

The Revolt of the Unique

Renzo Novatore

1921

To comrade Carlo Molaschi with strength of mind and serenity of thought

I

I don't want to dictate moral maxims to my "neighbor," or teach anyone anything... I leave this task to the missionaries of all faiths, the priests of all churches, the demagogues of all parties, the apostles of all ideas.

I only want to howl my extreme rebellion against everything that oppresses me; I only want to push far away from me everything that the religious, socialist, or libertarian priesthood wants to impose on my individuality without me having freely accepted and wanted it.

Digging into the underground of my depths, I have been able to penetrate the mystery of my "I" (emotional—spiritual—physical—instinctive); I have been able to discover my will and my power; I have been able to take possession of my "uniqueness."

The dogmatic frogs of societarianism and the geese of the ideal croaked, but their croaking only served to fill my heart with intoxication and distill poisons in my words.

The theoretical and philosophical chattering of the ruling plebeian "wisdom" no longer moves me, just like the choreographic demonstrations of starving mobs or those of the people cheering new redeeming Jesuses no longer move me...

I have a personal truth of my own that isn't and can't be universal "truth." I am guided by an instinct, by a feeling, by a dream, that are only the trilogy composing the unique ideal that is my individuality. Individuality that nobody except me and my power can make strong, free, and happy!...

I don't deny to anyone the beauty of their ideas, the strength of their dream, and the truth of their thought.

I know that everyone may lock within himself precious mines filled with unknown treasures; I know that where a human being lives there is—or can be—a world with all its lands and seas, its joys and sorrows, its sun and stars, its loves and hates.

Let each human being therefore work—if he thinks this way—at the discovery of his own I, at the realization of his own dream, at the complete integration and full development of his own individuality. Every human being who has discovered and won himself walks on his own path and follows his free course.

But let no one come to me to impose his belief, his will, his faith on me. By denying god, fatherland, authority, and law, I have achieved anarchism. By refusing to sacrifice myself on the altar of the people and of humanity, I have achieved individualism.

Now I am free...

The war that I opened against phantoms has ended with my victory. Now the cycle of a new war has opened!

The war against the brute force of society, of the people, of humanity. Against these terrible and colossal monsters that aren't ashamed to dare to act against the unique and the brutal force of their thousand monstrous arms, I "authorize" myself to defend myself with all the weapons that it is possible for me to dare to use: with all those means that I have the power and the ability to make use of. Without scruples!

Because I am one who really follows himself!

I cultivate the flowers of my garden and I quench my thirst at my own springs.

If for you my flowers are poisonous and my waters bitter, to me instead they fill the heart with a fierce joy and give me wild and heroic quivers in the flesh and spirit.

When I think of the claims of missionaries and teachers; of moralists and educators, I get the desire to laugh.

You are utterly absurd, oh lost soul. You are a poor lunatic who lives in the moral (?). You are an exaggeration; you walk a false and wrong path. Your 'morale' is fierce, your principle is 'cruel'! So, more or less, the knowing "sages" of universal happiness want to talk to me, the stammering fools of "good" and "evil," those who have discovered "truth" and buried "lies"...

Now god is dead, they say, the fatherland is destroyed, authority has collapsed. Forward, everywhere, young people, for the proletarian international, for the joy of knowing universal happiness. And anyone who won't die for this 'sacred cause' is a fierce 'egoist,' a 'wicked' person, a 'traitor'! It seems they want to say, or rather they do say, *The human being doesn't count; the idea counts; Humanity counts!*

And I, poor microscopic insect, poor powerless cell diseased with Stirner's "fierce egoism"—not to mention infected by arrogant Zarathustrian overhumania—am something less than nothing, an invisible particle that is of no use at all except as raw material put at the disposal of the great architects of the universe; except as a sacrificial beast to give in fiery slaughter to the goddess "humanity," to the god "people" or to the Sun of the future...

II

Comrade Carlo Molaschi will think: but of what use is this whole sermon of Renzo Novatore's, made as a prelude to a polemical writing dedicated to me?

Don't I also know these things?

Aren't they also old things of the Earth and the Sun?

But he will add: *The individualist current of anarchism threatened—and perhaps still threatens—to degenerate into absurdity (?). Stirner with his gospel of fierce egoism, has tried to slaughter human feeling in the individual; and the presumptuous egoism of the overhuman has led many comrades to the adoration of his own I.*

And he will continue: *But anarchist individualism should not* (pay attention to the "should not": I am the one who has emphasized it) *be either the ferocity of the Unique, nor the arrogance of Zarathustra.*

Mutual aid, solidarity, and love are necessities of life!

