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The Free Society

Johann Most

1887

The greatest happiness that a person can achieve is a state in which everyone achieves the most complete satisfaction of all his needs with the least possible effort. The closer one comes to this relationship, the more definitely one will find one's individual freedom preserved. For the shorter the period of time within which a person produces the means for his highest life goals, the longer the period of time he has left for enjoyment. While it may never be possible to remove all inconvenience from participation in the production of goods, it is obvious that, conversely, the unlimited consumption of goods gives individual inclinations the greatest scope and allows the level of enjoyment to be brought into line with personal will and needs. A system will therefore have to be found in which people can make the production of their consumer goods easier and easier. This system is the production of goods by organized labor and with common means of production — in other words: the communist mode of production.

In technical terms, there can no longer be any doubt about the truth of this assumption; for the current development of production conditions teaches more and more clearly every day that, to the extent that the production process is more

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perfectly organized, more goods can be manufactured by fewer workers in the same amount of time. And only because working time is not gradually reduced as this development progresses, and because the right of the working masses to consume is restricted to the minimum of mere subsistence by parasitic non-workers under the rule of private capitalism, the drudgery and insecurity of productive people increases with their productivity. People starve because of an abundance of food, freeze because of an excessive abundance of heating materials, go about in rags because of an excessive amount of ready-made clothing, and have no shelter because there are too many nice apartments!

This absurd relationship proves that the difficult point no longer lies in the area of production, but in that of consumption. There is no longer any talk of the fact that the items people need cannot be manufactured in sufficient quantities or at sufficient speed. It is simply a matter of bringing this almost inexhaustible productive capacity into line with human needs by removing all those things that impose the narrowest possible limits on the satisfaction of these needs.

This is where the lever must be applied! — It is not necessary to proclaim a standstill in terms of organisation in the field of production or even to fall back on earlier forms of productive organisation; rather, we can and must think of the best possible expansion of existing organisations in industry, agriculture, transport, etc. The larger these are, the more efficient they are, according to irrefutable experience. This is a mathematical truth, and future humanity cannot dream of denying itself the advantages that arise quite naturally from this.

What is at stake is solely the equal utilization of the results that commodity production offers through the most magnificently organized labor imaginable for all people.

This can happen if the worker bees eliminate the drones!

And a new, free system of work and enjoyment can very well be established without the productive organizational

power having to split up and dissolve, but also without a new edifice of rule (an archie) rising above all these thousandfold organic production structures. Anarchism (non-rule) is not — as malicious people claim — an enemy of harmonious, expedient organization, but an enemy of tyrannically (dominantly — domineering) structured administration.

In accordance with an old political superstition, those who thought about solving the social question always looked up to the state as a kind of divine omnipotence and convinced themselves that this incomprehensible power was the appropriate factor to bring all good into the world if only it was prompted to do so in the right way. In place of the “heavenly powers” to which oppressed man had implored for happiness and blessings in earlier times of even greater folly, a political god had taken the place.

This worship of the state was just as naive as the worship of God. Just as the believers of old imagined a supernatural regulator of things, the new believers dreamed of a state power outside and above society. They did not understand that the state is nothing other than an organism of violence, created and operated by those whose material position in society allows them to exploit and oppress the rest. What they believe they can bring into play against the ruling classes is nothing other than the organized tyranny of the same. It would have been no less naive if they had lived in the imagination that the emancipation of the proletariat must be ensured by the bourgeoisie; because it would have resulted in the same thing.

In public life, people have not been able to completely shed their ape-like nature, just as in their private actions. Because history teaches the workers that every time a class of people became free, it first of all sought to get state power into its hands, the wrong conclusion was drawn from this: that the proletariat must first come “to the helm” before anything else could happen.

It was overlooked that the social upheavals to date had only been about replacing one ruling class with another, not about establishing the freedom of the entire people. If, for example, in the most recent of these transformation processes, the bourgeoisie seized state power and organized it more firmly than ever, this is very understandable. On the one hand, it had to use this power to hit the old school aristocracy as hard as possible, or rather to destroy it. to paralyze the system and, on the other hand, to hide behind it from the working people who intended to exploit them.

