

# **Fringe Benefits**

Colin Ward

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# 1. Introduction

Colin Ward is one of the great radical figures of the past half-century, but his impact has been subterranean. His name is little mentioned by commentators and is scarcely known to the wider, intelligent public, even in his native Britain. A striking indication of his intellectual and institutional marginality is that he did not even possess a regular commercial publisher. In a *Festschrift* intended at least in part to remedy this unsatisfactory state of affairs, the editor, Ken Worpole, ably demonstrated the correspondence between Ward's concerns and contemporary debates and problems.<sup>1</sup> I suspect that Ward himself would have contended that this linkage can be made because of the commonsensical, realistic, *necessary* nature of anarchism as such (and not just his especial brand), if people could only see that, and its obvious relevance to the needs of the twenty-first century – and with this I would myself agree, it being one of the implicit themes of this book. But equally there can be no gainsaying the very real originality of Ward's oeuvre.

Colin Ward was born on 14 August 1924 in Wanstead, in suburban Essex, the son of Arnold Ward, a teacher, and Ruby Ward (née West), who had been a shorthand typist. He was educated at the County High School for Boys, Ilford, whose other principal claim to fame is that for thirty-eight years its English teacher was the father of the poet and critic, Kathleen Raine, who was to write venomously and extremely snobbishly of him, the school and Ilford in her first volume of autobiography. The young Ward was an unsuccessful pupil and left school at fifteen.<sup>2</sup>

Arnold Ward taught in elementary schools, eventually becoming a headmaster in West Ham, which, although a county borough outside the London County Council, contained the depths of poverty of Canning Town and Silvertown. He was a natural Labour supporter and the family car (a Singer Junior) was much in demand on polling days. To grow up in a strongly Labour Party environment in the 1930s was far from stultifying – whether politically, culturally or morally – as is attested by Colin Ward having both heard Emma Goldman speak in 1938, at the massive May Day rally in Hyde Park, and attended in April 1939 the 'Festival of Music for the People' at which Benjamin Britten's *Ballad of Heroes*, with a libretto by W.H. Auden and Randall Swingler, and conducted by Constant Lambert, saluted the fallen of the International Brigades at the Queen's Hall. He also recalled the milk tokens, a voluntary surcharge on milk sales, by which the London Co-operative Society raised a levy for Spanish relief.

It was Ward's experiences during the Second World War that shaped, to a very large extent, his later career. His first job was as a clerk for a builder erecting (entirely fraudulently) air-raid shelters. His next was in the Ilford Borough Engineer's office, where his eyes were opened to the inequitable treatment of council house tenants, with some having requests for repairs attended

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<sup>1</sup> Ken Worpole (ed.), *Richer Futures: Fashioning a New Politics* (London: Earthscan, 1999), esp. pp. 174–85.

<sup>2</sup> Kathleen Raine, *Farewell Happy Fields: Memories of Childhood* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1973). Much of the detail in this chapter derives from correspondence and conversations with Ward over twenty-five years, and most particularly from an interview of 29 June 1997 [hereafter 'Interview with CW']. The conversations published as Colin Ward and David Goodway, *Talking Anarchy* (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2003) [hereafter TA], are the nearest he came to autobiography. There is no published listing of his writings, although at the time of the *Festschrift* he produced an invaluable 21-page typescript 'Colin Ward Bibliography'.

to immediately, while others had to wait since they ranked low in an unspoken hierarchy of estates. He then went to work for the architect Sidney Caulfield, a living link with the Arts and Crafts Movement since he had been articled to John Loughborough Pearson (for whom he had worked on Truro Cathedral), been taught lettering by Edward Johnson and Eric Gill, and also studied under and later worked as a colleague – all at the Central School of Arts and Crafts – of W.R. Lethaby, whom Caulfield revered. Lethaby, a major architectural thinker as well as architect, is one of the nine people whom Ward was to name in 1991 in his *Influences*.<sup>3</sup> Next door to his office, Caulfield – who was brother-in-law to Britain’s solitary Futurist painter, C.R.W. Nevinson – let a flat at 28 Emperor’s Gate to Miron Grindea, the Romanian editor of the long-running little magazine, *Adam*. It was Grindea who introduced Ward to the work of such writers as Proust, Gide, Thomas Mann, Brecht, Lorca and Canetti.<sup>4</sup>

Ward was conscripted in 1942 and it was then that he came into contact with anarchists. Posted to Glasgow, he received ‘a real education’ there: on account of the eye-catching deprivation, his use of the excellent Mitchell Library and, as the only British city ever to have had a significant indigenous anarchist movement (in contrast to London’s Continental exiles and Jewish immigrants), the dazzling anarchist orators on Glasgow Green with their Sunday-night meetings in a room above the Hangman’s Rest in Wilson Street and bookshop in George Street.<sup>5</sup> He was particularly influenced by Frank Leech, a shopkeeper and former miner, who urged him to submit articles to *War Commentary* in London – the first, ‘Allied Military Government’, on the new order in liberated Europe, appeared in December 1943. After visiting Leech, sentenced for failing to register for firewatching and refusing to pay the fine, while on hunger strike in Barlinnie Prison, Ward, who had no clothes to wear other than his uniform, found himself transferred to Orkney and Shetland for the remainder of the war.<sup>6</sup>

It was in April 1945, as the war drew to a close, that the four editors of *War Commentary* were prosecuted for conspiring to cause disaffection in the armed forces – they were anticipating a revolutionary situation comparable to that in Russia and Germany at the end of the First World War, one of their headlines insisting ‘Hang on to Your Arms!’ – and Ward was among four servicemen subscribers who were called to give evidence for the prosecution. All four testified that they had not been disaffected; but John Hewetson, Vernon Richards and Philip Sansom were each imprisoned for nine months, while Marie Louise Berneri was acquitted on the technicality that she was married to Richards.<sup>7</sup> The following year, still in the army, but now in the south of England, Ward was able to report on the postwar squatters’ movement in nine articles in *Freedom*, *War Commentary* having reverted to the traditional title; and when he was eventually discharged from the army in the summer of 1947, he was asked to join *Freedom’s* editorial group, of which George Woodcock had also been a member since 1945. This was his first close contact with the people who were to become his ‘closest and dearest friends’.<sup>8</sup> This Freedom Press Group was extremely talented and energetic and, although Woodcock emigrated to Canada in 1949 and

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<sup>3</sup> Colin Ward, *Influences: Voices of Creative Dissent* (Hartland, Devon: Green Books, 1991), pp. 91–7. For the early career of Caulfield, who had contributed to Hampstead Garden Suburb, see A. Stuart Gray, *Edwardian Architecture: A Biographical Survey* (London: Duckworth, 1985), pp. 24, 137.

<sup>4</sup> See Colin Ward, ‘Fringe Benefits’, *New Statesman and Society*, 8 December 1995, for an obituary appreciation of Grindea.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with CW.

<sup>6</sup> Colin Ward, ‘Local Hero in Netherton Road’, *Guardian*, 3 August 1988, is a brief memoir of Leech.

<sup>7</sup> Colin Ward, ‘Witness for the Prosecution’, *Wildcat*, no. 1 (September 1974); *TA*, pp. 29–32.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with CW. For Ward’s reminiscences of the Freedom Press Group, see *TA*, pp. 33–42.

Berneri died the same year, was able to call upon contributions from anarchists like Herbert Read (until shunned in 1953 for accepting his knighthood), Alex Comfort and Geoffrey Ostergaard and such sympathizers as Gerald Brenan, the member of the Bloomsbury Group who had become a notable Hispanicist and whose exploration of the origins of the Civil War, *The Spanish Labyrinth* (1943), was a major work of history.

The file of *Freedom* for the late 1940s and early 1950s makes impressive reading. During the 1940s *War Commentary*, followed by *Freedom*, had been fortnightly, but from summer 1951 the paper went weekly. The bulk of the contents had always been written by the editors; and in 1950 Ward had provided some twenty-five items, rising to no fewer than fifty-four in 1951, but the number declined as he began to contribute long articles, frequently spread over four to six issues. From May 1956 until the end of 1960, and now using the heading of 'People and Ideas', he wrote around 165 such columns. Given this daunting, spare time journalistic apprenticeship, it is hardly surprising that his stylistic vice continued to be the excessive employment of lengthy, partially digested quotations.

