

## REVIEW ESSAY

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### SOCIALISM AS A CULTURAL MOVEMENT?

WEBER, PETRA. *Sozialismus als Kulturbewegung. Frühsozialistische Arbeiterbewegung und das Entstehen zweier feindlicher Brüder Marxismus und Anarchismus*. [Beiträge zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der politischen Parteien, Band 86.] Droste Verlag, Düsseldorf 1989. 545 pp. DM 98.00.

There is nothing wrong in tackling the intellectual history of social movements from a contemporary interest and perspective. Such an approach often uncovers things previously buried under the debris of received wisdom. Moreover, early socialism, the topic under discussion here, has long been used as a screen on which to project topical ideological arguments. This dissertation by Petra Weber on the “early socialist labour movement and the rise of the two hostile brothers Marxism and anarchism” (thus the subtitle), sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, supervised by Professor Heinrich August Winkler and Professor Wilhelm Hennis and published by the Bonn Commission on Parliamentary History and Political Parties, is the latest attempt to respond to “the demand for alternative concepts of socialism” (p. 13) by recalling socialist traditions preceding and contemporaneous with Marx. The author stresses primarily two themes in her attempted actualization: firstly she highlights the much neglected continuity between early socialism and anarchism and endeavours to reverse the suppression of anarchism from the history of socialism, and secondly she relies on the change of paradigm in sociohistorical research pioneered by E. P. Thompson and others by adopting a broad notion of “working-class culture” and the labour movement as a “cultural movement”. Together these provide the thesis of her book, namely that “the continuity of early socialism and anarchism must be sought in its self-image as a cultural movement” (p. 26).

It is not easy to gain an overall view of the immense quantity of material considered in this study. The index is a maze, through which readers have to find their own way. The author presents an intellectual and social history of early socialism and anarchism during the nineteenth century in four parts,

while in passing she carries on a debate with Marxism. The first and main part of the book contains a chapter each on Saint-Simon and his followers, Fourier, socialism and communism of the 1840s (Leroux, Cabet and Blanc), Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin. This section emphasizes the “concept of the association” as a “solidary culture of labour” (both are treated on the whole as synonymous) as the link between early socialism and anarchism and the former’s legacy to the latter. The second part of the book is devoted to economic issues. It argues that Saint-Simon and Fourier, Marx and Proudhon, Kropotkin and the German social democrats stood for different concepts of a socialist economy, which anticipate, according to the author and her publisher, the “currently keenly debated controversy between ‘industrial socialism’ and ‘eco-socialism’ or the ‘cooperative-based alternative economy’”. Similarly the third part, on forms of political organization, develops the perceived distinction between the Marxist theory of the state or the state-socialist concepts of socialism on the one hand and “communal socialism” of anarchist provenance on the other. The fourth part, the most interesting in my view, provides a comparative analysis of the various conceptions of revolution and revolutionary strategies, which are subsumed under the phrase “popular or proletarian revolution”.

As is to be expected from such a wide-ranging study, its source material is broadly based. The secondary literature referred to is also extraordinarily extensive, although it remains largely conventional. Apart from evaluating some archive material from the International Institute of Social History (in particular unpublished material by Max Nettlau), the author relies primarily on the published texts of the early socialists and the anarchists. She rightly laments the paucity of the source material in general. But I cannot agree with her complaint of a lack of earlier research on her topic. Such complaints invariably accompany a false belief that one is at a new departure in study and research. Not surprisingly, then, she is highly selective in acknowledging and assessing the advances in the study of early socialism over the last twenty years. Judging from the footnotes, an unpublished thesis by Hans-Ulrich Thamer on the history of early socialism in France appears to have been particularly important to the author.<sup>1</sup>

Before I comment on the individual chapters, I would like to make some preliminary comments on the central concepts of “culture of labour” (*Kultur der Arbeit*) and the labour movement as a “cultural movement” (*Kulturbewegung*). The author does not consider the origins or implications of these concepts, which are introduced in a section on “the origins of the concept of the association” in early socialism. But if I understand her correctly, she equates the notion of the “association of producers” formu-

