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The Forerunners of Anarchism

Translation of the Philosophy of Emile Armand

Emile Armand

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1933

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morally perfect it would not need a state; Wilhelm Humboldt in 1792 defended the thesis of reducing the state to its minimal functions. Alfieri in Italy wrote “Of Tyranny”.

On every side, under one form or another, authority was ceaselessly attacked. Spinoza, Comenius, Voltaire, Lessing, Herder, Condorcet, where libertarians in some way, in some form of literary activity. Fighting against tortures inflicted on heretics, against the severe punishment of crime, against slavery, — for the liberation of women — for a better education of children, against the superstition of religion, and for Materialism. Spee, Thomasius, Beccaria, Sonnenfelds, John Clarkson, Mary Wollstonecraft, Rousseau, Restalozzi, La Mettrie, d’Holbach, undermined the support for authority. One volume would be needed to recall the names of all those who, in one manner or another, contributed to the shaking off of faith in the state and church.

This is why we will end on William Godwin, who because of his “*Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*” (1793) we regard him as the first to be worthy of the name of doctrinaire of Anarchism. It is true that Godwin was a Communist-Anarchist, but his denial of law and state suits the nuances of all Anarchism.

vention replied to him with “The Rights of Man” (1791–2). Because of his opposition to the execution of Louis XVI he was expelled from the Convention and imprisoned. He barely managed to escape the Guillotine. He made use of his time in prison to write “The Age of Reason” (1795). “At all stages society is good, but even at its best, government is only a necessary evil; under its worst aspect it is an intolerable evil... The craft of government has always been monopolized by the most ignorant and most rogue of the individuals of mankind.” In 1796 in Oxford a pamphlet appeared with the title “The Inherent Evils of All State Government demonstrated”, attributed to A.C. Cudden a strong Individualist-Anarchist, which Benjamin R Tucker republished in 1885 in Boston.

Under the influence of the French Revolution a group in London sprang up called the “Pantisocracy” founded by the impulsive young poet Southey, who would later follow the example of Burke and renounce his young dreams. According to Sylvain Marechal — and partly confirmed by Lord Byron — this Epicurean group wished to realise the Abbey of Theleme and share all things between its members including sexual pleasures. According to Marechal, the greatest artists, the greatest scientists, the most famous people in England were members of that group, which was finally broken up by one Bill of Parliament (“Dictionary of Atheists”, at the word: Theleme).

In his “Figures of England” Manuel Devaldes presents the “Pantisocracy” as “a colony project to be established in the United States among the Illinoisans, a colony based on economic equality. Two hours of daily work should suffice for the settlement and subsistence of the settlers”. Apparently, as a result of Southey’s departure and the death of two of the main promoters, the “Pantisocracy” reportedly died before it was born.

In Germany Schiller wrote “The Robbers” whose main character Karl Moor, stands against conventions, against the law, which had never created a superior man whilst freedom generated Collossi and precious people. Fichte says that, if humanity is to be

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they mystical visionaries or isolated Anarchists? The first Quakers were also firmly anti-State.

The Dutch Peter Cornelius Hockboy (1658), the English John Bellers (1695) and Scottish Robert Wallace (1761) promoted voluntary and co-operative socialism. In his “Prospects” (*Various Prospects of Mankind, Nature, and Providence*) Robert Wallace conceived of a humanity consisting of many autonomous districts. The protest against governmental and authoritarian excesses appears in all kinds of pamphlets and satires, sharp and outspoken, which today we no longer have examples. It is enough to cite the names Thomas Hobbes, John Toland, John Wilkes, Swift, De Foe.

