Utopianism and Prefiguration

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This book chapter is from Political Uses of Utopia, edited by Sylwia D. Chrostowska and James D. Ingram.

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new types of social cohesion that Holloway advocates, even whilst the ends and means of protest are defined in a variety of different ways. Yet it is difficult to accommodate the horizontal practices and behaviours expressed through mutual aid in protest organizations and community campaigns in these dystopian frameworks, for they seem to exist “outside” the real world in a manner that makes their operation appear partial or compromised or impossible. Linked to a more positively utopian politics, this kind of activity might support a variety of ends and means and might even remain indeterminate, but in any of its forms, it would be possible for everyone – participant and observer, friend and enemy alike – to appreciate the complex ways in which actions might be designed to prefigure utopian goals. Looking again at anarchist history helps uncover some political uses of utopia that might contribute to such an approach.

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different social cohesions, different ways of coming together, different ways of doing things. Kill money, kill labour. Here, now.\textsuperscript{45}

This most negative casting of means-end relationship remains prefigurative and is perhaps reminiscent of Bakunin’s famous declaration that the passion for destruction is a creative passion, too. The difference is that the righteous expression of rage, indignation or despair often appears in contemporary literature as a condition of being rather than of doing. Moreover, it depends on the conjuring of powerfully dystopian images of existing society, which variously ensnares, entraps and enslaves individuals. In the light of this dystopian imagery, the generalized emotions which radicals seek to release increasingly resemble those that Paul Goodman cautioned against when he contrasted desire “without its object” and the adoption of “the role of being angry”, to the desire for something and the ability to blaze against the obstacles to its achievement. The ends of change are not only described with deliberate vagueness, even when linked to practical activities, but the analysis of means is developed as pulling away, less a pushing toward. Goodman explained the enraging desire to desire as a sense of lost paradise or the idea of “paradise not yet”, but rather than endorsing this idea as an impulse to eternal struggle, as Abensour suggests, he rejected it as a cause of continuous frustration.\textsuperscript{46} The negatively and dystopianism of contemporary prefiguration changes the focus for action, tends against the specification of hopes and desires and undercuts the positive charge that Bakunin excludes in his destructiveness. The power of this imagery might well help facilitate common actions, masses, occupations and demonstrations, and the

\textsuperscript{45} John Holloway, Afterword, in Campagne and Campiglio \textit{What We Are Fighting For}, p. 204.
and rage” that activists feel. In other activist writing, the idea is taken a step further. Utopia captures a boundless politics, but one described negatively as desire to resist, reject or destroy. Mark Fisher evokes an idea of perpetual motion, rooted in a psychological drive against death: stasis. “As desiring creatures” Fisher notes “we ourselves are that which disrupts organic equilibrium”, or the tendency towards regulation, direction and control.44

Paul Goodman’s discussion of utopianism offers a useful way of thinking about this recasting of prefigurative politics. In a discussion of grief and anger Goodman linked utopianism to patience. Patience, he argued, did not mean calm. On the contrary, utopianism was also a trigger for violent passions: anger, about the obstacles to the realization of utopian desire and grief, for things understood to be absent through the identification of that desire. Utopians were patient in the sense that they were prepared to wait for the emergence of felt desire, through their anger and grief. This meant that utopian desire always had an object and it involved effort in the present in order to secure its attainment – Goodman’s anticipation of prefiguration. In contemporary activism, the positive value attached to the ability to tap negative passions – despair, indignation, hatred and particularly rage – does not suggest that utopian patience has been eclipsed. But their invocation suggests a narrowing of contemporary anarchist utopianism and in the notion of prefigurative practices open to activists. John Holloway’s discussion of anti-capitalist rage captures the mood. His concern is to channel the forces of destruction rather than confront their negativity:

Break the windows of the banks, shoot the politicians, kill the rich, hang the bankers from the lampposts. Certainly, all that is very understandable, but it does not help very much. It is money we must kill, not its servants. And the only way to kill money is to create dif-

For anarchists, utopias are about action. As Uri Gordon argues, utopias are “umbilically connected to the idea of social revolution”.1 The kind of action utopia describes is a matter of debate. This essay examines how utopian thinking shapes anarchist thought and highlights some recent shifts in the political uses of utopia. Utopianism is not treated as an abstract concept or method, nor as a literary genre or place – because that is not how anarchists have understood the idea. Utopia, Gordon notes, “has always meant something more than a hypothetical exercise in designing a perfect society”. As a revolutionary idea, utopia is instead linked to the principle of prefiguration.