By the early 1950s characteristic Ward topics had emerged: housing and planning, workers' control and self-organization in industry, the problems of making rural life economically viable, the decolonizing societies. He was alert to what was going on in the wider intellectual world, attempting to point to what was happening outside the confines of anarchism, drawing on the developing sociological literature, and, for example, writing (sympathetically) on Bertolt Brecht (5 August, 1 September 1956) and excitedly highlighting the publication in *Encounter* of Isaiah Berlin's celebrated Third Programme talks, 'A Marvellous Decade', on the Russian intelligentsia between 1838 and 1848 and much later to be collected in *Russian Thinkers* (25 June 1955). But who was reading his articles? *War Commentary* had fared relatively well in wartime on account of the solidarity and intercourse between the small anti-war groups, principally *Peace News*, but also the ILP with its *New Leader*. With the end of the war and Labour's electoral triumph in 1945, the anarchists were to become very isolated indeed, *Freedom Press* being unswervingly hostile to the Labour governments and their nationalization and welfare legislation. Ward recalled Berneri saying towards the end of the forties, 'The paper gets better and better, and fewer and fewer people read it'.<sup>9</sup> The isolation and numerical insignificance of British anarchism obtained throughout the fifties also.

It was to break from the treadmill of weekly production that Ward began to urge the case for a monthly, more reflective *Freedom*; and eventually his fellow editors responded by giving him his head with the monthly *Anarchy* from March 1961, while they continued to bring out *Freedom* for the other three weeks of each month. Ward had actually wanted his monthly to be called *Autonomy: A Journal of Anarchist Ideas*, but this his traditionalist comrades were not prepared to allow (he had already been described as a 'revisionist' and they considered that he was backing away from the talismanic word 'anarchist'), although the subtitle was initially, and now largely redundantly, retained.<sup>10</sup> *Anarchy* ran for 118 issues, culminating in December 1970, with a series of superb covers designed by Rufus Segar (who was responsible for ditching the subtitle from no. 28).

In a review of the 1950s and statement of his personal agenda for the 1960s Ward had observed:

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with CW.

<sup>10</sup> Colin Ward, 'Notes of an Anarchist Columnist', *Raven*, no. 12 (October/December 1990), p. 316; Colin Ward (ed.), *A Decade of Anarchy, 1961–1970: Selections from the Monthly Journal 'Anarchy'* (London: Freedom Press, 1987), pp. 8–9.

The anarchist movement throughout the world can hardly be said to have increased its influence during the decade... Yet the relevance of anarchist ideas was never so great. Anarchism suffers, as all minority movements suffer, from the fact that its numerical weakness inhibits its intellectual strength. This may not matter when you approach it as individual attitude to life, but in its other role, as a social theory, as one of the possible approaches to the solution of the problems of social life, it is a very serious thing. It is precisely this lack which people have in mind when they complain that there have been no advances in anarchist theory since the days of Kropotkin. Ideas and not armies change the face of the world, and in the sphere of what we ambitiously call the social sciences, too few of the people with ideas couple them with anarchist attitudes.

For the anarchists the problem of the nineteen-sixties is simply that of how to put anarchism back into the intellectual bloodstream, into the field of ideas which are taken seriously.<sup>11</sup>

As editor of *Anarchy* Ward had some success in putting anarchist ideas 'back into the intellectual bloodstream', largely because of propitious political and social changes. The rise of the New Left and the nuclear disarmament movement in the late fifties, culminating in the student radicalism and general libertarianism of the sixties, meant that a new audience receptive to anarchist attitudes came into existence. My own case provides an illustration of the trend. In October 1961, a foundation subscriber to the *New Left Review* (the first number of which had appeared at the beginning of the previous year) and in London again to appear at Bow Street after my arrest during the Committee of 100 sit-down of 17 September, I bought a copy of *Anarchy 8* at Collet's bookshop in Charing Cross Road. I had just turned nineteen and thereafter was hooked, several weeks later beginning to read *Freedom* also. When I went up to Oxford University twelve months afterwards I co-founded the Oxford Anarchist Group and one of the first speakers I invited was Colin Ward (he spoke on 'Anarchism and the Welfare State' on 28 October 1963). Among the members were Gene Sharp, Richard Mabey, Hugh Brody, Kate Soper and Carole Pateman. Gene Sharp was different from the rest since he was American, much older (born 1928) and a postgraduate student, who had already published extensively on non-violent direct action – as he has continued to do, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (1973) being especially noteworthy. Richard Mabey, after working in publishing, where he edited several of Colin Ward's books, has become an outstanding writer on botany and wildlife, initially with a markedly alternative approach: for example, *Food for Free* and *The Unofficial Countryside*. Hugh Brody is many things, but principally an anthropologist, authority on the Canadian Inuit and advocate of the way of life of hunter-gatherers, as in the acclaimed *The Other Side of Eden*. Kate Soper became a Marxist philosopher, author of *On Human Needs* and member of the editorial committee of the *New Left Review*, but is also one of the translators of Cornelius Castoriadis into English. The work of the political philosopher, Carole Pateman, has been discussed in chapter 12. The Marxist social historian and a former editor of the *Universities and Left Review*, Raphael Samuel, was later to tell me that he had attended some of our meetings. By 1968 Ward himself could say in a radio interview: 'I think that social attitudes have changed... Anarchism perhaps is becoming almost modish. I think that there is a certain anarchy in the air today...'<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> CW, 'Last Look Round at the 50s', *Freedom*, 26 December 1959.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Boston, 'Conversations about Anarchism', *Anarchy*, no. 85 (March 1968), p. 74.

Ward's success was also due to *Anarchy's* simple excellence. This should not be exaggerated, for there was definite unevenness. "The editing, according to an admiring, though not uncritical contributor [Nicolas Walter], was minimal: nothing was re-written, nothing even subbed. "Colin almost didn't do anything. He didn't muck it about, didn't really bother to read the proofs. Just shoved them all in. Just let it happen."<sup>13</sup> Ward put the contents together on his kitchen table. Coming out of *Freedom*, he frequently wrote much of the journal himself under a string of pseudonyms – 'John Ellerby', 'Frank Schubert' (these two after the streets where he was currently living), 'Tristram Shandy' – as well as the unsigned items. Even the articles scarcely differed from, and indeed there was significant recycling of, his contributions to *Freedom* back in the 1950s – for example, the admired issue on adventure playgrounds (September 1961) had been preceded by a similar piece in *Freedom* (6 September 1958). Sales never exceeded 2,800 per issue, no advance on *Freedom's* 2,000–3,000.<sup>14</sup>

The excellence, though, lay in a variety of factors. Ward's anarchism was no longer buried among reports of industrial disputes and comment on contemporary politics, whether national or international. It now stood by itself, supported by like-minded contributors. *Anarchy* exuded vitality, was in touch with the trends of its decade, and appealed to the young. Its preoccupations centred on housing and squatting, progressive education, workers' control (a theme shared with the New Left), and crime and punishment. The leading members of 'the New Criminology' – David Downes, Jock Young (who had been a student distributor of *Anarchy* at the London School of Economics), Laurie Taylor, Stan Cohen and Ian Taylor – all appeared in its pages. Nicolas Walter was a frequent contributor and Ward published his pair of important articles, 'Direct Action and the New Pacifism' and 'Disobedience and the New Pacifism', as well as the influential *About Anarchism* for the entire hundredth number of *Anarchy*. From the other side of the Atlantic the powerfully original essays by Murray Bookchin (initially as 'Lewis Herber') – 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought' (November 1966), 'Towards a Liberatory Technology' (August 1967) and 'Desire and Need' (October 1967) – later collected in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (London, 1974), had their first European publication in *Anarchy*.

On demobilization from the British Army in 1947 Ward had gone back to work for Caulfield for eighteen months, before moving as a draughtsman to the Architects' Co-Partnership (which had been formed before the war as the Architects' Co-operative Partnership by a group of Communists who had been students together at the Architectural Association School). From 1952 to 1961 he was senior assistant to Shephard & Epstein, whose practice was devoted entirely to schools and municipal housing, and then worked for two years as director of research for Chamberlin, Powell & Bon.<sup>15</sup> A career change came in 1964–5 when he took a one-year course at Garnett College in south-west London to train as a further education teacher and he was in charge of liberal studies at Wandsworth Technical College from 1966; but he returned to architecture and planning in 1971 by becoming education officer for the Town and Country Planning Association (founded by Ebenezer Howard as the Garden City Association) for which he edited *BEE (Bulletin of Environmental Education)*. At Garnett he had met his future wife, then Harriet Unwin, whose mother, Dora Russell, had still been married to Bertrand Russell at the time of her

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<sup>13</sup> Raphael Samuel, 'Utopian Sociology', *New Society*, 2 October 1987, an exceptionally generous evaluation of Ward's work, occasioned by the publication of *A Decade of Anarchy*.

<sup>14</sup> CW, 'After a Hundred Issues', in Ward, *Decade of Anarchy*, p. 276.

