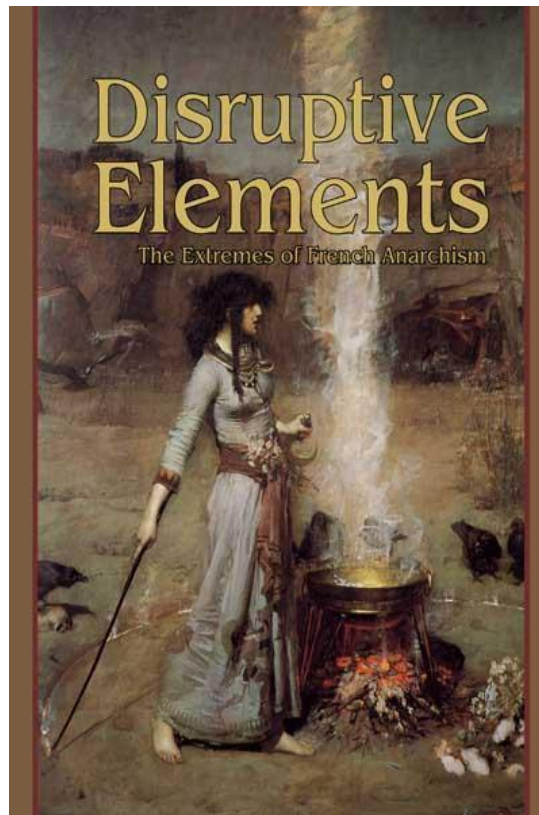


# Disruptive Elements

The Extremes of French Anarchism

Various Authors



2014

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*If Pierre Chardon overflowed with ardor, enthusiasm, activity, he was intransigent. Verbosity inspired pity in him; the verbosity of rhetoricians as well as that of revolutionaries. He wanted to “practice” in the field without waiting for the day after the Big Night or a problematic and chimeric New Dawn. He was neither an eminent philosopher, nor a famous author, nor even an industrious playwright, nor a libertarian gen de lettre for snobs and snobettes. Pierre Chardon was quite simply an artisan of action, an achiever who wanted to plough his furrow, and plow it well. Because he was not a “dear master” but a loyal propagandist believing in the efficacy of propaganda, does he deserve to be scratched so soon from the tablets of anarchists, of the “comrades” for whom he gave his life?*

— E. Armand



## Translator's Introduction

*Disruptive Elements* is a collection of previously hard to find or untranslated writings of French anarchists from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Much of the material presented here was translated specifically for this book, and offers up a lost thread from the fabric of history, one we find particularly vibrant. The editors do not presume to provide a monolithic, complete, or definitive story about French anarchist individualism, nor do we propose answers, conclusions, or closure on any of the ideas presented. We sought out the writings of many of the major figures of the milieu, chose those that most compelled us, and collected them here. So, a few important people have been left out: Rirette Maîtrejean makes no appearance for example (she took over publication of *L'Anarchie* after Libertad's death and merits our attention). We challenge those with the desire, knowledge, and capabilities to contribute to this work, to do so; if we have learned anything from editing this anthology (itself continuing the project begun by *Enemies of Society*), it is that archival work of this nature is endless.

We have set out to do a number of things in publishing this material. First, to provide insight on the lives of forgotten anarchists through their own writings. Far too little is known about many of the authors herein, despite the strength of their ideas, their prolific publishing accomplishments, and the mutual interests they share with many anarchists today (i.e., a strong affinity to the ideas of Max Stirner, a deep disdain for the Left, constantly developing theories on anarchist association, and an unflinching critique of authority paired with the insistence that putting an end to an old one should never mean submission to a new one). Though they played an early and prominent role in developing and propagating anarchist thought and action, their lives and writings have gone unknown or underacknowledged for too long. Many of them led vibrant and inspiring lives as illegalists, propagandists, deserters, travelers and staunch individualists.

Second, to contribute to the current interest in individualist and non-ideological anarchism, shedding light on its origins and providing valuable insight and theoretical history. Many of the selections here focus specifically on what individualist anarchism is (anarchism that refuses parties, programs, or any other archisms offered by leftists), though others deal with broader questions from an individualist perspective. Given the recent interest in egoism, as well as the editors' feeling that the basic tenets of individualist anarchism systematically attack compromised forms of anarchism (which are too prevalent today), these selections are offered for comrades to consider—that a number of these thinkers (among the first self-proclaimed anarchists) developed critiques of the left, civilization, communism, and revolution as long ago as a hundred fifty years might bring greater understanding and awareness to our struggles for liberation today. The vociferousness of those like Georges Darien and André Lorulot put them at odds even with other individualists of their time, and it is also this spirit—the ever-fieri, the anti-social, the anti-political—that we would like to highlight here.

Finally, it is my hope as a translator that others will be inspired to seek out more of this material and make it available to anarchists today. This anthology, like all anthologies, has omitted many worthy texts and thinkers, and there is much potential for future exploration. Many of the

excerpts here are too short to do justice to the original authors (Pierre Chardon, Ernest Coeurderoy, and Alexandra David-Néel being notable examples), yet by way of introduction this book will bring them out of the shadows: provided the inspiration and the will, more will appear in the future.

Above all, the voices herein have something to offer those who desire anti-authoritarian liberation. Something beautiful happened in France some time ago, a sustained, prolific, and committed project of such liberation. In renewing the texts of these times, we hope to rekindle the fires of resistance and to push anarchism beyond the limits it once reached.

—vincent

# Bonjour

Le Voyeur

*So I hear that unbridled liberty is menacing. Who is she menacing? Who shall fear the untamed horse, but one who would tame it? Who shall fear an avalanche, but one who would stop it? Who trembles in front of liberty, but tyranny?*

—Anselme Bellegarrigue

Out of consideration for my infinitely patient and long-suffering publisher (and out of fear for my life should I add any more pages to this already heavy tome!) I'm going to try to avoid rhetorical overkill and keep my introductory comments brief. Around 2006, anarchists in North America (myself among them) began leaving our insular self-referential ghetto in droves, due largely to the uninspired funk anarchism seemed mired in and the odor of carrion that reigned over the anarchist press. A huge portion of the general malaise and discouragement can be attributed to the dearth of edginess or originality in most anarchist writing and the lackluster synthesis of influences that held sway over anarchist discourse at the time (NEFAC, identity politics, post-modernism, PC moralism). There was a certain *élan vital* and healthy iconoclasm absent from how Anarchy was being discussed and the scene itself seemed to be bleeding to death from self-inflicted wounds. Many of us saw ourselves as “enemies from within,” interested in stirring up the stagnant pool of nebulous leftism that U.S. anarchism had settled into, but wondered if it was even worth the effort—especially given the central role of the AK Press publishing monopoly and the stranglehold they had on the anarchist imagination at the time, with their meaninglessly overdone Proudhon, Kropotkin, and Malatesta anthologies and sedate handbooks on “community organizing,” social justice, democratic decision making, feelgood activism, and other complacent cop-outs masquerading as anarchism (it's astonishing that a small coterie of humorless, ideologically-determined leftoids can take a resplendent, limitless idea like Anarchy and render it so unbearably boring). The most commonly-read general histories of anarchism—such as *Anarchism* by George Woodcock, *Black Flame* by Lucien van der Walt, and *Anarchism: From Theory To Practice* by Daniel Guerin—are no better, in that they either attempt to recast anarchism as merely a mass organized movement of the working poor or portray it as the most advanced and free-thinking form of union militancy, sidestepping completely the uncultivated burglars, bloodthirsty *flaneurs*, and rogue nutcases that they feel tarnish anarchism's image (in effect, expunging anarchism of its most adrenalizing and disruptive elements through a lopsided concentration on the more placid and banal end of the spectrum). This is legend-making in the most fearful and guarded mold, orchestrated by ideological tapeworms seeking to restrain the rest of us with their moral commandments and slobbering directives, and engrossed primarily in prolonging the duration of their own perfumed and timid precepts. In the English-speaking world, we've inherited and suffer from the intellectual debility, falsifications, weak visionary capacity, and tranquilizing programs of these anarchically-deficient anarchists, and it's difficult to fully

measure the baneful effects of their disarming and deodorizing campaign—apparently intent on reducing anarchism to an enfeebled, empty shell upon the historical garbage-pile of dead ideas. The result of their shrunken, restrictive, and quixotically doomed definition of Anarchy has been a theoretical climate of general devitalization and chronic mediocrity where most contemporary anarchist voices sound like the strangled gasps of the half-living or defeated. What happened to the varieties of Anarchy formulated around a refusal of *society itself* or to the self-deifying insurgents whose perception of revolution overstepped the narrow boundaries of the economic and stood proudly **above** the presiding left/right spectacle of approved consciousness? Were individuals like Émile Henry, Jules Bonnot, and Ixigrec really *anomalous* or have they been given the silent treatment and/or buried in disinformational sewage for more transparently political reasons? And when did anarchist aspirations become so...meager?

