

Benjamin R. Tucker



&

The

Champions Of Liberty

A CENTENARY ANTHOLOGY



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Our Purpose

Liberty enters the field of journalism to speak for herself because she finds no one willing to speak for her. She hears no voice that always champions her; she knows no pen that always writes in her defence; she sees no hand that is always lifted to avenge her wrongs or vindicate her rights. Many claim to speak in her name, but few really understand her. Still fewer have the courage and the opportunity to consistently fight for her. Her battle, then, is her own to wage and win. She accepts it fearlessly, and with a determined spirit.

Liberty

August 6, 1881





Beny R Tucker

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Benjamin R. Tucker And The Champions of **Liberty**
A Centenary Anthology



INTRODUCTION

The Evolution Of A Subversive Tradition



By Charles H. Hamilton

Anarchism is now one of the forces of the world." Benjamin Ricketson Tucker thus reported, in 1893, on the rewards and results of publishing *Liberty* for twelve years.¹ His work centered around that remarkable periodical for another fifteen years.

The sentiment also summarizes Tucker's large contribution to the world of ideas. For over fifty years, he was the most important individualist anarchist of that sometimes forgotten tradition. This very proper Bostonian — every bit the image of a banker — was the guardian and purveyor of subversive ideas: of the sovereignty of the individual, of the evils of the State, and of the commanding importance of liberty and justice. His efforts as a writer and as a publisher gave a coherence to a body of ideas and an institutional framework for them that would not have otherwise occurred.

Who was this man? By his own description, Tucker could "speak by the card:"

I am an Anarchist, I was the first American — I may say the first Anglo Saxon — to start (in 1881) an avowedly Anarchistic newspaper printed in the English language. I am still the editor, publisher, and proprietor of that paper I either am, or have been, the publisher of the chief Anarchistic works in the English language. I am the author of the most widely

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accepted English text-book of Anarchism. I have enjoyed the friendship, had the benefit of the instruction, and have carefully studied the works, of those Americans from whom the Anarchists have largely derived their beliefs — Josiah Warren, Stephen Pearl Andrews, Lysander Spooner, and Colonel William B. Greene. I am the translator into English of some of the principal works of P.J. Proudhon, who was the first writer in any language to declare himself an Anarchist. I am acquainted, perhaps better than any other man, with the English-speaking Anarchists in the United States.²

Despite such a distinguished career, his early hope and determination about the cause of anarchism were replaced in later years by pessimism. In a letter written to a friend in 1925, Tucker considered what he had achieved that was of lasting value to the world:

And to that question 'Nothing' is the only truthful answer. I aimed to contribute a stone to a social edifice, a cathedral if one may call it so, which I expected to be carried to completion, slowly but surely, through the ages. I have contributed that stone . . . But I see now that the cathedral will never be finished, and that the portion already built is destined soon to tumble into ruins. . .³

In this view of his own contribution, at least, Tucker was wrong. His work is now a matter of history.

His writing, while never systematic, eloquently captured the spirit of liberty and vehemently attacked all forms of oppression. He rarely shirked from seriously inquiring into all the important issues of the day. The substance of his intellectual work is still exciting and valuable.

In addition to his own writing, though, Tucker was quintessentially a publisher. And perhaps it is in that role that Tucker made his greatest contribution. For much of his time was spent providing the institutional mechanisms and channels by which the individualist anarchist tradition was transmitted. Tucker was (to use Lewis Coser's description of a publisher) the "indispensable intermediary in the diffusion of ideas," and the "guardian and the constant creator of our written culture."⁴ As editor and translator, as the publisher of four magazines, as the publisher of dozens of books and pamphlets, and as a bookseller of those and other books, Tucker nurtured a tradition, enlarged an individualist perspective,

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and chronicled a movement.

Through *Liberty* especially — and the circle of followers that gathered around him — Tucker profoundly affected the development of libertarian thought in America. The essays in this volume attest to the varied and important contributions he did make to that wonderful "cathedral" dedicated to human liberty and social voluntarism.

Benjamin R. Tucker was born on April 17, 1854. He was raised in the small town of South Dartmouth, Massachusetts, and later in the nearby town of New Bedford. There was, at the time, a special spirit in New England that provided an important backdrop to Tucker's development as the leading exponent of individualist anarchism. While explicitly anarchist ideas were not so much in evidence, there was a uniquely American radical milieu that informed the thought of the day.⁵

"We have a genius for liberty," said the Transcendentalist Theodore Parker in a remarkable speech in 1848:

The most marked characteristic of the American nation is Love of Freedom; of man's natural rights. This is so plain to a student of American history [W]hen one looks through the whole character and history of America, spite of the exceptions, nothing comes out with such relief as this love of freedom, this idea of liberty, this attempt to organize right.⁶ Many factors influenced this love of freedom. There was a vast new land still to be conquered, with all of the attendant freedom it promised. Economic *laissez-faire*, while not without its contradictions, was institutionalizing competition, cooperation and individualism.