Let's leave aside for a moment the "fierce egoism of Stirner's Unique" that is so cruelly fierce as to affirm that he is only "hostile" to all that is "dark." Let's leave aside for now that cynical "slaughterer of human feeling" (I say liberator of human feeling) who said: "My egoism is not opposed to love, is not the enemy of sacrifice and self-denial... and not even of socialism, in short, not the enemy of actual interests, and rebels not against love, but against sacred love, not against thought, but against sacred thought, not against socialism but against sacred socialism."¹ But—as I said—let's leave aside for a moment this terrible "slaughterer of human feeling" and with him let's also leave aside that "arrogant and presumptuous Zarathustra" or, to be more precise, Friedrich Nietzsche; that cruel Friedrich Nietzsche, who is without a doubt the highest bard of humanity, and the strongest and deepest—and let's get to ourselves.

Thus, that "should not" that I noted earlier starts to mean that individualism SHOULD be what he—Carlo Molaschi—preaches!

And when he says: "Mutual aid, brotherhood, love are needs of life!" (he once said—see the magazine *Libertà*, #7, November 1, 1913: "I despise solidarity, I feel that I am a stranger to humanity"), I respond that while admitting that they are a necessity, they are not and cannot be "a reality"! I say it of universal and particular reality.

Reality is hatred, enmity, war! Carlo Molaschi will answer: it is necessary to smash this reality; once he said (see the writing of his cited above): *I have no need to believe or hope in any Paradise, or to delude myself that my existence has to cooperate in making way for human progress*; but that Judas comes to create the other "reality" that is necessary here! And we still accept this as well... but for hundreds of centuries, prophets have announced this new "reality," martyrs have fallen, rebels have died, heroes have gone up on the guillotine, but with each day that passes, the hatred floods more strongly over the world, the mania for authority increases frightfully in every human heart, wars multiply and the "masses," the "crowds," the "proletarians"—despite illusory appearances—become more and more weary, more and more cowardly, more and more craven.

Molaschi will say (see "We and the Mass" in issue 9 of *Nichilismo*, August 24, 1920): "We ourselves are children of the people (what a marvelous father!), we feel the very suffering of the mass"; he once said (see *Libertà* cited above): "I live among human beings who seem similar to me; but I am not like them. They are refined or dissatisfied; I am restive, attentive to the reins of the law"; and he suffers under the yoke of a habit.

But I respond: the dream of workers is not my dream. The longings of the people are not my longings, the pains of the mass are not my pains!...

I feel the sorrow of my depth and the bitterness of what is impossible to me!

A crust of black bread is enough to satisfy the mass, but my longings cannot be satisfied!

It's true that Carlo Molaschi gleefully tubs his hands and says: *The Italian Syndicalist Union is strongly influenced by our ideas, many of its spokespeople are our comrades, we have a daily paper of national importance read by more than thirty five thousand people...* He once said (see *Il Ribelle* issue 6, January 2, 1915): *Anarchists have been and are much too concerned with proselytizing. Conferences and papers on propaganda...just to convince idiots who never knew how and never will know how to 'feel' any ideal to call themselves anarchists.*

¹ This is a paraphrase of this passage from Stirner's Critics: "Egoism, as Stirner uses it, is not opposed to love nor to thought; it is no enemy of the sweet life of love, nor of devotion and sacrifice; it is no enemy of intimate warmth, but it is also no enemy of critique, nor of socialism, nor, in short, of any actual interest. It doesn't exclude any interest. It is directed against only disinterestedness and the uninteresting; not against love, but against sacred love, not against thought, but against sacred thought, not against socialists, but against sacred socialists, etc."

—But I still laugh skeptically at these new Molaschian enthusiasms as he once laughed skeptically when he stated that “anarchists are born and not made” and that he didn’t give a damn for the “future” since he was “free” having made himself the “purpose of his life.”

Carlo Molaschi says (see the comment he made to Vivani’s writing “I Will Be Pure,” published in issue 5 of *Pagine Libertarie*): “... the human being is free in so far as he lives in harmony with nature and with his likes.” He once said (quoting that “arrogant and presumptuous” “man of genius” who then had “ideas like his”): “The weak and infirm die. First principle of our love for the human being. We need rather to help them disappear.”

But I cannot live in “universal” harmony with my “likes” for the simple reason that they are not... and cannot be—for the reason that I have already outlined in the prelude of this piece of mine—my “likes.”

My likes are few in the relative sense and none at all in the absolute sense. So with the few that are like me in the “relative” sense, I remain in agreement against the multitude; in the absolute sense I remain alone—Unique—against them and the others. They become in their turn the “weak,” and the “infirm,” for me!

But now I seem to have wandered far enough.

So let’s stop!

Carlo Molaschi will smile ironically and say: *That fine devil Renzo Novatore has put out my old articles for scrutiny to show my contradictions, but by doing this he manages to do nothing other than to “show” how much ignorance he still holds in his mind. He ignores the laws... of evolution!*

Well, no, comrade Molaschi, it is not through pure and simple ignorance that I have done all this. No!