We must now talk about the Irishman Edmund Burke and his work “Vindication of Natural Society” (1756) – a justification of the natural society – whose fundamental idea is the following: Whatever the form of government, none is better than any other. “The various kinds of governments compete with each other for the absurdity of their constitutions and the repression they inflict on their subjects... Even the free governments have experienced more confusion and blamed more unquestionably tyrannical actions than the most despotic governments in history.”[translation of text]

“The several Species of Government vie with each other in the Absurdity of their Constitutions, and the Oppression which they make their Subjects endure. Take them under what Form you please, they are in effect but a Despotism, and they fall, both in Effect and Appearance too, after a very short Period, into that cruel and detestable Species of Tyranny; which I rather call it, because we have been educated under another Form, than that this is of worse Consequences to Mankind.” [Actual text from English version of Vindication of Natural Society]

Edmund Burke changed his words. In his “Reflections” (*Reflections on the Revolution in France*) He placed himself in opposition to the French Revolution. The American Paine, a deputy at the Con-

At the end of the storm, Marechal again took up the pen. In 1798 his work “Worship and Laws of a Society without God” (*Culte et lois d’une société d’hommes sans Dieu*). In 1799, “The Voyages of Pythagore” (*Les Voyages de Pythagore*) in six volumes. In 1800 he wrote his great work “Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Atheists” (*Dictionnaire des Athées anciens et modernes*) whose supplement was written by the astronomer Jerome Lalande. Finally in 1807 “On Virtue” (*De le Vertu*) published posthumously, which may have been printed, but did not appear, and which Lalande used for his second supplement to the “Dictionary of Atheists”. Moreover, Napoleon forbade the famous astronomer from writing anything more on Atheism.

In England, we consider Gerard Winstanley and the Levellers as the precursors to Anarchism. John Lilburne, another Leveller denounced authority “under all its forms and aspects”; his fines and terms of imprisonment cannot be counted. He was exiled to the Netherlands, three times the court acquitted him, the last time in 1613 (while he had broken court orders), Cromwell kept him in captivity for “the good of the country” in 1656 he was released and became a Quaker, which did not prevent him from dying soon after in 1657 at the age of 39.⁷

Around 1650 Roger Williams makes himself known, as the governor of the early settlements that would eventually establish the state of Rhode Island, in the United States. And especially one of his partisans William Harris, who spoke out against the immorality of all earthly powers, and the crime of all punishments. Were

⁷ This is an accurate translation of the original text, however the biographical information about John Lilburne is nearly completely incorrect. John Lilburne was not acquitted for the last time in 1613, partly because he was famously acquitted in 1653, but mainly because he was born in 1613 at the earliest with some with some historians believing Lilburne’s date of birth to be in 1614 or 1615

Introduction

Emile Armand (26th of March 1872–19th of February 1962) was the son of a former Commune, that is a participant in the revolution of 1871 that established the Commune of Paris, and was for a time a well-known French Anarchist who moved through many associations and publications, developing his own thoughts and beliefs. In his early days he was sympathetic to a form of Christian Humanism before becoming interested in France’s diverse Anarchist movement. He eventually settled on and was closely associated with what’s called Individual Anarchism. An Anarchistic philosophy that centres free individuals as the foundations of the new society, and as the source of the solutions to the evils of our current society, war, domination, exploitation, capitalism, patriarchy etc.

“If we were animals, herded together in a stockade, then the eating part would be the only real thing that would interest us, and it would not be so important as to whether the trough is coloured Bolshevik-red or Fascist-black (taking it for granted that there is at all a trough), whether the food-distributor carries upon his cap a soviet-star or a fascist insignia or a swastika, the main thing would be the eating part.

But when one doesn’t consider oneself as a stockade-animal, when one doesn’t place the eating above one’s determined, self-acknowledged, ever-developing personality and its traits, then the entire program changes.”

[Emile Armand, Individual and Dictatorship, 1935]

Individual Anarchism or Individualism as its commonly known had strong followings in France and the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It arose partly as a response and

critique of the more orthodox Socialist and Anarchist doctrines. There were many different types of Individualist theory but in general its thrust was to encourage Anarchists to live as closely to their ideals as possible in the present. Essentially act as living propaganda by showing it was possible — enjoyable even! — to live in a society based on mutual respect and liberty.