The writings of the English and French liberal and radical traditions had been lavishly imported. Quakers, unitarians, transcendentalists, and free thinkers, while very different and adversaries on many issues, all wrote about freedom and the individual. America's heritage from its own revolutionary thinkers had not yet been forgotten. And there was an extensive radical abolitionist and no-government movement that was trying to excise slavery without substituting another cancer: the centralized State.⁷

There were authoritarian trends as well, as statism and monopoly capitalism began to dominate the scene. Many of the reformers and social critics of the period were eager to experiment with political

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power as an agent of change. But in the late nineteenth century, an American radical intellectual culture was still vital. Tucker came from that culture, and he would always hark back to that tradition — and then go a few steps further. As he was often to write: 'The Anarchists are simply unterrified Jeffersonian Democrats. They believe that 'the best government is that which governs least,' and that which governs least is no government at all.'⁸ In fact, by his own unflinching logic and sense of right, he was also an unterrified Manchester economist, an unterrified abolitionist, an unterrified free thinker, and an unterrified egoist.

Tucker absorbed this radical heritage from many sources. He attended the New Bedford Friend's Academy. He often listened to the radical preacher W.J. Potter, and he was a "daily devourer" of Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*. From the age of fourteen, he carefully studied Darwin, Spencer, Buckle, Mill, Huxley, and others. At the New Bedford Lyceum, he heard some of the leading thinkers of the period; Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Anna Dickinson, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.⁹ As he recollected later:

I . . . cherished a choice collection of chaotic and contradictory convictions, which did not begin to clear until I reached the age of eighteen, when a lucky combination of influences transformed me into the consistent anarchist I have remained unto this day. In the meantime, I had been an atheist, a materialist, an evolutionist, a free trader, a champion of the legal eight-hour day, a woman suffragist, an enemy of marriage, and a believer in sexual freedom.¹⁰

While at MIT, Tucker attended the 1872 meeting of the New England Labor Reform League, and it was there that he first met a small group of American anarchists: Josiah Warren and William B. Greene, and later Ezra Heywood and Lysander Spooner. Together with Stephen Pearl Andrews, these men were the leading individualist anarchists. Their views on individualism, voluntary association, statism, money and banking, social and sexual mores, property and value were the beginning for Tucker's own subsequent exposition of individualist anarchism.

Two anarchists were particularly important, and much of Tucker's own writing can be seen as an extension and reformulation of their basis tenets. First, there was the venerable Josiah Warren (1798-1874). Tucker dedicated *Instead of a Book* to

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Warren, "my first source of light."¹¹

Originally a follower of Robert Owen, Warren became known as the first American anarchist. In words and deeds, Warren saw that reform could not be brought about by compulsion but had to be based on individual sovereignty, mutualism and an economic system where cost was the proper limit of price.

Shortly after the 1872 meeting, William B. Green introduced Tucker to the writings of the French social theorist and anarchist Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865). His views were remarkably similar to those of Warren's.

Proudhon was by no means a systematic or consistent thinker, but by his attack on authority and his strong arguments for a natural human order without government, Proudhon had a profound effect on a myriad of diverse political movements. To Tucker, he was "the profoundest political philosopher and economist that has ever lived."¹² In 1874 Tucker went to France to study Proudhon's books and manuscripts which confirmed and broadened his belief in anarchism.

For Tucker, anarchism meant the greatest degree of freedom, a firm rejection of all forms of, and reasons for, force (besides self-defense), and a reliance on spontaneous and voluntary association. This view was different from other, more collectivist, conceptions of anarchism because of the "fundamental principle" behind it:

the freedom of the individual, his right of sovereignty over himself, his products, and his affairs and of rebellion against the dictation of external authority.¹³

In the early years of *Liberty*, Tucker believed - as had Warren, Proudhon, and Spooner before him — that anarchism was based on "a principle of nature,"¹⁴ and that a moral argument was sufficient to establish the validity of anarchism. By the late 1880s, though, Tucker was writing that morality and natural rights were unprovable abstractions, myths.¹⁵ He was influenced in this shift by the egoistic philosophy of Max Stirner (1806-1856) and his *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*. Tucker and *Liberty* were to uphold egoism against all critics from that time on.