<sup>1</sup> Hans-Ulrich Thamer, “Zunftideal und Zukunftsstaat. Zur Ideen- und Sozialgeschichte des Frühsozialismus in Frankreich” (Unpublished thesis, Erlangen, 1980).

lated by the utopian socialists and advocated by elements in the early labour movement with what she calls the “solidary culture of labour”. (This concept appears to vacillate between the objective and subjective: “culture of labour” or working-class culture?) The “concept of the association”, she writes, became “the basis for the establishment (*Begründung*) [?] of the labour movement as a cultural movement” (p. 36). It is a moot point whether the relationship between utopian socialism and the early labour movement really is that simple that one can generalize about an “early-socialist labour movement” (*ibid.*); and whether the concept of the producers’ association does not have rather different means in different contexts, whether one should not distinguish more clearly between the concepts of Saint-Simon or Fourier, between the reform-socialist plans for cooperatives and the genuine ideology of a craft-based workers’ elite.<sup>2</sup> But I am more concerned that the uncritical adoption of a concept of culture tends to deny the anti-capitalist dimension in the development of the early labour movement, removes it from its context of economic and social struggle and shifts it to the level of sociocultural alternatives. A series of passepartouts employed by Weber illustrates this tendency. For instance, although it is of course right to regard the pauperization and proletarianization of artisans as more than just an economic process, it seems wrong to me to reduce the complex aspects of class formation in the transition from artisans to proletariat to a “process of decorporization (*Dekorporierung*)” and the loss of a recognized value system (p. 32 and 38, following Thamer). And although it is of course right to mention the pre-capitalist, pre-industrial experiences which remained influential in the social ideas and struggles of the nineteenth century and to uncover the traditional antecedents of early socialism, I cannot see why the concept of the “moral economy” as developed by E. P. Thompson is misused in the German literature to describe all kinds of traditions whose relationship to the structures of the pre-capitalist economy is largely ignored and whose smallest common denominator is their normative character. (Moreover, the moral economy does not become virulent as a traditional model of values and behaviour but in the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century mass revolts against the transformation of food into commodities.) Weber speaks somewhat loosely of the “traditional values of the ‘moral economy’, in which cultural and religious values took precedence over economic viewpoints” (p. 83), of the “collective morality of popular culture, which manifests itself in the principles of a ‘moral economy’ ” (pp. 199f.), or generally of a “pre-industrial ‘moral economy’ ” (p. 267).<sup>3</sup> And all this as a

<sup>2</sup> One need only read Wilhelm Weitling’s critique of the associations, *Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit* (Stuttgart, 1974), pp. 238–241.

<sup>3</sup> For further examples, see pp. 64, 278f., 317 and 497.

component of such diverse systems as those of the saintsimonians, Fourier and Proudhon. Even more questionable is in my view the use in the same context of a vocabulary redolent of the nazi historians, such as the “economy of the whole house” (*Ökonomie des ganzen Hauses*) (pp. 120, 126 and 282f.).

The selection of early-socialist thinkers dealt with in the first part of the book is limited by Weber’s initial definition of “early socialism” as a “cultural movement”. Thus the British socialists, Owen and the left-wing students of Ricardo, Wilhelm Weitling, Moses Hess and the so-called true socialists are mentioned only in passing or not at all. More significantly, there is no room for the neo-babouvist communist currents of the 1830s and 1840s in France, an omission justified by the author with the unconvincing argument that these have been extensively studied elsewhere (as if that did not apply to Saint-Simon, Fourier and the others). She also assumes that the neo-babouvist elements were only of “marginal importance for the legacy of early socialism to the anarchist movement” (p. 28). But perhaps a closer study of revolutionary communism before 1848 would have thrown a different light on anarchism, perhaps it would have shown Kropotkin’s communist utopia of freely distributed goods to be not only in the tradition of Fourier but also in those of Dezamy and Pillot. At any rate the selection reflects a specific interest in early socialism, which comes to the fore more clearly as the exposition progresses.