The situation is quite different with regard to the aspirations of the working masses of the people today. As far as this is of a consistent nature — and unclear or half-truthful side currents cannot be taken into account here at all — it really does not lead to the establishment of a new class rule; rather, for the first time, the abolition of all class privileges and thus of the classes themselves is being sought.

Against whom, then, should a new instrument of violence — a state — be turned? Whose privileges should it protect? Who should be subjugated and kept in check by it?

Many socialist writers seem to have been confronted with these questions for a long time, whenever they thought about the collapse of the existing order and the reorganization of all social life. But they usually slipped past them very gently, as if a precise answer, which would naturally have to culminate in the negation of the state, would have been likely to frighten their worse selves.

So they said: the proletariat would come to power; but the moment that happened, this power would cease again, because the object of control would be missing!! — Such and similar fibs were intended to help them to avoid having to speak a bold truth.

If one had proceeded differently, if one had thrown overboard the last remnants of the Jacobin-liberal and bourgeois-radical doctrines that still played a major role in the early days

The commune, as a political body, has also become superfluous.

All human purposes in life are achieved through appropriate organizations or groups.

These are not centralized and are only connected to one another in a federalist manner to the extent that is essential to achieving the goals sought.

Private ownership of land or capital no longer exists.

The means of production of all kinds are in the hands of the various trade union organizations.

Like commercial fraud itself, its means of exchange, or rather, the means of exchange, money in the modern sense, has also been abolished.

Art and science, like the production of goods, are cultivated by grouping the relevant efficient forces.

The education system enjoys the greatest care and enables everyone to develop intellectually enough to be able to enjoy the results of art and science.

The constantly expanding knowledge of all people in this way abolishes belief and ensures the impossibility of old or new religions.

The complete right of self-determination of women, who, like men, have become truly free, is obvious.

Instead of legislation, decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. No one is governed; everyone is a member of numerous corporations that they join of their own free choice; no one is forced to act against their inclinations.

That is anarchy!

from the protection of the woman as a child-bearer, then it is quite obvious that there is no longer any necessity for marriage in the modern sense of the word, which is why it can hardly be assumed that it will continue forever.

Like all institutions of the past and present, marriage is also based on a relationship of coercion. And if one were able to statistically determine the so-called “happy” and the unhappy marriages, one would shudder at the immense amount of human suffering that is endured in the area of married life.

A society such as the one we strive for, however, knows no coercion at all, and therefore no galley-like nature of marriage. Free people will have sexual relations with one another according to their mutual inclinations — an action that is the only moral and natural one, and compared to which sexual intercourse in marriage today — it is horrible, but true! — is only legal rape. —

The increasing individual freedom, far from dissolving humanity into atoms, as some think, moves people to mutual respect and love. The more people have the opportunity to group themselves together according to their own free will for joint activity, for mutual enjoyment, for some self-chosen purpose, the nobler their character will become, the less differences of interest will be able to clash. The end result of such a play of humanitarian impulses will inevitably be the harmony of human actions.

In short, in this respect too, we see expediency being the deciding factor in anarchism in every respect. It is not the direction of an authority that rules, but the desire for certain things, and this from case to case; not according to written, rigid laws, but according to changing needs. And that is what we call: natural order.

If we take a bird’s eye view of anarchist society, we see the following basic features:

The state has neither space nor purpose.

of the socialist movement and which one believed had to be more or less protected for so-called utilitarian reasons, then the workers of all countries (including those in German-speaking countries) would certainly have long since come to the conclusion that socialists should not strive for this or that red-tinted extra-state, but that, on the contrary, they must fight and deny the idea of the state as such. The world would then have been spared all the senseless babble about “people’s state”, “free state” etc., and the proletariat would have been significantly more clear in terms of principles.

The fact that state power (archy) in a free society proves to be obsolete of its own accord is easy to understand when one considers the purposes that the state has had to fulfill up to now.