Tucker ultimately made his case for anarchism based on the unencumbered, sovereign individual. Many critics felt that Tucker had reduced anarchism to an amoral, egoist philosophy where might is right. In fact, it can be argued that he had combined egoism with a sophisticated social argument for anarchism.¹⁶

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I see no reason as far as moral obligation is concerned, why one should not subordinate or destroy the other. But if each of these men can be made to see that the other's free life is helpful to him, ["I know plenty of reasons why it is expedient for one man to refrain from injuring another."] then they will agree not to invade each other, in other words, they will equalize their existences, or rights to existence, by contract.¹⁷

Individuals live in, and make up, a very important and necessary social world. As Tucker wrote in a slightly different context: "Society has come to be man's dearest possession Both air and independence must be reconciled with society Luckily they can and will be."¹⁸ The reconciliation came through the application of Herbert Spencer's concept of equal liberty, which Tucker described as the "essence of their creed:"

It means the largest amount of liberty compatible with equality and mutuality of respect, on the part of individuals living in society, for their respective spheres of action.¹⁹

The case for anarchism then, was based, rather starkly, on sovereign individuals, and it was built, without moral trappings, as these individuals joined together by way of mutual agreement, social convention, and individual contract. The social bond was a voluntary one. Tucker was satisfied that he had made his case for anarchism devoid of myths and firmly grounded on egoism and social needs.

The true foe of liberty was authority in its multifarious social forms. The church and religion, and incipient monopoly capitalism were clear examples that had to be opposed. It was the State, though, that was the greatest danger:

The State is said by some to be a 'necessary evil;' it must be made unnecessary. This century's battle, then, is with the State: the State, that debases man; the State, that prostitutes woman; the State, that corrupts children; the State, that trammels love; the State, that stifles thought; the State, that monopolizes land; the State, that limits credit; the State, that restricts exchange; the State, that gives idle capital the power of increase, and, through interest, rent, profit, and taxes, robs industrious labor of its products.²⁰

The evils of society were seen by Tucker to take the form of four "monopolies" which rested upon State authority and opposed in all ways the principles of freedom. These were succinctly dis-

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cussed in Tucker's famous article on "State Socialism and Anarchism."

First in importance was the money monopoly. Government control of the monetary system was an evil that reverberated throughout society. As a result, interest, rent, and prices were all too high; labor, in relation to capital, was at a great disadvantage; and the accessibility to capital was severely limited. What was absolutely necessary, Tucker contended, was a system of free banking — or mutual banking to use the title of William B. Greene's book on the topic.

Second in importance was the land monopoly. Land titles, Tucker said, should be based on occupancy and use. To the extent that titles were based on other theories and enforced by the State, to that extent, then, property was theft.

The tariff monopoly was the third monopoly. Prices were too high and capital and labor were misallocated, Tucker argued, when protectionism prevailed. In the tradition of the classical liberals, Tucker called for universal free trade, but he cautioned that "free trade in money at home" must be a prior condition.

Last was the patent and copyright monopoly which protected authors and inventors against competition and permitted unreasonable returns for their labor.

These four monopolies were possible only through the legal privileges and protection given by the State. Like most socialists (for Tucker considered himself such, in its most generic form), Tucker sought the most effective methods to strike down these evils. And it was at this point that he forcefully drove a wedge between anarchism and "state socialism." Continuing in the tradition of Michael Bakunin, he derided the state socialist and Marxist solution to monopoly as the doctrine that would:

centralize and consolidate all industrial and commercial interests, all productive and distributive agencies, in one vast monopoly in the hands of the State the doctrine that all the affairs of men should be managed by the government regardless of individual choice.²¹

Such solutions, Tucker clearly saw, would bring heightened levels of State oppression and precious little freedom.

Tucker was just as logically unstinting in his presentation of *Liberty's* solutions. Since monopoly was the child of government intervention, the answer lay in the unterrified application of *laissez-*

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faire to the economic affairs of men and women. Most free market advocates at the time, Tucker wrote, were afraid of their own doctrine or applied it one-sidedly to labor and not to land or capital. For Tucker, it was necessary to subject capital to the same forces of competition:

Absolute Free Trade; free trade at home, as well as with foreign countries; the logical carrying out of the Manchester doctrine; *laissez-faire* the universal rule.²³

The stateless, non-monopolistic society Tucker saw as the result of the unencumbered practice of competition would be a society of great creativity. Individuals and voluntary associations would devise solutions to social problems that would be unique to the time and need. No advance blueprint was possible for such a society. That fact has led some to contend that Tucker was a **relentless** critic but was also hopelessly **Utopian** without a realistic strategy for change.

Tucker and his followers never adequately addressed the question of *how* to bring liberty about in an America enamored of State power. It was clear that "Anarchism should be considered not only as a result but as a method."²³ But discussions of strategy and tactics were limited and almost disappeared in the later years of **Liberty**. Tucker's own sense of priority can be gauged from a comment towards the end of "State Socialism and Anarchism," where he wrote that "time forbids the treatment of that phase of the subject here."²⁴

Perhaps this is asking too much of Tucker. His forte was the written word and the incisive argument. More than an institution, the State was "a principle, a philosophical error in social existence What we mean by the abolition of the State is the abolition of a false philosophy"²⁵ He knew that "nothing is ever accomplished until the minds of men have been convinced that the change in view is wise."²⁶ Communist anarchists and other social reformers felt that society could be pushed into liberty. Tucker, on the other hand, saw that the first step was educational. In a brief article in **Liberty** in 1887, he focused (as he often would) on the necessary precedence of what was his life's work: finding the believers and providing them with the works with which to build a social edifice based on liberty and justice.