The basic chapters on Saint-Simon, the saintsimonians, Fourier and what is called without further explanation “jacobin socialism” (comprising the religious socialism of Pierre Leroux, the Icaria of Cabet and Louis Blanc’s “organization of labour”) are largely written from the perspective of the history of ideas. The original texts are extensively referred to and quoted, but nothing new is really added by following the basic motif of the “early-socialist concept of the association”, nor is for instance the genius of a thinker like Fourier fully grasped. Specifically, I have my doubts about the interpretation of Saint-Simon’s notion of “industrialism” and his concept of the “association of producers” as the cradle of a “solidary culture of labour”, as Weber writes with reference to the adoption of Saint-Simon among the artisan-workers (pp. 57ff., 104). We probably have here a misunderstanding of the French terms *industrie* and *solidarité*, which are more concrete than in German. But there is also a more substantial objection to this interpretation, namely the fact that, as the author herself notes, Saint-Simon formulated an ideology of labour which was intended explicitly to counter workers’ recalcitrance and the lower classes’ aversion to performance and which had as its goal the creation of a manufacturing-based society. A study (along the lines of Thompson’s programme of a “sociology of ideas”) of the reception of Saint-Simon’s ideas among work-

ers would quickly hit upon the distinction between this ideology of labour and the ideology of the workers, between a “culture of labour” and working-class culture.<sup>4</sup> It would have been equally revealing in this context to consider the developing women’s movement within the saintsimonian school, which should be understood precisely as a reaction against the exclusion of proletarian women from the “culture of labour”.<sup>5</sup>

As already noted, the chapter on Fourier does not do justice to the ingenuity of a philosophy of history whose pivot is the position of women and which is based on the analysis of capitalist wage labour as “repugnant labour” and the alternative of “attractive labour” and on the theory of the crisis caused by abundance. All the time the author provides a formulation which smothers Fourier’s nuanced thinking. She describes Fourier’s demand for the emancipation of women as being “of central significance to the link between socialism and the women’s movement” (p. 82); notes, regarding “repugnant labour”, Fourier’s denunciation “not only of the exploitation of the worker, but also the alienating character of labour” (p. 84); and perceives a “sensual-feminist-influenced culture” (p. 98), although she does not really decode the complex interrelationship between sexuality, labour and public life in Fourier’s *Nouveau monde amoureux*, which, it must be said, is as little influenced by feminism – it has at least as much to do with male fantasies – as Owen’s ideal family, which Weber also cites as an example of a “feminist-influenced” culture (*ibid.*). Embedded in the vocabulary of the “economy of the whole house” are to be found such errors as the claim that Fourier designed his domestic agricultural association in the tradition of the “idealization of village life” (pp. 282ff.). On the contrary, Fourier reveals the ideological character of all notions of the rural idyll by pointing to the pauperization of peasants and farmworkers. How can one reconcile the “agrarian romanticism and hostility to cities” which the author attributes to Fourier with his incorporation of the most modern urban architectural elements (the Paris passages) in his utopia? And similarly the related forms of public life, activities and festivals are surely not so much a throwback to traditional village life or based on the “plebeian society” (pp. 285, 387f.) but derived from revolutionary festivals and bourgeois-revolutionary society.

But perhaps these objections on questions of detail are insignificant. For more importantly, in the Fourier chapter lies the hidden key to Weber’s interpretation of early socialism. “Fourier recognized”, she writes, “that the idea of communal ownership of property and egalitarian communism

<sup>4</sup> See Jacques Rancière, *La nuit des prolétaires* (Paris, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> See Lydia Elhadad, “Femmes prénommés. Les prolétaires Saint-Simoniennes rédactrices de ‘La Femme Libre’ 1832–34”, *Les révoltes logiques*, 4 (1977), pp. 62–88 and 5 (1977), pp. 29–60.

espoused by Rousseau and Babeuf was a plebeian ideal, an ideal of the sansculottes, which he did not believe could become the basis for a concept of socialism that transcended class divisions” (p. 89). Of course Saint-Simon or Fourier are not representatives of a decided proletarian class view and a communist movement; of course they address themselves to the ruling classes. But that is not the point. What matters here is the “class-transcending concept of socialism”, which determines the concept of early socialism as defined here and has as its logical consequence the exclusion of the neo-babouvist and communist currents from the analysis. Cabet’s communist utopia of Icaria cannot be ignored, for no other reason than that his ideas inspired a mass movement among French workers in the 1840s. And his pacifist tendencies fit into the overall picture which the author completes under the heading “fraternity and the ‘economy of the whole house’ ” (p. 120). The main representative of the “class-transcending concept of socialism” turns out to be Louis Blanc. His justified fear of a revolution by the urban underclass and of the mass poverty of the July monarchy is the fear of bourgeoisie. His programme for the “organization of labour” counts on the workers’ elite as the agent of social reforms and his model of the social state is the first to provide for the “solution of the social question” from above, for the state administration of pauperism (pp. 135ff., 363ff.).

