, but what is important to note is that in fetishism the signified is always ultimately *displaced* (to use Derridean vocabulary) – that is to say the

signified of the signs are never stable and the signifiers can refer back to seemingly unrelated signifieds.

The process of State fetishism is not different from what was described above. The signs that simulate the State's presence and the very word "State" are being invested with meanings that might not be ultimately related to it.

For instance we might consider the earlier example of obeying the police officer. A philosophical anarchist would choose to obey the commands of the man inside the police uniform because he wants to avoid the aggravation of the situation, while another person might obey precisely because he sees the uniform (the sign), which tells him that the commands are coming from the State.

Similarly, let us recall the discussion on "the Other Body of the Sovereign" in chapter four. It was clear example of how State fetish is produced in a ritual. The wax effigy of the king's dead body would be treated by physicians as still ailing body of a real person for seven days, until it too would "die" and the wax effigy would be burnt.

In the previous chapter on Debord's outline of the society of the spectacle, we have also seen how political reality and culture are ultimately produced as a result of transformations in commodity-fetishism into a normal way of consuming the object, whereby the objects themselves are by now pure images. Ultimately, Debord's theory shows that the fanaticised presence of the State is a

derivative not only of fetishisation of the objects that stand as signs of the State, but by now of fetishisation of the images of the signs of the State. Ultimately, in this endless simulacrum the State itself, indeed if there is such a thing, is ultimately *untraceable*.

It is untraceable (inexistent simulacral non-entity), and yet *as-if* always already present (existent). We are now faced with an aporia which is irresolvable. It is like the Gordian Knot that is complexly tied and embroiled to an extent that it cannot be resolved – it therefore can be treated as a Gordian Knot: it will have to be simply cut-off.

Gordian Knot: “The State” as an epistemic predicate

For deconstruction we must arrive at aporia – an irresolvable contradiction. For deconstruction to take place, the conflicting relationship between the opposites must be *displaced*. And indeed we have already arrived at this point.

We must demonstrate that the game of the spectacle *exceeds* the opposites to an extent that the relationship between and with these opposites is proven to be destabilised. To say that God is everything is one flip away from saying that God does not exist, just as to say that the State has saturated the Social sphere to an extent that there is nothing outside of the society of the spectacle is one flip away from claiming that the State does not exist. The governmentality thesis brought us to a point where the opposition between the *Social Law* and

the *Statist Law* is no longer relevant. We have returned to the point which Derrida, referring to Montagne, called the “mystical foundations of authority” (Derrida 1992). According to Derrida it is “mystical” because at that point the discourse stumbles at its own limit or paradox. The limit is simple: at its most basic level the performative and the interpretative power, violence and force that enforce “justice” is neither just nor unjust. As Derrida has claimed,

“The structure I am describing here is a structure in which law (*droit*) is essentially deconstructible, whether because it is founded, constructed on interpretative and transformable textual strata, or because its ultimate foundation is by definition unfounded... “Since the origin of authority, the foundation or ground, the position of the law can’t by definition rest on anything but themselves, they are themselves a violence without ground” (Derrida 1992:14).

It is because we have started from the anarchist understanding of the origins of the State (according to which the pure violence of sovereign power, and the force of law enforcement is covered up by interpretative practices of State reification as authorisation of authority) that we are now able to reach this point where the deconstructive *inversion* becomes possible.

It is just as easy to say that the State does not exist as it has been possible to say that it does in fact exist. Since the State is concept, since it is an epistemological abstraction created, as Schmitt stresses, out of ‘*nothingness*’ and out of mere presupposition of State’s presence (Bartelson 2001), and since it thus operates as a constituting (Derrida, 1992) predicate node; since the

constitution/simulation of political reality takes place by the precession of the model of the State (as I have claimed earlier); and since ‘...in the logic of simulation... “*opposite*” terms can be substituted for one another’ (Weber 1995: 37; my emphasis), it is possible to do an inversion. The statement regarding the existence of the State (is / is not) can therefore be treated as a predicate variable. It is possible to replace it with ‘opposite’ predicate ‘*There is no State*’.

The mechanism by which this knowledge comes into being and offshoots its meaning is repetitive as it is predicated on a stark *belief* which is untraceable and is created out of *nothingness*. It is a knowledge that has been derived from various empirical evidences and acquaintances of socio-political phenomena while *already* having in mind the pre-existing positive statement that ‘there-is-a-State’ as a priory predicate; when this predicate is applied empirically the world makes sense. The tautological and simulacral logic goes: since there is a State the socio-political and international phenomena can be understood and explained, and since these socio-political and international phenomena make sense, it means that there is a State. The edifice of the existence of the State and of Staitst political thinking has been based upon a tautological statement: since there is a State, then there is a State.

It is, however, ultimately irrelevant whether the State exists or not. But in demonstrating *how* is it that it does not exist, we have already started accounting for State reification itself. We have already noted a multitude of factors at play: the dissolution of the boundary between the State and society, the simulacral

functioning of the present signs that present themselves as the State itself, and last but not least the process of State-fetishism.

The functioning of the political structures and institutions, as well as political phenomena are always interpreted and represented in such a way that always repeatedly attests to the existence of the State. At the same time, interpretations and representations are animated by the *unquestionable* knowledge that there is a State; and the reason why it is unquestionable is not due to restrictive practices of the State or any other agency, but because the very logic that would question the existence of the State would not register with the logic according to which the interpretations and representations of political reality and of everyday life make sense.

The next cause of State reification that will be looked at is the production of the State as a matter of *theoretical* and *discursive* practice.

Simulating Sovereignty: State Reification as a *Theoretical* Production

While believing that spatial political communities might have a common interest and identity, classical anarchism rejects the social contract as an explanandum for the evolution of political communities. As we have seen, anarchist theorists do so by arguing that the State does not and cannot represent the political community, that authority has never been authorised and that the right to representation has never been consented to. As anarchists see it historically the

mechanism of social contract has been operating the other way round: authority was inflicted and representation was assumed and claimed, and only then successful discourses of social contract were produced to generate the community's consent and to logicalise the system that is inherently self-contradictory.