For the true reform party - the party that would seek to establish liberty and equity — we have as yet neither the

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builders nor the stones; and, if we are ever to have such a party, we must first devote our energies to the high and noble work of fitting ourselves for the position of builders and stones of the glorious temple of liberty.²⁷

The strength and success of any tradition are dependent on both the substantive content and pattern of the tradition itself and the institutional structures ("stones") by which it is sustained and transmitted. This second aspect of tradition building is crucially important, though often ignored. As Edward Shils has suggested:

An intellectual tradition exists in a stock of works which those who participate in the tradition "possess," that is, assimilate into their own intellectual culture and to which they also refer Every tradition is characterized by common patterns to be found in the works which constitute it and represent it to its adherents The tradition in question could not have been formed without an institutional structure to form and transmit it.²⁸

Much of Tucker's relevance to nineteenth century individualist anarchism and for our twentieth century perspective lies in the way he provided, almost single-handedly, a myriad of such institutional settings.

Tucker's first publishing ventures were a fitting testament to the influence of Warren and Proudhon. They symbolically tie him to the two most important influences in his developing anarchism. In 1875 he reprinted Warren's **True Civilization**, and shortly thereafter, in January 1876, he published his own translation of Proudhon's **What is Property?**

With the help of a small inheritance, Tucker began his first magazine in 1877. In the first of four quarterly issues of **Radical Review**, Tucker expressed the hope that it would be an "adequate literary vehicle for the carriage and diffusion of the most radical thought of our time."²⁹ It was certainly a most credible effort and clearly revealed the breadth of his interests. His own translation of Proudhon's **System of Economic Contradictions** appeared serially in each issue, together with articles by Sidney H. Morse, Lysander Spooner, Stephen Pearl Andrews, Ezra Heywood, Elie Reclus, Samuel Longfellow, John Fiske, and others.

The inheritance gave out and Tucker discontinued **Radical Review**. For most of the rest of his politically active life (from 1878-1899), Tucker's anarchist publishing and writing were done after

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work. For eleven years he was on the staff of the Boston Globe. Then, when he moved to New York City, he worked first as the editor of *Engineering Magazine* and then for the *Home Journal*.

By 1881, Tucker wanted another outlet for his own work and for the best in radical and anarchist thought. And so on August 6, 1881, Tucker published the first issue of *Liberty*. For the next twenty-seven years, 403 issues of *Liberty* appeared at various frequencies and with some periods of temporary suspension. It became the most important individualist anarchist journal in America and in the world. In fact, it certainly became one of the most important anarchist journals of all time. "Advanced" ideas in politics, art, and literature were eagerly discussed.

Liberty was probably the earliest American magazine to publish Nietzsche, G.B. Shaw, and Vilfredo Pareto. Every important individualist anarchist and many other radicals became members of what can be called the *Liberty* circle and wrote for it: including, to mention only a few, Victor Yarros, James L. Walker, J. William Lloyd, Florence Finch Kelly, Auberon Herbert, Voltairine de Cleyre, Steven Byington, John Beverley Robinson, Jo Labadie, and Lillian Harman.

Liberty reflected Tucker's views; he always remained in control of the magazine and its perspectives. At the same time, within certain, not always clearly defined, parameters, *Liberty* was a hotbed of controversy. Tucker thrived on controversy and much of the magazine was devoted to various disputes between him and Single Taxers, Communist anarchists, other individualists, etc. Tucker may not have always won — and he could get quite nasty at times — but the intellectual honesty and excitement of the debates were quite remarkable. Unfortunately, many of the debates during *Liberty*'s later years seemed to involve more hair-splitting than genuine intellectual discourse.

It isn't clear how many people read *Liberty*. It probably never had more than 600 to 1000 subscribers, but it was undoubtedly read by more than that. Clearly within the anarchist and free thought press, *Liberty* was regularly commented upon. And as Tucker pointed out once, subscribers included a wide range of professionals.³⁰ And *Liberty* had considerable influence in radical and anarchist circles in England, France, Germany and Australia.³¹

No one has yet done a complete study of the importance of *Liberty* in the history of American radicalism. It has been suggested

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that a study of **Liberty** and the circle of followers around it might change the way historians look at the history of American radicalism.³² Certainly Tucker by his creation, in a very real sense nurtured, formed, chronicled and preserved an American individualist anarchist tradition.