<sup>15</sup> For Ward's work in architects' offices, see TA, pp. 62–5.

birth, but whose father, as of her younger brother Roddy, was an unreliable American journalist called Griffin Barry.<sup>16</sup>

It was his editorship of *Anarchy* that released Ward from the obscurity of *Freedom* and Freedom Press and made his name. During the 1960s he began to be asked to write for other journals, not only in the realm of dissident politics, like *Peace News* and *Liberation* (New York), but such titles as the *Twentieth Century* and the recently established *New Society*. From 1978 he became a regular contributor to *New Society*'s full-page 'Stand' column; and when *New Society* was merged, ten years later, with the *New Statesman* he was retained as a columnist of the resultant *New Statesman and Society* with the shorter, but weekly, 'Fringe Benefits', until its abrupt termination by a new editor in 1996. His first books, *Violence* and *Work*, came as late as 1970 and 1972 respectively, but these were intended for teenagers and published by Penguin Education in a series edited by Richard Mabey (whom he had first met when he visited Oxford to speak to the Anarchist Group in 1963). He resigned from the Town and Country Planning Association in 1979, moved to the Suffolk countryside, and became a self-employed author.

Ward's third book, which appeared in 1973, was his first for an adult readership and is his only work on the theory of anarchism, indeed the only one 'directly and specifically about anarchism' until the publication in 2004 of *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction*, which happened to be his final work.<sup>17</sup> *Anarchy in Action* is also the one that has been most translated, currently into seven or possibly eight languages, for it is, as George Woodcock considered, 'one of the most important theoretical works' on anarchism.<sup>18</sup> It came into being almost accidentally since Walter passed on the contract after he found himself unable to produce what was required. Ward had wanted to call it *Anarchy as a Theory of Organization* – the title of an article that had appeared in *Anarchy* 62 (April 1966) – but the publishers, Allen & Unwin, insisted on *Anarchy in Action*.

It is in *Anarchy in Action* that Ward makes entirely explicit the highly distinctive anarchism that had informed his editorship of and contributions to *Anarchy* during the preceding decade. His opening words – alluding to Ignazio Silone's marvellous novel, *The Seed beneath the Snow*, translated in 1943 and which he remembered reading on the train back to Orkney after a leave in London – have been much quoted:

The argument of this book is that an anarchist society, a society which organizes itself without authority, is always in existence, like a seed beneath the snow, buried under the weight of the state and its bureaucracy, capitalism and its waste, privilege and its injustices, nationalism and its suicidal loyalties, religious differences and their superstitious separatism.

His kind of anarchism, 'far from being a speculative vision of a future society ... is a description of a mode of human organization, rooted in the experience of everyday life, which operates side by side with, and in spite of, the dominant authoritarian trends of our society'.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Harriet Ward, *A Man of Small Importance: My Father Griffin Barry* (Debenham: Dormouse Books, 2003). Dora Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree*, vol. 3: *Challenge to the Cold War* (London: Virago, 1985), esp. pp. 259–60, writes warmly of Ward. Roddy Barry published a single short story, 'Giancarlo', interestingly in the *New Reasoner*, no. 9 (Summer 1959), pp. 40–9.

<sup>17</sup> Colin Ward, '“I Think That's a Terrible Thing to Say!” Elderly Anarchist Hack Tells All', *Freedom*, Centenary Edition, October 1986, p. 63.

<sup>18</sup> George Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists: Essays* (Kingston, Ontario: Quarry Press, 1992), p. 231.

<sup>19</sup> Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973), p. 11.



Acceptance of this central insight is not only extraordinarily liberating intellectually but has strictly realistic and practical consequences: ‘...once you begin to look at human society from an anarchist point of view you discover that the alternatives are already there, in the interstices of the dominant power structure. If you want to build a free society, the parts are all at hand.’<sup>20</sup> It also solves two apparently insoluble problems that have always confronted anarchists (and socialists). The first is, if anarchism (or socialism) is so highly desirable as well as feasible, how is it that it has never come into being or lasted no longer than a few months (or years). Ward’s answer is that anarchism is already partially in existence and that he can show us examples ‘in action’. The second problem is how can humans be taught to become co-operative, thereby enabling a transition from the present order to a co-operative society to be attained, and is the same problem the solution to which, it has been shown in chapter 2, separated Morris from Kropotkin. Ward’s response here is that humans are naturally co-operative and that current societies and institutions, however capitalist and individualist, would completely fall apart without the integrating powers, even if unvalued, of mutual aid and federation. Nor will social transformation be a matter of climactic revolution, attained in a millennial moment, but rather a prolonged situation of dual power in the age-old struggle between authoritarian and libertarian tendencies, with outright victory for either tendency most improbable. As he explained in a remarkable manifesto of 1958, ‘The Unwritten Handbook’, published in his ‘People and Ideas’ column, his is an anarchism

which recognizes that the conflict between authority and liberty is a permanent aspect of the human condition and not something that can be resolved by a vaguely specified social revolution. It recognizes that the choice between libertarian and authoritarian solutions occurs every day and in every way, and the extent to which we choose, or accept, or are fobbed off with, or lack the imagination and inventiveness to discover alternatives to, the authoritarian solutions to small problems is the extent to which we are their powerless victims in big affairs.<sup>21</sup>

George Woodcock observed in an essay on Paul Goodman that, according to this conception of anarchism,

the anarchist does not seek to destroy the present political order so that it may be replaced by a better system of organization ... rather he proposes to clear the existing structure of coercive institutions away so that the natural society which has survived in a largely subterranean way from earlier, freer and more originative periods can be liberated to flower again in a different future.

Woodcock continued:

The anarchists have never been nihilists, wishing to destroy present society entirely and replace it with something new... The anarchists have always valued the endurance of natural social impulses and the voluntary institutions they create, and it is to liberating the great network of human co-operation that even now spreads through all levels of our lives rather than to creating or even imagining brave new

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> *Freedom*, 28 June 1958. Quoted also in TA, pp. 54–5.

worlds that they have bent their efforts. That is why there are so few utopian writings among the anarchists; they have always believed that human social instincts, once set free, could be trusted to adapt society in desirable and practical ways without plans – which are always constrictive – being made beforehand.<sup>22</sup>

Anarchists seek, in summary form, the end (that is, the goal) of voluntary co-operation or mutual aid using the means of direct action, while organizing freely. Ward is primarily concerned with the forms of direct action, in the world of the here-and-now, which are ‘liberating the great network of human co-operation’. In 1973 he considered that ‘the very growth of the state and its bureaucracy, the giant corporation and its privileged hierarchy ... are ... giving rise to parallel organizations, counter organizations, alternative organizations, which exemplify the anarchist method’; and he proceeded to itemize the revived demand for workers’ control, the de-schooling movement, self-help therapeutic groups, squatter movements and tenants’ co-operatives, food co-operatives, claimants’ unions, and community organizations of every conceivable kind.<sup>23</sup> During the following thirty years he additionally drew attention to self-build activities – he was particularly impressed by achievements in the shanty towns of the poor countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia – co-operatives of all types, the informal economy and LETS (Local Exchange Trading Schemes).<sup>24</sup> New self-organizing activities are continually emerging: “Do-it-yourself” is ... the essence of anarchist action, and the more people apply it on every level, in education, in the workplace, in the family, the more ineffective restrictive structures will become and the more dependence will be replaced by individual and collective self-reliance.’ This is another quotation from Woodcock, who was one of the most appreciative and perceptive of Ward’s commentators; but otherwise discussion of his writings has been remarkably limited, presumably because they are perceived as insufficiently theoretical, the unpretentious originality of his pragmatic anarchism not being appreciated. He observed that it is in the Netherlands and Germany with their down-to-earth empiricism that his books are most popular in contrast to the excessively rational and intellectual France and Italy.<sup>25</sup>

It is Ward’s vision of anarchism, along with his many years of working in architecture and planning, that account for his concentration on ‘anarchist applications’ or ‘anarchist solutions’ to ‘immediate issues in which people *are actually likely to get involved*’.<sup>26</sup> Although he told me in 1997 that in his opinion ‘all my books hang together as an exploration of the relations between

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<sup>22</sup> George Woodcock, ‘The Artist as Conservative’, in Peter Parisi (ed.), *Artist of the Actual: Essays on Paul Goodman* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1986), pp. 16–17, reprinted with changes (and errors) in Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists*, p. 231.

<sup>23</sup> Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (1973 edn), p. 137.

<sup>24</sup> For LETS, see Jonathan Croall, ‘Local, Mutual, Voluntary and Simple: The Power of Local Exchange Trading Systems’, in Worpole, pp. 145–58.

<sup>25</sup> George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 1986), pp. 421. There is, however, a penetrating analysis of *Anarchy* by David Stafford, ‘Anarchists in Britain Today’, in David E. Apter and James Joll (eds.), *Anarchism Today* (London: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 91–6, as well as Ruth Kinna, *Anarchism: A Beginner’s Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005), chap. 4, ‘Practical Anarchism’. Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), shamefully contained no discussion of Ward (though this is rectified in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), pp. 676–7), unlike the stimulating Rodney Barker, *Political Ideas in Modern Britain* (London: Methuen, 1978), pp. 203–5. See also David Miller, *Anarchism* (London: J.M. Dent, 1984), pp. 151, 205 n26; and George Crowder, *Classical Anarchism: The Political Thought of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 195–6.