Legislation always revolves around mine and yours. In a society such as we have today, in a society where there is a constant war of all against all, where there is a wild struggle for existence; In a society where a small percentage of the inhabitants sit on mountains of wealth, while the majority of the people, even with the most strenuous work, do not always have the prospect of being able to vegetate, and where hundreds of thousands are exposed to sheer misery — in such a society, thick penal codes, countless executors, judges, public prosecutors, gendarmes, policemen, prisons, courthouses and a hundred similar “order” instruments are quite understandable. But in a society where every person is able to enjoy the purposes of his existence without detraction, where an equal and highly developed educational system offers every individual the opportunity to feed on the results of a freely developed science to his heart’s content, and where the contrasts between rich and poor are totally unknown, the causes of crime themselves cease to appear when they disappear. The purpose of criminal legislation no longer exists. The associated bureaucracy has become superfluous. The situation is similar with other forms of legislation.

The people of today, forced into legal cages, will appear in the eyes of future society like the inmates of a zoo.

Even things that can only happen after prior agreement do not require institutions such as constitutions, laws or parliaments. Truly free peoples will never feel the need to hinder their free development with legal straitjackets and traps. Decisions on a case-by-case basis, with the full personal participation of those who want to do something in the public interest, will be a matter of course among free people. People will be downright ashamed of their ancestors, who were so enslaved that they believed that humanity would never be able to exist without guardians, representatives and authorities, restrictive statutes and guidelines.

We do not need to describe other institutions which are closely intertwined with statehood, such as militarism, priesthood and the like, as superfluous. Mass murder and its agents of all kinds — the throat cutters and the brain softeners — stand and fall with the present period of social disorder and tyranny.

The future society will only know economic, educational, scientific institutions — in short, those institutions which are suitable for reducing the difficulties of existence for people — all and every one — as much as possible and increasing the enjoyment of life. Intertwined hundreds and thousands of times — as the reasons of expediency will determine — these diverse organic structures may represent a harmoniously interlocking gear system, but one will search in vain for driving central forces and shifted zeros; rather, a similar relationship will exist as in the universe, where in the smallest particle of matter the same principles of forces prevail which move the overall mechanism of the universe. That — and nothing else — will be the much-feared, reviled anarchism.

If a state fanatic hears that we are striving for a social state in which the state is one of the things that have been overcome, he will howl with chattering teeth as if someone had promised him the end of all things.

expansion of their knowledge from the cradle to the grave. That will be the greatest pleasure in life.

We have already indicated that consumption in the future will increasingly move beyond the narrow family framework and, like production, will take place in larger organizations. This alone means that the position of women as housekeepers will be shaken or will become obsolete. We have also shown that in a reasonable society, child-rearing can no longer remain a secondary business for mothers. Women's ties to home and family are thus gradually coming to an end. The female sex enters life with the same prerequisites as the male sex; all professional spheres are open to them; women will not have to strive to achieve their goals in life by marrying, as is the case today, but by joining appropriate productive, consumer, etc. organizations, depending on their physical strength, intellectual ability and inclination.

In truth, there can only be one reason that could give rise to a difference in the position of men and women in society. This is the birth of children and the physical disadvantages that this entails for women. But this reason is by no means one that is likely to make women less valued than men in a free society.

Due to the circumstances mentioned above, women will certainly be unfit for work more often than men. But should women be condemned to further disadvantages because they have to endure more physical discomfort than men due to their sexual constitution? Only the barbarism of our time can answer this question in the affirmative. In an anarchist (humanitarian) society, such a question seems ridiculous.

In a free society, all those who are unfit for work will have the same right to life as those who are able to work.

We can therefore assume that in every respect women are completely independent and self-sufficient compared to men in anarchist society.

And if this complete freedom results from the end of the family economy, from a non-family method of education and

This is the inner essence of freedom, the basic characteristic of anarchism.

As soon as the child can physically do without its mother, it will be assigned to an educational institution in a reasonable society. To begin with, such an institution will have the form of a kindergarten, although it will of course be considerably more sophisticated than the institutions of the same name today. A rational development of body and mind through the scientific application of health science, stimulating games, object lessons, etc. will make childhood a much more joyful one and at the same time prepare the child's brain for its further purposes far better than could be the case today with the best possible family education. Quite apart from the advantages that the principle of brotherhood can achieve from the system of a common education that begins early.