In addition to **Liberty**, Tucker was involved in an ambitious program of book publishing. Many of the books he published were first serialized in **Liberty**. At times he had to set aside work on **Liberty** in order to have the funds and time to complete a book project (as was the case with the publication of Stirner's **The Ego and His Own**). In fact, Tucker published many of the most important anarchist works from America and Europe (mostly individualist works but not limited to them). He brought back old classics, translated and published previously inaccessible works, and acted as publisher to a number of American and English authors. Tucker translated and published Bakunin's **God and the State**, and works by Proudhon and Elisee Reclus; and published works by, among others, Ezra Heywood, Herbert Spencer, Auberon Herbert, Stephen Pearl Andrews, Paul Eltzbacher, Lysander Spooner, William B. Greene, Charles Dana, and Edmund Burke.

Tucker also had sophisticated literary tastes which were reflected in his interest in and publication of a great deal of European, and especially French, avant-garde literature. He commissioned G.B. Shaw's devastating critique of Max Nordau's *Degeneration*, which he then published separately. He published pieces by Tolstoy, including his own translation (from the French) of Tolstoy's controversial **Kreutzer Sonata**. He also translated and published Chernyshevsky's **What's To Be Done**, and published works by John Henry Mackay, Oscar Wilde, Emile Zola, and Felix Pyat.

In early 1900, Tucker organized the Tucker Publishing Company with some of his own money and a few thousand dollars from a number of investors. He hoped to broaden the base of anarchist thought and to indulge his love of avant-garde literature. The company's own financial problems as well as poor general economic conditions forced the company to fold in less than a year. But by then Tucker had already published over sixty pamphlets in the "Balzac Library" which included such authors as Maximilian Harden, Maurice Baring, Joseph Jacobs, Vernon Lee, and Grant Allen. Tucker even translated and published Octave Mirbeau's **A Chambermaid's Diary**, having guessed incorrectly that the book would be

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banned, and that the resulting uproar would bring about enough sales to save the company.³³

In his writing, Tucker could be maddeningly dogmatic. In his book-publishing ventures and in his two literary magazine ventures, one gets the sense of a man of broad tastes. He added cultural sophistication to the political interests of anarchism. He published, no doubt, what pleased him. But what pleased him included a wide range of authors and topics outside of the usual literary and political interests of anarchism and in many ways complimentary to them.

Tucker's literary contribution to a culturally isolated America went beyond the publication of books. In 1889 and then again a year later, Tucker published two short-lived literary magazines. **The Transatlantic** ran for sixteen bi-monthly issues from October 15, 1889 through June 1, 1890, and **Five Stories a Week** ran for eleven weeks from March 22 until May 31, 1890.

The Transatlantic was the more important effort. His intentions, as stated in the first issue, were:

to make easily accessible to the people of this continent the best fruits of the thought and literature of the other, and to inform them of the other's progress in art, society, and life.

[**The Transatlantic**] exists for the purpose of lessening the enormous waste of good work due to barriers of nature, nationality, and language.³⁴

In each issue, readers were presented with pieces of fiction and music, and articles on literature, science, art, society, and politics. While it was true to its subtitle — "A Mirror of European Life and Letters" — French authors and periodicals were most often represented, reflecting Tucker's own interests and translating abilities. For all of that the list of contributors was impressive and included Henrik Ibsen, Victor Hugo, Edward Grieg, Michel Glinka, Guy de'Maupassant, Louise Michel, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Alexander Dumas, Emile Zola, and Arthur Schopenhauer.

The Transatlantic probably had a short life because it didn't get the readership necessary for its financial survival. While it is not mentioned in Frank Luther Mott's standard work on American magazines, **The Transatlantic** did stand out among those few magazines of its day that concentrated on continental and French culture. For instance, the **Boston Herald** was to report that:

The Transatlantic gives a more distinct emphasis of European

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life and letters than has ever before been placed upon them in an American periodical.³⁵

Tucker never mentioned himself or his other ventures in *The Transatlantic*. One wouldn't know he was the publisher or, probably, the translator of much of the material that was printed. In some ways, it was a venture disconnected from his other work. Yet it is not difficult to see how this effort fit well with his larger Weltanschauung. It was a continuation of his institutional efforts to create and nurture a larger tradition. In this case the most striking thing about *The Transatlantic* was its internationalist perspective, which, on a literary level, was consonant with Tucker's political internationalism.

In another sense, much of the literature published was a response to "modernity,"³⁶ to the cultural and personal dislocations caused by the rending of traditional forms of community and interaction by the rise of the State and monopoly capitalism. Whether anarchist political writings or avant garde literature, what Tucker chose to print responded to these changes. Tucker's anarchist vision itself allowed for a diversity and creativity of the sort embodied in *The Transatlantic's* literary offerings.