As she moves to consider the anarchist thinkers, Weber asserts that “early socialism, anarchism and marxism were still a unified movement in the period before the 1848 revolution” (p. 143). Whatever “movement” this may have been, and perhaps she considers the “exchange of ideas” and the “affinity” between Marx, Proudhon and Bakunin or the editors of the Paris *Vorwärts!* a movement, she sees this unity in a shared “comprehensive concept of socialism” and understanding of socialism as a “transcending problem of humanity” (p. 155). At this point there emerges clearly for the first time what she means by “socialism as a cultural movement”, namely the formulation of a “cultural alternative to bourgeois society” based on the “class-integrating idea of fraternity” (p. 157) and derived from an autonomous artisan and working-class culture. The loss of this unity and the growing divergence between Marxism and anarchism – in which anarchism “remained loyal to the early-socialist legacy” (p. 152) – is attributed to the formulation of a concept of socialism prefigured by Lorenz von Stein and adopted by Marx and Engels which traces socialism to “the emergence of a proletariat pauperized by industrialization”, reduces it to “the resolution of the contradiction between capital and labour” (p. 154) and, eventually, posits the supremacy of Marxian theory within the labour movement. As proof of the latter the author adduces the controversy between Marx and Weitling in Brussels in 1846, as if the key issue here was the displacement of morality, culture and the artisan tradition in early socialism rather than the

clash between Weitling's revolutionary working-class communism and the evolutionary model based on the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Germany. In summary, Weber writes:

Marx's suppression of the moral-cultural elements and aims of the early-socialist theories and his formulation of a theoretical claim to supremacy over the autonomous forms of consciousness and organization of the early-socialist labour movement precipitated the collapse of the unity of the socialist movement which had existed until 1846 and led to a divergence of anarchism and Marxism, which became hostile brothers. (p. 159)

This sentence contains both correct and erroneous statements. I do not want to deny that there existed tensions between the early labour movement's autonomous forms of consciousness and organization and Marxism before 1848 and that the orthodox Marxist thesis of the "fusion" between the two only covers this up. But I would reject categorically that the loss of influence of early-socialist ideas has anything to do with the suppression of "the moral-cultural elements and aims" which were supposedly the substance of early socialism. Nor can I see the continuity between early socialism and anarchism in the history of ideas. The rise of the anarchist movement in the second half of the nineteenth century has more to do with the disparity of industrial-capitalist developments in the various European countries and between the centre and the periphery (which the author later mentions to herself) than with the "anarchist movement's reformulation of the early-socialist concept of the association" (p. 186). I have sympathy for Weber's attempt to rehabilitate the anarchist tendencies within the labour movement and present them as a counterbalance to the Marxism of the First International and German social democracy. But she succeeds in this attempt only at the cost of reducing anarchism to a culturally oriented, class-transcending concept of socialism which she already believes to have identified in early socialism.

Of the chapters on Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin, the one on Proudhon is of particular interest, because, following on from French research, it defines more closely the sociohistorical position of Proudhon's social theory. Proudhon stands, the author argues, at the beginning of *ouvrierisme*, that "autonomous working-class socialism" characteristic of the nineteenth-century French labour movement, upheld by a workers' elite still influenced by artisan traditions and values and kept distinct from the mass of wage labourers and the urban underclass (pp. 196ff.). I have serious doubts, however, about Weber's attempt to explain specific aspects of this working-class ideology formulated by Proudhon, such as an ethos of labour directed against the real subsumption of labour under capital as well as against non-working poverty (the demand for the recognition of the "dignity of labour" and the "heroism" of the worker, pp. 196 and 201f.)



and the related rigid patriarchalism which expels women from the sphere of society and labour into the family, in terms of traditional artisan codes of honour and to incorporate them into the labour movement as “cultural movement”, instead of investigating the compensatory and ideological character of these conceptions.