As far as the actual school is concerned, it will have to be fundamentally different from today's children's barracks — not only in terms of the teaching materials and the teaching staff, but also in terms of the curriculum and the spatial facilities.

We do not need to emphasize that in the school of the future there can be no room for religious brain-clogging or "patriotic" heart-poisoning, because these criminal maxims stand and fall with today's society.

More classrooms, more teachers, more school years and fewer school hours — these are certainly the most essential prerequisites for a better school system; and the future organizers of the school system will not be able to ignore them.

Later life offers time for the continuous scientific further education of all, for which the better preparatory schooling has already created the necessary urge and developed the essential comprehension.

The rest is the concern of the relevant organizations for the cultivation of art and science, from which no one can be excluded from now on. People can learn and enjoy the constant

It looks as if the abolition of the state would mean that people would scatter to the four winds, or as if the cessation of statehood would make all natural and culturally historical organizations that are present in developed technology, a network-like transport system and communal living obsolete.

But it does not take much insight to find out that these institutions are not tied to the existence or non-existence of a state, but rather their continued existence and development depend solely on the practical demands that people make of them. The more they correspond to these demands, the more firmly they will be maintained and developed. For one must not imagine that the moment people emancipate themselves from the state disciplinarian and declare themselves to be of age, they will lose their minds and start playing stupid tricks against their own well-being.

Well, it is already clear today that industry and agriculture are more efficient the more efficiently they are run; it is therefore obvious that the workforce of the individual branches of production will be organized as uniformly as possible in the future society.

As uniform as possible — that is not the same as "strictly centralized." Given our assumption that such organizations cannot be blackmailed from above or from a center, so to speak, but must be organized equally and freely from all sides on the basis of obvious expediency, the federalist principle is practically self-evident. Large and small departments (groups) of a branch of production can of course regulate their internal relationships entirely according to their own special inclinations; there is absolutely no need for a template. One may only work in the morning, another only in the afternoon; in a third department, it is preferred to work every other day in the morning and afternoon, but to have a day of rest after each working day. In one group, equal working hours and an equal share in the proceeds of the activity of the whole group are introduced; other groups leave it up to their individual

members to be sometimes more, sometimes less active and to be kept in the distribution of the proceeds accordingly. In some groups, everyone who belongs to them may want to achieve more than is usual in other groups and enjoy more in return, while the opposite case is also conceivable: giving up some of the material pleasures that are usually available and in return working less time, or more opportunity to indulge in intellectual pleasure. Under such circumstances, it is possible for the inclinations of individuals in all their various forms to be taken into account without the general goal being compromised. Everyone chooses a group of individuals whose inclinations are closest to their own. If their inclinations change, they can exchange their local position with someone else accordingly. That is precisely the great and natural thing about the federal system: that it allows the greatest scope for individual freedom, but at the same time also creates an organizing bond around all elements that by and large serve the same purposes.

A centralized organization, on the other hand, is always linked to a rigid barracks system. The human individual no longer gives himself up voluntarily, no, he is completely submerged in the organism. Consistently implemented centralism is the dictatorship of a personal leader over the masses – monarchism – tyranny! Consistently implemented federalism is real, i.e. equal freedom for all, as well as for the individual – is a lack of domination – anarchism!

Centralism is ultimately ossification, casteism, Chineseism. Federalism is a competition of ideas, an elastic momentum of development, restless cultural progress. Anarchism is the harmony of humanity!

Some anarchists of the French school go further in this respect and say that in the future society there will be no systematic structure whatsoever and in particular no voluntary obligation to work; likewise there can be no talk of individuals receiving an income based on their work performance, because

The greatest care will be given to education in a free society, or rather: for the first time since the world began, the freed humanity will give the growing youth a rational helping hand in terms of intellectual and physical development and will move from the previously usual training to real education.

