

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Emma Varlin
Hostility Towards Politics
Autumn 2019

Translated for The Local Kids, Issue 5

First appeared as *L'Inimicizia verso la politica* in *Senza misure; Quel giorno che Cremona bruciò di gentilezza* (S-edizioni), 2016

theanarchistlibrary.org

Hostility Towards Politics

Emma Varlin

Autumn 2019

“Resolve to serve no more, and you are at once freed.” - La Boétie

Between the beginning and the middle of the last century a brilliant mind of surrealism, André Breton, noticed that in the presence of the irreparable, nothing is more miserable than saying that rebellion serves no purpose, because rebellion finds its justification within itself.

More or less during the same period an erratic philosopher persecuted by the Nazis, Günther Anders, didn't let go of his relentless critique against the monstrosity of the atomic bomb and the world of war that instigates it. This fierce enemy of oppression even went as far as saying that humans – because of their total submission to technique – are doomed to become *obsolete* if they don't embark on a struggle against the latter. His positions were quite the shock for certain academics and servants of science from his time.

Certainly, neither the former nor the latter were really taken into consideration during their lifetimes and, even after their deaths, only a few passionate and furious dreamers of words of freedom have deepened their studies and their compelling advice. These two individuals had in common that

they captured the spirit of those times, because their critiques never seemed as grounded as in the moments of rebellion.

To say that the world of today is reigned by technique seems a banality. To say that technique is eliminating ethics, is going towards a quite precise critique.

Why say such a brazen thing when what surrounds us does so *technically*? Why provoke concerns towards a technical world, when many have integrated it in their lives and use it on an industrial scale?

Today human beings don't ask themselves what is just, but they strive to find what works and their existence only tends towards that.

They don't ask themselves anymore what is just, because in this world dominated by technique *what is just is what works*.

How many moralists have asked themselves after moments of revolt like 24 January : what was the purpose of this day of rage? [On 24 January, 2015 in Cremona, in the north of Italy, riots break out after a comrade was assaulted by fascists and heavily beaten. Banks, real estate agencies and the headquarters of several institutions are attacked]

This question, in itself as ridiculous as tragic, presupposes that ideas have to be instruments that shouldn't be evaluated according to the meaning or the explosive upheaval that they carry, but on the grounds of their efficacy.

What is politics if not a technique that takes the upper hand over the possibilities that are harboured within the relations that give sense to a possible rupture in all the – more or less diffuse – moments of revolt?

Wouldn't it be the shrewdness of a politician to subordinate your ideas to the tactics of the moment?

Is it politics or ethics that answers to all that? Politics, particularly in uncontrollable situations, always strategically chooses the tactic of appeasement of the spirits. Ethics – as a choice of life – doesn't consider tactics because it uses coherent means with the aim of getting rid of all tacticism.

radically different premises. To recognize his own uniqueness, Stirner wrote these fundamental words: the existence of the oppressor is the responsibility of the oppressed.

That said, it is up to each sensibility to reflect upon this, and the sooner the better.

It's certain that the *end of the most irresponsible responsibility* passes by the insurrectionary rupture. It's from the irredeemable break with habits that the possibility of something unimaginable and uncontrollable can emerge. Without a rupture the saying of an old rap song will continue to follow us: *life runs alongside death*. [*“La vita corre in linea con la morte”*, Mauri B]

Everything has become a means, the ends don't exist anymore. We have huge machines that produce an enormity of means without any idea of where we're going and forgetting where we've come from.

The ends have been brought back to zero faced with an irresponsible production of means. Because to produce is the evident sign of the times of misery.

The main preoccupation of these times, thus of the majority of humans, is efficacy. The means are justified by their efficacy.

We look favourably on what works. On the contrary, we denigrate what seems to fail or what doesn't seem to satisfy an instant need. It is technique that produces the efficacy of a means, and this is where many human gazes gravitate to and fixate on

The technical phenomenon – the one that works – evades little by little the human essence, with the mortal consequence that no judgement can be attributed to it.

How many question all the technological machinery that has progressively transformed our time and our places? Who thinks that technology is a means of social cohabitation?

Technique, combined with its huge technological means, is techno-science, in other words totalitarianism, made of instruments of force and structures of domination.

Technique, just like politics, has never been a set of means but is a real encompassing environment.

Technique and politics become science, to experiment in an authoritarian way. They move forward hand in hand with a whole bunch of technicians that work together for the construction of oppression.