Eager to pinpoint just when and where anarchist thought lost its way, I decided to go back to the epicenter of it all—France in the 1840s—and discovered that not only had a critique of the Left been present from the very beginning, but so had a critique of civilization! How long had this been going on? To answer this question I intensified my research into early French anarchism and found more writings of such remarkably high quality that I couldn't fathom why none of them had ever been translated into English. Continued investigation yielded one invigorating discovery and revelation after the next, but also effectively dispelled the fiction that Pierre-Joseph Proudhon has any place within the anarchist canon, beyond popularizing the word. The rote veneration of Proudhon is comical when considering only the embarrassingly awful writing (his literary hallmark), but becomes less of a laughing matter when critically examining his torrent of ideas on "social reform," which are completely at odds with the nature of the enterprise to which they allegedly refer. Let's begin with his description of anarchy:

*Anarchy is... a form of government or constitution in which public and private consciousness, formed through the development of science and law, is alone sufficient to maintain order and guarantee all liberties. The institutions of the police, preventative and repressive methods officialdom, taxation etc., are reduced to a minimum... monarchy and intensive centralization disappear, to be replaced by federal institutions and a pattern of life based upon the commune.*

Does any of this sound remotely liberatory or (fundamentally) anti-statist? In the dimension of politics, Proudhon's methodically-developed half-measures are a greater aid to *socialists* than anarchists and, ultimately, are just a gleaming sideshow grafted on to authentic anarchism (similar to the relationship of the Sex Pistols to the more irreproachable punk that followed them). In one of his letters Proudhon remarks that he who engages in politics must "wash his hands in dung," but this "conviction" didn't stop him from fervently indulging in the filth, as when he dedicated his book *La révolution sociale, démontrée par le coup d'état du 2 décembre*, "to the bourgeoisie" or when he ran for political office after the events of 1848 and floated the patriotic proposition that each "citizen" perform one or two years militia service! This proposal appeared in the *Programme Revolutionnaire*, an electoral manifesto issued by Proudhon after he was asked to campaign for a position in the provisional government. The text reads: "7° *L'armée. — Abolition immédiate de la conscription et des remplacements; obligation pour tout citoyen de faire, pendant un ou deux ans, le service militaire; application de l'armée aux services administratifs et travaux d'utilité publique.*" ("Military service by *all* citizens is proposed as an alternative to conscription and the practice of 'replacement,' by which those who could avoided such service.").

So as we can see, no sooner had the concept of Anarchy been put forth before mildew already starts to appear. Yet nowhere is Proudhon's charlatantry more fully exposed than in his genocidal anti-semitism, as expressed in this sickening entry from one of his personal notebooks (finally published in *Carnets de P.J. Proudhon* in 1960):

*December 26, 1847: Jews. Write an article against this race that poisons everything by sticking its nose into everything without ever mixing with any other people. Demand its expulsion from France with the exception of those individuals married to French women. Abolish synagogues and not admit them to any employment. Finally, pursue the abolition of this religion. It's not without cause that the Christians called them deicide. The Jew is the enemy of humankind. They must be sent back to Asia or be exterminated. By steel or by fire or by expulsion the Jew must disappear.*

In all fairness, Proudhon's complete writings still haven't been published a hundred fifty years after his death, even in French, partly because they would fill forty or fifty volumes; still, what *has* been translated would seem to indicate that Proudhon only rarely even **used** the word anarchy and when he did he never stretched the scope of anarchism beyond the political sphere (i.e., *governmental* authority), with later writings violating even his own vapid, yawninducing use of the term. Anti-semitism, misogyny, and homophobia are a wretched substratum upon which to base anarchist thought and the diseased branch of Proudhon needs to be pruned unceremoniously from the anarchist family tree (the more obliterating critiques of Proudhon scattered throughout this volume inaugurate this necessary task).

But to many of Proudhon's contemporaries there was a new vision being born and a new consciousness unfolding, one that was fated to sweep the world like a storm—and it's here that **consistent** anarchist thought starts to get very interesting. Take the case of Ernest Coeurderoy (1825–1862), an anarchist who participated actively in the June uprising of 1848 and spent his later life in exile, refusing to accept the amnesty of the French state. By profession a physician, he shared the positivist and scientific outlook imparted by that training, but in his literary style he was a fanatical enthusiast of anarchism's early period, full of exuberant passion and messianic vision, who aroused widespread hostility for his scandalous conviction that the triumph of liberty in Europe depended on a catastrophic Russian invasion that would raze civilization—an invasion he prophesized as inevitable! To clarify his curious position, Coeurderoy published a book titled *Hurrah !!! ou la Rivolution par les Cosaques* in 1854, in which he laid out his extreme diagnosis and prescriptions and announced his uncivilized forecast. Writing like a man possessed by the spirit of a black sun, everything in the world Coeurderoy knew seemed to him ripe for total destruction: Western civilization had frozen into immobility and was no longer able to support humanity's physical and spiritual needs; Revolution was everything that was not immobilized in the past, all that was not **civilized**, all that strove with intensity to be born. To Coeurderoy the Russians represented something barbaric and Dionysian, a pitiless force of ever recurrent destruction and rebirth, innocent of civilization, disinherited, and hungry for universal ruin. The West was an immense cemetery of peoples and religions; the East was the great workshop of new forces; the West was satiated and desired rest, but the "barbaric" Russians were driven on by their very privations; the West thought that it had ideas and yet "we have only memories which hinder us from thinking courageously." Coeurderoy himself had no problem thinking courageously, however, and preached a breathtaking gospel of social destruction, weaving together apocalyptic

fantasies of a generalized Negation which, by necessity, would lead to social reconstruction, to a glorious Affirmation of individual sovereignty and an overturning of the tables of the Law. Using the intertwined (at the time) languages of socialism and anarchism, he raved: “The socialist Revolution, that is the Individual, that is Happiness! What could such a revolution do with the present men as they are, regimented men who deny the surpassing excellence of Self-interest, of Well-being, of Pride, and of Individual Liberty?” When Coeurderoy penned these words of blinding lucidity he still hoped for years of health to allow the eventual writing of his gospel of anarchy, the *constructive* phase of his world-conception: “Then I shall predict all the future events according to their hour. And with ardent word I shall force them into reality as the Spring rays of the sun awaken the anemones! Then I shall break the seal that suffering forces me to put on the terrible Book of the Future. From the depth of my exile calm as in the night of the grave, I shall write on each of my terrifying pages the menaces and the promises of the eternal revolution.” But alas, thirty years before Nietzsche, this other solitary and homeless wanderer of old Europe, overshadowed by his approaching personal end, impatient with the pettiness of humans and of society, and suffering internally from a suspected mental illness, honorably took his own life—after which his delirious and disturbing pontifications were swallowed by the void (until Max Nettlau carefully tracked down his complete extant works and republished them at his own expense).

Coeurderoy was the harbinger of an imminent deluge of anarchist articulations, and before too long anarchism divided into a bewildering array of prefixes in order to define precise philosophical strands and agendas. In a stellar series of recent essays on the fundamental “ungovernability of anarchism,” North American anarchist Shawn Wilbur made the following observations:

*There is a lesson about anarchism that seems extraordinarily hard to learn, even though we are constantly confronted with it: As a tradition and as an idea, anarchism is essentially ungovernable. As an idea, it is too basic and logical a response to the statist status quo to remain the exclusive domain of any particular class or faction of dissenters. As a tradition, it emerged alongside many of the categories we presently use to distinguish those classes and factions, positing itself, at its origins, as much as an alternative to those classificatory schemes as fodder for their work... Anarchism hardly had a name before it had an internal diversity that no amount of spinning is ever going to reduce to a single orthodoxy. And the more of our history that we uncover, the more irrevocably irreducible it will appear.*

*The word ‘Anarchism’ marks a variety of things, among them an elusive and contested Ideal, a historical Tradition, and a present Movement:*

- *As an Ideal, Anarchism runs on ahead of us as we chase it, constantly revealing greater freedom and unchallenged forms of authority, provided we pay close attention. The Ideal is ungovernable, and that is a good thing. We can’t get too smug, and those who would settle for “liberty on the low bid,” and attempt to reduce Anarchism to their level, just make it clear that they’re not paying attention at all.*
- *As a Tradition, Anarchism has always been more diverse than most of us can easily be comfortable with, as an attentive reading of the most uncontroversial histories of the movement quickly demonstrates. This is a fact that we should probably learn to live with. Sure, it’s a little hard to know what to do with the earliest explicit expressions of anarchism, with their wild fantasies (Humanispheres, Cossack invasions, etc.) and their occasional glaring errors (anti-semitic and anti-feminist elements, for example), but in attempting to cleanse the tradition*

*of stuff that makes us uneasy, we've neglected some elements that arguably ought to please, or at least amuse us (the fact that Proudhon's feminist adversaries were also mutualist activists, Humanispheres, Cossack invasions, etc.) We can acknowledge that Bellegarrigue, who produced Anarchy: A Journal of Order, was some sort of market anarchist, and it won't be the end of the world. Our denials look too much like opportunistic history to reflect very well on us. We don't have to go there again, and Bellegarrigue probably isn't going to make a modern capitalist any happier than a modern communist. None of us claim the whole Tradition anyway.*