The more exclusively the children are left to parents and grandparents, especially old women, for “education”, the more ignorant the latter are and remain.

And that is quite natural. Just as not everyone can be a painter, architect, shoemaker or tailor, just as not everyone can be an educator, or even less so. Nevertheless, it has been taken for granted that horses, cattle, donkeys, sheep or geese must be entrusted to those who know something about it for care or “breeding”, but it has not been understood that the education of people should require more special skills from the educator than the breeding of sheep from the shepherd.

In a free society, the commune or, in some cases, an association of several communes will be best suited to fully safeguard the public and cultural interest by taking over the education system.

This does not mean that the same principles would be applied everywhere (as would be the case with state education). Indeed, it is not even necessary for the geographical (local) or, as it is called today, “political” commune to cover the communal educational institution; rather, in some places and districts, majorities and minorities may establish their educational communes alongside one another (independent of the other concept of commune).

The performance of all these institutions can then very easily be subjected to a comparative assessment. Here too, the better will break through of its own accord and without compulsion because of its advantages and will be introduced until further progress, which is evident within some other educational organization, drives it to even further development.

They have no right to monopolistically exploit their higher knowledge, or to exploit it. to pillage the public in an impudent manner because they could only acquire their abilities with the help of society — especially in a state of freedom and equality, in which this educational support is available to all to the same degree and only talent and inclination — elements which cannot give anyone a privilege — will determine higher education in this or that more specific direction.

On the other hand, white-collar workers are naturally entitled to the same remuneration for their services as manual workers.

Moreover, there is no doubt that the consequences of the anarchist system will ultimately lead to mental and manual work no longer being separate categories.

Through equal and scientific education, people will increasingly all attain a high level of general education. On the other hand, thanks to a daily working time that is constantly decreasing with the development of technology, people will be given ever greater opportunities to indulge in intellectual pleasures (the only pleasures that distinguish man from all other animals in more than just an external and insignificant way), which will gradually and automatically produce countless capacities in all areas of more specialized knowledge. The distinctive activity of the latter will be their greatest pleasure; mental work will therefore ultimately be a voluntary, sought-after matter because it is enjoyable; and the question of remuneration for it will, so to speak, disappear entirely of its own accord.

Until cultural development has reached such a high level, intellectual consumption can be regulated in a similar way to material consumption. Organized interested parties will enter into free partnerships with those who are willing and able to meet their wishes and needs in the required manner. The most diverse free associations can be imagined in this respect — associations for literary, sanitary, educational, scientific, artistic and similar purposes.

such a relationship does not represent full and complete individual freedom. They say that all existing things must simply be at everyone's unrestricted disposal and that everyone will then automatically contribute their own share to the production of luxury goods, etc. This explanation is indeed extremely simple, but is unlikely to be very convincing in wider circles and therefore cannot have a particularly strong convincing power as an agitation factor.

Who can know how things will turn out in the worst case scenario? For the time being, we are content to speculate on such conditions for the future — because of course everything that can be said in this regard does not go beyond speculation — which the unimaginative logic of the facts suggests.

The conclusion that people in the future will be active without any obligation is based on the assumption that all people have an innate desire to work. Work is, however, only a necessary evil, an unpleasant thing that is never done for its own sake, but only for its purpose, namely because without work, pleasure cannot be produced. There is therefore no desire to work, even if some work may be done more or less willingly under the influence of habit, etc., and may be done almost like a game.

In any case, this point is far too speculative to be considered a bone of contention. We only mentioned it in order to record the differing schools of thought in this regard.

At the same time, we note from the outset that everything we have to say below is by no means intended to present positive proposals for the future society, as has often been claimed, but that we are only making speculative considerations here in order to illustrate the possibility of a free society, as it were by means of visual and exemplifying instruction.

Since the organizations mentioned earlier represent not only people, but also things — land, factories, tools, raw materials and finished consumer goods — the question arises: to whom do these things belong?