Furthermore, Weber does not consider Proudhon’s critique of property, which after all has had a history of its own within the labour movement. Among Proudhon’s economic reflections she highlights above all the project of the exchange bank, because it represents a variant of the concept of the association. But what should one make of statements such as “in arriving at this concept of a just exchange of goods by independent producers Proudhon returns to the labour theory of value as expounded by the British early socialists” (p. 293)? Clearly the labour theory of value, which is a classical doctrine, is here confused with its egalitarian application. And what informative value is there in joining Proudhon’s adherence to forms of simple commodity production to the fashionable concept of the “dualist economy” (p. 296) taken uncritically from Piore and Gorz?

The two chapters on Bakunin and Kropotkin mark the culmination of the author’s attempt to recast the history of socialism and anarchism in terms of a *cultural alternative* to bourgeois society. Here the emphasis shifts yet again, for now socialism is given an *ethical* foundation (as opposed to a historical and economic basis). In endless variations Weber repeats the assertion that socialism – that is, the early-socialist tradition now taken up by Bakunin and Kropotkin – cannot be reduced to a “stomach issue”, the class antagonism between labour and capital or the demand for the elimination of economic exploitation, as Marxism did (pp. 215, 221). Rather, she argues, Bakunin retained an “ethical-moral understanding of socialism” (p. 228) and a “cultural dimension of associative working-class socialism” (*kulturell-lebensweltliche Dimension des assoziativen Arbeitersozialismus*) (p. 234, sic!), and Kropotkin had been interested in the “cultural-revolutionary aspect of the early-socialist concept of the association” and in “early socialism as an ethical movement” (p. 241). All this boils down to a formulistic opposition of Marxism and anarchism and to a distinction between an “industrial socialist concept of socialism” and a “cultural, communalistic, associative tradition” (p. 243), or, more simply, between “economism” (*Ökonomismus*) and “conviction socialism” (*Gesinnungssozialismus*) (pp. 237, 249). Conversely early socialism and anarchism coincide to the extent that they can be differentiated from the older egalitarian communist currents and Marxism. The intention behind this whole construction is obvious, and the more the dichotomies are piled up, the more their analytical value is lost.

As I have already mentioned in the context of her remarks on Proudhon, Weber is concerned to prove that the alternative ethical conception of



socialism cannot only be derived from the history of ideas but is rooted in the social history of the nineteenth-century labour movement itself, that the “concept of the association” is rooted in working-class culture, and that the value systems and forms of organization above all of the artisan-inspired workers’ elite (the traditions of the guilds, mutual aid, relief funds, trade unionism and cooperativism) form the basis for an “autonomous working-class socialism” as an alternative to “scientific socialism”. Consequently she interprets the confrontation within the First International between the supporters of Bakunin and Marx, similar to the Brussels controversy between Weitling and Marx, as the resistance of Marxism’s theoretically based claim to supremacy against an autonomous working-class culture. She writes:

Bakunin attacked Marxism’s intellectual claim to leadership, which in his view stifled the autonomous initiative of workers. The attempt to impose a scientific theory on the working class condemned it to passivity and rendered impossible the development of an autonomous working-class culture which could only arise from the experiences of the workers. [. . .] As far as Bakunin was concerned, the Marxist conviction that socialism had to grow out of bourgeois society meant the destruction of the traditional communal culture of the people as the basis of a working-class solidary culture and practice. Bakunin accused Marx of wanting to “civilize” the workers and thus to encourage an adaptation to the living conditions and culture of bourgeois society. (pp. 234–245)<sup>6</sup>

There is certainly some truth in this, although the controversies within the First International seem to me more indicative of the heterogeneous class composition of the labour movements in the various European countries. The Swiss watchmakers or the peasants of the Russian villages were typical of a period of anti-capitalist resistance in Europe which had long been broken in the centres of industrial development of the time. The Marxism of the First International takes account of this in its reference to the growing mass of the industrial proletariat in Britain and Germany, and it thus reproduces the defeat in the cycle of social struggles up to the middle of the nineteenth century or the link between the development of capital and class formation as well as the regional disparities and the unevenness of the capitalist penetration itself.