- *As a Movement, in the realm of practical struggles and in our ideological struggles about how we will relate to the Ideal going forward, let's try to at least be practical. Internal struggle is part of our Tradition, and is probably dictated by our relentless Ideal. We constantly face new questions, and new threats, among them elements that would just love to govern Anarchism to some narrower end. When we identify with the Movement, we presumably take on a relation to the Ideal and the Tradition (even if the latter may be somewhat antagonistic), and we necessarily enter into some kind of relation of basic solidarity with others who similarly identify. We don't all have to play nice. We don't have to welcome anything that appears in opposition to the Ideal, even if it has some validation from the Tradition, but we should probably have more sense than to squander or wreck what we have inherited and presumably share. Some kinds of sectarian squabbling will arguably drive the project of Anarchism forward. Others obviously don't. Some kinds of toleration on the fringes enrich that project. Others clearly imperil it. So we need to take responsibility for the actions we take on this very field of conflict. We can't hope to govern or rule the movement, without putting ourselves in conflict with our own Tradition and Ideal, but that's not a reason to be indifferent. Quite the contrary.*

Wilbur makes some excellent points here about anarchism as a volatile body of ideas not calculated to enlist popular support, ready acceptance by the unthinking, or even a monolithic agreement of meaning among anarchists themselves (including those with a fetish for orthodoxy). Forever morphing and mutating, anarchism can be likened to a complex oscillating wave spectrum, a fluid and highly contradictory discursive field that will always defy simplification. Within the coming and going multitude of anarchist expressions, various streams—or filaments—approach, exchange, and superimpose themselves on each other, at times relieving the inner tension in merger and fusion, and in other encounters reacting like cells that hostilely divide in order to generate new, warring cells. Sometimes these filaments take opposite courses only to be reunited later on a more intelligible level, while other currents cancel each other out and deviate so far from core anarchist principles that no reconciliation is even possible. The interplay between this quarrelling family of discourses (which vary widely in the degree to which government, the State, and forms of authority in other spheres are analyzed and/or held in contempt) is an *active* phenomenon, a continuous whorl of energizing debates within an unbounded field of radical inquiry. This is certainly preferable to a systematized ideology (which is by definition *governed*), but spawns yet another question: Are there constant characteristics beneath the changeable externalities of anarchist forms and approaches? In other words, are there **consistent** anarchist sentiments emerging from the momentum and original chaos that have the courage to persist on their own terms, and that don't disintegrate into liberalism or middle-of-the-road collusion with "social reform" movements (which contemporary anarchism in the U. S. has become associated with)? Who *were* the breeders of coherent, non-hybridized anarchist thought-strains and

why are their writings still so difficult to access? The questions prompted by our research were eventually answered—in a curvilinear fashion—by our research and what we present here are stories and writings from anarchism’s more forbidden territories, writings that provide a superior vantage point from which to strategically survey the contours of anarchism’s ever-mobile landscape. We aren’t claiming to have distilled anarchism down to some “pure compound” or quintessence, nor are we seeking to minimize the wide-openness and poetic dynamism of the anarchist dream to one stable idea; we’re unequivocally hostile to the codification of liberty and to any pretentious attempt to bring the rich multiplicity of anarchist imaginings under some hegemonic “order.” One of the great ruses of the self-righteous High Priests of anarchism, who stand like inflexible Hermeneutic guards over the individual interpretation of anarchist ideas, has been the masking and glossing over of the bitter factional antagonisms and inner dissensions within this continuum. Yet it was precisely the bountiful and tremendously potent texts generated by this devastating collision between clashing, discordant tendencies that held such an irresistibly strange attraction for us, as they sabotage the mainstream temporal structure of anarchism’s developmental wanderings (beginning with the fraudulent Proudhon) and unearth the gold hidden beneath continents of leftist putrefaction. Make no mistake, in the collection you’re now holding we *are* attempting to overthrow ruling “truths” regarding anarchism, and to assign a new rank to valuable and ignored texts key to deciphering some of the invisible currents flowing through the anti-authoritarian tradition. These are writings of convulsive anger and interior resonance that have been hidden from interested minds by the fleeting mirage of time, writings that are **recognizably** anarchist and which provide a counterpoint to (and more importantly, *a treason against*) the impasse of moralistic and collectivist anarchist models, all the while shaking confidence in the edifice of lies democracy-worshipping simpletons like Ramsey Kanaan (and others who would just love to govern anarchism) have constructed around the subject. We want nothing more than to set free these smoldering words of fire again, so that they may agitate, break, set ablaze, and destroy anew! In the end, my contributions to this research project were slight and ultimate praise for the offerings in this anthology (should you deem them worthy of praise) goes to my erstwhile translator (and close friend) Vincent Stone, without whom this adventure in subversion would have been an unmitigated calamity.

We open this collection with Felix Pignal’s very rare proto-anarchist pamphlet *Philosophie de l’insoumission ou pardon a Cain (Philosophy of Non-Submission, or Pardon for Cain)*, an extravaganza of anti-authoritarian thought, in all its extensions, rediscovered by Max Nettlau in the course of researching his monumental nine-volume history of anarchism. We feel this audacious *aperitif* sets the tone for the other texts assembled here, which form an interlocking narrative that tells the story of **a breakaway pattern** from conventional historiographies of the anarchist movement—historiographies that all tend to present a sanitized facsimile of the wild, outlaw impulse running riot outside the custodianship of “respectable” and academic anarchism. This is the neglected legacy that left-leaning anarchists have yet to honestly confront, an inexcusably maligned genealogy that has been hitherto restricted to a mostly European readership, as it’s not an image of anarchism that today’s **recuperators** in the U.S. are eager to spotlight. Anarchist thought has never reached very many people, and unadulterated, **internally-consistent** anarchist thought has reached even fewer. This isn’t because anarchist writings are ever truly hidden, but simply that they remain imperceptible to those not putting forth an effort and *seeking* them. This is even more true of the writings in this compendium, which inhabit a liminal zone between an already obscure history and an indeterminate future.



We approached this project not as a deformed remembrance of an idealized past that never was, nor as an exercise in nostalgia, but as an **action**: a campaign of *guerrilla* historicism that has as its goal a paradigmatic hijacking and a sweeping overhaul of existing, received doctrines concerning anarchism. Retracing the elusive rhizomes of bona fide, non-diluted anarchist thought necessitated some digging, but it was delightfully dirty business—for to sort through the remains of anarchism is also to sort the viable seed for future plantings.

# The Philosophy of Defiance, or, A Pardon for Cain (1854)

Félix P...

Edited by Max Nettlau  
Translated by Shawn P. Wilbur

... Give me any epithets you wish; I accept them all in advance. I have only one thought, and envision only one glory: it is to strike everywhere and always, as much as I can, at the principle of domination. *Satan, in his revolt, is my father, and, in his courage, Cain is my brother!*

...We do not take a single step in society without hearing that human beings must believe in a God, in a sovereign being, master of all things, according to whose absolute will everything occurs, whether for good or ill.

Well, I claim bluntly that this doctrine is the source of all our miseries and that those— too numerous, alas!—who maintain it, as much by cunning as through ignorance or fanaticism, constantly dig beneath our feet the abyss which must swallow us.

...Some mistreat others,—that is beyond doubt,—and in order to safeguard ourselves against rebellion, we have invented the belief in God.

I will go further, and say that in order to believe in a supreme being, the *mistreated* have no need of teaching; from that side, the movement of the soul is inevitable.

Yes, it is when we are, so to speak, abandoned by everyone, that our minds seek the support of an unknown being; and so long as he remains a brother to us, a friend, it is from him that we await the consolations that our sufferings demand...

...A tooth for a tooth! The law of the jungle. Such is the combat that we must still make against the divinity. First, why do we tremble at this audacity? Isn't humanity, under the weight of its sorrows, at bay, at the last extremities? So it no longer has anything to lose. Courage in the attack! Courage! Our servility offers us a glorious pretext which would, by itself, justify our rebellion. And since we honor a people when they know how to overthrow a tyrant, what would be the grandeur of our triumph, if we succeeded in destroying the principle of tyranny!

There is a fact, and it is that tyranny is an evil more violent than all the evils which could result from our independence. That is why each of us should seek to belong to ourselves, in order that human tribulations (if we must still have them) might not be the result of a shameful mistake, and that the vicious should always be disgraceful in our eyes, for God is an imaginary torch, so fatal to humanity that he guides it in paths contrary to its happiness and renders society guilty before the criminal that it punishes!

With God, man is given the odious chore of torturing his fellows and the victims the shame of patiently bearing the oppression!

Thus marches society, loaded down with the chains that it imposes on itself! Ashamed of the blood that covers it! Without respect for its own tears, and stuffed full of a crime which will choke it, if a plerosis does not save it from its last bout...