As far as the finished things are concerned, they presumably belong first of all to the organization from whose activity they emerged. As far as the means of production are concerned, they are just as likely to be the property of society as a whole, but remain freely available to the individual productive organizations whose purpose they are intended to serve, as long as they do not attempt to use them to harm other organizations or society as such — for example, by acting monopolistically and trying to pillage organizations outside them or the people in general.

But where is the appropriate power to adequately punish such crimes, now that all state power has been abolished?

This power simply lies in the hands of consumers, who as a whole cannot even dream of being ripped off by a relatively small gang.

But do not a few monopolists nowadays also cheat the entire broad mass of the consuming public without the public being able to do anything about it?

This is certainly the case today; but precisely because there is a state power that protects the monopolists and similar crooks in their predatory privileges and brands every expedient and quick-acting measure that the people could put into action against them as a crime. Manipulations that lead to defrauding and pillaging can only be used against them by any fraction of the population if the fraudsters in question form a ruling class and are thus in a position to protect the results of their robbery from any attack by the robbed by state power.

In a free (stateless) society, such attempts at robbery fail at the first appearance of a malicious intention in this regard due to the general unwillingness, which could, if necessary, escalate into vigorous action.

Such objections can only be raised if the characteristics that are the natural consequences of today's society are arbitrarily attributed to the people of the future (free) society, and in doing

view of the horrible role that money has played in the world up to now — only the measure of time allows an assessment of value without fraud! —

And similar products exchange for one another.

Harmony will therefore find its natural development in the area of the exchange of goods no less than in the other spheres of a free society; and all this on the basis of a free play of the people's forces that depend on each other — on the basis of the anarchist order!

The anarchist school mentioned earlier, according to which everyone works when they feel like it and takes what they want from the things available, naturally rejects any kind of means of exchange. It even wants nothing to do with production and supply statistics. If it really does happen without such institutions, then of course we have no objection; for the time being, however, such an assumption seems to us to have little probability, which is why we will not deal with this possibility any further in our presentation.

Not all people produce actual goods (tangible products), and yet they can also be indispensable promoters of general happiness and work in a useful way. These are the intellectual workers who satisfy some reasonable needs of people through their work.

Something like this cannot be said of many of the intellectual workers who exist today. Indeed, most of them are absolutely misanthropic, anti-cultural, and freedom-destroying in their actions and are therefore completely pointless, have no right to exist and are therefore unthinkable in a free (anarchist) society. In this respect, we refer only to the priesthood, lawyers and other judicial swindlers, diplomats, bureaucrats, literary prostitutes, etc., etc.

But those who are called upon to look after art and science, education and health care in a free society naturally have to demand appropriate remuneration for their work.

in fact, there are extremely widely differing opinions on this matter among the theorists of social philosophy.

An anarchist school of the older type quickly dealt with this matter by accepting the rule of free competition. We cannot share this viewpoint, which gives the impression of a snob that strongly smells of Manchesterism and generally of bourgeois thinking. It also does not fit into the framework of communist anarchism at all.

Far more dangerous elements, because they are quite significant in number and influence, are encountered in the form of the centralization or compulsory communists when it comes to the issue of exchange.

Who else, in their view, could have the right to estimate the value of things than a kind of tax deity, a higher, in a sense all-knowing authority, a state idol, an economic monster?

Strange! These people take so much pride in the fact that, according to the theory of value formulated by their master, the exchange value of every commodity is given by the necessary labor time embodied in it.

What is simpler, then, than to estimate the value of a commodity not by a monetary measure that obscures its essence, as the previous swindlers and exploiters thought was good, but by the number of normal working hours involved?

But could not the one group be cheated by the other? Perhaps – for a while – certainly not in the long run.

Even the statistics of the individual trades, which will prove to be absolutely essential for production and consumption in a free society, and may even represent the general regulator for both producers and consumers, would soon reveal such fraudulent manipulation – and could therefore only have a temporary, never permanent effect.

The receipt for an hour of necessary working time embodied in goods will have to form the unity of the tokens of value in a free society! For only time money – if one still wants to call such exchange certificates “money”, which is hardly the case in

so one forgets that the character traits of today’s people must stand and fall with the present system.