The postmodernist account of representation is carried out not by distancing the representative and the represented (as is the case with classical anarchism, Engels's (1884: 177-8) and Lenin's (1919) theories of the State), but by placing under question whether there is such a thing as 'the represented' at all. In this way the nerve of international political practice is pulled from underneath: 'implicit in a State's offering of a justification for its practices is the assumption that a community of sovereign States which abide by similar norms of conduct *already* exists' (Weber, C. 1995: 5).

The poststructuralist accounts of sovereignty implicitly follow the model which was outlined by Foucault and which could be termed 'discursive constitutivism'. It is a model which in understanding the constitution of political reality, places an emphasis on the textual, discursive and theoretical practices by experts when they speak as experts (Weber 1995; Walker 1993; Ashley 1988; Bartelson 1995; George 1994). At this stage I would like to focus more on the work of Cynthia Weber because her work gets closest to dealing with State reification as a matter of *theoretical* practice. This is an important stage in understanding State reification; however in my final analysis I will claim that a lot more emphasis is needed on such aspects of State reification as the psychological dynamics

involved in identity formation, cultural production of everyday life and micropractices of the spectacle. For now, let us look at how Weber's theory works.

Drawing on Saussure's linguistic theory Cynthia Weber examines the logic of representation, in both contexts of 'symbolic representation' and 'political representation', since both implicitly subscribe to the same logical mechanism. She is concerned with the logic of representation because following the theory of social contract she still believes that '[f]or a state to be sovereign, it must represent its domestic community in global politics' (1995: 6) Following the linguistic theory and the logic of social contract theory she asks:

'how can one preserve the notion of representation – that a signifier refers back to a signified – if either no signified or ground can be said to exist or if a signified or ground *is constituted in the act of speech?* Put differently, how can one say that a transference of authority somehow takes place between a domestic community and its government apparatus if either there is no stable domestic community or if a domestic community is constituted or made up to serve as the foundation of sovereign authority within a state in the very act of speaking about this domestic community?

'For a logic of representation to work, a signified or ground must exist. *And if no signified or ground can be found, one must be created.* Thus, in the case of the transference of authority from a domestic community to a state government, symbolic representation begins by taking that which does not exist except as a fiction – a domestic

community – and transforming it into the foundation of the sovereign authority of the state. Working within the logic of representation and asking “who is the sovereign authority in the domestic community which is represented by the state?” an answer must be “found” or “produced” or the logic of representation will crumble’ (Weber 1995:7; my emphasis).

What further crumbles here is the logic of contradictions that has conceded features of the most advanced forms of contemporary political practice: democracy, party politics and spatiality. If the ‘domestic community’ is a fictional notion (as Weber successfully demonstrates) which is constituted/produced as a result of essentialist discourses, then what happens is that every individual within the community is quintessentially is an anarchos – not represented in the conventional sense but only represented through a simulation. Representation is, thus, merely *claimed* and then *simulated*. If the individual in the context of the international system is ‘anarchos’ (not represented) while there is such a thing as the State (a sign which only *claims* to be representing the community of individuals) then what we have here is a paradox regarding whether there is a State (and, if so, what sort of State) or anarchy (and, if so, what sort of anarchy). What we have is a successful system of logification of illogicality, or as Proudhon would treat it ‘the system of contradictions’. The problem of depoliticisation as a systematic task of biopolitical practice comes back again; Weber proceeds:

‘For a logic of representation to be politically effective, this question must be postponed. It must not be asked, for the mere asking of

questions about foundational authorities puts foundational authorities into question. “Finding” answers concerning who foundational authorities are may not be enough to make a logic of representation work; a more successful strategy is to prevent such questions from being raised. (Weber, C. 1995: 7-8)

What follows from this is that political representation and the international order itself are maintained by a pure State of depoliticisation and a proper alienation of the political subject from the political realm, because it is only in these conditions that the self-contradictory political practices of simulation can systematically function as logical and natural practices.⁵

Weber touches on the very nerve of the international political order, but her argument is informed by the non-existence of that which is ‘supposed’ to be represented, which she identifies as the ‘domestic community’ that is ‘found’, ‘produced’, ‘constructed’ and ‘constituted in the act of speech’ (1995: 7). What needs to be faced, resisted and dealt with is a whole edifice of logification of illogicality, of which the concepts of sovereignty and ‘necessary evil’ are exemplar. This system of logification of illogicality makes contradictions appear logical and concedes oppressive institutions, practices, systems and ideational not in an apologetic, but in an imposingly logical manner. The logic of representation operates merely *within* this edifice. This argument does hold

⁵ Whether Weber is aware of it or not, her argument operates by the basic credo of the classical philosophical anarchist method of inquiry; the only difference being that the classical philosophical anarchist logic proceeds the other way round. Weber holds the theory of the social contract (the political working of the logic of representation) as a stipulation, and by questioning the existence of the referent (signified) places under question the basic logical chain by which the international order of diplomacy functions, namely the logic of social contract being a microcosm of a generic logic of representation. Anarchists, on the other hand, as it has been mentioned above, start by rejecting the social contract and proceeds from thereon.

plausibility, and is indeed a turning point in IR theory, but it seems that Weber is missing a much grander scale of simulation that is taking place in regard to the State – *Simulacral Simulation (a simulation not by discourses but by precession of the sign that refers to itself in loops)*.

In this way she misses the crucial aspect associated with the concept of sovereignty and its power. It is precisely the point that the sovereignty can and does act with no necessary recourse to the logic of representation and the social contract; this code of practice is already implicit in the concept of sovereignty as Schmitt has informed us (1985). Sovereignty is the one that systemises and realises the whole system. Sovereignty, since it involves a notion of borderlineity and absolutivity – *absolute right to be right*, can and does speak on behalf of the domestic community because whatever the sovereign speaks can be enforced as right, true and real onto the domestic community (even if the latter happens to be another not constructed, but *created* concept). In other words sovereignty can and does speak not so much on the basis of the success of its achievements but on the basis of the absolutism that is implicit in it. What follows from this is that State does not operate so much through recourse to the social contract and the logic of representation, as much as through the reliance on the absolutism of the concept of sovereignty. I will take this argument further: the State operates not even with a reference to sovereignty, but to the simulacral reference to the established knowledge that the State exists.