...But the only God which it seems tolerable for me to avow, assuming that name should not disappear from every language, has no absolute will over us: it is the intellectual fluid, having the universe for reservoir, which is refined in the springs of our imagination, more mysteriously still than the nutritious juices of the earth being distributed to the roots of the plants that absorb them. This fluid gives some abilities which are ruled by no other laws than those that we impose on them...

...Still, we dare to give him (God) the name of Almighty Father! A thing which undoubtedly imposes on us the title of Brothers... Truly, wouldn't it make you shudder with horror if you knew some less-powerful father who would allow his own children to tear each other to pieces, before his very eyes! It is barbarians who have created this vampire in their image!...

How could we believe in liberty if the mind warps itself so easily in favor of dependency? As long as the mind will bear any *subordination*, the body must endure *servitude*. This is a deadly, but inevitable, consequence of every belief in God.

Thus, let us first teach the children their duties with regard to their fellows, instead of accustoming their imaginations to the mysteries, and later, if they want, they can discuss eternal visions. There will then be many fewer head cases and more honest folk in society.

...The tears, the moans—and the arms—of those who suffer, have still not been able to change anything about their appalling condition...

What good is it to revolt today, if tomorrow you reestablish or allow to be reestablished the colossus which crushes you; if tomorrow, in other forms, you reconstruct the teeth that bite you, the jaw that crushes you, the throat that swallows you, and the stomach which digests you; if tomorrow, in short, the authority that you have overthrown, is reborn fresh and even stronger, and consequently more violent and more redoubtable? What good is that? Tell me.

For a number of years, the democracy was astonished to see its soldiers so scattered and discordant; but I say that nothing is less astonishing. The division of interests divides the interested parties. Let us console ourselves, however, for despite everything nature is emerging and the democracy, refining itself, is inclined to follow nature's laws. So there is no longer but one cry: the call for independence...

... Property, such as it exists today, is the fruit of a law upheld by some skilled sorts who want to live at the expense of those that they dominate. Like all human laws, it is unjust and murderous, not really creating happiness for anyone, not even those that it protects... Understood as it is presently, property is the source of all evils!...

...It is not, however, property alone that stems from the meanness, the cruelty, the vengeance, and the laziness of which so many of our fellows are accused!

Misfortune makes us mean, the lack of everything makes us thieving and disheartened, and a false principle warps humans to the point of not loving their fellows, of being harmful rather than devoted to them.

To maintain this principle and perpetuate its crime, we feign to guarantee the public repose by increasing the number of police, by building new prisons, by doubling or tripling the wages of those who forge the chains or fasten them to the feet of the exploited poor. Ah! If instead of exhausting us, misfortune gave us intelligence, we would see something else entirely, despite the multiplication of the police!...

...If there is, in this world, some real power, it is indeed the reign of tyranny, that colossus with numberless claws, which constantly tears at all the peoples whose palpitating breasts call for liberty.

Certainly, we can find nothing more deplorable than the evils that overflow the earth because of this murderous principle. The kings, who should be for us only free conventions, which we should change as the future brings us new ideas, because often the next day we do not know how to content ourselves with what made us happy the day before, are for most of us heavy chains that hold us riveted to misfortune, while the traitors who attach themselves to us wander at their ease the fields of our prosperity!...

Labor, which should be for individuals only a subject for *leisure* has become mindnumbing under this *insufferable* and *bloodthirsty* empire, because many are required to give of themselves beyond their strength to feed their own executioners!...

... What!. There is not a single place on earth which is not stained with the crime of slavery and oppression. Not a city which has not resounded, as many times as there are grains of sand in its walls, with the cries of the ill-fated and despairing! Could the inner man, whose nature a false principle has still not been able to change, reflect on his unfortunate fellows without a secret power awakening in him, to sleep again only when it has found the salutary concoction with which the poor are spoiled?. The poor are thirsty, and the only drink they demand. is liberty! But an **absolute** liberty, a liberty without intermediary, a liberty with no other laws than those which germinate in the people. Finally that liberty which is born from independence, and which could only be hostile to those who oversee the workers in order to live on their sweat and blood!!

Now, in order to enjoy that liberty, it is necessary to prevent tyranny, and as we have already said: The king is certainly not the only tyrant in a kingdom.

A king is only the summit of a governmental pyramid, the base of which is calculated to maintain it.

As long as that base is not broken up, it would be useless to sacrifice ourselves to knock down its peak in order to acquire liberty.

... To cut off the head of a king, but allow the principle which requires him to remain, a principle which demands that so many other kinglets fatten themselves at the expense of the proletariat, is just like trying to stop the current in a rapidly flowing river with a saber blow!.

Laugh in the faces of the idiots and schemers who, on the basis of similar stupidities, will cry out to you: To arms!... I have said, or have meant, that to obtain true liberty we must wait for the governmental pyramid to be broken apart, by itself even!. I stand by it.

Far from encouraging that bloodthirsty, liberticidal intoxication, I would always strive for silence, so as not to have to bemoan the atrocities of a revolution of barbarians or to water with our tears the places stained with the blood of those who could have become our friends.

Let us suppose that a government is broken up. It is then that we must show the courage and resolution to prevent its reconstitution in any other form. For, in order to exist, power must be homicidal, murder being the daily fruit of its instinct for preservation.

For independence, and for her daughter liberty, we will sacrifice ourselves! To arms, to arms!! But for our fellows, the seditious have only silence. For, far from freeing the world from the claws which clasp it, we will only enslave it more.

Truly, we could only laugh at a republican who wanted, at all costs, to change one government in order to reestablish another! What then does this madman—this troublemaker— want? Some

trouble and disorder, fifty savages in exchange for one barbarian. One hundred deputies for a prince. Finally a thousand cankers for an ulcer. Is it really worth the fuss for such horrors!!

No, no, I will never be republican to the point of swapping the ugly for the dreadful. And I will not even trouble myself to see if the barricades in the street are deserted or occupied, as long as people are not disposed to discuss at least these four points.

1. The earth, being rightly regarded as the principal part of our inheritance, is inalienable in any form and transaction;

2. All uncultivated earth returns to the public domain to be distributed as an immoveable instrument of labor;

3. The products of labor alone are considered as trafficable, individual properties;

4. All domestic service is regarded as degrading and whoever serves a master will no longer be a citizen.

... I reflect in passing, that some are capable of believing that I would diminish the number of revolutionaries!!. If I should diminish anything, it would only be, in any case, the number of those who call themselves republicans and who, most often, are only a bunch of brutes who will cut the throats of the so-called reds and whites, because they are of another color.

So much the better. Then we would know, and if the war between us is a war to the death, we will at least have the advantage of knowing why. While today, you hardly dare to approach in broad daylight certain individuals who cry to you in an insolent voice: Long live the republic!. Well, whoever wishes life for any government, also supports a coterie existing at the expense of those whom it governs. Whoever says: Long live absolutism! says long live lies. Whoever says: Long live a governmental republic! says long live hypocrisy! But those who say: Down with all governments!! say down with murder! Long live independence! Long live truth!.

Let the liberals, the radicals, and the bourgeois republicans choose. And if they want to continue to exploit the miserable workers, let them say: Long live absolutism!.

The earth is the mother of everyone. Each has a right to the land, as they have a right to the rays of the sun which warms us, and should not command it any more than they would the air of which they breathe a portion to invigorate their blood.

Now, if the earth is subject today to the laws of commerce, like an ordinary bit of merchandise or any product, it is a crime against humanity which affects the majority of us, and which has become the source of all our evils and which puts humans below the savage beasts, which despite their fierce spirit only appropriate that which conforms to the needs of their nature

Thus there are two very distinct camps among us: that of the *governors* and that of the *governed*, and there are also only two principles: that of lies and that of truth...

... The governments tremble, so rejoice; they totter, so hold yourself in readiness; they fall, so attack! But among their ruins, soaked with the blood of your fathers, never let the audacious dare to cry: Long live the power!. or crack their skulls, for power is authority, and authority is tyranny. With the last. there is not liberty, there is only some monstrous hybrid, which everyone must hound as they would a beast suspected of rabies.

Down with governments, down with tyranny, and long live independence! Long live love and friendship.

... No more governments, and no more taxes. No more cutthroats, and no more blood. No more greed, and no more hate. The future is for all. And it is thus that you will love yourselves in your brothers.

Establish yourselves in revolutionary communes; even in the smallest places always cry: Down with the governments! Let each of you participate in the discussions in their town, in order to debate their interests.

As your well-being will depend on the same cause, you will never have a guide except the same reason, the same spirit. It is thus that intelligence will really prevail.

Don't concern yourself with the lazy: there will be none, for individuals who work freely for themselves need work as much as recreation and could not do without it without suffering.

That seems bizarre, doesn't it? There are so many today who are lazy and live splendidly.

With regard to the majority of those, I do not know what to tell you, except that since you have tolerated them thus far, we have to feed them: habit is a second nature.

Besides, they will disappear like the old soldiers of the Empire.