<sup>26</sup> David Goodway (ed.), *For Anarchism: History, Theory, and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 14; CW, ‘After a Hundred Issues’, p. 279 (Ward’s emphasis).

people and their environment' (by which he means the built, rather than the 'natural', environment), and while this clearly covers three-quarters of his output, it seems rather (as he had put it thirteen years earlier) that all his publications were 'looking at life from an anarchist point of view'.<sup>27</sup> So the 'anarchist applications' concern housing: *Tenants Take Over* (1974), *Housing: An Anarchist Approach* (1976), *When We Build Again, Let's Have Housing That Works!* (1985) and *Talking Houses* (1990); architecture and planning: *Welcome, Thinner City: Urban Survival in the 1990s* (1989), *New Town, Home Town: The Lessons of Experience* (1993), *Talking to Architects* (1996) and (with Peter Hall) *Sociable Cities: The Legacy of Ebenezer Howard* (1998); education: *Talking Schools* (1995); education and the environment: *Streetwork: The Exploding School* (1973) (with Anthony Fyson), *The Child in the City* (1978) and *The Child in the Country* (1988); education, work and housing: *Havens and Springboards: The Foyer Movement in Context* (1997); education and housing: *Undermining the Central Line* (1989) (with Ruth Rendell); transport: *Freedom to Go: After the Motor Age* (1991); and water: *Reflected in Water: A Crisis of Social Responsibility* (1997). As can be seen from this (incomplete) list, a surprisingly large number of his books, despite their distinctiveness, have been written in collaboration, something he particularly enjoyed.<sup>28</sup>

How did Ward come to espouse such an anarchism? Who are the thinkers and which are the traditions responsible for shaping his outlook? First, it should be said that some would argue that there is no originality in Wardian anarchism since it is all anticipated by Peter Kropotkin and Gustav Landauer. There is indeed no denying Ward's very considerable debt to Kropotkin. He names Kropotkin as his economic influence; described himself as 'an anarchist-communist, in the Kropotkin tradition'; and, regarding *Fields, Factories and Workshops* as 'one of those great prophetic works of the nineteenth century whose hour is yet to come', brought it up to date as *Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow* (1974).<sup>29</sup> It is also the case that Kropotkin in his great *Mutual Aid* demonstrates that co-operation is pervasive within both the animal and the human worlds, in his concluding chapter giving contemporary clubs and voluntary societies, such as the Lifeboat Association, as examples. Ward, with his typical modesty, writes that in a sense *Anarchy in Action* is 'simply an extended, updating footnote to Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*'.<sup>30</sup> Yet Kropotkin prepared for a bloody social revolution; and Ward also goes far beyond him in the types of co-operative groups he identifies in modern societies and the centrality he accords to them in anarchist transformation.

Ward is still closer to the remarkable Landauer. He even goes so far as to say that his 'is not a new version of anarchism. Gustav Landauer saw it, not as the founding of something new, "but as the actualization and reconstitution of something that has always been present, which exists alongside the state, albeit buried and laid waste."' And one of Ward's favourite quotations, which he rightly regards as 'a profound and simple contribution to the analysis of the state and society in one sentence' derives from an article by Landauer of 1910: 'The state is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution, but is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently.'<sup>31</sup> What this led Landauer to advocate was the formation of producers' and consumers'

<sup>27</sup> Interview with CW; Goodway, p. 21 n52.

<sup>28</sup> See TA, p. 84.

<sup>29</sup> Boston, p.65; Peter Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories and Workshops Today*, ed. Colin Ward (London: Freedom Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 1985), p. iv. See also Ward, *Influences*, chap. 3; TA, p. 85.

<sup>30</sup> Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (London: Freedom Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 1996), p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (1973 edn), pp. 11, 19.

co-operatives, but especially of agrarian communes; and his emphasis is substantially different to Ward's exploration of 'anarchist solutions' to 'immediate issues'. In any case, for many years Ward only knew of Landauer through a chapter in Martin Buber's *Paths in Utopia* (1949); and it is Buber, who had been Landauer's friend, executor and editor and shared similar views concerning the relationship between society and the State but, although sympathetic, was not an anarchist himself, whom Ward acknowledges as his influence with respect to 'society'. He was deeply impressed by 'Society and the State' – a lecture of 1950 that he has perpetually cited – in which Buber distinguishes between 'the social principle', exemplified by all spontaneous human associations built around shared needs or interests, such the family, informal groups, co-ops of all kinds, trade unions and communities, as opposed to 'the political principle', manifested in authority, power, hierarchy and, of course, the State. Buber maintained:

All forms of government have this in common: each possesses more power than is required by the given conditions; in fact, this excess in the capacity for making dispositions is actually what we understand by political power. The measure of this excess ... represents the exact difference between Administration and Government. I call it the 'political surplus'. Its justification derives from the external and internal instability, from the latent state of crisis between nations and within every nation...The political principle is always stronger in relation to the social principle than the given conditions require. The result is a continuous diminution in social spontaneity.

Ward comments that these words 'cut the rhetoric of politics down to size' and that ever since he first read them he has 'found Buber's terminology far more valuable as an explanation of events in the real world ... than a dozen lectures on political theory or on sociology'.<sup>32</sup> In 'The Unwritten Handbook', he himself wrote that a power vacuum,

created by the organizational requirements of society in a period of rapid population growth and industrialization at a time when unrestricted exploitation had to yield to a growing extent to the demands of the exploited, has been filled by the State, because of the weakness, inadequacy or incompleteness of libertarian alternatives. Thus the State, in its role as a form of social organization rather than in its basic function as an instrument of internal and external coercion, is not so much the villain of the piece as the result of the inadequacy of the other answers to social needs.<sup>33</sup>

It seems extraordinary that Wardian anarchism was nurtured within a Freedom Press Group whose other members were looking back to the workers' and soldiers' councils of the Russian and German Revolutions and the collectives of the Spanish Revolution. He never believed in an

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<sup>32</sup> Ward, *Anarchy in Action*, pp. 19–21; Ward, *Influences*, pp. 88–9; TA, pp. 86–7; Colin Ward, *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 26–7. See also the Buber-Landauer-Muhsam issue of *Anarchy*, no. 54 (August 1965), where 'Society and the State' is reprinted (Ward's quotation is on p. 241). For Landauer, see Eugene Lunn, *Prophet of Community: The Romantic Socialism of Gustav Landauer* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973); also Charles B. Maurer, *Call to Revolution: The Mystical Anarchism of Gustav Landauer* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), and Gustav Landauer, *For Socialism* (St Louis: Telos Press, 1978) [with a helpful introduction by Russell Berman and Tim Luke]. For years this last was the only significant English translation of a book by Landauer, but it has now been supplemented by Gustav Landauer, *Revolution and Other Writings: A Political Reader*, ed. Gabriel Kuhn (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> *Freedom*, 28 June 1958.

imminent revolution: 'That's just not my view of anarchism. I think it's unhistorical...I don't think you'll ever see any of my writings in *Freedom* which are remotely demanding revolution next week.' When he tried to interest his comrades in the late 1940s in a pamphlet on the squatters' movement – to give them the idea he had even pasted his articles up – he recalled that 'it wasn't thought that this is somehow relevant to anarchism'.<sup>34</sup> Although they deserve great credit for allowing him to go his own way with *Anarchy*, it was not until after the success of *Tenants Take Over*, published by the Architectural Press in 1974, that Freedom Press suggested that he write a book for them. The result was *Housing: An Anarchist Approach*, which, to some extent, did recycle his *War Commentary* and *Freedom* pieces on postwar squatting.<sup>35</sup>

Ward's difference of emphasis is, in part, to be explained by the fact that he was approaching anarchism from a background of architecture, town planning, the Garden City movement – 'You could see the links between Ebenezer Howard and Kropotkin' – and regional planning.<sup>36</sup> He was considerably influenced by Patrick Geddes (who is acknowledged accordingly in *Influences*), Lewis Mumford and the regionalist approach.<sup>37</sup> William Morris was also important – 'As the decades roll by, it becomes more and more evident that the truly creative socialist thinker of the nineteenth century was not Karl Marx, but William Morris' – but not for his political lectures, which were not to Ward's taste, but rather as mediated by the Arts and Crafts Movement (his early employer, Sidney Caulfield, had actually known Morris) and, in particular, as has been seen, by Lethaby.<sup>38</sup> It is Alexander Herzen, though not an anarchist, whom he regards as his principal political influence, repeatedly quoting – just as with Buber's paragraph from 'Society and the State' – the same passage from *From the Other Shore*, praising it as 'a splendidly-phrased political message for every twentieth-century zealot, prepared to sacrifice his generation for the sake of his version of the future':

If progress is the goal, for whom then are we working? Who is this Moloch who, as the toilers approach him, instead of rewarding them, draws back, and as a consolation to the exhausted multitudes shouting, 'We, who are about to die, salute thee!', can only give the mocking answer that after their death all will be beautiful on earth. Do you really wish to condemn human beings alive today to the mere sad role of caryatids supporting a floor for others one day to dance upon? Of wretched galley slaves who, up to their knees in mud, drag a barge with the humble words 'Future Progress' on its flag.