One of the basic anarchist arguments is that masses and the people *do not need* to be represented. But Baudrillard seems to have extended the point further by an

attempt to untie these entities, “masses” also known as “the people”, and the meaning that these bear (1978 & 1988). It is not that the masses and the people do not need to be represented, but more profoundly, these simply *cannot* be represented. ‘The ‘masses’ are at once the most obvious and indisputable, the very basis of all historical and political sociology, and do not actually exist, are only a fiction produced by polls and surveys as a result of the hegemony of positivist method of enquiry. They are what every political system and sociology tries to grasp – to ascertain their opinion, to educate, to represent – and what all inevitably fail to’ (Butler, R. 1999: 6).

Therefore, from now on the argument must proceed not by distancing the signifier signified relationship (as was the case with classical anarchism, Engels, Lenin and neo-Marxists) but must operate in light of a categorical forgetting of representation as a political practice of justice and logical plausibility.

Cynthia Weber’s analysis is important and there is hardly anything to disagree with. Even though she never calls it “State reification”, it is precisely this problem that she is dealing with. She outlines how State reification is implicated in the international theory, how the State is constituted in the midst of theorising/interpreting the boundary between the practices of sovereignty and their alleged opposite, which she identifies to be the intervention. Weber’s model of constituting the State-effect is essentially a top-down model. She seems to eschew Foucauldean emphasis on discursive practices and sides with Baudrillardian account. Nevertheless, her final analysis still carries the emphasis on the discursive practices of the interpretative community, and not on the

broader cultural production whereby the State refers back to itself in simulacral loops, as a Baudrillardian analyses would accentuate. It seems that State-reification is more a *micro-political* issue in the way that it is tied up with the psychological dynamics of self-interpretation and identity-formation, as well as with the cultural production of everyday life. In understanding State-reification more emphasis is needed on the *politics of Self* and *spectral experiencing* of the spectacular presence of the simulacral State-sign. This is where the insights of Max Stirner and Guy Debord are indispensable.

Existential Psychoanalysis of Max Stirner

Stirner's outline of the process of how one produces the imagination of the higher sacred being is the basic psychoanalytic framework that this thesis has taken on board in understanding State reification. As it was demonstrated in chapter three, the subject starts off by finding himself juxtaposed to the higher essence. This higher essence can be anything as long as it is absolute, perfect and unattainable. It presents itself as a *God-shaped vacuum*, which is one of the reasons it is ultimately alluring. It can be the idea of the essence of God, the essence of Man, the model of a perfect Christian, a perfect citizen or an ideal worker. Thus, the Ego finds itself set against the higher essence and evaluates the self against that essence. This is alienating. That model embodying perfection that one is permanently cut-off from becomes the ideal that one tries to reach, but in effect becomes a permanent reminder that the Self is not complete – it is a source of permanent dissatisfaction with the existent self.

Thus, since one can never reach that ideal, it becomes even more alienating. As a result one reduces the self into a ghostly and shadowy existence (one forgets that one exists) and one starts searching for renewed modes of existence: thus, now the self finds a renewed existence not in the self (as an existent self-possessor) but in citizenship, in party, in ideology, in religion. What Stirner described is a play of subjectifying power that is no longer quantitative – it pervades the purportedly indivisible individual. Thus we see the internalisation of the desire to be dominated and of the need to reify the higher sacred. By tying the self to renewed identities (like citizenship) the individual inevitably ends up reifying the State. In reifying the State the individual reduces his own existence to that of a ghost, while delegating his own existence to the non-existent ghost. Thus the State becomes reified as the absolute existent.

Analytic of Finitude

The Analytic of Finitude further reinforces Stirner's existential psychoanalytic model as it gives new explanations for State reification. The analytic of finitude was originally developed by Heidegger (Heidegger 1962:§§61-62) and it is further explored by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre 1943) and then by Foucault in *The Order of Things* (Foucault 1966).

The Analytic of Finitude analyses how the search for origins shapes the world, that is to say – how it shapes the conceptualisation of what and how reality is.

Heidegger and Sartre place an emphasis on human finitude in relation to the choices made in everyday life. For instance Heidegger proposes that we make

existential choices – choices in the light of the knowledge of human finitude and awareness of existence – as if they would be the last choices before we die. It means making choices within a constructed situation whereby death is something that could have already happened and a possibility of something that could happen at any time – a possible improbability that has already begun. Furthermore, it is not only the death of the decision-taking person, but also awareness of the death of all preceding non-repeatable no longer alterable, but forever determinative moments where choices have already been made without the awareness of existence. So what happens when we place an emphasis on existence in such a manner? Both for Sartre and Heidegger this means leading a life that is truly one's own, or, to put it in Stirner's words, 'to become the possessor of my life'.

But Sartre goes one step further than Heidegger. For Sartre understanding existence and choices becomes a matter of understanding the flows of responsibility. The theme of responsibility is something that runs throughout Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*, but is never so systematically articulated as in Sartre, who developed a different existential psychoanalytic model out of the theme of responsibility. For Sartre God does not exist, which means that the universe is ultimately absurd as there is nothing to pull it together, and we are completely free – it is entirely up to us what we make of the world and ourselves. In a short story entitled *Intimacy* Sartre depicts a situation where Lucienne, the central character, when confronted with a hard choice that would determine her life thereafter *escapes having to make her own choice*. Sartre's own analysis later in *Being and Nothingness* shows that despite the human aspiration