From the sixth issue of *Liberty*, Tucker offered a steadily rising number of books for sale through the mails, including books and pamphlets he published and titles from other publishers. The list of available titles grew and in 1906 Tucker began work on opening a bookshop in New York City. The first catalogue came out in August 1906 under the title:

Benj. R. Tucker's Unique Catalogue of Advanced Literature:
The Literature that makes for Egoism in Philosophy, Anarchism in Politics, Iconoclasm in Art.

Tucker stocked almost 5000 titles in English, French, Italian, and German (having a separate catalogue for each language). The *New York Herald* described "Benj. R. Tucker's Unique Bookshop" as dispensing

more anarchist literature than from any other one place in the United States and more, probably, than from all other similar distributing places put together.³⁷

The bookselling effort was obviously an extension of Tucker's efforts to build and maintain a radical, an anarchist, and especially an individualist tradition. For those in the hinterland, it was one of the relatively few places from which such books could be ordered.

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The bookstore also served an important function as a gathering place for the political and literary avant garde in New York City; including Emma Goldman and Eugene O'Neill for instance. As one of O'Neill's biographers reported, "Eugene's first step in self-education was into Benjamin R. Tucker's *The Unique Book Shop* . . ."³⁸ It is easy to imagine the affect of such a place on many individuals.

During the early years of the twentieth century, Tucker's writing and publishing became less frequent. When a fire broke out in his bookshop and office, Tucker felt much of his life's work had gone up in smoke too. As he wrote in an autobiographical sketch:

In January 1908, a disastrous fire in New York City put an end to my career, virtually wiping out all the work that I had done in the previous thirty years . . .³⁹

At about this same time he entered into a romantic partnership with Pearl Johnson and they had a child on November 9, 1908. The next month the Johnson/Tucker family left for France. While he had vowed to return to anarchist publishing from France, Tucker never did. His pre-eminent role in the individualist anarchist movement was to become largely titular. He did write occasional articles, but he mostly confined himself to letters, miscellaneous translations, and to his set of notebooks of press clippings and comments.

One can only speculate about why Tucker so quickly abandoned his career. Certainly the fire was a huge financial and personal loss (Tucker had refused to insure his offices). While he had received a comfortable inheritance in 1904, it would not go too far in the United States. And as Tucker often pointed out, France was a much cheaper - as well as a much more pleasant - place to live.

Tucker may well have been exhausted by the effort he had expended for anarchism for 36 years - he was 54 in 1908. Together with a full time job, he had been totally involved with writing and publishing for the cause. As Joseph Ishill once suggested, this may have taken its own toll:

He seemed to me so much better than his ideas, which held him like a suit of iron armor, locked on him, and from which he could never get out.⁴⁰

The fire may have afforded him an opportunity to get out.

One cannot discount his new interest in family life. Tucker's growing attachment to Pearl Johnson and their little girl Oriole was quite apparent. As he said in 1925: "It has been my endeavor

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in my later years to realize *The Anarchist at home*, and it seems to me that my effort in this line has not been entirely vain."⁴¹

For all of the remarkable work he had done as guardian of the individualist anarchist movement, it had already lost most of its bonding force when Tucker left for France. Part of the reason for this was no doubt Tucker's strong, and often dogmatic, personality; and the fact that there was no one else who had the vision and strength to take his place. There was a circle of individualist anarchists who did carry on but they went in many different directions. Already in February of 1908, Harry Kelly was to write that "the Individualist wing has lost so much ground that it can hardly be called a movement In short, Mr. Tucker is the 'movement'."⁴²

The influence of egoism and Max Stirner was probably a factor in the decline of the movement, leading **Liberty** away from its earlier interest and concern for social issues and activism. The poverty of the individualists' answer to the questions of means and strategy was clearly evident, and troubled many within the individualist circle. Wanting to "do something," there were numerous "defections" to other radical movements that promised some practical method of dealing with authority; whether it was to Communist anarchism, the labor movement, or to the Georgist movement. With respect to the latter, for instance:

a large number of philosophical Anarchists, without ceasing to cherish their own large ideal, have felt it incumbent on them to join the Single Tax movement and to work faithfully for its success The Single Tax is practical at the present day It is a form of transformation wholly in the direction of a wider liberty.⁴³

These alternatives, no doubt, were seriously flawed themselves; in fact, the case could easily be made that they were more flawed than the individualist anarchist position. But as **Liberty** lost much of its interest in method, it also lost much of its contemporary relevance.

In another subtle but terribly important way, **Liberty** had lost touch with the times. Over the years, it had become hide-bound; holding to old issues and old ways of presenting its case for anarchism. This is not a matter of necessarily changing the philosophy, but rather one of constantly renewing its relevance — as Tucker himself had done with what he had taken from Warren

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and Proudhon. Tucker was quite aware that:

to a certain extent **Liberty**, like the rest of the world, floats with the tide, and the development of her philosophy is governed by the progress of affairs.⁴⁴

Neither Tucker nor any other writer in the circle, was able to infuse **Liberty** with a new language of individualism.