While convincing others of the correctness of an Anarchistic ideal was important to him he did not limit himself to writing, though he certainly did a lot of that. He was a very active speaker attending many meetings and conferences. He was also no stranger to the law, being sent to prison several times in his life, the first time in 1907 for counterfeiting money, then again in 1917 for his support of desertion, Armand was not only an opponent of the First World War but also a founding member of the Anti-Militarist League (established in 1911), then again in January 1940 for three months, and shortly after release was interred in several camps for 16 months, being released in 1941. He also wasn't afraid to tackle social taboos and was an early advocate for sexual liberation, one of his more infamous stances was his defence of nudism and belief that it holds revolutionary potential.

“It seems to us to be something else entirely than a hygienic fitness exercise or a “naturist” renewal. For us, nudism is a revolutionary demand. Revolutionary in a triple sense: affirmation, protest, liberation.”

[Revolutionary Nudism 1934]

In short, he's a very interesting character. But he seems to have fallen into obscurity in English speaking circles. I discovered the following pamphlet while browsing the webstore of an Esperanto workers association, and picked it up on a whim. I was surprised I was able to read most of it and that many of my difficulties were to do with the subjects and not the language used. The pamphlet was

stone of which came from the shedding of tears and stained with blood. The soldiers sent to bring the men back to their strongholds are converted to freedom, and remain with those they had to enslave again, returning their uniforms to the tyrant, who dies of fury and hunger, devouring himself. This is indisputably a reminder of “Voluntary Serfdom.”

In 1790, he published the “Almanac of Honest Women” decorated with a satirical engraving of the Duchess of Polignac.⁶ By exaggerating the “Almanac of the Honest Men” he replaced every saint with a famous woman. These famous women were separated into 12 classes or “genres” as he put it (1 class for 1 month): January Lesbians; February, sex workers, etc (...) this very rare pamphlet is found only in the hell of the National Library.

Sylvain Marechal greeted the revolution of 1789 with reservations. The first anarchist newspaper in France “The Humanitarian” *L’Humanitaire* (1841) asserted that he declared that so long as there were masters and servants, rich and poor, there would never be liberty nor equality.

Sylvain Marechal continued to promote his works, in 1791 he published “Mother Nature at the Helm of the National Assembly” (*Dame Nature à la barre de l’Assemblée nationale*) in year II (Revolutionary calendar) or 1793 he published “The Last Judgement of the Kings” (*Jugement dernier des rois*) in 1794 “The Festival of Reason” (*La Fete de la Raison*). He worked on the journals “Revolutions of Paris” “The Friend of the Revolution” and “Bulletin of the Friends of Truth”. The Herbertist Chaumatte was a victim of the Terror, but Marechal escaped Robespierre. He would have escaped the persecution of the Thermidorean reaction and the Directory too, had he not gotten involved with the “Manifesto of Equals” or so it is claimed.

⁶ A favourite companion of Marie Antoinette and rumoured to be her lover, this subject was a popular topic among the more lurid pamphlets of the late 1700s.

In the “Revue Socialist” of September 1888, Benoit Malon [the founder and editor] dedicated 10 pages to Don Deschamps a Benedictine monk from the 18th century, a predecessor to Hegelianism, transformism and Anarchist Communism.