toward freedom, when persons are confronted with the real possibility of freedom, they ultimately dread and loathe it. This is the case precisely because of the human finitude discussed above: consciousness of freedom and awareness of existence also means making choices that affect one's life thereafter, which also means taking responsibility for what one's life may turn out to be. In *Nausea* – one of the earliest of Sartre's works – Roquentin realises the absurdity of objects and values surrounding him, but he stands up to the responsibility of confronting his own freedom, which makes him view the surrounding environment in a contrastingly different way (Sartre 1938). In the case of Lucien from *The Wall*, however, the displacement of identity caused by having to confront one's responsibility leads him in becoming a Nazi and an anti-Semite – he realises the absurdity of the universe and escapes his own Bad Faith by reifying an abstract ideology that brings a new promise of order (Sartre 1991). Later on in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Sartre demonstrated that anti-Semitism was not a one-off fragment in human history but and is a manifestation of a broader problem of Bad Faith – having to confront one's own responsibility and existence. Thus, the existential psychoanalysis that Sartre develops is marked by the argument that the tyranny of freedom and responsibility means that responsibility is either something to be confronted, or *to be passed on to something else*. This brings a new aspect to understanding State reification psychoanalytically. From the Sartrean perspective the reification of the higher sacred becomes a matter of seceding one's own responsibility and existence to metaphysical non-existent abstractions, in this case – to the State. Thus State reification becomes a matter of escaping responsibility for one's own existence.

Foucault, however, made a different use of Heidegger's analytic of finitude. If we are to understand human civilisation as intimately related to language the fact is that "the beginnings of language are shrouded in mystery and retreat further and further into the past in the face of empirical investigation" (Dreyfuss and Rabinow 1983: 38).

"It is always against a background of the already begun that man is able to reflect on what may serve for him as origin" (Foucault 1966: 330). Man discovers, in Heidegger's words, that he is "always already" in the world, in language, in society, and in nature. As Foucault put it, "Man is cut off from the origin that would make him contemporaneous with his own existence: amid all the things that are born in time and no doubt die in time, he, cut off from all origin, is already there" (Foucault 1966:332)

As Dreyfuss and Rabinow note,

"Given the logic of the analytic of finitude, Heidegger is finally forced to the conclusion that man is condemned to the fruitless project of attempting to get clear about the origin, which in this case amount to trying to name being and thus drag the clearing into the open. Indeed, early Heidegger comes to hold that this ontological error is definitive of man" (Dreyfuss and Rabinow 1983:38).

Thus, the individual finds himself permanently cut off from his origins, but already there inside the State, and already subject to the sovereign, to a certain given identity, to a certain set of essentialisms and to a given table of values. The subject finds himself permanently cut-off from his origins, but at the same

time always already in the presence of the State. The presence of the State is not really a *presence* until the individual finds himself unable to narrate his own origins and therefore makes the Statist claim to the “always already” as a pure timeless presence. Thus, reifying the State becomes an easy and most convenient solution in the vicious circle of having to search for origins. As we saw earlier Stirner was confronted with a similar problem and resolved it by a radical negation of all origins that constitute the higher essence that man is supposed to fit into, and instead he constitutes his own world and his own self anew – the fact of his corporeality/existence becomes the new – his own – origin.

Conclusion

In this chapter we returned to the problem of State reification and examined it in light of the achievements of the thesis thus far. In addition to the positions already examined in chapters two, three, four and five, we have also looked at some other insights that could address the problem of State reification.

In the introduction we took up Foucault’s famous statement as “homework”:

“We need to cut off the King’s head: *in political theory*, we argued, that has still to be done. ... We need... a political philosophy that isn’t erected around the problem of sovereignty” (Foucault 1980: 121; my emphasis).

In this discussion we have come to slightly different conclusion. The King's decapitation is not only a theoretical difficulty – it is indeed intricately tied up with deeper psychological factors that make the need for State reification and self-subjectification a necessary part of self-interpretation and identity formation. Though they do not call it this, theorists like Ashley, Weber and Bartelson get closest to addressing the problem of State reification. Yet their contention is that this problem is only a theoretical one. From the discussion in this chapter using the three models that I presented throughout the thesis and some new positions as well it becomes evident that the problem of State reification is a lot more *micropolitical* and is tied up with intricate *spectacular* micropractices, whereby the direction of the gaze is not so much from the experts, discursive practitioners or theorists, but from the passive observer of the higher object of the spectacular image – the image that is reified into the State.

Thus the problem of State reification is no longer the improper usage of the State, but the improper usage of the signs and images of the State.

It was further discovered that the existence of the State is established not only through fetishes and theoretical manoeuvres, but by endless tautologies and simulacra. That further reaffirmed the hypothesis that what underlies the politics of everyday life, interpretative practices and the comprehension of the sign of the State is the untraceable predicate episteme that the State exists.

Therefore, it is not that the State refers back to sovereignty (as traditionally understood), but the other way round: it is sovereignty that refers back to the existence of the State. The convincing character of sovereignty and its absolutist logic are grounded not in its origins, but in the simple fact that the State always already exists. This is the “fact”, the epistemic predicate node, which it is impossible to question, but which can only be inverted.

This is why sovereignty is a derivative of the problem of State reification – the problem that is hardly posed as a problem or even as an actuality of everyday life.

CONCLUSION

It is worth mentioning the brief history of this project and how “State reification” became a problem. This project has gone through three phases, three cycles. Originally, it was an attempt to construct an anarchist theory of International Relations by looking at *why* international phenomena appear ethically differently from anarchist and traditional IR perspectives. The terrain where the two traditions, anarchism and IR, overlap was unexplored but filled with landmines, which would repeatedly set me back and/or raise new questions. However, the greatest barrier that repeatedly made it impossible to make the discourse of anarchism compatible with the discourse of IR theory was the concept of the State. The two discourses became ultimately ontologically incompatible because of their radically opposing conceptualisations of the State: IR takes the concept of the State as its departing point and is animated by that presupposition, while for anarchism the State is never a settled or taken for granted concept. Thus, in light of this difficulty the project entered into the second phase, which became an enquiry into the nature of State’s existence. Thus, the metaphysical question “what is the State?” became the new drive of the inquiry – it was an attempt to come up with a conceptualisation of the State that would make anarchism and IR compatible and also answer Martin Wight’s unsettling question about international theory (Wight 1966). However, that inquiry too went in circles never producing satisfactory results; and it became further complicated by critical and poststructural accounts of governance and domination in modern societies,

which in the broadest sense, led to the theoretical dissolution of the State. The way out of these vicious circles of trying to understand what the State is, came when I realised that the mode of my method itself was partly the cause of these difficulties. Thus, I reformulated the question, thus entering into the final phase which revealed the problem of State reification. Instead of taking the State as a pre-existing part of political reality and attempting to grasp what the nature of its existence is, I decided to get behind the problem itself and ask what produces the State and its sovereign presence. In a very short time after that the problem of State reification became obvious.