Prefiguration has been identified as a core concept in contemporary anarchist thinking and it is increasingly invoked to highlight the distinctiveness of anarchist practices, actions and movements. In 2011, two months after the start of Occupy Wall Street, David Graeber identified prefigurative politics as one of the movement’s four characteristically anarchist principles, the other three being direct action, illegalism and the rejection of hierarchy. Hinting at the utopianism of the concept, he described Occupy as a genuine attempt “to create the institutions of the new society in the shell of the old”. Pursuing the idea, he linked prefiguration to the creation of “democratic General Assemblies”, consensus decision-making and a range of mutual aid, self-help institutions - including “kitchens, libraries, clinics, media centres”.2 The spontaneous emergence of these bodies and practices attested to the practicality of radical aspirations, in ways that might be deemed to be at odds with the traditional idea of utopia as an imaginary realm of ideal non-existence or impossibility. Yet insofar as actions like Oc-

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44 Mark Fisher “Post-capitalist Desire” in Campagne and Campiglio What


cupy expose the flimsiness of official dismissals of egalitarian social change, captured in the mantra TINA, they are also utopian.

While there is little dispute about the centrality of prefiguration in anarchist literatures, there is considerable variation about the utopian politics that prefigurative action variously encourages and rules against. The essay shows how blueprint utopianism (associated with the mid-nineteenth century utopian socialists) serves as a foil for contemporary anarchism. It also touches on Abensour’s well-known framing of ‘utopia as desire’ in order to illustrate the dovetailing of anti-utopian utopianism with some recent conceptions of anarchist utopianism. By examining debates about the interrelationship of these two concepts and, in particular, the continuities and discontinuities in the history of anarchist thought, it is possible to capture the spectrum of utopian political practice which prefiguration describes, extending from a utopian commitment to a sociological framing of alternatives to a dystopian embrace of a psychology of desiring.

**Prefiguration**

For Benjamin Franks prefiguration is the principle anarchists use to assess the legitimacy of actions and he defines concept in terms of a relationship between ends and means. A core anarchist commitment, he argues, is that “means have to prefigure ends”. In normative political theory, the commitment to prefiguration leads anarchists to reject both consequentialism, the idea that the outcomes of actions are the proper measures of rightness, and deontology which instead considers the justness of actions in terms of duty, or conformity with established norms or laws. Prefiguration, Franks argues, steers anarchists towards virtue ethics, a po-

Utopias that prioritise psychologies of action often revolve around the creation of autonomous space and the transformation of every-day social relationships. Dreams and visions still have a place in these strands of prefigurative practice. Ben Lear and Ralph Schlembach’s recent discussion of hope and despair includes a central demand, “luxury for all”, which is reminiscent of William Morris’s call for wealth and the abandonment of riches. Utopia provides a way of moving beyond the despair that capitalism induces by providing a “basis of our hope, not in capitalist development, but in its confrontation and eventual abolishment”. Their anti-utopian utopianism bears some other hallmarks of his utopian romance.

Our hope is … non-utopian in the sense that we are not in the business of painting detailed pictures of what a post-capitalist society will look like. That does not mean that we cannot imagine or experiment with social relationships that are not dominated by the logic of accumulation and valorisation … What we do say when we talk about an alternative is that we reject the logic of capital. The vision of a post-capitalist world is not one of paradise; …we can, and must imagine a future where the production of wealth is no longer tied to class divisions and the labour relation.

Nevertheless, a striking trend in prefigurative politics is towards dystopian escape, rather than utopian achievement. Lear and Schlembach’s conclusion is that indignation can powerfully be brought bear on change and that the “unwillingness to imagine bigger political alternatives” contributes to the “sense of despair

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4 Franks, pp. 17-18.

collective psychology of hopefulness. In a discussion of the Transition movement he argues, “if despair is perceiving an undesirable future as inevitable, one glimpse of a realistic, welcome alternative transforms our despondency into a massive drive to work towards that alternative.” In a similar spirit, Mark Smith advocates a form of practical utopianism that models ecological ways of living through the estimation of global risk. There is at least a hint of Proudhon and Kropotkin in these approaches and a resounding echo in Franco “Bifo” Berardi’s conception of utopian possibility:

As Force and Reason have failed as principles of social change and political government, I think that we should adopt the point of view of the tendency, not the point of view of the will. Tendency is not an ideal, a utopia, it is not the projection of a rational order that force would eventually implement. Tendency is a possibility implicated in the present state of things, a possibility that cannot currently be deployed because the present paradigm of social relations ... makes such deployment impossible.  