Once society considers land and all things necessary for the production of goods as common property in principle, the possibility of the whole being deceived by individual parts of it is also excluded.

Of course, if the society of the future were so stupid as to organize itself according to the model of the current centralized state, then it would certainly be possible that, for example, the ruling majority would cheat the minority, perhaps even pressuring them into forced labor and slacking off themselves; or that a cleverly devised and firmly structured hierarchy of officials, consisting of countless drones, would exploit and tyrannize the masses – as in the Inca state of the ancient Peruvians.

But, as I said, we do not believe that the people of the post-revolutionary era would make such a mistake. They will not, wisely learned from the infinitely bitter lessons of history, “pour new wine into old wineskins”; they will recognize that institutions that have created and maintained slavery are not suitable for freedom; After the destruction of the traditional, devilish centralism, they will turn to the all-enlivening federalism in their organizations.

Standing on the basis of common capital and organized in a federalist manner, humanity will have banished the exploitation of one by another, all domination and all servitude forever.

The exploitation of one by another takes place today not only in the field of production, but even more so in the field of commodity distribution. The finished products pass through the hands of countless swindlers, none of whom add any surplus value to them, but who all too often counterfeit them, i.e. make them worse, and who nevertheless drive up the prices of consumer goods to such an extent that their nominal value (expressed in money) must appear doubled, and not infrequently tenfold, compared to their production costs the moment they reach the actual consumer.

In a free society, there can be no more talk of such robbery. The producers, who are also all consumers, exchange the goods they produce without the intervention of trade and the associated profit-making.

To do this, however, an intermediary institution is probably necessary.

“Holy State, help!” calls out ironically to us someone possessed by the devil of tradition. Easy! There is no need for mandarinism for this either. For as much as it is obvious that it would be extremely impractical if every individual consumer turned to the most diverse production organizations in order to obtain his various necessities from them, it would seem just as impractical if a state shopkeeper wanted to play the role of intermediary.

The same people who are taught by expediency how to organize themselves in order to produce goods as profitably as possible without endangering their individual freedom — these same people can also want to carry out the exchange of goods only through voluntarily formed consumer organizations.

The association of a number of people for the purpose of purchasing goods together can be imagined in the most varied forms. It is highly probable, however, that the associations in question are more or less limited. While in some productive organizations a broad structure over the entire area of a free society may prove to be expedient, even perhaps indispensable, in the area of commodity consumption hardly anything more than a communal organization is necessary.

If the inhabitants of a place so wish, they will take on the task of regulating the distribution of goods as a whole community. In this case, they will set up communal warehouses from which each individual can obtain what he or she needs. On the other hand, the consumer community, as one might appropriately call such an organization, will address its orders directly to the associations of the various production organizations.

If, however, such an extensive organization of the distribution of luxury goods is not to everyone’s taste, they can form themselves into larger or smaller consumer associations with or without a communal federation. In this respect, nothing can be said in advance in which direction these things will initially break through. The first consideration is the inclination of those who are in a position to create such organizations. Secondly, the practice of the system that proves to be the most appropriate will most likely break through more and more of its own accord.

When things are built up according to the free decision of those involved, there is also the advantage that a variety of phenomena can come into play at the same time, which allows comparative observation and thus, without any coercion, the best in itself can prevail over the less perfect through the convincing influence of proven experience and achieve general recognition; whereas the decree of things by majority or other powers imposes the stamp of one-sidedness on all the institutions brought about by them and gives them a highly conservative character.

Perhaps for a long time to come, many people are content with little comfort just to enjoy what is called family happiness. The anarchist order really does not put any obstacles in their way in this respect. But it also leaves the way open for those who are willing to emancipate themselves from the family life of a snail shell, and who prefer to live in palaces in community with a larger number of like-minded people, to dine together and, in short, to create such luxurious facilities through the economy of organization that the dissipation of things and the waste of domestic work, which are inevitable in a family-oriented society, will never be tolerated.

The most delicate matter with regard to the exchange of goods in a free society seems to be the valuation of the individual types of goods in comparison with one another. And