But Weber’s attempt to rehabilitate anarchism goes beyond proving its links to “popular culture” and “autonomous working-class culture”. As mentioned, her efforts exact a high price. This becomes abundantly clear in the second part of the book, which is dedicated to economic issues. Here the author’s particular topical interest is reflected in a wealth of fashionable terms and phrases. Referring to the current “crisis of industrialism”

<sup>6</sup> Similarly pp. 259ff. on the contrast between Kropotkin and German social democracy.

(p. 269), she points to Fourier, Proudhon and especially Kropotkin as representatives of an “alternative economy”, she declares Fourier a precursor of “eco-socialism”, and in Kropotkin she finds the whole arsenal of “appropriate” technology, “agriculture practised on ecological lines” and a “mode of production oriented on the immediate needs of the people” (p. 314ff.) (although she also observes that his “eco-socialist approach to an alternative, decentralized economy based on the low-technological organization of production” remained undeveloped, p. 320). It is above all this green-alternative jargon which hides from view the clearly evident communist and social-revolutionary elements in Kropotkin’s thinking. As a result the author largely misses the point of *The Conquest of Bread*, published in 1892 and arguably Kropotkin’s most important work apart from *Words of a Rebel*, which, as the title already suggests, relates to the subsistence revolts in the bourgeois revolutionary cycle between 1789 and 1848 and their translation into Babeuf’s communist programme, working-class communism and blanquism. She investigates a sansculottist “bread motive” and its continuation in the songs of the French labour movement until the end of the nineteenth century, as if the issue were a motive rather than the continuity of anti-capitalist subsistence and appropriation struggles.<sup>7</sup> Her own, correct, references to the social-revolutionary traditions which find a place in Kropotkin’s analysis of the French Revolution are submerged in another interpretation, in which Kropotkin and nineteenth-century anarchism are conscripted into the creation of, “to put it in today’s words, [. . .] an irreconcilable opposition between industrial socialism and eco-socialism” (p. 323). And the anarchist critique of the state also appears in a softer light: decentralization and “communal socialism” are the slogans of an “alternative to the bureaucratic institutional state” (p. 325), and smashing the machinery of the state becomes less important than the creation of “local free [. . .] spaces for the construction of an alternative society” (p. 346).

I mentioned at the beginning that in the fourth and last part of the book, in which Weber carries out a comparison of concepts of revolution and revolutionary strategies, I found more of value than in the other parts. Perhaps this is because the key question it poses, “popular revolution or proletarian revolution?”, cannot be easily fitted into the specifically German environmentalist ideology and is at least suited to revealing the socio-historical aspects and traditions of early socialism and anarchism (although here too in the end the analysis comes down to the opposition between the “Marxian idea of class struggle” and the “cultural dimension of a revolutionary reorganization”, p. 451). Going beyond the material she has al-

<sup>7</sup> See pp. 317, 435f. and 442, with a reference to Michelle Perrot, *Les ouvriers en grève* (Paris and The Hague, 1974).

ready compiled on the social basis of “autonomous working-class socialism”, Proudhonism and so on, the author now places the anarchists Bakunin and Kropotkin next to Blanqui in the “tradition of the French popular-revolutionary movements of the period between 1789 and 1871” (p. 442). She rightly points out that for Kropotkin the history of the popular movements during the French Revolution, the revolts of the peasants and the sansculottes, presented the model for the social revolution of the nineteenth century (pp. 434ff.). She also rightly notes that, in contrast, Marx’s and Engels’ conception of revolution leans heavily on the example of the bourgeois revolution and that the crucial experience of the failed revolution of 1848 led Marxism increasingly to see the development of the productive forces and the formation of an industrial proletariat (accelerated by capital itself) as preconditions for a future revolution. And on the whole I agree with her when she writes:

In contrast to Marx, the anarchists set their hopes on the latin countries as the agents of the revolution, because there the “spirit of revolt” of popular revolutionary movements was still alive, because there especially the delay in capitalist penetration and the survival of pre-industrial traditions had kept alive and provoked the resistance of the mass of the peasants and workers against the bourgeois cultural hegemony. (p. 446, see also pp. 449, 454)

Leaving aside the persistent reduction, evident here as elsewhere, of anti-capitalist resistance to a cultural conflict, I think the author is right when she sees the nonuniformity of capitalist development not only as the basis of the anarchists’ model of revolution but also of their concept of class, whose broadness and imprecision – with “the masses”, “the people” and “lumpenproletariat” as revolutionary subject – was not the outcome of an inadequate class analysis but an explicit rejection of Marx’s narrower concept of class as centred on the industrial proletariat (pp. 447, 451f.). Moreover, she argues, during the second half of the nineteenth century it was revolutionary syndicalism, the anarchist alternative to the Marxist programme of working-class political organization as well as to the social-democratic reformism of the ballot box, which could react to the development of capitalism in the European centres as well as the rise of new mass strike movements independent of parties and unions (pp. 454ff.).

It is however undeniable that these final chapters of the book present Weber with her greatest challenge, since the anarchists’ revolutionary traditions and their attitude to the question of violence are very badly suited to the development of “alternative concepts of socialism” demanded by the current constellation of political parties. She does not dodge the real problem, the question of revolutionary violence and revolutionary organization, but seeks to remove it with a historically only partially tenable

distinction between anarchism and “individual terrorism” (pp. 477ff.).<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, she does not see the secret societies of the anarchists as a continuation of the French secret societies of the 1830s and 1840s, the conspiratorial forms of organizations of blanquism or revolutionary working-class communism, but links them instead to freemasonic and rationalist traditions of secret organization (p. 483). It is interesting in this respect that these secret societies, as conceived above all by Bakunin and used as levers within the First International, arose out of the contradictions inherent in the relationship between intellectuals and the labour movement, between the “self-emancipation of the workers” and “mass mobilization” on the one hand and the “intellectual vanguard” of bourgeois origin on the other (pp. 487ff.). This problem was more acute within anarchism than in the Marxist party model. But at this point the analysis switches again. Weber now characterizes anarchism, as compared to theory-led Marxism, as the more open variant of “intellectual socialism” for the autonomous practice of workers (p. 492f.). With some bewilderment the reader looks back to the various social landscapes: who, then, moulded the anarchists’ “concept of culture”, the “minority of the workers’ elite”, the “popular masses” or the “intellectuals” (p. 506)?

I would like to pass over Weber’s concluding remarks. They are a hotch-potch of fashionable ideas, in which are mixed together Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, “the one-dimensional nature of bourgeois living”, the “exodus from industrial society” and the “inescapability of the modern age”, “cultural hegemony”, “cultural socialism”, Nietzsche, Gramsci and Carl Schmitt. Someone should have put the red pencil to such absurdities like “As the intellectuals within the labour movement, the anarchists saw it as their task to give this unconscious working-class socialism a theoretical foundation with the early-socialist

<sup>8</sup> In this context it is more than questionable to use this distinction in turn for a denunciation. I would like to point to a footnote on p. 479 in which Weber refers to a “falsification of history”, of which the left is also guilty, which consists of putting anarchism in “the same tradition as the terrorism of the Red Army Faction”. She quotes Bernd Kramer, “for instance, who in his preface to Bakunin’s *Gewalt für den Körper* (1980) tries to justify in the name of Bakunin and Nechayev the use of terrorist violence by present-day revolutionary liberation movements”. In Weber’s view such attempts only reinforce conservative prejudices against anarchism. Quite apart from the fact that these prejudices would not be overcome even if the murdered anarchists Landauer and Mühsam were to rise from the dead and advocate non-violence, it is not acceptable to point a finger at a publisher who deserves credit for introducing the whole range of anarchist literature to Germany and a writer whose works, including the preface referred to by Weber, reveal a highly critical view of so-called terrorist organizations and particular practices of liberation movements, and who certainly cannot be accused of advocating terrorism.