40 Shaun Chamberlain “The Struggle for Meaning” in Campagna and Campiglio (eds.) What We Are Fighting For, p. 45.
41 Mark J. Smith “Practical Utopianism and Ecological Citizenship”, in Campagna and Campiglio (eds) What We Are Fighting For, p. 82.
42 Franco “Bifo” Berardi “The Transversal Function of Disentanglement” in Campagne and Campiglio, What We Are Fighting For, p. 144. Kropotkin argued in very similar terms. In “Anarchist Communism” he wrote: “As to the method followed by the anarchist thinker, it entirely differs from that followed by the utopists. The anarchist thinker does not resort to metaphysical conceptions ... to establish what are, in his opinion, the best conditions for realizing the greatest happiness of humanity ... He studies society and tries to discover its tendencies ... He distinguishes between the real wants and tendencies of human aggregations and the accidents (want of knowledge, migrations, ward, conquests) which have prevented these tendencies from being satisfied”. In Baldwin (ed.) Kropotkin’s Revolutionary Pamphlets, p. 47.
urative politics thus aligns one’s values to one’s prac-
tices...  

The priority attached to intention as a standard of rightness is
not new in anarchist thought. The nineteenth-century anarchist Pe-
ter Kropotkin defended the assassins of Alexander II in 1881 in pre-
cisely these terms. Similarly, anarchism has long been associated
with the rejection of instrumentalism: Weber framed his critique of
Tolstoy in terms of the priority anarchists attached to the “ethics
of ultimate ends” over the “ethics of responsibility”. Yet the term
“prefiguration” does not appear in nineteenth century anarchist dis-
courses, at least not commonly. For some contemporary writers
this absence is significant and its emergence in the last two decades
or so captures sense that there has been a shift in thinking, or per-
haps in emphasis, in contemporary anarchist thought in the post-
second war period. Indeed, some tie the concept tightly to recent
activism. The strong association sometimes made between labour
organizing and historical anarchism, on the one hand, and the di-
chotomy between social and lifestyle anarchism, on the other, has
encouraged this view (though proponents of prefiguration over-
whelmingly reject the critique of lifestyle that Murray Bookchin
advanced when he cemented this distinction). To give one exam-
ple, in “Trying to Occupy Harvard” Philip Cartelli notes:

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10 Prefiguration is a familiar term in English-language anarchism but it does not feature in Daniel Colson’s *Petit Lexique philosophique de l’anarchisme de Proudhon à Deleuze*, (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2001).

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Franks observes within utopian studies map neatly to an evolution
within anarchism from abstract or blueprint utopianism, on the
one hand, to “here and now” utopianism on the other. By resetting
the relationship between anarchism and utopian studies it is
possible to locate the significant shifts in the anarchist politics of
utopia elsewhere. Even though there are considerable overlaps
between historical and contemporary forms of prefigurative
politics, the detectable change lies in the psychology of action
that Franks refers to in his discussion of Sorel. In other words,
the distancing of contemporary from historical anarchism has
encouraged a move away from positively utopian aspiration and
towards the dystopian framing of utopian desire.

Anarchism and the Political Uses of Utopia

Removing anarchist utopianism from the binominal taxonomies
that distinguish historical, workerist, ideological anarchism from
contemporary anti-ideological horizontalism reveals the existence
of a spectrum of utopian, prefigurative practices and suggests a
number of distinct political uses for utopia in contemporary ac-
tivism. Utopias might be fleshed out sociologically at one end of
this spectrum and appear as nebulous possibilities, vehicles for the
principle of desire, at the other. The danger of invoking a harsher
historicized transformation of anarchist utopianism, crystallized in
the concept of prefiguration, is that a particular set of approaches
to social change are valued at the cost of others. Recognizing the
spectrum on which anarchist utopianism rests admits a diversity
of prefigurative practices.

Contemporary literature shows that utopianism supports diver-
sity in activism. Among the prefigurative practices that contain
strongly sociological currents are a number of grass-roots commu-
nity projects. Shaun Chamberlain, for example, describes the “force
for a better future” in a project of community building, fostering a
framing of social transformation – a framing that in different ways was designed to challenge principles of certainty and inevitability. Utopia was not held up as “the end” in the means-ends relationship, but invoked in order to assert the possibility of different alternatives, each dependent on direct action and the principle of desire. As utopians, anarchists elaborated strategies for change consistent with their anti-authoritarian principles precisely in order to resist unspecified abstract utopias and blueprints.