A goal which is indefinitely remote is not a goal at all, it is a deception. A goal must be closer – at the very least the labourer's wage or pleasure in the work performed. Each epoch, each generation, each life has had, and has, its own experience, and *en route* new demands grow, new methods.

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with CW.

<sup>35</sup> Colin Ward, *Housing: An Anarchist Approach* (London: Freedom Press, 1976), pp. 13–27.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with CW. For Ward on Howard and the Garden City movement, see Peter Hall and Colin Ward, *Sociable Cities: The Legacy of Ebenezer Howard* (Chichester: John Wiley, 1998), esp. chaps. 1–3; *TA*, pp. 70–73.

<sup>37</sup> Ward, *Influences*, pp. 105–i. For Ward on Mumford, see Colin Ward, 'Introduction', to Lewis Mumford, *The Future of Technics and Civilization* (London: Freedom Press, 1986).

<sup>38</sup> William Morris, *A Factory as It Might Be*; Colin Ward, *The Factory We Never Had* (Nottingham: Mushroom Bookshop, 1994), p. 21. See also Colin Ward, 'An Old House amongst New Folk: Making Nowhere Somewhere', in Stephen Coleman and Paddy O'Sullivan (eds.), *William Morris and News from Nowhere: A Vision for Our Time* (Hartford, Devon: Green Books, 1990), pp. 127–36.

Herzen's conclusion is that 'the end of each generation must be itself'.<sup>39</sup> By extension another influence on Ward is Herzen's outstanding expositor in English, Isaiah Berlin, whose major liberal statements, *Historical Inevitability* and *Two Concepts of Liberty*, he also prized. Yet he was familiar with Herzen long before Berlin's 'A Marvellous Decade', George Woodcock having published an article on him in *politics*, whose editor, Dwight Macdonald, was another Herzen *aficionado*. Berlin was to decline Ward's invitation to write a piece on Zeno of Citium, on whom he was due to speak to the Oxford Anarchist Group, although asserting that he had 'every sympathy' with *Anarchy*: 'I am very sorry, I should like to oblige.'<sup>40</sup> George Orwell and his 'pretty anarchical' version of socialism also need to be mentioned; and in 1955 Ward published 'Orwell and Anarchism', a persuasively argued series of five articles, in *Freedom*.<sup>41</sup>

From across the Atlantic two periodicals, which were available from Freedom Bookshop, were important. *politics* (1944–49), edited by Dwight Macdonald in the course of his transition from Marxism to a pacifist anarchism, Ward considered 'my ideal of a political journal', admiring its 'breadth, sophistication, dryness'. Although Macdonald lived in London in 1956–7 and again in 1960–61, he had by then moved to the right – although participating in the Committee of 100's first sit-down demonstration in Whitehall in February 1961 – and Ward was to meet him only two or three times.<sup>42</sup> *Why?* (1942–7), later *Resistance* (1947–54), was edited by a group which included David Wieck and Paul Goodman. Goodman, who also contributed to *politics*, was another principal influence, firstly and always, for *Communitas* (1947), the planning classic he wrote with his brother Percival, but also for the very similar anarchism to Ward's he began to expound from 'The May Pamphlet', included in his *Art and Social Nature* (1946), onwards. Goodman became a frequent contributor to *Anarchy* and *Anarchy in Action* is dedicated to his memory; yet Ward was only to meet him once (when he was in London in 1967 for the Dialectics of Liberation conference).<sup>43</sup> In an issue of *Anarchy* celebrating the work of Alex Comfort, Ward drew attention to the similarities between Goodman and Comfort, and the Comfort of *Authority and Delinquency in the Modern State* (1950) and *Delinquency* (1951), in which he calls for anarchism to become a libertarian action sociology, is the final significant influence on Ward's anarchism.<sup>44</sup>

In total, as he explained in 1958:

To my mind the most striking feature of the unwritten handbook of twentieth-century anarchism is not in its rejection of the insights of the classical anarchist

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<sup>39</sup> Cited in full in Ward, *Anarchism*, p. 32. A shorter version, from which the conclusion is drawn, appears in Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (1973 edn), p. 136. The passage, but in a different translation, is quoted in Colin Ward, *Housing Is Theft, Housing Is Freedom* (Nottingham: Old Hammond Press, n.d.), p. 9; Ward, *Influences*, p. 60; TA, p. 86. (The emphasis is Ward's.)

<sup>40</sup> Ward, *Influences*, p. 50; letter from Berlin to Ward, 10 January [1964] (for a copy of which I am indebted to Colin Ward). Woodcock's article on Herzen was reprinted in George Woodcock, *The Writer and Politics* (London: Porcupine Press, 1948), chap. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with CW. 'Orwell and Anarchism' has been reprinted in [Vernon Richards (ed.)] *George Orwell at Home (and among the Anarchists): Essays and Photographs* (London: Freedom Press, 1998), pp. 15–45.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with CW. For Macdonald and *politics*, see Stephen J. Whitfield, *A Critical American: The Politics of Dwight Macdonald* (Guilford, CT: Archon Books, 1984); Michael Wreszin, *A Rebel in Defense of Tradition: The Life and Politics of Dwight Macdonald* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); and Gregory D. Sumner, *Dwight Macdonald and the 'politics' Circle* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996). For Macdonald in London, see NW, 'A Rebel in Defence of Tradition', *Freedom*, 10 December 1994; Vernon Richards, *A Weekend Photographer's Notebook* (London: Freedom Press, 1996), p. 44 and note 59.

<sup>43</sup> Ward, *Influences*, pp. 115–32. See also *Anarchy*, no. 11 (January 1962), a special Goodman number.

<sup>44</sup> 'John Ellerby', 'The Anarchism of Alex Comfort', *Anarchy*, no. 33 (November 1963), esp. pp. 329–32.

thinkers, Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, but its widening and deepening of them. But it is selective, it rejects perfectionism, utopian fantasy, conspiratorial romanticism, revolutionary optimism; it draws from the classical anarchists their most valid, not their most questionable ideas. And it adds to them the subtler contribution of later (and neglected because untranslated) thinkers like Landauer and Malatesta. It also adds the evidence provided in this century by the social sciences, by psychology and anthropology, and by technical change.<sup>45</sup>

Ward was, with good reason, scornful of most other anarchists' obsession with the history, whether glorious or infamous, of their tradition: 'I think the besetting sin of anarchism has been its preoccupation with its own past...'<sup>46</sup> Still, despite his own emphasis on the here-and-now and the future, he wrote four historical books, the first two with Dennis Hardy and the third with David Crouch: *Arcadia for All: The Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape* (1984); *Goodnight Campers! The History of the British Holiday Camp* (1986); *The Allotment: Its Landscape and Culture* (1988); and *Cotters and Squatters: Housing's Hidden History* (2002). The masterly *Arcadia for All*, a history of the 'plotlands' of south-east England, is simply a natural extension back into the recent past of his major interest in self-build and squatting in the present, while *Cotters and Squatters* draws from their entire historical record in England and Wales; and *The Allotment* touches upon similar issues. In *Goodnight Campers!* the entrepreneurial holiday camps are traced to their origins in the early twentieth century and the 'pioneer camps', in which a key role was played by the major organizations of working-class self-help and mutual aid: the co-operative movement and trade unions.<sup>47</sup> The historic importance of such institutions in the provision of welfare and the maintenance of social solidarity was to become after *Goodnight Campers!* a theme of increasing significance in Ward's work.<sup>48</sup>

He stated his case in 'The Path Not Taken', a striking short article of 1987;<sup>49</sup> but his analysis over the next ten years fleshed out and developed a longstanding preoccupation, as he explored the manner in which 'the social principle' has been overborne by 'the political principle' in modern Britain. Since the late nineteenth century 'the tradition of fraternal and autonomous associations springing up from below' had been successively displaced by one of 'authoritarian institutions directed from above'.<sup>50</sup> He saw a 'sinister alliance of Fabians and Marxists, both of whom believed implicitly in the state, and assumed that they would be the particular elite in

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<sup>45</sup> *Freedom*, 28 June 1958. Also quoted in *TA*, pp. 54–5.

