
short of the demands of scholarship. There are other, better books about conservatism. This one leaves the reader frustrated and unconvinced. It is a missed opportunity.

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AN ANARCHIST SQUINT

James C. Scott: *Two Cheers for Anarchism: Six Easy Pieces on Autonomy, Dignity, and Meaningful Work and Play*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012. Pp. xxvi, 192.)

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In this slim yet intellectually loaded volume, Scott (professor of political science and anthropology at Yale) tries to utilize an anarchist lens to provide lessons for social scientists and other academics. The author does not give an explication of classical anarchist theory but instead tries to use his “anarchist squint” to gain insights from “forms of informal cooperation, coordination, and action that embody [Proudhon’s principle of] mutuality without hierarchy” (xxi). This reviewer would classify Scott as a “neanarchist,” one who uses the anarchist critique without calling for the abolition of the state, similar to analysts such as Roberto Michels, who posited an “iron law of oligarchy” where formal organizations always tend to rule for themselves. Scott goes further than Michels, however, to examine how ordinary people often find ways to defy and disrupt hierarchical institutions from below and thus help spur progressive social change, with perhaps better odds of preventing the recreation of even more virulent hierarchies than conscious revolutionaries. Although one can certainly see Scott’s anarchist bent in his previous books, in this new work Scott seeks to find a unity of method and theory through an experimental, free-form style of four to five “fragments” each in six concise chapters that evoke anarchist lessons.

For example, in the first chapter, drawing on his experiences in the former East Germany, Scott calls for the need for an “anarchist calisthenics,” that is, practicing disobeying trivial regulations and laws, such as crossing against a light when little or no traffic is present, in order to be ready for the day when one might need to disobey major laws. He cites examples of popular habits of defying authority throughout history, including unplanned and unorganized movements of mass military desertions that subverted repressive regimes and the acts of “poaching, pilfering, and squatting” that served to undermine state attempts to reinforce aristocratic property rights. For Scott, such law-breaking behavior represents “a special type of collective action” that too often goes unrecognized by social scientists yet often contributes to democratic political change. Though unplanned, such actions nevertheless rely

on the tacit cooperation and complicity of other people to succeed, he argues, and have the advantage of being more likely to escape the notice of authorities than more open acts of rebellion, making them also less likely to provoke violent repression. Subversive actions do not always begin with outright acts of political rebellion but can have more influence than organized movements, as, for example, popular shortcuts that create paths that eventually become paved walkways and acts of trespass and squatting in Anglo-American and even French law that eventually established formal rights of possession. Likewise, major public-policy shifts often occur in response to massive spontaneous acts of rioting and law breaking, including the reforms of the New Deal and Civil Rights eras that began with ordinary acts of insubordination which were only later coopted by formal organizations. Even the success of supposedly charismatic leaders of formal organizations, he notes, only occurs as they refine their message through “call and response” to ordinary people.

Scott also highlights the “vernacular” or informal ways of knowing that often make formal structures work, such as gardening forms that help overcome destructive state-sponsored monocultures, among many other examples in which he vividly brings to life the basic anarchist view of coercive organizations as parasites on voluntary, cooperative informal organizations. Though as a neoanarchist the author does not ignore the possible advantages and benefits of more centralized forms of control, as in federal interventions against local oligarchies in the United States South or centralized control of epidemics or pollution, this order is often deceptive, he argues, and is only sustained in effect by “nonconforming and unacknowledged practices at the periphery” (45).

The author decries in successive chapters how parasitic formal organizations, including public-education systems, nursing homes, and mass-production factories, whatever their benefits, often produce terrible side effects, including the homogenization and overquantification of everyday life, even as they depend on informal practices of ordinary people in order to survive. Lest one think that he uncritically accepts the ability of the masses to subvert coercive hierarchies, Scott worries at points throughout the book that the continuing standardization and homogenization of life might eventually sap the vitality of civic dialogue coming from ordinary people. Flying deliberately in the face of standard Marxist criticism of the “petit bourgeois” nature of anarchism, Scott finds that this civic vitality often comes from the much-maligned artisans, small landholders and other independent producers who he finds were at the heart of most struggles for equality and justice. He cites examples of the public goods which the petite bourgeoisie often provides that often go unmeasured, including informal social work, public safety, aesthetically pleasing and variegated streetscapes, more personalized services and acquaintance networks, and better stewardship of the land (99–100).

Perhaps the best example of the author’s style and method is in chapter 5, where, as part of a long rant against the overquantification of education

standards in America, including the exam hell system borrowed from Japan, he presents a satirical fantasy about a future President Condoleezza Rice of Yale institutionalizing quantitative tenure and promotion measures that involve professors wearing digitalized beanies that light up when their articles are cited in obscure journals or go blank when their citation levels go below dismissal level. This fantasy is just one example of how Scott derides the validity of many allegedly empirical measures, especially for their tendency to “colonize behavior,” such as subjects of French monarchs reducing the number of openings in their houses to evade the “window and door tax,” American generals in Vietnam inflating body counts to improve their ratings, and Enron executives inflating quarterly profits and concealing losses to build up the price of their company’s stock and thus their own salaries. He argues that neoliberal attempts to depoliticize and quantify standards in the end not only help to build up an unchecked technocratic elite, but even more importantly “stand in the way of potentially bracing and instructive debates about social policy” (127).

In the concluding chapter Scott argues for bringing back “particularity,” flux, and contingency into academic studies. Not only do overly determined social science and historical studies often lead to false images of causation, but they also help elites and organizations project an image of control and blind people to the fact that “the great emancipatory gains for human freedom have not been the result of orderly institutional procedures but of disorderly, unpredictable, spontaneous action cracking upon the social order from below” (141).

In sum, all readers, even those sympathetic to Scott’s anarchist theme, will find themselves unsettlingly but usefully challenged by this beautifully written and argued book, especially by his call to pay more attention to the beliefs and actions of ordinary people and to avoid overly abstract theorizing that serves to aid centralized hierarchies and technocratic elites.

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THE MEANING AND LIMITS OF POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

Xavier Márquez: *A Stranger’s Knowledge: Statesmanship, Philosophy and Law in Plato’s “Statesman.”* (Las Vegas: Parmenides, 2012. Pp. vii, 399.)

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“Wearying,” “bizarre,” “disjointed,” “confused,” “a poor relation of the *Republic* and the *Laws*,” “a ‘dialogue’ without any real dialogue.” These are just a few of the phrases that have been used by scholars over the years to dismiss Plato’s *Statesman* as a work unworthy of serious study. Fortunately,