The principle which must, by its own power, bring into communion the interests of all its members, will promote industry as much as agriculture; consequently, your moral and material necessity will be to establish a balance between the agricultural products and those of industry. And being dependent only on your needs, that equilibrium can never be upset enough for the products of each of you to stop flowing, always with the same regularity.

Thus, nothing can prevent or constrain any longer the free exchange of your products, and as it is these alone which can satisfy the void of your needs, each will trade at will. Then, the beautiful, the solid, and the convenient still being capable of an incontestable perfectibility, an eternal competition will establish the price, stimulated by that progressive perfection whose limit is found in the fictions of eternity, if it is to be found at all.

Some communal bazaars will be established in each locality, and the products which are lacking will very quickly give some advantages to those who can fill this void, in order that each commune or hamlet will soon have its necessities within reach. The fruits of the labor of the producers will fall directly to the consumers, without any increase of price above their real value, except for the costs that the staffing of the bazaars to which these products will be entrusted will entail.

However, no one will be required to stock their products at the communal fairs, so that they still remain free to negotiate directly with other producers or consumers, if they judge it proper...

There will always be individuals of superior talent. And for this reason, individuality could not be merged, without suffering subjection, into a collective liberty. Besides, whoever says individual liberty, says it all; for a collective liberty can only be created under the will of several individuals.

Thus let those who judge it appropriate unite in life, duties, and labor. And let those whom the least subjection would offend remain individually independent.

The true principle is thus very far from requiring inviolable community. However, for the harmony of certain labors, it is obvious that many of the producers will establish themselves in societies, for the advantages that they will find in the union of their strengths. But once more, communism will never be a fundamental principle, because of the diversity of our intelligences, needs, and wills.

Thus, excluding the jobs of judge, priest, policeman, thief, and torturer, our new society will offer to each of its members the means to live in a perfect ease, no longer wearying themselves for vain glories and sordid lusts.

In each community, they will establish some institutions for the young.

Scholars will never have been more sought after. Science will be an instrument of busy labor for those who feel themselves capable of working one of the fields of its domain... And each individual, being occupied with the work they prefer, will put into that work as much art, skill, and intelligence as a great writer will use to describe some story. An individual who is in their true society, works with taste and pleasure, with no hostility towards anyone.

Thus, all your days will pass in prosperity and joy.

... The earth will be the homeland of everyone, and each will be able to contemplate its riches. All people will love one another.

Oh, independence! Protector of humanity, inexhaustible source of happiness and satisfaction, seep into the hearts of the people, disabuse their minds of the artifices which delude and incite them, unblind their eyes, oh goddess! So that they can see your radiant halo, whose pure light weakens the monsters like the daylight wearies the owl! Mother of all pure liberties, let your name be sung, and let your name be blessed! Long live independence! War to authority!

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*These extracts show that their author was certainly imbued with anarchist ideas, which he presented in an independent manner. He is not presented here for any reason other than at that time, in the 1850s, anarchists were extremely rare, and he was perhaps the least known of them. We have always gathered with interest these first glimmers of the libertarian spirit: we know the Belleguarigues, Caurderoys, and*

*Déjacques, and here is one more of that sort, who signs his name (page iv) Félix P...and whose work contains almost no personal indications, and nothing which would put us on the track of the author whom he calls the godfather of Félix Dupanloup, to whom the pamphlet is dedicated. The place of publication, "New York," tells us nothing; but to see if it was New York or Geneva, it would be necessary at least to compare the brochure with a quantity of similar publications from that era, produced in these two cities and elsewhere, which I could not do. I found the brochure in Paris in January 1914 and I have not been able to find any other trace of it or its author, lacking the means to search more fully, which I had reckoned on doing in the autumn of that sad year in the British Museum.*

*The search was impossible from then on, but in January 1916, browsing through old notes I found something that I had myself noted in February 1904, based on what I was told by the widow of Pierre Vésinier, who had spent the 1850s in Geneva and knew all the exiles of December, particularly those of the region around Cluny, where he came from. In 1899 one of these old men showed him an old booklet he had written, which he had just come across by chance in Geneva. It was an anarchist brochure, since to Vésinier it recalled the ideas of Déjacque, whom he had known well. That same man went to America, where he had known Déjacque (but since I was told that this was in 1856 or 57, that detail can have nothing to do with the booklet). In any case, the name of that man, who in 1899 was a proprietor in the vicinity of Cluny, was—Félix Pignal. Thus, P and five letters as there is a P and five periods on page IV of the booklet. The double coincidence, that of the five letters, and that of the anarchist booklet by that author from the vicinity of Cluny, followed by the fact that the testimony of 1904 and the booklet*

*found by me in 1914, are two facts independent of one another, and all that makes it more than probable, in my opinion, that this new addition to the recovered incunabula of anarchy was truly written by Félix Pignal.*

— M. Nettlau, June 21, 1922, *La Revue Anarchiste* n°7, (July 1922)

Selections from a booklet by an unknown anarchist precursor, *Philosophie de l'insoumission ou Pardon à Caïn*, par Félix P. (New York, 1854, IV, 74 pp. in-12°)



**Section One: Ernest Coeurderoy  
(1825–1862)**

Were it not for the monumental work of anarchist historian Max Nettlau, Ernest Coeurderoy might have been all but forgotten. Inspired by the visionary power of Coeurderoy's writing, Nettlau toured Europe in search of any trace of this legendary thinker. He followed Coeurderoy's life, from his birthplace in Avallon, through his long exile in Switzerland, Belgium, England, Spain, and elsewhere, to the Swiss town where he committed suicide in 1862. Nettlau assembled the scattered facts of Coeurderoy's life and work into a long biographical note that heads what remains of his *chef d'oeuvre*, *Days of Exile*.

In this note, we learn that Coeurderoy lived a brief and eventful, if isolated, life. Active in many socialist groups while a practicing doctor in Paris and later while in exile, he had a keen understanding of the various strains of revolutionary thinking in his time and developed a powerful and unpopular critique of their fatal limitations. Though the precise nature of his participation is unclear, we know that he was forced to flee France in the fallout of the June 1848 revolution and first found himself in Switzerland. This began his long exile, which Nettlau asserts had a profound impact on Coeurderoy. He would soon begin an intensely productive period of writing, during which his millenarian, prophetic voice reached its apex, declared "I am an anarchist" and denounced as futile reformist approaches to liberation. Amidst visions of an unrelentingly violent upheaval, Coeurderoy provides an early critique of civilization and bourgeois revolution (his definition of which is so expansive it is probably more accurate to say "leftist revolution"), while also meditating on his own brief existence. The sheer volume and tenor of his writings during this time suggest that in his isolation, Coeurderoy wrote almost manically, teeming with a bitter and urgent message for his distant comrades. It is perhaps due to this unbridled creative explosion, in conjunction with the difficulties of exile, that his health began to decline in the mid-1850s. Nettlau could find no evidence of publication after 1855, at which time Coeurderoy married and settled down in Switzerland. Despite the first-hand accounts he collected, our careful historian leaves the question of "mental health" open to interpretation, for it is evident that his extreme and unpopular views alone would have been enough for society to label him as such. He notes also that Coeurderoy's ideas were eccentric, and that because of this most overlooked his compelling critique of society.

After extensive bibliographical research, Nettlau concludes that much of Coeurderoy's writings, including the third volume of *Days of Exile* (Nettlau's edition contains volumes I and II divided into three parts), have been lost, burned, or were never published. The following selections come from *Hurrah!!! or Revolution by the Cossacks*, a lengthy work presenting Coeurderoy's theory that true liberation will inevitably come from a violent upheaval driven by the peasant and artisan classes, away from urban areas and probably originating in Russia. His experiences of socialist uprisings in Western Europe taught him that bourgeois classes violently intervene in urban-centered libertarian movements, and that anyway most of these movements have narrow aims that even if achieved will leave the existing social order quite intact. Coeurderoy based his theory of the Cossacks on what he saw to be historical analogies and his (albeit uninformed) understanding of Russia. Nettlau affirms that despite the inaccuracies of this central claim, these fiery writings retain their force. In these selections, readers will get a brief glimpse of Coeurderoy's vivid literary style, his dark visions of unbridled destruction, his bitter hatred for compromise and weakness, and his lack of interest and hope in reforming civilization. His writings remain largely untranslated and poorly known.

# Hurrah!!! or Revolution by the Cossacks (excerpts)

Translated by vincent stone

From the Introduction

## IX

...However, whatever it costs my pride, I will return to my idea of the Cossacks. I return because it must develop, become greater, and move beyond the barriers opposing it with force and hatred, with power and parties. I come back to it because it must be understood in the disorder of the camps, discussed among men drunk with wine, drunk with blood. I return to it because it will spread throughout the world, and make it tremble as I myself tremble.