theories of society” (p. 503). I would also like to pass over the irritating aspects of this book, namely the unacceptable number of typographical errors and factual inaccuracies, which suggest not just an inadequate editing of the manuscript; the lax manner in which quoted material is referred back to secondary texts only; the adoption of other writers’ formulations word for word without due crediting, and so on. All this may be excused on the grounds that the author took on too great a task. Instead I believe it necessary to consider this work from a political viewpoint. The book’s merit lies not in the lengthy deliberations on the intellectual history of early socialism and anarchism, but in the linking of the two as a continuum. This continuity is created on the basis of a conception of socialism which, firstly, focuses not at modern class relations and forms of capitalist exploitation but sees it as a “cultural movement”, that is, a specific, largely artisan-influenced, traditionally determined working-class culture and a corresponding elitist ethic of labour; and, secondly, forms an alternative not only to bourgeois culture but also to egalitarian communism and the Marxism of the First International, to the social movements of the early proletarian underclass as well as the industrial mass proletariat. Such a conception of socialism flows from – could this have escaped the author’s notice? – a decidedly anti-communist interpretation of early socialism, which has a long tradition in Germany and which is not improved by dressing it up in the fashionable clothes of the German green movement.

But the “novelty” of this book lies in the following: relying heavily on the work of Hans-Ulrich Thamer, Michael Vester, Ulla Pruss-Kaddatz and others – whose inspiration ultimately goes back to E. P. Thompson and which has brought the development of a working-class culture and the early labour movement’s learning process and thinking within the ambit of German research<sup>9</sup> – Weber breaks through her history-of-ideas starting point and relates, indeed quite correctly in my view, the history of early socialism and anarchism to this “autonomous working-class culture”, which in its traditionalism, organizational forms and ideology was set apart from the political and theoretical hegemony of Marxism from the beginning. It should come as no surprise that I endorse the author’s plea, found already in the early pages of the book, “not to reduce the history of the labour movement to a history of the adoption of Marxism” (p. 13). It was and is right to reveal the layers which lie underneath, as it were, the Marxist conception of the labour movement. It was also to be expected that this would lead to a neo-reformist interpretation of the history of socialism and

<sup>9</sup> See Hans-Ulrich Thamer, “Zunftideal und Zukunftsstaat”; Michael Vester, *Die Entstehung des Proletariats als Lernprozess* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970); Ulla Pruss-Kaddatz, *Wortergreifung. Zur Entstehung einer Arbeiterkultur in Frankreich* (Frankfurt am Main, 1982); see also Alexander Brandenburg, *Theoriebildungsprozess in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung 1835–1859* (Hannover, 1977).

the labour movement – not only by using a sociological vocabulary, which abstracts from the class opposition with terms such as “working-class exclusivism”, but precisely also by bringing to light the reformism within the labour movement itself. It seems to me that in the end there appertains less of the cultural-revolutionary to the “concept of the association” so belaboured by Weber than the everyday: it lies somewhere between guild solidarity, strike funds and soup kitchens and is infused with a pronounced working-class patriarchalism. It is not easy to observe the revolutionary underside, the anti-capitalist tendency, within the “autonomous working-class culture” once it has been brought down from the conceptual level.

On the whole there is much of value in Weber’s study: the interest in early socialism not merely as a precursor of Marxism; the analysis of the relationship between early-socialist ideas and the developing labour movement or what the author calls the “autonomous working-class culture”; the evidence of continuities between early socialism and anarchism; and the rehabilitation of the anarchist concepts of class and revolution in the tradition of revolutionary mass movements. It is unavoidable that the panorama of the nineteenth century she paints must often remain general and superficial. Much of all this is lost, however, not only because of the mistakes and inconsistencies, the pompous language and the endless repetitions but also because of the contemporary German green perspective which permeates everything and which leads to a straitjacketing and an anachronistic falsification of the subject matter. Fourier and Kropotkin are not any better understood by depicting them as eco-socialists, and nineteenth-century anarchism described as “cultural socialism” is no better suited to facilitate the renewal of social democratic thinking. In my view we do not need a reinterpretation of socialist and anarchist traditions by hook or by crook to legitimate the German social democrats’ courting of new allies in the new “green” middle classes or their efforts to fill gaps in their party programme.