And finally, Sylvain Marechal, poet, author, librarian (1750–1803) who was the first to joyously proclaim anarchist ideas, although tainted with Arcadianism. Sylvain Marechal was a political author, who tackled all kinds of subjects. “Shepherds Poems” in (*Bergeries*)1770, and “Anacreontic Songs” (*Chansons anacréontiques*) in 1770, and in 1779 he successfully released pieces on “Moral Poem about God” (*Fragments d’un poème moral sur Dieu*) “The Modern Pibrac” (*Le Pibrac Moderne*) in 1781, and in 1782 “The Golden Time” (*L’Âge d’Or*) and “Shepard’s Fables”; in 1784 “Book escaped from the deluge” (*Livre échappé du déluge*) or “Newly Discovered Psalms”. In 1788 as a sublibrarian at the Mazarin Library, he published “Almanac of Honest Men” (*Almanach des Honnêtes Gens*) in which he replaced the names of Saints with those of famous men and women. He places Jesus Christ between Epicurus and Ninon de l’Enclos. For this, the Almanac was condemned to be burned by **the hand of the executioner and the author sent to St. Lazare** (A prison in France) where he remained for four months. In 1788 his “Modern Apologies for the Crown Prince” (*Apologues modernes, à l’usage d’un dauphin*) appeared. In them is the story of a King who, following a cataclysm, returns home each of his subjects, ordering that, from now on, the head of every family be king in his home. In that work there is the formula of a “general strike” as a method for establishing a society in which the earth is the common possession of all its inhabitants, where “Liberty, Equality, Peace and Innocence” rule. In “The Triumphant Tyranny” he imagines a people that surrender their cities to armed bands of soldiers and seek refuge in the mountains, where divided into families, they will live with no other master than nature, with no other king beyond the family heads, forever renouncing their time in the cities with its costly buildings, each

written in 1933, the Esperanto translation in 1989, and it concerns the philosophical origins of Anarchism throughout history.

Its an interesting topic and I learnt quite a bit reading it and in checking to make sure my translation was as accurate as could be. I started translating it as an exercise to improve my skills with Esperanto, but at the time of writing haven’t found this pamphlet in English, apart from a translation of a later passage on the website Libertarian Labyrinth which was translated from the French language version but was useful to me in proof reading. Though there were a few issues with the text for a modern and general audience.

I don’t know if this is the case but I strongly suspect that “*Les précurseurs de l’anarchisme*” was written purely for the French Anarchist movement, it doesn’t bother to explain what Anarchism is directly and relies on inference from the people and works it cites, so I’ve added a definition that Armand used in another work. It also assumed that the reader would be as familiar with philosophy as Armand was and so he’s a bit light on biographical context in some areas, so I’ve used footnotes to fill in some of the gaps, though I recommend in the event of confusion turning to the web can be instructive, most of the named persons and works have something in English that can be found, though worryingly I could find very little on some of them. In addition to footnotes the text in [] are comments by me to further help fill in the gaps.

I’m also including a short glossary of key terms some of which has less relevance to this text but should help new readers in accessing Armand’s other texts and texts by other authors about Anarchism.

English translations of Emile Armand’s other texts can be found online at the Anarchist Library and the Libertarian Labyrinth.

Reddebrek

The Forerunners of Anarchism

“To be an anarchist is to deny authority and reject its economic corollary: exploitation — and that in all the domains where human activity is exerted. The anarchist wishes to live without gods or masters; without patrons or directors; a-legal, without laws as without prejudices; amoral, without obligations as without collective morals. He wants to live freely, to live his own idea of life.”

[This definition of Anarchism is taken from Emile Armand’s Mini-manual of Individualist Anarchism, written in 1911]

Antiquity

We do not know exactly — and what documents could tell us? — when government or state authority began. Some attribute many reasons to the establishment of authority. As the people formed more and more numerous groups, did it prove necessary to entrust the administration of matters and the solution of the disputes to the most intelligent or the most feared: wizards and priests? Since primitive groups have generally been hostile to each other, has there been a need to centralize environmental defence in the hands of several or one chosen from among the bravest or bravest warriors? Either way, it seems that authority existed before individual ownership. Authority obviously ruled while the lands, objects and in some cases even the children and women were property of the social organisation. The regime of individual property — the possibility for a member of the collective: 1: to seize more land than is necessary to support his family: 2: to exploit the surplus by means of another — only refined, complicated and made more tyrannical the authority whether theocratic or essentially military.