In its exceptional character, insurrection is confronted with this technically political world. What sense does it make to carry an idea of subversion outside of moments of rupture, if it is to become *opportunists* at the moment that it becomes materially visible?

To start to think that means and ends are one is more than ever ethical. To separate means and ends is more than ever disgustingly political.

Radicality doesn't have any specific advantages, and doing the thing that seems more effective is not always synonymous with doing the right thing.

An ethical tension is independent of effects, positive or negative, which follow a certain way of thinking and a certain view of the world. In fact, what counts is not the result, but the tension that leads to think and do a specific action.

The determination of certain actions – felt to their full potential – don't stay on the surface but run deep. The risk of not being at ease in certain situations can provoke the return to a reassuring normality.

And unfortunately, even during historical moments of rupture, even the insurgents are not immune to this. What drove Juan Garcia Oliver, in the 30's, during the Spanish revolution (of strong anarchist tones), to pass from an anarchist bandit to a minister of Justice in the republican government, with the Stalinists' backing? And what to say of Ferruccio Parri; unwavering partisan of sabotage during the resistance, then indulgent towards presidential decrees after the fall of the fascist dictatorship?

Maybe the fact of sitting on a seat of power? Or the incapacity to imagine another way of relating? Maybe the fear of passing through an open-ended dream of a different life that cannot be technically codified?

There's no prevalence of ethics over politics, or vice-versa, it's only a question of individual choices.

It's human to fall into certain errors. To drown oneself deliberately in suicidal tendencies already brings the smell of rotting flesh. And it's precisely because of this that nobody is immune to criticism.

The heart of every human has its obscure part; hiding this would mean lying to oneself. This is why insurgent moments

tute poverty. But above all, this happens because it seems that power doesn't anymore have opposition capable of disrupting its time, neither in front of it nor within its fortresses and sanctuaries.

George Orwell understood very well two questions that are today resounding.

The first is that the control that produces the most incapacity of acting is not the fact of being constantly watched, but the fact of being aware of its possibility at any given moment. The second is a very recurring tragedy for any subversive: who to talk to when nobody is listening anymore?

Ignorance is strength, the monopoly of force in service of this world.

War is peace, an armed peace that reaps pacification between oppressed and oppressors and war between exploited.

Freedom is slavery, where in a world of domination the near victory of totalitarianism is given by the illusion of feeling free – paraphrasing Anders.

This world is thus the totality of horrors, a horrible environment where catastrophe is waiting at every corner. All politics is the latent representation of something that oppresses us.

The production of merchandise is joined with the deadly justification of all politics that administers and manages, where the management is a dialectical deception, which through words hides a police state and suffocating control.

Everyone is at the centre of their world, said Max Stirner. To affirm this means to deny all forms of hierarchy and authority, as they claim their own imposed centrality.

Every individual has their own uniqueness, not absolute-ness, strictly connected to the mutuality of their relations. Because this world of law and money oppresses us with its presence as if it was nothing, but it's on this nothing that the liberating revolt has its base. It's precisely this conscience that permits one to fight against hierarchy, this knowledge that underpins another way of being together, founding one's life on

Thus, isn't it an existential affliction if we don't undergo ourselves the severity of this world, which is absolutely impossible when we open our hearts and eyes? However, by being the audience to the continuous manifestations of horrors, aren't we falling into another banalization, namely the banality of good?

Nevertheless, we live in a constant repetition of catastrophes, where the mass entertainment and the generalized consumption make quickly forget the cage in which we're trying to feel alive.

What happened in the past? What will happen today?

Didn't Nazism sacrifice a small amount of human beings for the 100 million persons living under the Third Reich? Being a bit provocative; didn't they *only sacrifice*, through a merciless death machine, some millions of human beings to protect the *well-being of all*?

Doesn't every war have its *unjust* victims? Besides, who are the right victims, given that no war is justifiable? Don't the detention centres, the prisons, the psychiatric hospitals and all places of imprisonment and confinement have the same purpose today? Are we so banal to think that we're not experiencing a continuation of certain Nazi ideals, just because of the absence of the former painter with the moustache and the stiff arm? It's nevertheless what's happening today.

State of emergency, emergency laws (yesterday anti-crisis, today anti-terrorist), concentration camps, walled borders and perpetual propaganda forged by the legitimate sons of Goebbels, are here to testify to the efficacy of this abomination.

Everywhere millions of individuals are stopped, registered, beaten up, encountering death in the democratic Mediterranean seas. Only because certain gentlemen want to contain the rage, anxiety and rebellion.