We have started by posing the problem of State reification – the fact that “the State” is being reified. State reification, it was said, implies an improper use of “the State” – its conceptualisation as an object, as a subject, as an agent and even as a being with anthropomorphic properties. To reify “the State” means to create the State out of nothingness and to attribute to it a separate and even higher reality – to make it ontologically the highest existent, and furthermore, to conceptualise its existence as a timeless and an “*in itself*” phenomenon – as if independent of factors that produce the State-effect. In theorising, theories of the State already treat it as something that already exists out there and only awaits our making sense of it. Because of such an implicitly metaphysical methodological strategy, theories of the State, in effect, end up creating and reifying the very “State” that they try to make sense of. We have seen that even anarchism – the discourse that always poses itself against Statism, is not entirely immune to such a trap: the more anarchism talks about its “enemy” and the more anarchists fight against “the State”, the more real it becomes.

This thesis unpacks the problem of State reification and demonstrates how it is that the State gets reified. However, along the way we have discovered that the problem expresses not only a theoretical difficulty, but is also inherently a psychological and cultural process. As we said in the introduction, “We need to cut off the King’s head: *in political theory*, we argued, that has still to be done. ... We need... a political philosophy that isn’t erected around the problem of sovereignty” (Foucault, M. 1980: 121; my emphasis). At its initial stage this thesis took Foucault’s famous statement as homework. For Foucault the problem is primarily *theoretical* – it is a result of discursive practices by the interpretative community. However, after examinations throughout the thesis I have come to the conclusion that even the theoretical problem of the King’s decapitation is intertwined within a broader economy of State-reificatory micropractices within everyday life.

It was said that in order to confront the problem of State reification critically we had to consult a political theory that does not take the State *for granted*. That is why we started examining classical anarchist thought. We saw that anarchism possessed both invaluable potentials as well as many limitations that later needed to be eschewed in order to investigate our problem deeper. Anarchism as we have noted is not simply a political theory, but a distinct politico-philosophical *system* in its own right. One of the valuable aspects of anarchism was its rejection of the Social Contract theories. As a counter argument to social-contract narratives of the origins of and justification for the State, which are essentially bottom-up models, anarchism fostered an alternative set of

theories, best exemplified in Bakunin's notion of Tacit Contract. In short, anarchists present a top-down model, whereby the domination was initially imposed by force and only afterwards were the justificatory narratives and discourses (of which Social Contract and the sovereign's divinity are but instances) produced in order to legitimate the violence and the injustice of the State. The emphasis in anarchist accounts of sovereignty almost always falls on religion. Religion is seen as the precursor of sovereign authority, and as we saw later Max Stirner constructed an early psychoanalytic model, which helped us understand how the reification of the State takes place. Furthermore, the importance of anarchism is in its inherent anti-authoritarian tendency – the refusal to accept authority as a matter of principle, and the evaluation of the State without the prism of sovereignty. In philosophical anarchism this stance is resolved in a simple ethical value system whereby legitimate authority invariably becomes a contradiction in terms and State actions are evaluated in practice-specific terms. For instance, if we recall, both robbery and taxation were equated from the philosophical anarchist point of view. This was valuable for it made us raise questions as to how and why are actions, which amount to the same practice, seen as legitimate when carried out by the sovereign power and illegitimate when carried out by others. One important aspect of the philosophical anarchist way of looking at things is that one is not prepared to obey orders just because they originate from the State and/or are said to be in the interests of the State. The very fact that sovereignty is seen as sovereignty and the State as the State already raises questions about what makes sovereignty and what makes the State. In other words, it was demonstrated that even

though rarely stated explicitly anarchism's logic and ontology is inherently confronted with the problem of State reification.

However, it was argued, classical anarchism often relies on dichotomous oppositions: good/evil, natural/unnatural, *physis/nomos*, justice/law, Social laws/Statist laws, Individual/State, autonomy/authority; and this dichotomous thinking cannot help us in addressing the problem of State reification which, as it was demonstrated later, indeed *exceeds* those dichotomies. Classical anarchism, inheriting the models mainly of libertarian thought and partly of romanticist thought, is based on the dichotomy of "State versus Society". This thesis has demonstrated that that dichotomy is no longer relevant because the separation itself is by now obsolete: the Social sphere has been saturated with Statist political thinking. Saying that there is no State is another way of saying that the boundary between the State and society is so blurred that the State is inside the society, the State is the society and vice versa.

Furthermore, classical anarchist political philosophy often relies on the categories of "natural" and "human nature". It was argued that these categories are obscure, ambiguous and represent yet another set of analytical categories that can be resorted to in order to avoid a deeper and more critical engagement with a series of complexities. Therefore, these categories needed to be dropped not because they represented potentially vulnerable areas of anarchist thought, but because they hindered our engagement with the problem of State reification.