Did the primitives’ rebel against even this rudimentary authority that existed amongst primitive groups? Were there objectors,

relationship, thus achieving by the common and mutual statement of our thoughts a communion of our wills; and since she has tried in every way to narrow and tighten the bond of our union and kinship; since she has revealed in every possible manner her intention, not so much to associate us as to make us one organic whole, there can be no further doubt that we are all naturally free, inasmuch as we are all comrades. Accordingly, it should not enter the mind of anyone that nature has placed some of us in slavery, since she has actually created us all in one likeness.” From this we can deduce a total social system.

[Quotations are from Discourses on Voluntary Servitude]

Modern Times

Monarchy became more and more absolute. Louis XIV reduced half of the “intelligentsia” to a state of servitude and forced the other half to turn to the Dutch press. In the “Longing of enslaved France, which aspires to freedom” (1689–1690) and similar works appeared in Amsterdam, amongst which can be found a few expressions of Anarchism. They had to wait a little for Diderot,⁵ to hear that phrase which sufficiently expresses the whole of Anarchism. “I neither want to give nor receive laws”. In his conversation between a father and his sons (complete works Vol.5 page 301) he gave precedence to the man of nature over the man of law, and to human reason over that of the legislator. Everyone remembers the phrase of Maréchale: “Evil is that which does more harm than advantages, good is the opposite, it has more advantages than harm”. And the parting words of the old man in the “Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville” You two are children of nature, what rights do you have over him, which he does not have over you?” Stirner who came later, would not say it better.

⁵ Denis Diderot 1713–84, French philosopher, novelist and art critic, chief editor of the Encyclopaedia project. And is considered an inspiration to the early thought of the French Revolution.

someone said “let’s play” everyone played. If they said “let’s go to the field” everyone went there.

Rabelais was more Utopian. Another predecessor of Anarchy – and a famous one – is undoubtedly La Boétie (Étienne or Estienne de La Boétie) in his “Against One” or “Discourses on Voluntary Servitude” (1577) whose main idea is the refusal to serve tyrants, whose power springs from the voluntary servitude of the people. “Everyone knows that the fire from a small spark will increase and blaze ever higher as long as it finds wood to burn; yet without being quenched by water, but merely by finding no more fuel to feed on, it consumes itself, dies down, and is no longer a flame. The same goes for the tyrants: the more they are given and served, the more they gain new forces to annihilate and destroy everything. On the contrary, if nothing is given to them, if they are not obeyed, without blow, without battle, they remain naked and defeated, and are annihilated; like a root that without juice, without food, dries up and dies.” “Firmly decide that you will no longer serve, and you are already free”.

La Boétie did not propose a well-defined social organisation. Yet he speaks about nature which has seemingly made all men in the same form and mould ... “If in distributing her gifts nature has favoured some more than others with respect to body or spirit, she has nevertheless not planned to place us within this world as if it were a field of battle, and has not endowed the stronger or the cleverer in order that they may act like armed brigands in a forest and attack the weaker. One should rather conclude that in distributing larger shares to some and smaller shares to others, nature has intended to give occasion for brotherly love to become manifest, some of us having the strength to give help to others who are in need of it. Hence, since this kind mother has given us the whole world as a dwelling place, has lodged us in the same house, has fashioned us according to the same model so that in beholding one another we might almost recognize ourselves; since she has bestowed upon us all the great gift of voice and speech for fraternal

disobedient in those times when the climatic phenomena were attributed to superior powers, here good, now unfavourable, when they related the creation of man to a supernatural entity? These myths show that humanity was not always pleased to be playthings in the hand of the deity and a slave of their representatives, for example the myths of Satan and Prometheus, rebel Angels and Titans. Even later, when the administration and ecclesiastical authority was firmly founded, demonstrations broke out, which while maintaining a peaceful character, nevertheless testified to rebellion. One can classify under this type the satirical scenes and comedies, Roman Saturnalia and Christian carnivals etc. Many fables circulated amongst the people who listened joyously, sometimes from childhood, which all shared the same theme, the victory of the weak over their subjugators and the poor triumphing over the tyranny of the rich.