This idea is the alarm of the eternal revolution coming to us on the wings of dreaded scourges. Now or never we need to howl it over the icy peaks and the jabbering church bells so that the avalanches and the bronze strikers repeat it in echoes and echoes. I believe crises to be useful in the social body as in the human body: I hope that the fever that is in me will shake humanity from its torpor. Barely six years ago I was a poor petit-bourgeoisie, quite timid, raised to *kill the world*. So why was I torn from this dark sphere if my eyes were not sharp enough to handle the bright lights, if my hands were not firm enough to tear away the masks and stamp them with my feet?

*"Write my message on the posts of your house and on the gates of your cities."*<sup>1</sup> For I am going to tell you what the future holds for you. And I am sure that my suffering is not in vain;—the next generations will understand.—I am sure this is no trifling scandal;—the disapproval seeded in my path by capitalists and traditionalists is a sure indication that my name will be cleared in the future. I am sure that it isn't within the power of a handful of envious people to quash an idea conceived for all;—what the civilized and the slaves condemn today, a new humanity and the free individual will approve of later.—The emperors and their gendarmes are not immortal, property boundaries wear out, the wood and iron of customs offices disappear, party bosses and their Praetorian Guards devour one another. Each morning the sun dines on the demanded reputations that the usurious hours bring to its sumptuous table. And the idea grows well in the ruins of matter! That is why I come back to my idea.

I come back to it because it has sewn fear amongst unjust interests, and division within mendacious parties;—because it has weighed on the heads of those who think themselves great;—because it has risen up those who wallow in the dust;—because it has achieved, though quite young and quite poor it may be, the honors of calumny, rage and forgery. I come back to it

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<sup>1</sup> *Tr*—From Deuteronomy 11:20. Coeurderoy's use of biblical quotes here and elsewhere in *Hurrah!!!* makes evident his millenarian vision of revolution and social upheaval described earlier in this volume. See *Introduction*.

because no one has fully addressed it, nor seriously contended with it, as it holds formidable mysteries. I come back to it because it is eminently anarchic, terrifying, deadly to all authority and all intrigue; because *those* of the democratic party have been forced to admit *that it would deal a major blow to the revolution if the people of the country and the cities of France could read me and understand me.*

I come back to it because the people must read me in the countryside and the cities, and a verdict must finally be declared, with clear intent, on the revolution desired by the constitutionalists and the formalist republicans of 1830 and 1848, a revolution that I call, me, of my own unofficial authority, the Lie, Immobility, Counter-revolution, press-ganging, Despotism, under the pretext of Freedom.

## XII

I come back to my idea of the Cossacks, because all of our revolutions will be useless so long as we are imprisoned in the same borders and bridled by the same legal conventions. The history of the last fifty years, throughout all of our countries, bears witness to the inanity of an uprising that stirs but a single country. I can see that the reforms obtained by these superficial riots can satisfy those who define the revolution: Freedom of the press, formation of the bourgeoisie guard, elimination of brothels, establishment of a constitution, universal suffrage. But those who demand the abolition of property, the elimination of interest, the destruction of monopoly, freedom of circulation, equality of exchange, the reign of work, the empire of passions and wellness, they should quit exhausting themselves opposing the civilized milieu. They impart but forced upheavals on cadavers: the west is soulless...

## XX

I'm stagnating in this century, the century of all monstrosities,—the century which brings the death of the youth by chastity and the old by lust;—the century where rich old hags faint on their sofas, while poor young girls pass the nights doing work that doesn't buy them bread during the daytime;—the century where children are buried by eighty year olds;—the century of decadence where they shout "Long live the cadavers! Raise up the tombs! Blessed be the bones, stones and the metal that have no soul! Those who march make us afraid!"

Senseless bourgeoisie, voracious for large sums and prodigious with light words! Spit your obesity on your embers and don't set foot outside of your boutiques: this time there is danger of death! Cease with your defiance of the Revolution. For I, I say to you:

Nature is more powerful, more magnificent when it destroys a society in one fell swoop than when it builds a town house by house. The greatest lessons are found among the ruins. Rising civilizations bring conquerors—those in decline: prophets. I admire avalanches, I love revolutions. I will not rise up against a crumbling world; I will not use up what little is left of my energies preaching revolution to the deserts of the West. I will say what I see—And what can I describe if not ruins? And what can I foresee in the future but people marching? And what can I feel in my heart but poignant despairs for the present, and for the future, vague aspirations of happiness, like a bolt of lightning in the night, a ship in a storm, a first stone among the debris? I announce what is on the way; for all the kingdoms in the world, I would not be quiet.

What matter is the fury that my predictions will bring in the west and in Europe, at this point? The world is much bigger than that. My words will pass through the air like lightning that only rumbles and awakens for an instant; it will say: Forward and patience! Freedom grows out of oppression! After darkness, light! After silence, speech! After iniquity, justice! After civilized generations, socialist generations! After the multitude of languages, universal language! After Babel, the Promised Land! After competition and hatred, harmony of interests and Love! After the sowing of seeds, the harvest! After man, Humanity! After this life, another Life!

The East exaggerates strength; I will exaggerate Freedom. Anarchy against Terror! May each complete his task! May Decomposition move forward by iron and by the pen! Each day has enough trouble of its own!<sup>2</sup> To the Cossacks, the Sword; to us, the Idea! Let us demolish to the death! Our children will do the rest. And are we not ourselves the children of our children?—Man lives again in humanity.

from the end of the introduction

At night, dreams and visions come to me, affectionate spirits! I welcome them warmly.

Sometimes, it's a star that says to me with its enchanted voice: *Look, just look at how I've risen in the sky! For me nothing is high, nothing is eternal. Men seem to me like gnats and their cities like anthills. The longest, most brilliant of your centuries, what are they to me? Fractions of a second in eternal time! ...*

*The vain lark barely ascends to the height of icy peaks; and me, I rest above the ethereal regions. The lark is grey and I am more striking than the purest brilliance. The lark tires after a few moments, it returns to land to rest its wings; and I still sparkle, and I'm still young, and I know no fatigue.*

*Leave earth for a moment, miserable speck of dust and sand. Come up here; I will lay you in my magnificent bed, and with my beautiful eyes I will look into the depths of your dull ones. Come, I will help you forget the little affairs of your times. And from the dawn of centuries until their decline, you will sleep to the music of the spheres.*

*This is how you will learn to judge the part based on the whole, and to not make so much of the lives of insects.*

Other times, it's a bolt of lightning, faster than delirium, that sends me these brief words in passing: *I fly, I fly, I traverse space and lightning warns of my arrival. Space is nothing to me, and I come to know it by illuminating it. I come from far, far away, from the workshop of worlds, which you, mortals, do not even suspect exists.*

*The most spacious, the most fertile of universes, what are they to me? Grains of sand in limitless oceans! And your earth, what is that? The most imperceptible of these grains of sand!*

*The talkative man is proud of his locomotives because they can go 15 leagues an hour, because they make little plumes of smoke in the air and they leave a trail of burning embers, because they shout and whistle like owls caught by the light of day. Man calls that an infernal force.*

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<sup>2</sup> Tr—Matthew 6:34

*But I, I traverse 15 universes in a second, I choke entire countries in fires; me, I am redder than the fires of hell; I shake the firmament with my stunning voice. I was born in the first bursts of love of the worlds.*

*Fly, fly to me! I will make you slide, filled with awe, on my trail of sulphur. And from one end of the universe to the other, I will show you so many marvels that wars, revolutions and the intrigues of man will seem like child's play to you.*

*This is how you will learn to judge the part based on the whole and you will participate in the fights of insects without being affected.*

Often, in the dark night, I light the *cigarro de papel* with the enduring fire. And I cry out: Oh fire that I breathe in burning, may you circulate in my veins and make my words seem like flames! Oh, my idea, my idea! Will you ever release yourself from the dreary backdrop of civilization?

Alas! In the immensity, in eternity, I am no more than a paper cigarette. The fire of my spirit will consume my body; my flesh will become cinders, and my thought smoke. Lightning, Thunder, Stars, Souls of worlds, Spirits of the elements, I am yours for as long as my force allows, as far as my sight stretches.

Make it so that on the one hand, I lift the veil hiding the future, and with the other, I bring a trembling Humanity to contemplate this grand spectacle, a humanity which is, however, eager to know its destinies!!

from "Visions"

## **FIRST VISION: "Spirit"**

*My father and my mother rested after begetting me. The spirit of divination of one, the aspirations of revolt of the other mingled in my blood. The marrow in my bones cries out. I suffer everything written by this pen.*

— Ernest Coeurderoy,  
*Days of Exile*

Cursed be the hour that I was born! Cursed be the morning star that watched over my mother as she was seized by the pains! Cursed be the first bird who saluted that awful day! Cursed be the shepherd and the vintner who wiped away the tears of dew in the vineyards of Bourgogne! Cursed be the obstetrician who didn't smother me upon arrival! Cursed be the dog who licked up my impurities! Cursed, the dotting friends who came to congratulate my father for having a son born to him!

What were the waves doing then? Where was the lightning? Oh, that they would have taken me to oblivion! Why did the ice and the snows of January spare me? Why did they wash me in perfumed water? Why did my poor mother give me her milk?