Acknowledging the open-textured character of historical anarchist utopianism and its consistency with contemporary prefigurative politics suggests a possible recasting of Franks’s conception of prefiguration. Franks defines prefiguration in dyadic terms and argues that anarchism collapses the distinction between means and ends. His recognition of the utopian element in prefigurative politics indicates that prefiguration describes a triadic relationship and that anarchist utopianism mediates the means and ends of anarchist action, injecting it with a set of possibilities that make sense of their ethical inter-relationship. In a discussion of the Committee of 100, Nicholas Walter made the point in this way: “unilateral nuclear disarmament as the end, and mass non-violent action as the means”. The utopian ideas that brought the end and means into a prefigurative relation was the vision of Britain that embraced revolutionary solutions to existing social problems, had banned the bomb, left NATO, disengaged from the Cold War and adopted "positive neutrality", rejecting “colonialism abroad and racialism at home”. Utopianism might have different flavours, but in order to be prefigurative, anarchist recipes for the cookbooks of the future must include this ingredient.

Questioning the conjunction of historical anarchism with rigid utopianism also challenges the contention that the shifts that

Since the beginning of Occupy Wall Street, much has been made of its prefigurative politics — an increasingly popular mode of political organization and practice among grassroots movements of the Left over the past half-century that models the kind of democratic society in which they aspire to live. In my experience, however, such radical lifestyle politics are more likely to appeal to activists outside of traditional political groupings such as labor unions or specific issue and policy-oriented organizations.12

Marianne Maeckelbergh offers a similar account, tracking prefiguration through post-war feminism, “the anti-nuclear and peace movements, the racial justice movements in the US, anti-colonial and anti-developmentalism movements in the global South, and later the do-it-yourself and environmental movements—all of which fed into the alterglobalization movement that challenged the right of multilateral organizations (WTO/WB/IMF/G8) to rule the world”.13 In this context prefiguration is an expression of counter-cultural politics which disappeared at the end of the ’60s to re-emerge in recent anti-capitalist campaigns. And rather than attach to “anarchism” as such – a doctrine suggestive of thick ideological commitment and defined practice – prefiguration is instead linked to practices, free from specific content. Maeckelbergh finds the contrast in old-style programmatic politics.

The practices today find their predecessors in movements of the 1960s, when activists questioned on a large scale the need for a unitary political program of

13 Marianne Maeckelbergh “Horizontal Decision-Making across Time and
revolutionary change (in other words, the need to determine ahead of time the one thing your movement is ‘for’). These ideas often took the form of practicing ‘participatory democracy’ and building ‘autonomous’ social relations.\(^\text{14}\) The narrowly workerist assumptions about the character and composition of the historical movement are contestable. Moreover, the identification of prefigurative politics with particular waves of activity or forms of practice betrays a tendency to historicism which is difficult to reconcile with the types of agency that prefiguration spotlights. The significance of the means-ends dynamic in prefigurative politics is not that it maps actions to a prescribed set of approved forms, but that it rules against judgments based on the consideration of outcomes or, at least, results determined by anyone other than the “local agent”.\(^\text{15}\) Similarly, the weight attached to the choices that activists make when engaging in action is not that prefiguration results in moral consensus or political uniformity, but only that it supports direct action: the power of transformation is placed in the hands of individuals, acting by themselves and/or in collaboration with others.

In current discourse, prefiguration is used to describe the creative power of collective struggles,\(^\text{16}\) the project of building of a new world in the heart of the old, either in the ordinary sense of the word, as a foreshadowing,\(^\text{17}\) or to describe ways in which revolutionary desires are expressed in respect of the intimate relations that structure our experience of the world. Kropotkin and Gustav Landauer developed their utopian alternatives through the critique of socialist theories of history, which they considered abstract.\(^\text{36}\) Their special concern was to highlight the structure of Marx and Engels’ scientific socialism and show that anarchist utopianism stood some distance from it.