Greek Antiquity, with Gorgias¹ denying all dogmas; with Aristippus founder of the school of Hedonism, for which there is no other good than pleasure, the present actual pleasure, whatever its origin; with the Cynics (Diogenes and Crates of Thebes) with the Stoics (Zeno, Chyrsippus and their servants). Greek antiquity birthed people who criticised and then rejected the received values.

Since the denial of the values of Hellenic culture the Cynics have reached the denial of its institutions: marriage, homeland, family, property, state. Behind the barrel and lantern of Diogenes lay something other than mockery and witticism. Diogenes pierced with his sharp sarcasms the most powerful and feared among those who had torn from each other the remnants of the dying Athens. Undoubtedly Plato, scandalised by his ultra-popular sermons called him “delirious Socrates”; by looking at manual labour as equal to intellectual labour, declaring themselves citizens of the world, looking upon Generals as “Donkey drivers”

¹ Gorgias (483–375 BCE), an early Sophist, who was called Gorgias the Nihilist for his views on existence and sceptical arguments.

making ridiculous superstitions, including the Demon of Socrates, reducing the object of life to the exercise and development of the moral person, the Cynics could claim as its master, doctors of the soul, heroes of freedom and truth. From the social viewpoint the Cynics were communalists, and this principle of theirs applied not just to objects but to people, a concept dear to many different philosophies.

The cynics, and especially Diogenes in particular, were rebuked for being proud of their isolation, posing as role models, and exaggerating in their way of life, which was a sort of denial of any organized society. Diogenes had replied before: "I am the same as the choirmasters who force the tone to be picked up by the students."

The first teaching of Zeno, that of the "Stoic" greatly resembled the teaching of the Cynics. Zenon in his "Treatise on the Republic" pushed against the customs, the laws, science and arts, and at the same time promoted the community of farmers like Plato had done. The foundation of the Stoic system is that the good of man is freedom, and that freedom is conquered only by freedom. A Sage is synonymous with a free man: he owes his good to himself and depends only on himself. Shielded by the blows of fate, in everything insensitive, self-controlled, needing only himself, he finds in himself boundless serenity, freedom, happiness. He is no longer a man. He is a god and more than a god, because the happiness of the sage is the privilege of his nature, while the Sage is happy, he is the conqueror of his freedom! Zeno logically denied the omnipotence and trusteeship of the state: man is a law unto himself and individual harmony is born from the harmony of a collective. Hedonism, Cynicism, Stoicism set up the "natural right" for the individual to dispose, against the "artificial right" which turns him into a tool of the state. Zeno used this theory to hit back just as the Cynics had already done the excessive nationalism of the Greeks, and to promote a social instinct, a natural instinct that would allow man

tua I. 52/57)⁴ can be equally regarded as amongst the forerunners of Anarchism. Élisée Reclus proclaimed him "our great ancestor". Certainly, in that bookish environment it's true that he tended to neglect the economic side, and that he owed more to his century than he imagined. Certainly, he painted his refined estate with the same spirit as Thomas More, in his "Utopia," his idealized England, and as Campanella, in his "City of the Sun," his Italian and theocratic republic, or as the author. of "Kingdom of Antangil" (the first French utopia, 1516) his Protestant constitutional monarchy. That doesn't stop Rabelais, in *Theleme Abbey*, from painting an unauthorized life. It is recalled that Gargantua did not want to build "walls around it". "Even, and not without reason, approved by the monk, where a wall is in front and behind, there is a lot of murmur, envy and dumb conspiracy"... The two sexes did not stand still and speechless... they were dressed in a similar ornament..."