Why does all of this happen? Because the known resources of the earth are devoured by certain greed. Because for the increased wealth of a few, many others sink into the most desti-

put us in front of a very simple, fundamental question: security or liberty?

Do we want to perpetually live barely-passionate eternal present, where the catastrophe every day is that nothing happens? Or do we want to venture into the unknown, with its joy and pain?

Do we want the oppressive calm of the chain? Or the liberating tension of the open air?

Do we want to lock ourselves up in small spaces considered different but that maintain some of the cages that envelop us (of what's around us)? Or do we want to get out of our futile certainties to freely experiment what we feel?

Freedom carries a danger that is inherent to it. We cannot delegate the task to protect ourselves from danger neither to a power like the state nor to a transcendence like God. It is up to us to negate all *existential centrality* that ruins our life, with the aim of serving nobody and of being the masters of nothing.

The will of emancipation and autonomy always challenges its moments of defeat, while it doesn't get inebriated on its own – always ephemeral – successes.

A small improvement in our lives is not synonymous with a small step towards freedom, but it's a short breath that helps us to go fiercely forward.

It's up to those who feel in themselves a liberating fire to break open the door of human impossibility; to find thousand and one escape routes out of a rotting institutional world, but also to desert those who reproduce their own objectification of the decaying role of the rebel.

Any institution, any approach that seeks to modify such or such institutional pact, nurtures obedience, but also badly hidden informal hierarchies; giving energy to that existential frustration.

It's low to demand pathetic rights (concessions) and to manage (to decide with those who are in charge) ridiculous claims that only help power to forge new weapons to defend them-

selves from those who are banished. It's a question of ethics and intelligence to emphasize the distance with those who collaborate with the police; irrespective of them doing it intentionally or because they are useful idiots.

The finite, the routine repetition cannot belong to us. To invite the infinite is craziness but also a perfect travel companion.

Individual revolt is compatible with generalized revolt. The freedom of all is a lie if individual freedom doesn't exist, remarked Emma Goldman. The life and the words of this revolutionary anarchist have always shed light on a question of vital importance: the drunkenness of pleasure can never be subjugated to the reason of sacrifice.

The reason why individuals delegate to the state the task of organizing their time, is because they have renounced the aspiration of freeing themselves. They prefer to collectively delegate their existence to institutions rather than, individually or in relationships of reciprocity, face their problems and their desires. It seems that we're afraid of determining the times and the ways of making the most out of ourselves. And it's on this fragility that the state constructs its devouring force.

That's why politics is linked to delegation and the ephemeral question of representation. That's why politics reproduces exactly what we already know. Everything is spectacle, nothing more.

The more the *decent citizen* relies on the state (even some supposed revolutionaries do it today...) which now swallows their whole imagination, the more the state demands the absence of dreams and imposes its own totalitarian reality on the *decent citizen*.

Not one qualitative sign comes out of submission, not one blasphemous word comes out of the repetition of the banal; you cannot create a world that aspires to freedom by starting from a compliance to politics.

To stay with both feet on the ground doesn't allow you to reach any utopia. It's only hypocrisy, like collecting signatures or eating organic. Not one *island of self-management* will remove the authoritarian world from our nightmares. As long as the state exists, there will not be any self-organization but only and always *co-management*.

The self-management of your own misery will never aid the idea of getting rid of it. It will certainly not be good intentions to transform the pathetic demands of concessions into a radical process of liberation.

A wave of liberation is far from politics. Politics is calculation and rational planning, it's not the expression of desires and spontaneity.

Everything political reeks of domination, because there's no politics without representation, there's no politics without corruption, there's no politics without boot-licking trickeries.

The creation of concentration camps in the heart of democratic Europe, of borders, of barbed wire, of cages and of armies in the streets, marks many people with the status of *excess humanity*, of human waste, who doesn't seem to matter to this world.

Those who persist in not understanding this reality as totalitarian, have internalized the assumption that the catastrophic past has been surpassed by a present and a future where the horrors of yesterday cannot find a place today.

Even less, of being collaborators of horrors. That would upset the sensitivity of all. But if we don't see and we don't hear, we collaborate and become, even indirectly, collaborationists. There is a very visible barricade: either we become hostile to this world and we seek to erase its projects, or we collaborate with its continuation. To not acknowledge this difference is one of the thousand atrocities of the existing.

How does the eye not see the rivers of blood in the streets, the ravaged corpses and the ever present, repulsive stench of death?