<sup>46</sup> 'Colin Ward Interview', *Freedom*, June 1984.

<sup>47</sup> Colin Ward and Dennis Hardy, *Goodnight Campers! The History of the British Holiday Camp* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1986), esp. chap. 2.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, three of his articles: 'Those Talking Co-op Blues', *Freedom*, ii June 1994; 'A Token Anarchist's Week', *Freedom*, 29 April 1995; 'Coping with Jobless Capitalism', *Freedom*, 26 April 1997.

<sup>49</sup> Colin Ward, 'The Path Not Taken', *Raven*, no. 3 (November 1987), abridged as 'Rebels Finding Their Cause', *Guardian*, 12 October 1987. The apparently independently convergent views of Michael Young (in conjunction with Gerald Lemos), 'Roots of Revival', *Guardian*, 19 March 1997, were printed with his acknowledgement to Ward omitted (letter from Young to Ward, 21 March 1997, for a copy of which I am obliged to Colin Ward).

<sup>50</sup> Ward, 'Path Not Taken', p. 195. He said these phrases (which also appear in Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (1973 edn), p. 123) were first published in 1956 in *Freedom*; but the original printing is actually located in a long letter of 30 June 1960 to the *Listener*, and his 'Origins of the Welfare State', *Freedom*, 12 June 1959, prefigures it only weakly. For other early engagements with theme see, for example, his articles, 'Moving with Times...But Not in Step', *Anarchy*, no. 3 (May 1961); 'Anarchists and Fabians: An Anniversary Symposium', *Anarchy*, no. 8 (October 1961); 'House and Home', *Anarchy*, no. 35 (January 1964).

control of it', effectively combining with 'the equally sinister alliance of bureaucrats and professionals: the British civil service and the British professional classes, with their undisguised contempt for the way ordinary people organized anything'. The result was: 'The great tradition of working-class self-help and mutual aid was written off, not just as irrelevant, but as an actual impediment, by the political and professional architects of the welfare state ... The contribution that the recipients had to make ... was ignored as a mere embarrassment...'<sup>51</sup> Drawing upon several recent historical works, he was able to show that the nineteenth-century dame schools, set up by working-class parents for working-class children and under working-class control, were swept away by the board schools of the 1870s; and similarly the self-organization of patients in the working-class medical societies was to be lost in the creation of the National Health Service. Ward commented from his own specialism on the initially working-class self-help building societies stripping themselves of the final vestiges of mutuality; and this degeneration has occurred alongside a tradition of municipal housing that was adamantly opposed to the principle of dweller control. Here we are presented with a rich, never more relevant, analysis of the disaster of modern British social policy with pointers to the way ahead if we are to stand any chance of reinstating the self-organization and mutual aid that have been lost. He restated his argument in *Social Policy: An Anarchist Response*, the lectures he gave in 1996 as Visiting Professor of Housing and Social Policy at the London School of Economics and which summarize several of his most important themes.<sup>52</sup>

Down to his death in February 2010, Colin Ward saw anarchism's best prospects in the immediate future as lying within the environmental and ecological movement, and the concluding chapter of his final book significantly is on 'Green Aspirations and Anarchist Futures'.<sup>53</sup> One of his greatest regrets remained that so few anarchists follow his example and apply their principles to what they themselves know best. In his case that was the terrain of housing, architecture and planning; but where, he wanted to know, are the anarchist experts on, and applications to, for example, medicine, the health service, agriculture and economics?

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<sup>51</sup> Ward, 'Path Not Taken', p. 196.

<sup>52</sup> Colin Ward, *Social Policy: An Anarchist Response* (London: London School of Economics, 1996) and (London: Freedom Press, corrected edn, 2000).

<sup>53</sup> Ward, *Anarchism*, chap. 10.



## 2. Colin Ward is Alarmed As the City of London Spreads Over Spitalfields

My friend Bobby has for 25 years had his little office in Commercial street, London E1. Nowadays he's besieged with phone calls making offers for the premises.

Bobby is always polite. He listens to the smart young speculators, gratefully accepts their offers, and just when they propose to come round with the papers, explains that he doesn't actually own the place. Receiver crashes down at the other end. I keep telling him that he's going to be bought out, squeezed out or otherwise eased out, but he goes on believing in his gentleman's agreement with the landlord, forgetting that there aren't any gentle men in the property business.

I went the other night to an exhibition called "A Farewell to Spitalfields". It was rushed together by John Shaw and Ralph Samuel of Ruskin College, from old and new photographs and testimony, to remind us of the implications of the coming closure of Spitalfields market, and its removal eastward to Temple Mills.

It's moving not because of traffic congestion or under-use, but because the annual turnover of the fruit and veg wholesalers is worth less than the "million square feet of potential office development right next door to the City of London" which will replace it.

This ancient area outside the city wall has been a market since the 14<sup>th</sup> century and a centre for the rag trade since the 15<sup>th</sup>. It is in the geographers' terms, the classic zone of transition where, as everyone knows, the Huguenots, then the Irish, then the Jews and now the Bengalis, have gained their first toe-hold in the urban economy.

It has always been a place of unlicensed factories in upper rooms, child labour, sweatshops, family solidarity and racial antagonism from outside. It has also been the hugely productive centre where the latest modes are run up for the smartest shops. And of course it houses the Petticoat Lane market, known 400 years ago as Rag Fair, and the market for birds and animals, Club Row. People have been thankful to get into it and glad to get out.

The same streets have always contained dozens of minute businesses supplying or applying the buttons, zips, fixings and trimmings or pressing, pinning and packaging for the wholesale market. What you wear either comes from a chain of subcontractors in places like Spitalfields or from their equivalents in South East Asia.

If you don't like it you should make your own clothes. What you *shouldn't* do is to applaud the elimination of the low-rent workshop economy by the high-rent finance industry that doesn't deal with useful commodities at all, just in money.

The organisers of that little exhibition at the Bishopsgate Institute were right to say that, "The viewer is thus confronted with two versions of the enterprise culture: one of family business and small scale firms, the other of international high finance with computer screens linking the City of London to the money markets of the world."

The left, when in office, used a lot of energy in attempting to eliminate the zone of transition, which represented everything it despised about petty capitalism. The right carelessly wipes it out

because low-income enterprises are automatically absurd when property as such is a much better investment. Politically neither side recognises the need for the scruffy, busy workshop economy which depends on cheap premises close to the market.

“The whole industrial economy of Spitalfields,” Shaw and Samuel claim, “rests on cheap work-rooms; rentals in the new office complex are some eight times greater than they are in the purlieus of Brick Lane, and with the dizzy rise in property values which will flow, accommodation of all kinds, whether for working space or home, will be beyond local people.” But who cares?

### 3. Colin Ward visits the house for Nicaragua

Asked what the project meant to him and the others, Johnny said: "It's a chance to live your politics, learn skills, decide your own work routines, meet a changing network of 50 to 60 people. Some even came from Leeds to help. It's been a focal point." The house for Nicaragua began with Tod. He trained as an architect but dropped out as he didn't see social usefulness in what he was learning. He and his wife bought a shed in Essex and slowly turned it into a house. She working days as a nurse and he on nights in a factory. It was too much and they parted. But selling the house brought them £20,000 each.

He moved to south London in a squat that arose because the GLC had compulsorily purchased a street of old houses dispersed the residents and left the buildings to rot, to provide for an eventual extension to an ILEA school. As demographers could have predicted, the school has not extended. In fact it has since closed. The squatters had rescued the street and like several of the best squats, became legitimised as a housing co-op.

I would rejoice that direct action had enabled them to build their own nests. But Tod is a sterner character and saw them as simply feathering their nests. "Surely," he argues, "some of the money made out of gentrifying areas like this should do somewhere really useful?" Six years ago he saw John Pilger's TV programme about Nicaragua: the hopes of its people and the obscene horror of the US government intervention. This decided him.

He invested his particular nest-egg in buying a totally derelict two-storey 1860s house in Vauxhall, once a cobbler's shop, and about its reconstruction with the aim of selling it and investing the proceeds in popular projects in Nicaragua on 19 July the Sandinista Nicaragua Festival that day in nearby Spring Gardens opposite the City Farm.

The house for Nicaragua won't actually be finished this week, but it will be soon. In five years of work, using materials that the affluent society dumps in skips, Tod's team have rebuilt the house with magnificent oak doors and lovely staircases. From the dump outside Bankside Power Station they reclaimed mahogany floor blocks, each one of which has been stripped of its bitumen screed by patient volunteers.

Most of the walls have been finished by a gang of trainee women plasterers' from Camden. Helen and Ruth did the balustrading. Judy made the stained glass in the kitchen. Tod has added a light and airy top floor with a balcony'. The plumbing electrics and central heating are coming along slowly.