All their lives were occupied with laws, statutes, regulations. But according to their good will or free will; they rose when they pleased, drank, ate, worked, slept when they felt like it. No one woke them up, no one forcibly forced them to drink, eat, or do anything. Thus settled the Gargantua affair. And their rule was just that clause: "do what thou wilt," for free men, well-born, well-educated, conversing with shameful companions, naturally have an instinct and a sting which pushes them to virtuous deeds, and draws them away from the wickedness they called honour. There are those who, due to trivial domination and coercion, allow themselves to be diverted from their noble inclinations to tend virtues, meanwhile we have discarded that servile yoke; for always undertake forbidden things, and covet that which is denied us. With that freedom, they immersed themselves in competition to do whatever pleased them. If someone said "Let's drink" everyone drank, if

⁴ Gargantua and Pantagruel is a series of stories about the giant Gargantua and his son Pantagruel, written by François Rabelais, the Abbey of Theleme is also a feature in the stories. The stories are often comic and fantastical, but some sections became important humanist documents.

This anti-authoritarian movement did not just spread in Europe. In the History of Armenia by Tschamschiang (Venice 1795), we read about a Persian heretic by the name of Mdujik, who rejected “all law and all authority”... In the Literary Supplement of the Temps Neuveux (Paris Vol II, pg 556–7) contains an article titled “One Forerunner of Anarchism”, in which the Turkish writer Dr Abdullah Djevdet introduces a Syrian poet from the 15th century Ebr-Ala-el-Muarri.

The Renaissance

We are approaching the Renaissance; it cannot be denied that the Catholics with the aid of the secular state annihilated and reduced to impotence the pantheistic-anarchist heretics. The Protestants did not show mercy to the Anabaptists, a kind of authoritarian communists founded on an interpretation of the Old Testament. The dictatorship of John of Leiden in Münster disappeared lightning fast. The old world had to bow its head under the omnipotence of a state that was stronger and more centralised than in the Middle Ages. The discovery of America, however, ignited the spirit of the thinkers and originals, whose state of mind was not crushed under the laminate of the political organization.

They talked of a happy island, about El Dorado’s, Arcadias. In his “Cosmography” (1544) Sebastian Munster described the inhabitants of the “New Islands”, “Where one lives free from all authority, where one knows neither justice nor injustice, where no one punishes misdemeanours, where parents do not rule over their children, no kind of law, freedom in sexual relations. No trace of any God, nor of any baptism, nor of any worship”. To these aspirations for liberty, it is possible to add the Free Masons and the different orders of Illumination. One of the most brilliant genius of the Renaissance, François Rabelais with his Abbey of Theleme (Gargan-

to reach out to associate with other peoples. We could consider the Cynics and the Stoics the first internationalists.

Middle Ages

These ideas about “natural right”, “natural law”, “natural religion” has been adopted by many philosophers. Certainly, the triumph of Christianity was not as complete as was claimed by the incense burners. Many heretics appeared, some of them, out of caution, cloaked themselves with religious masks and disguised their ideas under a religious shell.

Take for example the Gnostic Carpocrates of Alexandria, founder of the sect of the Carpocratians, whose son Epiphanes codified the whole doctrine in his work *On Righteousness*. According to him, divine justice exists in the community through equality. As the sun is set by no one, so be it with all things, all pleasures. If God has given us a desire, it is so we can satisfy it, not restrict it; likewise, the other living beings on the earth do not curb their appetites.

The Carpocratians were among the first to recognise everyone’s right to all things, to the extreme consequence, and tried to practice it. They were seemingly exterminated. Although surviving writing indicates that Carpocratian tendencies still existed in Cyrene North Africa until the 6th Century.