Ah! That he might have saved me from maledictions and pains, he who, without remorse, might have buried me under the black earth! My soul would not be bleeding today in revealing to men the awful sorrows that will come to weigh on them!

## VISION XV: “Expiation!”

*But two of an enormous city did survive, and they were enemies.*

— Byron<sup>3</sup>

Son of man, cry out then:

Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of Earth!

Three times woe to the rich!

Who know justice!—And who don’t at all practice it!

Who speak of science and religion!—And who eat the flesh of the poor! And drink their sweat!

Who crush the beggars under the wheels of their carts, and demand that the poor wretches spread rose petals in their path!

Who profane the bodies of young girls with their vile kisses! And who send them back mothers, left to prostitute themselves in order to feed the children conceived in the service of the market!

“Woe to them who have joined one house to another and who added one field to the next until there was no space left and they made themselves the only inhabitants of the country!

“Woe to them who built their house on injustice and their floors without honesty, who helps himself to his neighbor without paying him, and who does not give him wages for his work!”

Woe to him who wallow in the most unrestrained pleasures!—While the others hear hunger crying in their stomachs.

And also, also, three times woe to the poor!

To all they who suffer hunger!—For there is cheese in the granaries;

To all they who suffer thirst!—For the cellars are packed full of wine;

To all they who remain naked!—While there are robes on the thrones, surplices in the convents, and ermine in the court of law;

To all they who sleep on damp earth!—While the palaces stand deserted.

Woe to they who labor and leave the idlers to reap the wheat!

To they who construct magnificent buildings!—And who nest, like sparrows, in attics where the winds rejoice!

Woe to they who weave silk, linen, rich shawls and precious fabrics!—And who tremble in the cold, dressed in frocks.

Woe to they who work gold, silver, and iron!—And who hand over masterpieces for a piece of bread! Woe to hired artists!

Woe to the poor who produce everything and who suffer as men without complaint! While others enjoy pleasure like animals, without ever getting their fill.

Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of Earth!!

## REALITY

*I judge but by the fruits—and they are bitter.*

— Byron<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Tr—Byron, “Darkness,” lines 55–57

<sup>4</sup> Tr—Cain: a Mystery, Act I, scene 1; line 78.

I have looked all around me in the world. And I saw nothing but men who have made a God in the form of their stomach and the organs below it.—I looked all around me. And in the crowd, I saw only goats and pigs.

I have listened all around me in this century. And I only heard jingling of money, grating metal, vain discourse.—I have listened all around me. And every day, at every hour, I heard the poor ground by the machines operated by the rich.

I have questioned people all around me in civilized society. And the Bourgeois replied: I'm running a racket! And the Proletariat replied: I'm dying! And the student replied: I'm yawning and believe in nothing! And the most illustrious RRevolutionaries [sic], in complete dismay over the kings' latest *coups d'état*, replied: we can do nothing more; we cannot resuscitate the dead!...

Oh! Well, then! I beat my chest with my two hands and I said to my heart: stupid organ, be quiet! Today sentiment is ridiculous, and thought superfluous; noble aspirations aren't worth a penny to the pound of debit and credit! Since one only speaks to men of these times in metallic voices, to the rumbling of gold I oppose the bronze noise of my predictions.

Oh! Well, then! I have understood that to conquer the moral contagion that infects our societies, a physical contagion must be called upon, scourges and famines. Good and Evil, everything is inevitably contagious among men forced to live in society. And among fatal contagions, Poverty kills more people than Cholera! It kills more cruelly, more slowly!—And we know the causes of Poverty! And we are guilty when we tolerate it.

Oh! Well, then! I swore that from night to morning, down broad streets, on the doorways of shops, palaces and barracks, my voice would resound. And may it fill the bourgeois with terror!

So I cry out: may France perish! May all countries perish! They are, after all, but the most ephemeral forms of society! But long live MAN, the least imperfect and the most recent of universal transformations!

And again I say: oh! Men of today, cheap men of little value, men stooped over in women's work, those who spend their lives balancing accounts and measuring out ribbons, men who have had neither their own free will nor their own free speech! Oh! I despise them as they deserve! And I will repeat it to them!

I am perfectly aware of the fatality of revolutions, of their character, the places they visit, the epochs in which they appear and the circle they run.—Because I easily separate myself from the national and temporary point of view to embrace humanity in the continuity of time.—Because I dare to say the truth, and accept its will despite the consequences. Because I feel a veritable pride in feeling myself indifferent, sparkling with frankness on the dreary backdrop of civilization.—Because it is not within my power to resist the deadly force that loosens my mouth.

Because I myself was stunned by God. When I was young the black Cholera introduced me to capricious Death, who refused to take me. Since then, I have grown up; sick and still struck by the premonition of future dangers. This is how the bird—caught once in a deadly trap, if by some miracle he escapes—by his cries warns the others of the danger that threatened him.

Supreme Destroyer! You defeated me by the Malady faithful to your orders! To the very depths of my entrails resounds the emotion of societies. My body is shaken as if by a sudden flash of lightning. I am shattered; I cannot remain insensitive, like the others, to the depravities and the woes of our agony. Ah! The anger invincibly advances upon me, and pushes the fever to my fingertips!

Is it Love that makes me tremble? Is it Hatred? It is one just as it is the other. But it is, before all else, the vengeful feeling of Justice and the just need for Vengeance!



# Citizen of the World: *Jours d'exil* (1854–55)

Translated by Paul Sharkey

I am a citizen of the world these days and regard that title as greater than anything the proudest of nations can bestow; what is more, it is of my own choosing and not doled out through some accident of birth. I am exiled, which is to say, free; these days one can only be so outside of society, country and family, all of them buckling under shameful servitude. What care I about armies, flags, governments and police! I skip across frontiers like the smuggler. I have no home, no land for which I am required to pay tax. Far from me, kings ascend their thrones and step down from them like shame-faced crooks; and I laugh at this phantasmagoria. I flee from churches the way I would from the gates of Hell. Laws are not made for me; I am outside the law and prefer that to being under its protection. I am a vagabond; and, first and foremost, revel in the fact. Neither king nor subject: the strong are stronger on their own.

In every land there are folk who are kicked out and driven away, killed and burnt out without a single voice of compassion to speak up for them. They are the Jews.—I am a Jew.

Skinny, untamed, restless men, sprightlier than horses and as dusky as the bastards of Shem, roam through the Andalusian countryside. Real wolves. They give every appearance of being horse-traders, but nobody is quite sure what trade they ply and the common gossip accuses them of sorcery. They are not—lucky mortals!—deemed worthy of being subjected to the laws of Spain. They live and marry according to their own ways. They drift through civilization, setting up their tents on the forest's edge. The doors of every home are barred to them, in hamlet and town alike. A widespread disapproval weighs upon their breed; no one knows whence it comes nor whither it is bound. Such men are known as Gitanos.—I am a Gitano.

In the mountains of Scotland and Norway, out on the heaths of England and Ireland, camp sorcerer clans that have provided inspiration for the divine voices of Shakespeare and Walter Scott. They dance in the mist, setting huge fires of holly and gorse ablaze and, come nightfall, under the pale moonlight they summon up the spirits from the abyss. They go by the name Gypsies.—I am a Gypsy.

In Paris one can see wayward boys, naked, who hide under the bridges along the canal in the mid-winter and dive into the murky waters in search of a *sou* tossed to them by a passing onlooker. They go unshod upon the asphalt of the quays and boulevards and have nowhere to shelter other than under the lee of the roofs and carriage entrances. Their trade consists in purloining scarves and pretending to ask for a light but swapping cigarettes. These are the Bohemians.—I am a Bohemian.

In Naples the Lazzaroni sprawl on the marble terraces of the ducal palaces, rubbing their bellies in the sunshine while dining on a glass of water and a *quattrino* of macaroni.—I am a Lazzarone.

In Switzerland and Germany one sees folk with neither creed nor law, rights nor duties and whose origins no one knows and who seem lost among all the rest. They are known as the Heimatlosen. I am a Heimatslos.

Ah, if only I, like all the homeless folk, could spend my days in the shaded woodland and my nights under the beautiful stars, on the flowering banks of the streams! But I was raised in comfort, like the grocer's children.

Everywhere, there are folk banned from promenades, museums, cafes and theatres because a heartless wretchedness mocks their day wear. If they dare to show themselves in public, every eye turns to stare at them; and the police forbid them to go near fashionable locations. But, mightier than any police, their righteous pride in themselves takes exception to being singled out for widespread stigma.—I am one of that breed.

Oh the bourgeois misery, somber as any Whitechapel proletarian, wretchedness in greasy and down-at-heel boots, a wretchedness that wears a long neck-tie and an excuse for a shirt and which never laughs and dares not weep! Hypocritical, indescribable, unutterable, unclassifiable, hope-destroying misery, the greatest, most atrocious of all miseries! The misery of a study supervisor!