I did it for quite another reason...

I know what I wanted to note in you, you could—at least in the reverse direction—note it in myself and in all those who are not crystallized fossils.

But I did it just to show you that it is, at least, ridiculous to state that individualism “should” be that of Tucker and not that of Stirner. “Should” be this and “should” not be that!...

As far as the negating concept of anarchism we walk together; when anarchism becomes individualist, every individuality follows his or her own path. Yes, human beings evolve!

At eighteen years of age, when experience is zero and the mind is excited by reading books very poorly understood, one can—at times—take on the menacing appearance of the overhuman; but later, when experience starts to analyze life then one evolves...

And in evolving one now denies everything that one affirmed yesterday!

And that’s fine.

But no one has the “obligation” or the “duty” to follow the single path of our evolution... or devolution!...

Because someone who followed the evolution of Giovanni Papini would have ended up in church with him; one who followed Libero Tancredi ends up in interventionism and fascism; one who follows Renzo Novatore could end up one day with him in a lunatic asylum—perhaps a “libertarian communist” one. And one who would follow Carlo Molaschi might end up—how do I say it?—as Carlo Molaschi will end up!

And this is why, oh my friend, I am against that “should” which you, in my opinion, still pronounce with too much ease...

You see? If I am supposed to say something to these “likes”—who are not my likes—especially to the young ones—I will say this to them: Beware oh young spirits! Beware of the old sirens!

The old have ideas that cannot be those of youth. So seek again your cast-off selves. Discover yourselves. Don't let yourselves be violated! Old Tolstoy is a majestic, unshakable, gigantic figure. But I would pity any youth who professed the ideas of this old man!

Before coming to christianity, Papini passed through all rebellions. Then tired, exhausted, finished, he threw himself down on the bed of weakness, of impotence, of senility. He cast himself upon the bosom of "our mother church"!

Discover yourselves, oh young ones! Dig into yourselves. In each of you there must be precious mines of unknown treasures. But if in digging into your I you find nothing, don't look for anything in anyone. The most real and precious jewels would transmute into false stones in your hands. Because "anarchists are born and not made," as comrade Molaschi once said...

III

"The anti-society perspective that tried several years ago to make inroads in the movement of anarchist ideas," Molaschi says, "has faded."

But all this that comrade Carlo Molaschi affirms is not entirely true...

It's true that with the daily paper *Umanità Nova*, the conferences, the unions, the workerism, the organizations, anarchism has ended up making itself official and becoming a party.

It's true that comrade Carlo Molaschi feels a great "joy" in finding himself in agreement with comrade Damiani; that he is "satisfied" to be in agreement with Luigi Fabbri and that he "shares" Malatesta's ideas.

It's true that Carlo Molaschi wants to make a mark, "orienting" individualism in his way!

But it's still not true that the "anti-society" current of individualism has completely faded into the heaven of anarchy.

There is still some "wild" reprobate, in the midst of so much paternal democratic domesticity, who holds the "barbaric" banner of anti-society individualism!

Yes: there is still someone...

IV

First of all, we need to come to a bit of an agreement about what "anti-society" means.

I am not a misanthrope and so much the less a misogynist...

I need friends and lovers, clothes and bread. I am not an anchorite or a saint in the desert.

But there's no need to be such a thing in order to be anti-society. Being anti-society means—for me—not collaborating in the preservation of the present society nor lending one's efforts to any new social construction.

I said it once before:

Every society you build will have its fringes, and on the fringes of every society, heroic and restless vagabonds will wander, with their wild and virgin thoughts, only able to live by preparing ever new and terrible outbreaks of rebellion!

I shall be among them!

And if materialistic "needs" force me to go toward society, the "necessity" to be free sets me against it and gives birth in me to a third "need." That of doing violence to it. Without scruples!

This is my "anti-society" perspective. And if we happened to speak of so-called "progress" I could even affirm—without fear of going wrong—that the triumph and the glory of the human path are due only to the spirit that informs this anti-society principle of individualism.

V

Carlo Molaschi who has launched himself with fury against the overhuman to throw it into the sea and against Stirner's "association of egoists" to make it suffer the same end; now he

proclaims with the impulse of faith B. R. Tucker's "association of the free," because—he says—"Tucker in his project of the association of the free allows that minorities, when they don't agree with majorities, can split (oh, strange miracle!...) from the association and create another one of their own."

But I bet that Carlo Molaschi knows much better than me what "might" be—or rather—what "is" hidden in that: "when they don't agree"!

Yes: Molaschi knows!...

VI

The word "Freedom" taken in itself is a negation: nothing—death!

Freedom is a propulsion towards power—it is the strength of conquest and the capacity for possession.