Exterminated or not, the Carpocratians had followers. We do not know if the initiates of the similar sects accepted their concepts or adopted similar ideas: discarding all authority, whether or not they were “organised” in the contemporary style. But it is certain that the ruling political regime regarded them as irreconcilable enemies. There was a network of connected secret societies in existence on an international scale, whose travelling members were accepted as brothers by the other associations. They were taught in secret, and the many legal penalties against those who were discovered and victimized by their propaganda amply demonstrate this. Very

sadly, their true opinions are unknown to us. We only talk about their crimes (?) Or their deviations (?).

At the Synod of Orleans (1022) 11 Carpocratians (Albigensians²) were burned to death, accused of practising free love. In 1030, in Montfort near Turin, heretics are accused of declaring themselves against religious ceremonies and rites, against marriage, the killing of animals and were supporters of a commune to work the land. In 1052 in Goslar, a small number of heretics were burned, because they had declared their opposition to the killing of all living things, I.e., against war, murder and the slaughtering of animals. In 1213 Waldensians³ were burned in Strasbourg because they promoted free love and communal living on the land. They were not “scholars” but simple craftsmen, weavers, shoemakers, carpenters, masons, etc...

Relying on a passage from St Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians “If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are no longer under the law,” many sects placed man above the law. Men and women took a viewpoint similar enough to the Carpocratians, and finalised, in practice, a type of libertarian communism, which they experienced as much as they could, in more or less occult colonies under the threat of ruthless oppression. Amalric of Bene, near Chartres taught his ideas in Sorbonne in the 13th century. He had disciples more energetic than himself, amongst them was Ortlieb of Strasbourg who made his doctrine of Pantheistic-anarchism known within the German states, where they found enthusiastic and convinced supporters who organised under the name “Bruder und Schwest-

² A French religious movement, mainly organised in the south of France particularly around the city of Albi where the name Albigensian comes from. Today they’re more commonly known as Cathars. In 1209 Pope Innocent III sanctioned a crusade to eradicate the movement, it lasted 20 years and was so bloody and destructive against the civilian populations where Cathars practised that it is considered an act of genocide by some historians.

³ Waldensians early Protestant movement, faced severe persecution from the 1200s-1800s, still exist in small congregations around the world.

ern des Freien Geistes” (Brothers and sisters of the Free Spirit). Which Max Beer in his “History of Socialism” considers them to be a form of Anarchist-individualists, who kept themselves outside of society, its laws, morals and customs, and organised a separate society that was ruthlessly opposed by the authorities.

I imagine! For Amalric of Bene and his followers, God was found in Jesus as well as in the pagan thinkers and poets he spoke through the mouth of Ovid, as well as through that of St. Augustine. Such people were not worth living!

In the heresies it is necessary to distinguish between the Pantheistic Anarchism of Amalric, whose followers considered themselves elements of the holy spirit, discarding all asceticism, all moral truths, situated so to speak beyond good and evil, and the heirs of the Manichean agnosticism of the Albigensians, ascetics who aspired to victory over matter. But it is not always easy to see the exact line between them. The Catholic historian Döllinger who has studied the history of all of these sects, did not hesitate to declare that if they had been victorious (mainly concerning the Waldensians and Albigensians) the result would be a general reversal and complete return of pagan barbarity and indiscipline.

To the first pantheistic-anarchist group we link the Antwerp heresy of “Tanchelm”, that of the “Kloeffers” of Flanders, of the Picards or Adams (radiating to Bohemia), of the “Loïsten” also from Antwerp; Everywhere there are people or associations who want to react against the predominant system, represented especially by Catholicism, whose dignitaries behaved scandalously, keeping prostitution at bay, ruled brothels and gambling houses, were armed and fought like professional soldiers.

I agree completely with Max Nettlau that at the close of the Middle Ages, Southern France, the provinces of the Albigenses, part of Germany reaching out to Bohemia, lands washed by the lower Rhine as far as Holland and Flanders, certain portions of England and Italy, and finally Catalunya were overrun with sects that attacked the institutions of Marriage, Family and Property.