Another area of anarchist thought that needed renovating was the theme of power. In setting the Individual against the State, which is a position associated very much with the American individualist-anarchist thinkers like Emerson, Thoreau, Tucker, Nozick and others, what we see is the assumption of the autonomous Individual operating within quantitative power – power that the Individual is or can be conscious of. Thus, this autonomous individual, according to such a conceptualisation, can potentially make rational choices while remaining immune to the workings of power. But there is a problem in such a view: if individuals are autonomous agents, then either authority is legitimate (while it is not), or authoritative structures would be destroyed (while they only integrate) – there must be a different type of power at work. Furthermore, not only is the presupposition of an autonomous individual contestable, but it also leads to a framework of analysis that would not even capture State reification as an actuality. We then complicated the issue by introducing qualitative power – power that pervades and produces the allegedly indivisible individual; power that the autonomous individual might not be conscious of; power that distinguishes the upright citizen who would obey State orders just because they come from “the State” and because they express the reason of “the State” on the one hand, from the philosophical anarchist who would see taxation as robbery and execution as murder. The hypothesis at that stage was that if we were to analyse what causes the contrast between the views of the upright citizen and those of the philosophical anarchist, that is to say, if that qualitative power was to be explored further we could come up with an explanation of the process of State reification. It must be noted that although many classical and contemporary anarchist thinkers have stumbled upon this

type of power (as for instance in Bakunin's analysis of tacit contract, or in Godwin's analysis of governmental pervasion of personal judgement), there is no systematic theoretical mechanism within classical anarchism that could help us unpack the process of reification of the State.

One direction in which the thesis could have moved at that stage would have been to maintain anarchism's anti-authoritarian commitments, while moving on to a more contemporary analyses of power as it appears in works of Michel Foucault. That is how Todd May directed his argument in one of the earliest works on poststructuralist anarchism (May 1994). However, this thesis chose to investigate anarchist resources further. We turned to Max Stirner. There were several reasons for such a move. One was the general dissatisfaction with the way that Stirner is taken as a simple proponent of selfishness. Another reason was a more broad and experimental one that may inform my future research agenda: contemporary poststructuralism is predominantly Nietzsche's descendant, but what if a slightly different type of "poststructuralism" could be developed out of the post-metaphysical thought of Stirner? But the main reason was that the work of Max Stirner contained a systematic body of theory that could help understand the problem of State reification.

Since, first we decided to part with such categories as "natural" and "human nature", and, second, since we have seen the dichotomisation of State and society as problematical, and, third, since we had already suspected the workings of the type power that was more subtle than a simple quantitative capacity, the analysis of State reification needed to move beyond rationalistic categories.

Such a radical reconceptualisation of power as something that eschews the autonomous individual meant that we needed to move toward thinking that was more analytic and psychoanalytic. Max Stirner provided a basic psychoanalytic model which helped in unpacking the psychological process of how and why the subject ends up reifying the State.

Stirner's psychoanalytic model outlines not so much how the power of ideas contains and dominates the subject, but how the desire to be dominated, to participate in one's own oppression and the need to reify the higher – the spirit – into an absolute almighty being is *internalised*. We have seen how the alienating dynamics of religion, best manifest, according to Stirner, in Protestantism, result in subject's discovery of a renewed existence in renewed identities. By tying the self to renewed identities (like citizenship) the individual *inevitably* ends up reifying the State. In reifying the State the individual reduces his own existence into that of a ghost, while delegating it to the non-existent ghost. Thus the State becomes reified as the absolute existent. Later in a brief exegesis of Sartre's existential psychoanalysis we further enhanced this model by the argument that the subject reifies the state as a result of Bad Faith and as means of escaping freedom and responsibility.

Another aspect of Stirner's thought that is vital for understanding State reification is the generally nominalist and particularist stance that he adopts. He reduces such categories as nation, fatherland, legality and of course the State to mere spooks and *words*, which do not have their own reality. Language for Stirner represents the vast land of unreality, while the only island of the real is

the existent unique Ego (Einzig), which can never be represented through a word or words. Stirner's existential framework thus rejects universals in favour of particulars, and especially in favour of the primacy of the existent self. Thus, following such a framework we arrived at another important cornerstone of Stirnerian thought: it is not that there is objective reality out there awaiting representation, but it is us who create that reality – humans can and do create their conceptualisation of the world that they live in. This means that humans create the State in their imaginations – the State does not exist outside one's reified conceptualisation of it. Thus, it is no longer the individual that bends around reality, but reality around the individual. This too was useful for it inspired the later discussion on the "State" as a signifier with no stable signified and, generally, as a *universal* that does not exist.

Furthermore, with the help of Stirner's thought we conducted a discussion on sovereignty. Sovereignty is the spectre that haunts, defines and redefines modernity. Our investigation into sovereignty has revealed that it is tied up more with paradoxes, mystical rituals and psychological, metaphysical and theological dynamics than with reasonable justifications. This in turn means that it is fruitless to reason against the State – one can only *analyse* how those paradoxical, mystical and metaphysical aspects assist in the production of the overall effect that the State is present.

Using Stirner's thought it was argued that the State is an omnipresent phenomenon, as opposed to centralised and institutionalised entity. The omnipresence of the State is manifest through Statist identities, but more so

through its spectrality: the fact that it does not exist and yet it is always ubiquitously present. Thus we stumbled upon yet another aporia associated with the question of the existence of the State. That suggested that State's reification at the micropolitical and psychological level is indeed an actuality.

Stirner's work, however important, is written in the nineteenth century. There is a general critique of culture and particularly of culture that is produced from theology, but there is no account of capitalism's influence on culture. Even though Stirner's general psychoanalytic, nominalist and ego-ist framework is important to this thesis, the reification is still that of a *spirit*. Stirner helped outline the *social mediation by ideas*. Sartre, as we mentioned at the outset of chapter five, saw the presence of the *image* as crucial for the constitution of the imagination and for reification (Sartre 1948). That is why we turned to Guy Debord's outline of the spectacle, which is the *social relation mediated by images*. With the evolution of the society of the spectacle, State reification gains a new momentum: the evolution of the *moving* image, television, aggressive advertisement and transformations in commodity fetishism radically alters the conceptualisation of what and where political reality is. As Debord said in response to the opening statement of Marx's *Capital*, 'In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation' (Debord 1967:§1). Thus Debord helped us formulate a new order of reality: only that exists which appears, and everything that appears exists, because there is nothing outside the realm of spectacular representations. In short, the spectacular representation becomes the objective episteme; crudely

put, if the TV says that there is a State, it means that there is a State and every observer knows that this is the truth. Thus, the process of State reification is intensified to an extent that now we are faced with not the spectre of State's presence, but the presence of image that purportedly refers back to State, but in fact constitutes it.