Marx, they argued, denied he was a utopian yet he conjured a vision of the future by rooting socialism in a theory of change that assimilated prevailing norms, practices and institutional forms, and ridiculed other, imaginative visions as impractical or whimsical dreams. The hallmarks of their utopianism were first, the possibility of working practically towards the realization of a different politics and second, the space that existed for creative thought and moral judgment in shaping that politics. In this, Kropotkin aligned himself with early-century utopian socialists – particularly with Charles Fourier – both to show the continuity of anarchism with these traditions and in order to probe the possibilities of realizing a better (more beautiful, emotionally rich, humane, convivial) future than the one that history, without intervention, seemed most likely to otherwise deliver.\(^\text{37}\) However, in appealing to conceptions of desire, he explicitly rejected the phalanstery and the classification of personality types that Fourier’s science defined.\(^\text{38}\)

As Franks suggests, contemporary anarchists recognize an affinity with forms of utopianism that reject scientism, a pervasive feature of dominant forms of historical socialism. Yet the consistent feature of anarchist thinking about utopianism is the prefigurative


\(^{15}\) Franks, p. 114.


\(^{17}\) The Anarchist FAQ talks about “the future in the present”, see the discussion entitled “The American Model: Peter Kropotkin’s Radical Collectivism”, History of Political Thought, 35 (2014), pp. 147-173.


\(^{38}\) For a discussion of Kropotkin and Fourier see Matthew Adams, "Rejecting the American Model: Peter Kropotkin’s Radical Communalism", History of Political Thought, 35 (2014), pp. 147-173.
property ownership, workers instead took immediate, direct control of the land and factories and abandon production for profit. The Tolstoyan model was rather different, involving multiple individual acts of refusal, in addition to collective actions, notably to participate in systems of conscription and regimes of punishment. Here, action was directed towards the realization of peaceful coexistence and non-violence is the required means. For Kropotkin revolution had an insurrectionary aspect but it was underpinned by a principle of collective withdrawal. The ends were captured in the principle of mutual aid. The appropriate means was the construction of political, social and economic networks, organized beyond the reach of the state, which would both ensure that activists had access to basic necessities in periods of violent repression and intense combat, and that the social relations capable of sustaining anarchist practices were brought into being, prior to the state’s collapse.34

Just as anarchists accused authoritarians of focusing on issues of efficiency or necessity in developing revolutionary strategy – the same critique that Franks’ attaches to Leninism – they were also wary of abstraction. In Bakunin’s work the means-end relationship was underpinned by an understanding of conceptual contestability. Socialists, he argued, were united in their commitments to “equality, freedom, justice, human dignity, morality and the well-being of individuals”. But these were not ends as such, since the meaning of these abstract ideas was always open to interpretation: they took on a particular hue when they were “mapped by a few sages or savants”.35 The utopian element of his anarchism was filled out by a vision of ordinary people negotiating conceptual meanings through struggle and the process of self-organization, having


relationship between social transformation and action in the present.18 Like Franks, David Graeber places the commitment to direct action in everyday life at the heart of prefigurative discourses.19 Prefiguration is linked to creativity, subversion, playfulness and to the development of alternative relationships and ways of living. Prefigurative politics, Federico Campagna and Emanuele Campiglio argue, “go hand in hand with the desire for long-term, broad-horizon imagination”; prefiguration is about “the continuous exercise of testing the imaginary landscapes against the necessities and the subterranean flows of daily life”.20

In all these senses, prefiguration contests the frequent and unthinking association of anarchism with destruction, and instead stresses the experimental, productive and innovative characteristics of anarchist practices that challenge and seek to replace or challenge hierarchical and oppressive social forms. As Franks argues, prefigurative politics describes the rejection of vanguardism and the “scientific” certainties on which revolutionary elitism has been constructed and the repudiation of the varieties of socialism that vanguard strategies have produced – classless but nevertheless highly centralized and industrialized dictatorships.21 Just as
it refuses the imposition of even fleeting, temporary dictatorial means, prefiguration embraces actions that achieve nothing more than transitory, momentary gains in autonomy. The local, direct actions that bring these gains about foster behaviors that are transformative. In sum, prefiguration rules out certain approaches to social change, but leaves the specification of behaviours open to activists. In this respect, and in the context of debates about the continuities and discontinuities of the historical and modern anarchist movements, Franks’s approach to prefiguration appears malleable both to the politics of the nineteenth-century, to post-second war campaigns and contemporary forms of activism. Nevertheless, as the relationship between utopianism and prefiguration reveals, the utopianism of the historical movement appears to rule against this application. In Franks’s terms, the suspicion is that these forms of utopianism admit a gap between means and ends, compromising prefiguration by directing action towards the realization of predetermined goals.