At the same time, the social and political scene had changed dramatically. In the early years of **Liberty**, the 1880s and 1890s, there was a hopefulness of spirit. The obstacles to anarchism were staggering but through the concerted efforts of education, non-violent resistance, and through the natural workings of equal liberty and competition, Tucker thought that liberty and justice would prevail at some point in the unknown future. Years later, Tucker saw things differently. The State's power had grown in many and nefarious ways; as had the forms and power of the four monopolies. In his famous 1911 postscript to "State Socialism and Anarchism," Tucker gave expression to his pessimism by saying that "The Anarchistic remedy was still applicable" in 1888. But:

Today the way is not so clear. The four monopolies, unhindered, have made possible the modern development of the trust, and the trust is now a monster which, I fear, even the freest competition, could it be instituted, would be unable to destroy.⁴⁵

Tucker felt that the force of monopoly could only be broken by "forces political or revolutionary."⁴⁶ But he feared that unless individualist anarchists continued their efforts to show that competition and voluntarism were the only real, long-term solutions for society, any great levelling of the monopolies would merely lead to a new series of monopolies of greater oppressive authority. Tucker warned that "education is a slow process, and for this reason we must hope that the day of readjustment may not come too quickly."⁴⁷

Nineteen years later, in a letter dated July 22, 1930, Tucker remarked that the situation had gotten even worse:

The matter of my famous 'Postscript' now sinks into insignificance; the insurmountable obstacle to the realization of Anarchy is no longer the power of the trusts, but the indisputable fact that our civilization is in its death throes. We may last a couple of centuries yet; on the other hand, a decade may precipitate our finish.⁴⁸

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Tucker's belief in the "idea of progress" had been torn from him. He was spared from witnessing the spectacle of death that was World War II by his death on June 22, 1939.

Too dependent on one man, American individualist anarchism went into a period of hibernation. The theoretical and institutional framework that Tucker had done so much to build has since been battered by the rush of many terrible events in the 20th Century. It is not difficult, therefore, to share some of Tucker's late pessimism. The social edifice — the "cathedral" — to which he contributed so much, may indeed be beyond repair. But we do not know that. And as a social ideal, Tucker's clear insights, his vision of liberty and justice, his emphasis on education, and his hints on method all offer us a great deal.

Far from being the failure he once feared he was, Tucker's legacy represents a remarkable success. There is a rich tradition to draw upon and an important institutional example to recognize. This volume is but one sign that his contribution is being reconsidered and newly appreciated.

Footnotes

1. Benjamin R. Tucker, **Instead of a Book** (New York: Benj. R. Tucker, Publisher, 1893), p. ix. The full run of **Liberty** was reprinted in hard copy in 1970 by the Greenwood Reprint Corp. A microfiche edition of **Liberty** is available from Michael E. Coughlin, Publisher. In 1982, Michael E. Coughlin, Publisher, also published **Liberty 1881-1908: A Comprehensive Index**, compiled by Wendy McElroy.
2. Tucker, "Are Anarchists Thugs?," **Liberty** 359(1899):3.
3. Irving Levitas, **The Unterrified Jeffersonian: Benjamin R. Tucker** (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1974), p. 421.
4. Lewis Coser, Charles Kadushin, and Walter Powell, **Books: The Culture and Commerce of Publishing** (New York: Basic Books, 1982), pp. 3 & 362.
5. See, for instance, David DeLeon, **The American as Anarchist: Reflections on Indigenous Radicalism** (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); and Eunice Minette Schuster, **Native American Anarchism** (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970).
6. Theodore Parker, "The Political Destination of America and the Signs of the Times," in Perry Miller, ed., **The American Transcendentalists** (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1957), pp. 350 & 351.
7. See, for instance, Lewis Perry, **Radical Abolitionism: Anarchy and the Government of God in Antislavery Thought** (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973).