Furthermore, it was demonstrated that State reification within spectacular societies is tied up with transformations in commodity fetishism that spill over in constituting the spectacular culture. Commodity fetishism is the way that the object is presented, vied and consumed as *in itself* – completely separated from labour that produces it, its origins and the broader set of factors that present it as *in itself*. The important aspect of spectacular commodity fetishism is that it prefers the image over the real thing: the image is consumed instead of the real and as the real itself. *Being* was transformed into *having*, and is now further transformed into *appearing*. Thus *appearance* becomes the sole criterion for being within the spectacular order: the sign of the State becomes automatically reified into the State. This establishes the tautological and simulacral loop whereby the sign does not refer back to a signified, but only to itself, while the actual State, as we saw later, is untraceable.

The disappearance of the boundary between the State and society, the evolution of governmentality as sovereignty over a specific population (rather than a specific territory), Stirner's earlier discussion on sacredness, and the evolution of the diffuse spectacular order brought our analysis in chapter six to a point where the State was untraceable. The statement that "There is a State" exists

only as a predicate episteme, the origins of which are untraceable. Instead of the actual State as it is represented we are confronted with a broader economy of the micropractices of its reifications.

The discovery that the State does not exist is not original to this thesis – it has been claimed before. I examined the work of Cynthia Weber as an exemplar of an attempt to cut off the King’s head *in political theory*. She succeeded and I do not disagree with her. But in the final analysis of chapter six as well as throughout this thesis I have demonstrated that the King’s decapitation is a task that needs addressing within a broader problem of State reification as it exists in the micropractices of everyday life, which is why I proposed a shift in emphasis.

Furthermore, since the statement that “the State exists” serves as the constitutive predicate node, it was argued that *the convincing character of sovereignty originates precisely as a result of the knowledge that the State exists*.

I have started with the problem of State reification and ended with the same problem. Toward chapter six it was argued that the problem of State reification is not only in reificatory practices, but also in the way that State reification itself is hardly ever posed as problem, and, furthermore, as a problematical actuality. I started by posing the problem of State reification and after completing a whole circle, it seems, I am back at square one. The achievement of this thesis, it could be said, is in its finding that there is indeed a problem of State reification; that it is hardly being problematised as an actuality within theory and

everyday life; and that it is even more rarely problematised in such a fashion that does not end up returning to a renewed reification of the State.

What sort of literature does this thesis contribute to? This thesis contributes to a variety of debates. I cannot say that the thesis contributes to the debates on State reification simply because, as it was said, the topic is not really discussed. It contributed to IR in the way that it places the uses of “the State” as an agent in International Relations theory under question. The thesis also contributes to the debates in the sphere of radical politics as it presents an early theoretical and analytical sketch of why the State should not be taken for granted in attempts to evaluate and make sense of political and international phenomena. In addition it contributes to discussions of psychoanalytic approaches to politics and international politics.

In addition, I see this thesis as contribution to the contemporary debates in anarchist theory, and particularly to the newly evolved and rapidly growing field of poststructuralist anarchism, or, as it was dubbed by Saul Newman “post-anarchism”. Post-anarchism is an intellectual project that generally attempts to link classical anarchist ideas and take them beyond the categories inherited from Enlightenment rationalism by infusing the achievements of the poststructural movement (May 1989; Koch 1993; May 1994; Koch 1997; Perez 1990; Purkis and Bowen 1997; Bey 1984, 1991, 1994; Moore 1997; Flathman 1998; Newman 2001; Newman 2002). Post-anarchism is seen as a step forward in the history of anarchist thought, as well as an attempt to re-emphasise the inherently anti-authoritarian and leftist propensity of poststructuralism. This thesis too has

operated in the “spirit” of post-anarchism, though I have tried to focus more on thinkers who are located at the margins of the anarchist thought.

However, above all, this thesis contributes to those critical debates on sovereignty that place an emphasis on the cultural and psychoanalytic processes involved in its constitution. The conventional understanding of the relationship between State and sovereignty is that the former refers back to the latter. The argument that I have put forward in this thesis is that the relationship is best seen in reverse: sovereign power and the practice of sovereignty refer back to the established (but untraceable) knowledge that there is a State – that is the source of the conviction carried by sovereignty in modern societies.

The convincing effect of the discourse of sovereignty originates predominantly from the problem of State reification – that is to say, the fact that State reification is not seen as an actuality and as a *problematic* actuality, and that spectacular micropractices present the State as always already pre-existing political reality. The State exists not because there is and always has been sovereignty. The State does not refer back to sovereignty, as conventionally understood, but the other way round. On the contrary, modern configuration of sovereignty refers back to the knowledge that there is a State – a stabilised political reality where the existence of the State is the constitutive *predicate episteme*. *Thus sovereignty is a derivative of the problem of State reification.*

What does this add to the previous literature? Critical theories of sovereignty accentuate the constitutive role of the discursive practices of the theoreticians

(Weber 1995; Walker 1993; Ashley 1988; Bartelson 1995; George 1994). While this is not entirely misleading, and while the problem of sovereignty is tied up with theoretical practices of presenting it as a logical and coherent discourse by the interpretative community, this thesis has put forward an argument that the problem is a lot more *micro-political* and psychological, in the way that people participate in their own domination and in the way that the problem is tied up with a set of micropractices of reification more than it is a result of primarily discursive practices. The emphasis must therefore shift to more psychoanalytic and cultural analyses.

So what does this thesis do that has not been done before? Since this thesis, strictly speaking, is not located within international relations I cannot claim originality in bringing in anarchism into the discipline, and attempts to infuse anarchism with poststructuralism within the theory of IR (I would have to leave that for future projects). Neither can I claim originality in the argument that there is no State, since it has been done before on numerous occasions and from different perspectives (Miliband 1973; Poulantzas 1973; Abrams 1988; Ashley 1988; Weber 1995; Taussig 1993; Taussig 1997).