Prefiguration and Utopianism

It is common to find contemporary anarchists describe prefiguration as a utopian politics. In Anarchism and Its Aspirations Cindy Milstein argues that envisioning a world “beyond hierarchy” is “part of prefiguration”. And hinting at the continuity of anarchist thought, she suggests that by adopting prefigurative politics, contemporary anarchism “retains a utopian impulse”.22 Milstein’s defence of anarchist utopianism is advanced explicitly as a rejection of two other types. Utopia, she argues, is neither “a thought experiment. Nor is it a blueprint or rigid plan”. Franks makes a similar point. Prefiguration, he argues, is compatible with utopianism but he qualifies the ways in which it is so; and he shares Milstein’s worry is that utopias typically fall into one of two main types: ab-

22 Milstein, Anarchism and Its Aspirations, p. 66.

been persistently identified with blueprint utopianism. His view, that anarchists are more open to engagement with postmodernism than other types of socialist, (specifically Leninists), because of the fluid conceptions of utopia that postmodernism supports, points to theoretical developments in the field of utopian studies. Miguel Abensour’s scholarship has been extremely influential here. In a recent discussion, which Newman recommends, Abensour defines utopianism as an idea of “becoming”, a term he uses to describe an ontological condition linked to the creativity, individuality and inventiveness of desire. There is a broad sense in which utopianism captures a particular desire, but it is not one that can be given content. Persistent utopias, in distinction to “eternal forms”, designate “a stubborn impulse toward freedom and justice – the end of domination, of relations of servitude, and of relations of exploitation”. This impulse is an “orientation toward what is different, the wish for the advent of a radical alterity here and now”.32

These innovative developments in utopian studies tend to historicise forms of utopian anti-utopianism, largely in critique of vulgar Marxist traditions, much in the same way that contemporary activists historicise prefigurative politics. Yet the divergence of anarchist and Marxist historical traditions is rarely noted and the result is that the convergence of anarchist utopianism and contemporary utopian anti-utopianism is not treated, as Franks argues, as a shift in utopian thinking, but as a revision of anarchism. Thus for Newman, the dovetailing informs the rejection of two currents: one which associates nineteenth-century socialist traditions with work-erism and a second that treats socialism as an enlightenment philosophy which automatically places utopian visions in a box marked abstraction or blueprint. However, another reading of history is possible and the openness of contemporary “here and now” anarch-
In addition, Franks adds a psychology of action. Anarchist utopianism, he argues, might be regarded as a myth, comparable to Sorel’s myth of violence. Like the Sorelian myth, anarchist utopianism is unaffected by the failure of its achievement: to borrow Milstein’s neat formulation, “[a]narchists are used to loss.” In this guise, the myth indicates an eternal willingness to endure the impossibility of success as a condition of struggle. In addition, anarchist utopianism shares the Sorelian myth’s irrational qualities, which Franks captures in the notion of desire.

Nevertheless, the association of anarchism with abstraction and blueprint utopianism infuses a lot of contemporary anarchist thinking. The title of Christian Marazzi’s preface to *What We Are Fighting For*, “Exodus Without Promised Land” hints at persuasiveness of anarchist self-criticism. More pointedly, Uri Gordon, Simon Tormey and Saul Newman have advanced the critique and sought to distance contemporary anarchism from dominant nineteenth-century doctrines. Kropotkin is often identified as an exponent of the wrong sort utopianism: a form that is inflexible, focused on the destination rather than the journey and rooted in abstract, essentialist conceptions of nature and human flourishing. In Newman’s recent work, the relevant distinction is between ‘scientific utopianism’, in which a future anarchist society is founded on scientific and rational principles and will be the inevitable outcome of a revolution against the state; and another that might be termed ‘utopianism of the here and now’, in which the focus is less on what happens after the revolution, and more on a transformation of social relations within the present.

A strong a tradition of critical anarchist thinking, stretching back to Proudhon’s refusal of all systems, attests to the anti-utopianism Franks and Milstein describe. Anarchism’s anti-utopianism was cogently re-stated by Rudolf Rocker.

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29 Rocker argued: “Anarchism is no patent solution for all human problems, no Utopia of a perfect social order (as it has so often been called), since, on principle, it rejects all absolute schemes and concepts. It does not believe in any absolute truth, or in any definite final goals for human development, but in an unlimited perfectibility of social patterns and human living conditions which are always straining after higher forms of expression, and to which, for this reason, one cannot assign any definite terminus nor set any fixed goal.” Rudolf Rocker, *Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism*, online at https://libcom.org/library/anarchosyndicalism-rudolf-rocker-chapter-1. Last access 31 January 2014.