Bluefields, Nicaragua's main Atlantic coast town twinned with the London Borough of Lambeth) was devastated by a hurricane last October. People front the twinning group, and from this particular project, have worked there. The money from the sale of the house will be spent on the projects there that Bluefield's people think are most urgently needed.

My impression of the place? Well just because old materials have been used, it looks as though it has always been like that. An enveloping atmosphere of mellow brightness has been brought to a building that was derelict for a decade. It's a creative transformation. If you're a likely purchaser ring Trevor at [number deleted], leaving your number to make an appointment to view.

What will happen Todd when the job is clone? He describes his trade as that of a joinery refurbisher, so he won't be short of work. I suspect that he'll drift into some other ruined house and bunch of helpers around him to take on another hopelessly uneconomic, but beautifully enterprising job. He's a one-man revolution. Standing out against the spirit of the idea of Britain in the 1980s. "I like idea of giving away a house," he told me "and I enjoy the fact that people see it as something quite shocking and outrageous." I hope he'll go on shocking us.

## 4. Back pages

The TV character with whom I identify totally is the old gent in the Yellow Pages ad. He rings around the secondhand bookshops for a work on fly-fishing by J R Hartley. Finally he locates a copy. Yes, he'll call and collect it instantly. And his name? Well, of course, it's J R Hartley.

You can laugh, but the second most common embarrassment for authors is to run out of copies of their own books. Everyone assumes that when all else fails, the writer of this elusive out-of-print book must have a secret hoard of copies. The other embarrassment is the opposite: to have the floorboards sagging under the weight of parcels of your own unsold works. There's nothing new about this. Henry David Thoreau was obliged by the terms of his contract to buy the unsold copies of the first of his books, and wrote in his journal, "I have a library of 900 volumes, over 700 of which I wrote myself."

It has happened to me twice. When Pearsons bought Penguin and closed its education section in 1974 there were some books which had gone too far through the printery to be stopped. As an alternative to pulping they gave the authors the chance to acquire as many copies as they wanted just for the carriage costs. "I'll have them all," I said, full of wounded pride. "There are rather a lot," warned Tony Lacey of Penguin. "So much the better," I replied, and I gave them in parcels of 44 to every school I visited. Today I only have two copies, but I actually see that book still in use, and I blush for the out-of-date illustrations.

The second time demonstrates the sheer perfidy of publishers. In breach of contract, a publisher remaindered a book of mine without giving me the chance to buy up the stock. A friend in the book trade bought the lot from the remainder house and I've slowly sold them ever since. The irony is that I'm now overtaken by a new reprint.

But the J R Hartley syndrome is much more familiar. Authors get six free copies and instantly give them away to the people who have helped them. When a book goes out of print, as mine usually do, every scholar from Syracuse to Sydney reckons that the author is the last resort for a loan of his or her copy. Never mind the airmail costs, if they're interested in what you've written about, how can you be churlish enough to resist?

This is why I know Mr Hartley's dilemma inside out. I was once talking at a meeting in Toynbee Hall, along with the poet and propagandist for the Yiddish language, Avram Stencl, editor of *Loshen un Leben*, which he used to thrust on people with a missionary glint in his eye. He read one of his poems and, sitting next to him on the platform, I couldn't help noticing the stamp on the back (or front in Yiddish) of his own book. It said Tower Hamlets Public Libraries. "Do you mean to say," I whispered, "that you don't have a copy of your own poems?" He smiled seraphically and replied, "No. Naturally, I gave them all away."

Unlike J R Hartley, Avram Stencl was innocent of the Yellow Pages, and would, I imagine, have felt affronted rather than pleased if a book of his turned up in the secondhand trade. How could the owner bear to dispose of it? All the same, the very week that someone wrote to me wanting the loan of an out-of-print and out-of-date book of mine of which I only possess one battered copy, I chanced to be in Carlisle. The new public library, which is sited, as they all ought

to be, right in the middle of the city's new shopping centre, had a shelf of ex-library books for sale.

We all know that it's a pathetic gesture of public libraries these days to raise a little cash by selling off books which aren't borrowed very often. That's why I own a copy of the Municipal Yearbook for 1984. Sometimes they sell off standard works which should have been kept in the basement for posterity. It's a short-term asset-stripping policy of which no one who believes in libraries can approve. All the same, I bought there for 20p a copy of this book of mine which my enquirer had been vainly seeking. She was delighted and I was flattered.

But the lessons of the Hartley ad for authors are to hang on relentlessly to just two copies of your own hard-won output. Forget about the Yellow Pages and refer all enquirers to the Inter-Library Loans service to which every public and educational library in the country belongs. Give it time and it will serve you marvellously.

Many years ago I saw a small ad in the personal column that said: "Good prices paid for any novels by Gerald Kersh in any condition." I chanced to have seen half a dozen in the sixpenny box outside our local junk shop. So I bought them and sent them off to the box number. Back came a generous cheque and a letter of thanks. You'll have guessed who signed it. Yes, of course, it was Gerald Kersh.

## 5. New Town truths beyond the campaign profiles

*In the 1950s, following the New Towns Act of 1946, a number of new towns on the outskirts of larger cities sprung up around the UK. After the war there was an appetite for healthy, fresh environments free from the trauma of bombing and evacuation. These towns became not sites of affluence, with low-income people contained within the cities, as had been hoped by many, but the opposite: “The accidental achievement of New Towns,” writes Colin Ward, “was to provide rented housing for non-affluent outward migration.” But housing swiftly became an issue in these towns as populations grew – as did employment. “Some time next century, a bunch of amateurs will have to reinvent the New Town idea.”*

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In the constituency profiles that have filled the posh papers for weeks, special attention has been given to the postwar New Towns, with the patronising idea that places like Basildon or Harlow really are the habitat of Essex Man (and Woman), that Livingston really is Silicon Glen, and that Milton Keynes is full of employees of firms with Japanese values.

These assumptions are wildly misleading, whatever their electoral implications. In the first place, the New Towns aren't new any more. Back in the 1960s, at the moment when the first crop of babies born there grew into teenagers, New Towns became the same boring old home towns as anywhere else.

Second, they absorbed only a small proportion of the outward population movement in search of space. Far more people live in the new estates on the fringe of every non-metropolitan town or village.

Third, of course, the last place where the migratory elite chooses to settle is in the town whose industry provides its income. Frederick Gibberd once told me that he was the only architect-planner who actually lived in the town he designed. But his home was an elegantly converted barn set in the beautiful gardens he and his wife had made from derelict land on the fringe.

Like the journalists, I've followed the New Town trail, although with a different intent. I just wanted to find out whether the experiment had worked. But I'm left with reflections on the shift from long-term aims to instant expediency among all our politicians, and on the aspirations that have been dropped on the way.

When the New Towns Act was passed with all-party support in 1946, the British were a nation of neophiliacs, anxious to be rid of the shameful legacy of the urban past. Its horrors had been all too well revealed in the wartime experience of universal conscription, bombing and the evacuation of city children. Everyone wanted new, healthy environments. But by now we are a nation of antiquarians, devoted to an invented Heritage, determined that nothing new shall disturb our own backyard, and united in deploring the utilitarian public-service architecture of the fifties and sixties.

People with freedom of choice decanted themselves; and the attempt to contain low-income people within the cities has been a more spectacular failure than any New Town. The accidental achievement of New Towns was to provide rented housing for non-affluent outward migration. This avenue is by now firmly closed. Every New Town has its homeless next-generation young.

The other lost assumption was full employment. Peterlee was founded to give an urban focus for the grim and isolated pit villages, while Corby was to do the same thing for Midlands steelworkers. Stevenage, when I first knew it, was no longer called Silkingrad (after the minister who dared to designate it as a New Town). It was easier for the development corporations to say the magic word diversification than to achieve it in a declining economy.

Wooring internationally mobile industry, they had to forget the high social aims, and rival each other in targeting the company directors influenced by access to “executive housing”, international airports, private schools and golf-courses. Government, meanwhile, is attracted, not by the New Town idea but by the development corporation mechanism. It sidesteps those tedious local authorities and the boredom of accountability. Appointments and budgets come directly from Whitehall.

But population pressures remain. Some time next century, a bunch of amateurs will have to reinvent the New Town idea.



## 6. Colin Ward is Amazed at Getting Out of the Labyrinth.

I've never been a wild enthusiast for mazes and labyrinths, though I've known plenty of people who seek out every chance to walk in one in stately homes, ancient sites and public gardens. And whether they are constructed with hedges or walls, or are simply a pattern of turf, stone or brick on the ground, you never know until you do it whether it is truly a labyrinth, like the one where Theseus slew the Minotaur, with a route that leads you inevitably to the centre, and sometimes out again, or whether it really is a maze, with teasing choices and dead ends.