One thing that this thesis can, however, seriously claim is its unique use of Stirner's thought as means to understanding how and why the psychological process of State reification works. Furthermore, my reading of Stirner is different from the two works that have noticed a psychoanalytic method in Stirner's critique (Carroll 1974; Newman 2001). Moreover, through the work of Guy Debord I have demonstrated that State reification in post-industrial

societies is closely and complexly interwoven with transformations in commodity fetishism that overspill and animate a general culture of how the higher image is consumed and reified. To my knowledge the link between the concept of the spectacle and the process of State reification has not been drawn before. This thesis makes use of two thinkers who are not generally paid attention to in academia nor in the anarchist circles, and my attempt revitalises their thought.

However, above all, the originality of the thesis is in its arguments. The prior literature dealing implicitly with the problem of State reification saw it as a *theoretical* enterprise. Herewith, I have investigated the problem of State reification with an emphasis on psychological and cultural factors. I have demonstrated that the theoretical aspect of the reification of the State is only a minor fragment of a broader economy of micropolitical practices.

Are there any limitations within the thesis that may need further exploration? I have limited the discussion of language and an universals to Stirner's reflections because he already provides a framework necessary for the logical procession of this thesis. It must be noted, however, that the problem of universals in language, logic and politics is not as clear cut as was demonstrated in the discussion on Stirner. Plato's theory of universals (*forms*) and particulars, as outlined in his *Dialogues* (Plato 1970), could be seen as the origin of many a problems in occidental philosophy and especially the problem of State reification. In fact it could be seen as the earliest record of reification – turning abstracts into objects. In short, this theory states that universals (abstract

concepts) and particulars (objects in material world) belong to different realms and are distinct in essence. However the only way one can make sense and understand universals, Plato argued, is by treating them as particulars, and by representing them as particulars. In other words, what Plato is proposing is that we treat abstract concepts as real objects. Highlighting the seriousness of such mistreatment is perhaps too late, for it shaped much of occidental political philosophy and the micropolitical imagination of the political reality. It is precisely from Plato's embroilment that Aristotle insisted that the State, in order to be made sense of, must be treated as an *object* and as an entity that exists in nature, like a botanical plant. But the problem does not stop with Aristotle, for it was Thomas Hobbes who took the point as far as literally anthropomorphising the State and representing the State as an agent and an actor.

The reason the problem of universals was not tackled in this thesis is not because the debate between the nominalists and the realists is not central to political theory and international politics, but because it becomes increasingly embroiled to an extent that it becomes difficult to draw links to politics. One hypothesis would be that the problem of State reification and Plato's theory of universals is ultimately rooted in the grammatical structures of Katharevousa (Ancient Greek), but a comparative linguistic analysis with other archaic languages was not something that the thesis could carry out. It would, however, be an interesting project to see how the problem of universals are embroiled in our everyday political language, imagination and in processes of State reification.

Another important area for further investigation is the constitutive effect that State reification has on ethics. That is to say, how does State reification systemise the Statist tables of values? For instance, such interpretations and reasonings as “the interest of the State”, “State security” or “reason of the State” are no longer convincing when they are portrayed as derivatives of State reification. For example, if the predicate episteme that already informs us that “there is a State” were replaced with the opposing predicate episteme that “there is no State”, actions would be evaluated for the practice that they perform. Execution would become a murder not by the State, but by the particular person that carried it out – there would be no space left for Bad Faith. Since the convincing effect of sovereignty is rooted in the predicate episteme that already positively affirms the existence of the State, the only way of evaluating political phenomena without the prism of sovereignty is by reversing the constitutive predicate episteme.

Another interesting potential area of investigation could be in tracing how State reification was played out in historical events, for example, the cases of Armenian Genocide and the Nuremberg trials. Zigmund Bauman’s account of how responsibility was evaded, emphasised the modern mode of production and the division of labour that alienates the producer from the end-product (Bauman 1989). While this is an interesting account, my suspicion is that it does not capture the element of State reification (conceptualisation of the form of State that as an agent, producer and existent and as means of evasion of Bad Faith) that systemises conceptualisations of agency and responsibility. Similarly, the inability to see State reification as an actuality reflects in contemporary

accounts of Armenian Genocide: the prime cause of the Genocide is usually seen to be the *form* of State (the undemocratic Ottoman Empire) without seeing that it was “the State” itself. At the same time the persistent denial on part of the modern Turkish government is explained either in terms of the substantial role of the military in political and intellectual spheres of modern Turkey, or in terms of rather essentialist reductions of Turkish identity. Neither account captures the problem of State reification as an explanandum of the denial and as an integral part of the Kemalist identity.

The State does not exist. But this does not mean that the anarchist tasks of revolutionising conditions of existence are to be shelved. Quite the contrary, this means we are now confronted with a much more complex problem whereby there is no political reality or experience of that reality outside the spectacular representation of it.

To say that there is no State means both to complicate the revolutionary task, and to simultaneously suggest a possible path towards alternatives. The fact that “There is no State” must be treated as a *predicate node* for conceptualisations, practices and existence, just as “There is a State” has been treated hitherto. It means conducting relations, speech and thought in such a way *as if* there was no State. It also means evaluating actions, practices and political phenomena with the prior knowledge that there is no State. It means engaging in the systematic real-isation of the fact that there is no State.

There is definitely a problem when in ethics and theorising the State is placed above everything else, especially when it is attributed with, as Schmitt put it, 'the highest, legally independent, *undervived* power' (Schmitt 1985:17); when it is experienced as the sublime being always already present and not as a predicating simulacral sign that is atomistically presented as-if unrelated to the mappable practices which constitute that which we know to be the State. It is a problem because it prevents us from seeing the workings of power, class-interests and political practice for what they are in themselves. The State does not exist; what exists is the practice of State reification.

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