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8. Tucker, "State Socialism and Anarchism: How Far They Agree, and Wherein They Differ," *Liberty* 1 20(1888):3. This article was originally written for the **North American Review** in 1886. When they didn't publish it, Tucker did a few years later. It is one of the best and most famous discussions of individualist anarchism. All subsequent page references to this article are to the edition published in 1972 by Ralph Myles Publishers, Inc., Colorado Springs. That edition also includes Tucker's gloomy 1911 postscript, as well as "The Attitude of Anarchism Toward Industrial Combinations" (1899) and "Why I am an Anarchist" (1892). The cited quote appears on page 20 of this edition.
9. For more biographical information, see James J. Martin's entry on Tucker in Robert Livingston Schuyler, ed., **Dictionary of American Biography**, Volume 22, Supplement 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 669-671. Also see Steven T. Byington's obituary in **Man!**, August, 1939, pp. 5 & 6.
10. See Tucker's chapter in Emania Sachs, **The Terrible Siren: Victoria Woodhull, 1838-1927** (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1928), p. 242.
11. Tucker, **Instead of a Book**. On Warren, see William Bailie, **Josiah Warren: The First American Anarchist** (Boston: Small, Maynard, & Co., 1906).
12. This comment appeared in an ad Tucker had in *Liberty* for "Portraits of Proudhon," *Liberty* 8(1881):4. On Proudhon, see George Woodcock, **Pierre-Joseph Proudhon** (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), and Robert L. Hoffman, **Revolutionary Justice: The Social and Political Theory of P.-J. Proudhon** (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972).
13. Tucker, **State Socialism and Anarchism**, p. 20. For an interesting introduction to Tucker's anarchism, see Carl Watner, "Benjamin Tucker and His Periodical, *Liberty*," **Journal of Libertarian Studies**, Fall, 1977, pp. 307-318.
14. Tucker, "Liberty the Mother of Order," *Liberty* 27(1882):2.
15. Tucker, "Mr. Blodgett's Final Question," *Liberty* 123(1888):5; and Tucker, "Rights," *Liberty* 261(1893):3.
16. This social aspect of Tucker's position is quite important, and it has been rarely appreciated. One good discussion of this point, however, is Richard P. Hiskes, "Community in the Anarcho-Individualist Society: The Legacy of Benjamin Tucker," **Social Anarchism**, October, 1980, pp. 41-52.
17. Tucker. "Rights," *Liberty* 261 (1893):3.
18. Tucker, "Economic Empiricism," *Liberty* 111(1887):5.
19. Tucker. "Trying to Be, and Not to Be," *Liberty* 126 (1888):5. For Spencer's formulation, see his **Social Statics** (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1970), p. 95.
20. Tucker, "Our Purpose," *Liberty* 1(1881):2.
21. Tucker, **State Socialism and Anarchism**, p. 14.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
23. Quoted in Joseph Ishill, **Free Vistas: A Libertarian Outlook on Life and Letters**, Volume 2 (Berkeley Heights, N.J.: Oriole Press, 1937), p. 270.
24. Tucker, **State Socialism and Anarchism**, p. 22.

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25. Tucker, "What We Mean," *Liberty* 19(1882):2.
26. Ishill, *Free Vistas*, p. 270.
27. Tucker, "On Picket Duty," *Liberty* 107(1887):1.
28. Edward Shils, "Intellectuals, Tradition, and the Traditions of Intellectuals," *Daedalus*, Spring 1972, pp. 23 & 25.
29. Tucker, "Prospectus," *Radical Review*, May, 1877, inside front cover.
30. Tucker, "Are Anarchists Thugs'," *Liberty* 359(1899):4.
31. See, for instance, Wendy McElroy, "Benjamin Tucker, Individualism, and Liberty," *Literature of Liberty*, Autumn, 1981, pp. 7-39.
32. See Herbert G. Gutman's introduction to the Greenwood Reprint Corporation's 1970 reprint of *Liberty*.
33. For a list of the titles published by Tucker (but not including the 72 pamphlets in the "Balzac Library" or the four pamphlets in the "Bacon Library"), see Levitas, *The Unterrified Jeffersonian*, pp. 193-195.
34. Tucker, *The Transatlantic*, October 15, 1889, p. 1.
35. As reported in *The Transatlantic*, November 15, 1889, inside front cover.
36. See, for instance, Peter L. Berger, *Facing Up to Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), especially Chapter Six, "Toward a Critique of Modernity."
37. "Only Books That Teach Anarchy Are Sold in This Sixth Avenue Shop," *New York Herald*, April 12, 1908, Third Section, p. 6.
38. Arthur and Barbara Gelb, **O'Neill** (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 119.
39. Levitas, *The Unterrified Jeffersonian*, p. 204.
40. Ishill, *Free Vistas*, p. 282. In a letter to Joseph Ishill, April 9, 1935, Tucker wrote, "It seems paradoxical to say so, but it is the literal truth that I forgot myself in my determination to express myself," Levitas, *The Unterrified Jeffersonian*, p. 315.
41. Levitas, *The Unterrified Jeffersonian*, p. 417.
42. Harry Kelly, "Anarchism: A Plea for the Impersonal," *Mother Earth*, February, 1908, pp. 555 & 556.
43. James F. Morton, Jr., "Philosophical Anarchism and the Single Tax," *The Single Tax Review*, October 15, 1906, p. 17.
44. Tucker, "Liberty's Weapon," *Liberty* 4(1881):3.
45. Tucker, *State Socialism and Anarchism*, pp. 24 & 25.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
47. *Ibid.*, p.25.
48. Ishill, *Free Vistas*, pp. 300 & 301.