It was when I was trying to disentangle history from legend in Chartres cathedral that I got entrapped in the labyrinthine scholarship of puzzle-building. The maze there is the largest decorative feature in the whole of that vast structure: 12 metres wide with a path of white stones separated by thinner blue ones, 294 metres long.

Several other French cathedrals of the 13<sup>th</sup> century had them set in the floor, but only three remain. The one at Amiens was removed, because the noise of children playing on it was distracting during services.

The Chartres maze was known as "The Road to Jerusalem", and I learned from its interpreter, Keith Critchlow, that this is also the name given in Germany to the children's game hopscotch, chalked on pavements and playgrounds.

There's now a project called Learning Through Landscapes, which urges that school grounds could be transformed from tarmac deserts into experiences for both learning and pleasure. One of its mentors, Wendy Titman, was telling me about her book *Special Places, Special People; the hidden curriculum of school grounds ...*, and the results of learning children's own preferences.

"Why do you think that the number of mazes open to the public has grown from 40 in 1980 to over 100 today, and why are they a playground priority for children?"

I was unable to provide a reason. "Computer games," she said triumphantly.

So I read another book *The British Maze Guide* by Adrian Fisher and Jeff Saward ... , and dared to chase up one of its authors, Adrian Fisher, billed as the world's most prolific maze designer ... Fisher is certainly the hot gospeller of the maze world and designs them everywhere in all materials.

When I raised the computer game analogy, he said: "Yes, it's true, but our colour mazes are a much more rewarding experience than the usual solitary situation of children, on their own, working through an over-structured programme. We give a starting set of rules, but our colour mazes demand creative and cooperative play by being deliberately deficient in formal rules."

London visitors will be familiar with the visual pun on the word "Warren", in Crosby Fletcher Forbes' ceramic tile mazes on the platform walls of Warren Street underground station, and may even have surfaced to see John Burrell's medieval-style brick maze on the pavement of the Warren Street Playground nearby.

But Fisher insists that the greatest play-value of mazes arises when children abandon the rules and invent new games. “This is very creative: inventing new rules, playing with them to see how they work and modifying them in the light of experience. This process requires a high degree of communication, persuasion, social skills, interactions and cooperation.”

Inevitably, I saw his conclusion as a social parable. We can take a solitary pilgrim’s progress on the road to Jerusalem. Or we can change the rules through negotiation with other travellers, and take a different route, not into, but out of, the labyrinth, evading all those dead ends on the way.

## 7. Squatters in Rural Norfolk Have a Message

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In retrospect, I belonged to the golden age of house-purchase. We both had regular jobs and the building societies were still non-profit-making, friendly societies with their origins in 19<sup>th</sup>-century working-class self-help. Foreclosure on mortgage debts was unknown. The societies would tumble over themselves to avoid it by reducing and extending repayments.

Market-worship has changed all that. It instigated a real-estate boom that turned every investor into a property-speculator, from the Church of England to the pension funds. Almost all the societies have joined the indecent rush to stop being friendly and become ruthless usurers.

Coupled with the deliberate casualisation of jobs in a flexible labour market, the collapse of property prices has brought misery to 300,000 households in the past five years alone. And, of course, we have auctioneers specialising in repossession jobs, knocking down the houses to the highest bidder at a fraction of the outstanding debt. Even then, some houses remain unsold and rot, at a time of acute housing distress, urban and rural.

There are, of course, possible solutions: like turning the failed home-owners into tenants, or adopting the “urban homesteading” approach favoured in the US 20 years ago, or setting up housing co-ops renting rooms to members of the young and dispossessed.

In East Anglia we have one marvellously creative solution. At Pulham St Mary, near Diss in Norfolk, there’s a 20-room 16<sup>th</sup>-century manor house, a listed building, repossessed by the Leeds and Holbeck Building Society. It had been empty for years, during which thieves and vandals broke windows and ripped out five marble fireplaces, fountains, gates and lead from the roof.

Last October, six squatters, all from Norfolk, moved in as an alternative to sleeping rough, mended the leaky roof and windows, and set about making the place habitable. They were sued for repossession by the Leeds; but two of them, Paul Wessell and Matt Bevan, went to court with an Affirmation of their needs, supported by a petition from local residents and councillors arguing that the house ought to be inhabited and protected from further decay.

They succeeded and were granted a shorthold tenancy at £80 a week for six months. A building society spokesman told the *Eastern Daily Press*-. “We are currently finalising a formal agreement. It must be stressed, however, that this is a unique case ... and it is not the normal policy of the society to allow squatters to take over empty properties that are up for sale.”

Some of us argue that it should be. And that the next step for the Pulham St Mary squatters is to form themselves into a Co-operative Housing Society and consolidate their position in the village. We also remember how, when some urban local authorities shifted from using thugs to drive out squatters to a policy of acceptance, some very durable housing co-ops were formed that flourish to this day.

Economists warn that the downturn in house prices is permanent, not temporary, and this is bad news for both families and mortgage-lenders left with a mountain of debt. But with an ounce of foresight we could transform it into good news for the next generation of the homeless.

The Norfolk squatters have won a toehold to a future. Shouldn't the 250,000 borrowers owing six months or more of mortgage arrears, link with others in their own areas to become squatters in their own homes ? And wouldn't the resulting housing co-ops reduce not only their own misery, but the actual financial debts of the mortgage-lenders?

Inevitable losses, resulting from the speculators' Thatcherite utopia, would be transformed into small aims: domestic security for those households that need it most, and a recovery of the tarnished reputation of the building societies, faced by the results of their improvidence.

## 8. Colin Ward Reappraises The Titmuss Book That Gave New Meaning To the Expression “Blood Bank”

When Richard Titmuss, the insurance clerk who became our most acute analyst of social policy, produced his last book, *The Gift Relationship*, in 1970,<sup>1</sup> dismissed it as an elaborate and academic restatement of Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid*, filled with indigestible detail about the pale yellow fluid known as plasma and constituents like immunoglobulin. Happily, when I wanted to consult it recently, the county library had a copy in its reserve stock, stored, like plasma, for my needs, and I changed my view.

What set Titmuss off on his investigation must have been a 1968 publication from the Institute of Economic Affairs, *The Price of Blood*, which made an economic case against a monopoly of altruism in blood transfusion. So he embarked on a comparison of the commercial market in bought blood with the voluntary donation of blood.

He found that the dominant characteristic of the American blood-banking system was a redistribution of blood and blood products from the poor to the rich, since the sellers tended to be the unskilled, unemployed and other “low-income groups and categories of exploited people”.

He found that when voluntary donors in Britain were asked about their motives, “the vividness, individuality, and diversity of their responses add life and a sense of community to the statistical generalities”, but that 80 per cent of answers suggested feelings of social responsibility towards other members of society.

Titmuss concluded that on four testable, non-ethical criteria, the commercial trade in blood was bad: “In terms of economic efficiency, it is highly wasteful of blood; shortages, chronic and acute, characterise the demand and supply position and make illusory the concept of equilibrium. It is administratively inefficient and results in more bureaucratisation and much greater administrative, accounting and computer overheads. In terms of price per unit of blood to the patient (or consumer), it is a system which is five to 15 times more costly than the voluntary system in Britain. And finally, in terms of quality, commercial markets are much more likely to distribute contaminated blood.”

He died in 1974 and consequently did not live to see the phenomenon that he called “the philistine resurrection of economic man in social policy.” And although he was to record that among cardiac surgery transfusions in the US, “in the commercial group the total hepatitis attack rate was 53 percent, in the voluntary group nil,” neither he nor anyone else could have anticipated the Aids epidemic, and the disaster that befell haemophiliac patients, heavily dependent on blood products, as a result of the importation of contaminated commercial blood.

Not did he live to see the vast confidence trick we have witnessed since the 1970s where, as Brendan Lambon argued on the letters page (26 January), business studies and economics, as taught today, amount to “the most successful programme of political propaganda ever undertaken

in the country”. Economics has become simply market economics, and other concepts of social interaction are relegated to the public relations industry. (“If it’s uneconomic, get the mugs to volunteer.”)

Rereading Titmuss is a reminder of how rapidly the market ideology has been transferred from economic theory to social policy, with a pathetically weak dissenting voice. I’m now inclined to see his book as a parable. Blood, as the saying goes, is thicker than water, which is the fluid that holds it together. We can’t survive without blood, but nor can we survive for more than a few days without water.

A century before Titmuss died, the Public Health Act required every household to have a water supply. Twenty years after his death, profitable, privatised water companies were depriving people of a water supply because of non-payment of bills.

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)  
Anti-Copyright



Colin Ward  
Fringe Benefits

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- Colin Ward's weekly column in the journal *New Statesman and Society* called *Fringe Benefits*. Many of the titles should be read as having the words 'Fringe Benefits:' before it, so 'Fringe Benefits: Back Pages', i.e. the fringe benefits of back pages.

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