(I have had the capacity to free myself from that tiresome old lover of mine; because I had the capacity and the power, I have taken the liberty of gathering this new flower).

Living means doing good and bad to others. No one can live without hurting anyone...

Living means: dominating and being dominated!

With the realization of the unpleasant authoritarian communism of the socialists, the rulers would be a slimy handful of demagogues, vulgar, cunning insects; plebeian slaves in their turn of a dogma.

In realizing libertarian communism, the great majority would be the ruling Goddess. But libertarian communism (which is the dream of those who hate conflict and battle—which is youth and life—and for which they are nonetheless a quick, strange paradoxical contradiction, to make war in the name of equality and peace) would have to take extreme measures against those who want to come out, advance, rise up to a more ample affirmation of individual life.

Libertarian communism would then be forced to repress in order to preserve itself. But its materialistic preservation would be the categorical negation of the very spirit that informs and exalts it!

And here we are finally at anarchy—I admit that one can speak of this as a social realization of human life together. "Anarchy" would thus be nothing more nor less than the triumph of the higher "type."

Radically vanished—because even the lowliest of all human beings would have had to go beyond it—the as-stupid-as-it-is-vulgar right to private property and everything that is "material good." The spiritual dominator remains—the one who is noble by nature. He will stand above the others and dominate them.

(No one, I believe, would have the false pretension of levelling ethical, aesthetic, artistic, intellectual, and spiritual values, like physical and sexual values). Because the noble one, even in Anarchy—or rather, in anarchy more than in any other form of human life together—will enjoy pleasure that others would not be able to enjoy, even if he, for love of them, wanted to renounce them. Anarchy is therefore the natural Autocracy of the noble.

A simple test that thousands of other complicated ones are equal to him there. Yesterday a young woman offered herself—marvelous gift—to the charming and noble dominator Pietro Gori.

Today in the whirlpools of misery if a stunted "papa's" boy who nature has condemned bought her! He has enjoyed with money the fruit that in Anarchy he would never have been able to enjoy. And I'm no longer able to argue that in anarchy a cobbler is the same as a genius or that a hunchback is equal to an Adonis.

We can give both the same bread, but not the same pleasures.

And if it is true that friendship and love give joy and pleasure, I would just like to ask any anarchist if he can give his old semi-idiotic doorman what, in fact, he gives to Errico Malatesta in love and friendship.

I would just like to ask a few of our free and intelligent woman comrades if she can give to any nasty, conceited, vain, ambitious “comrade” what she willingly concedes to a kind, cultivated, loving, good comrade...

I repeat: Anarchy—for me—means: Autocracy of beauty, of genius, of art, and of all those who possess the willful and selective qualities suitable for dominating and that mother nature—justly or unjustly—grants and lavishes so generously on a few, while she denies them to most, as if the latter were her bastard children!

And if the overhuman that you—oh comrade Molaschi—have thrown with implacable fury into the stormy waves of the sea, were that elect—superior—type to which I just now alluded, it’s enough that he rise up again out of the waters more beautiful and stronger than before, since this race is an immortal race.

Everyone can be levelled before society (we are all equal before god!...) but the selective-individual values remain. They remain and dominate!

And for these and a thousand other reasons, in my relations with the present society, I declare myself “united” with Stirner’s Unique, and in my posthumous relations with the future society of distant becoming, I feel drawn toward the Antichrist and Zarathustra transformed and purified in the sun of my thought.

Of course, I am neither Max Stirner, nor Friedrich Nietzsche. Rather, halfway, between me and them there might be a fearful depth powerfully dug out by the mystic

Tolstoy, or the high and dreadful peaks illuminated by the voluptuously tormented spirit of Ibsen, as there could also be the conflagration of the pure and perverse Wildean mind!

VII

Dear Molaschi, I am at the end. The polemic with you is done.

As you have seen, more than a polemic, it is a confession and a declaration.

I believe you’ve understood me.

I know that often the form takes hold of my hand and wraps and twists itself around the nakedness of my thought, like a beautiful and perverse female wraps herself around the virile body of the lover, almost managing to hide it from the modest eyes of most.

But this time I believe that it hasn’t been like this.

I have many times, but many times I have decidedly failed...

Then the writing is dedicated to you!

And you are not one of the many!

Your eyes are certainly able to see even a bit in the night...

Even though you don’t share my ideas, I am certain that you understand me.

And that is what I want! Only that...

There was a time when I understood you as flesh of my flesh, feeling my feeling. Now no longer!

And that is why my love toward you fades away among the shadows of a memory, but leaves the torches of the strongest, most sincere admiration lit.

We may have started from the same stream, but we started on the path to two different mountains. If we both reach the peaks we will stretch out our hands over the gulf since we will have conquered fate and overcome the abyss.

And then we will love each other with a different love!

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