There are young folk everywhere, shunned by everyone else because they are the outcasts of society, because they are not acceptable and will not abide by the world's conventions. They are stiff-backed and angular types; they have a look of gloom about them; the buzz of conversation irritates them. They love broad ideas and loose clothing; their thoughts are bad and their status worse. They dare to question the infallibility of the Pope, divine right, the legitimacy of property, the happiness of the family and the harmony of the civilized world.—I am one of their number.

There are young folk everywhere from whom earthly angels avert their all-curing gaze. I swear by my life, such folk can endure everything, the very appearance of which throws the gracious young ladies into a tizzy and the later never have a kind word to spare them.—O, ladies, ladies, every evening you call blessings down upon your mothers, from whom you get your limpid eyes; and yet you cannot see past the attire of the very man who would love you best.—Again, I am one of their number.

Very well! I shall bear my loneliness. I will not squeeze my lungs into a corset just to escape it, and I will not deliver myself up as a willing victim into the hands of tailors and the tongues of drawing-room wits. I shall roll around this world like a stone tossed from the mountain top into the yawning chasm. The pine tree thrives only on arid summits; the eagle soars unattended into the sun. The sailor wrestles with the storm unaided; the emigrant forges on alone beneath strange skies. The huntsman in the hills lies in wait, alone, for the she-bear who has lost her cubs. The lion and the tiger prowl alone; the bull stands alone in the Spanish bullring. Everything strong has no need of support.—Quite the opposite. The frightened migratory birds huddle together in order to make headway against the wind; sheep need no encouragement to gather together; the ox stretches out his neck to the yoke; capons are held in cages, swine in the mud and princes in the palaces. Crows gather only over dead bodies and party followers only over a rioting populace.

Isn't it at the mightiest oaks and tallest spires that the thunderstorm hurls its lightning bolts? Doesn't the pack bay at the wild boar that stands up to it? Me against the world and the world against me: so be it! I accept the challenge and am proud to enter the fray alone, for I count it an honor not to be numbered among the common herd of my contemporaries. No one acknowledges me any more: those who used to call themselves my friends have shunned me. I haven't a penny, not a single supporter, not a single mind well-disposed towards me; my attire does not fit me too well, my eyes are stung by the flickering of a 20 *sou* lamp on four white-washed walls.

What matter? My cause is a good one. I wage open war against the hypocrisy of the parties. Maybe I can force them at last to break with the conspiracy of silence and battery of calumnies they trot out every evening with their whispering campaign. For God's sake, speak up and explain yourselves; set out whatever you will in the glare of publicity. I scream Thieves! Because there are so many on every side, cowardly thieves that destroy a man's reputation, tearing it to shreds, with the same carelessness with which a pick-pocket would shred a handkerchief.

I may not be famous, but, look, I should like you to tell the truth about me, and nothing but the truth, should you do me the honor of speaking about me. I am as hard to arm as any flint, but strike me with gusto and you'll get your spark.

Only bites bring forth bleeding. The thunder is father to the lightning. Fire sucks at the wind. Do not attack the savage beast. Don't pet the wolf. Don't get in the way of a man striding towards his goal. Had I a spark of intelligence, some glimmer of embittered honesty, your Jesuitical attacks would alert me to it; they would suggest what I might do, what I should try; in the innermost recesses of my soul, they would strike the spark of revenge, the passage of which sets the blood coursing.

Partisan fury, I would give you my blessing! Stoke your wrath, parade your petty susceptibilities and sinister vengeance in battle array, hone your sneers, hurl your insults and, if you can, stretch to irony. If a man must go down fighting against the parties, I am willing to be that man, but I want to leave a fatal dart in their flanks. Until such time as I have no crust to chew on and no earth beneath my feet, I will cry out to men: Throw down the gauntlet to soldiers and Caesars, throw down the gauntlet to committed folk!

You who endowed the tiger with his fearful roar, the viper with its poison and its coils, Satan, God of vengeance, I turn to you. Make my tongue rough and my pen brutal and let my every utterance, like a two-edged sword, impale the slaves kneeling in the dust!

So that, when the day of reckoning comes I am entitled to cry: Freedom!

Let the stones pile up behind me, let the houses tremble and beasts of the forest prove as pitiless as men in the middle of burning villages.

And let Revolution enfold the globe in giant's arm and squeeze until it bursts and gushes Eternal Fire over civilized folk!

# Hurrah!!! Or the Revolution by the Cossacks (excerpt)

Translated by Michael Shreeve

Ah! Humanity is grand, the Future eternal and the Worlds cradled in infinite Space are immense! And we are tiny, short-lived Civilized men who think we lay down the laws of the Universe and the limits of Time! So, who are you then, illustrious monarchs and profound lawmakers of the West who believe you are the end all and be all of creatures living under the sun? Wretched and pitiful! Don't you hear the rumble of the abyss of fire vomiting revolutions among men, the ever-open, ever-hungry, ever-vengeful abyss? It will swallow you up and your lying systems and your schoolmaster vanity. For, every system is false and every systematic an oppressor! We will no longer put up with Governments, Begging and Masters. Whoever you are—Caesars, Jesuits, Communists, Fundamentalists or Utopianists— don't hope to lead us any more. Man has finally left the school of Slavery! The Revolution carries me toward distant, terrible horizons; it multiplies a hundredfold the virtuality of my being; it blows through my head like a storm wind.

This world is a dungeon.

Anarchist revolutionaries, say it out loud: our only hope is for the human deluge, our only future is in chaos, our only resource is in a war that will mix all races and break all established relations, remove the hands of the dominating classes, the instruments of oppression with which they violate freedom at the price of blood.

When everyone fights for his own cause, no one will need to be represented.

**Section Two: Joseph Dejacque  
(1821–1864)**

*This book is not a literary work, it is an infernal labor, the cry of a rebel slave.*

*Being, like the cabin boy of the Salamander, unable, in my individual weakness, to strike down all those who, on the ship of the legal order, dominate and mistreat me, when my day is done at the workshop, when my watch is finished on the bridge, I descend by night to the bottom of the hold, I take possession of my solitary corner and, there, with teeth and claws, like a rat in the shadows, I scratch and gnaw at the worm-eaten walls of the old society. By day, as well, I use my hours of unemployment, I arm myself with a pen like a borer, I dip it in bile for grease, and, little by little, I open a way, each day larger, to the flood of the new; I relentlessly perforate the hull of Civilization. I, a puny proletarian, on whom the crew, the horde of exploiters, daily inflict the torment of the aggravated misery of the brutalities of exile or prison, I open up the abyss beneath the feet of my murderers, and I spread the balm of vengeance on my always-bloody scars. I have my eye on my Masters. I know that each day brings me closer to the goal; that a formidable cry—the sinister every man for himself!—will soon resound at the height of their joyous intoxication. A bilge-rat, I prepare their shipwreck; that shipwreck alone can put an end to my troubles and to those of my fellows.*

— Joseph Dejacque, *The Humanisphere*

Anarchist, poet, and outlaw utopianist, Joseph Dejacque is finally starting to be recognized as one of the first French anarchists and as a dazzling literary stylist whose discourse sparkles with learned allusions to Proudhon, Ernest Coeurderoy, and Charles Fourier (the most surreal of the utopian socialists)—and whose own work stands out as possessing extraordinary originality. Though little-read today, Dejacque’s claims to fame are many: He coined the term “libertarian” as a synonym for “anarchist,” he was one of the earliest anarchists to describe himself as an anarcho-communist, and his remarkable *Journal Le Libertaire* was the second anarchist paper to be introduced on American soil (and also one of the first anarchist periodicals to be printed in a foreign language in America). Still inexplicably obscure, Dejacque nonetheless has an underground reputation in the English-speaking world (spread mostly through word-of-mouth) that has been slowly, quietly, and steadily growing over the years, thanks to the pioneering work of translators/researchers like Shawn Wilbur.

To really appreciate the significance of Dejacque’s contributions to anarchist thought, it’s helpful to examine the intellectual climate of his age and the cultural and historical context in which his worldview developed. The French Revolution pulled the cork on concepts like Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, and from 1800–1865, France was flooded with pamphlet after pamphlet exploring the meaning and practical application of these ideas. Concomitant with this deluge of writings on liberty was the sudden thriving of utopian novels (there were over twenty written between 1815 and 1846), many of which expounded grand ideas akin or parallel to the more anti-authoritarian socialist proposals. This was also an extremely fruitful and exciting period for **anarchism**, which was still a wide-open speculative field that had not yet been reined in by utilitarianism or philosophic provincialism. Joseph Dejacque plunged full tilt into this amazing frolic of antithetical and complimentary forces (between 1789 and 1848, France had three monarchies, two republics, and one tyrant. This semi-permanent governmental turmoil inspired a variety of political movements to seek popular support and power: communists, socialists, monarchists, republicans, liberal economists, supporters of Napoleon, and various other groups were all out in

force in France in the 1840s) and immediately distinguished himself as an illuminating new voice for freedom.

Déjacque was a self-educated house-painter by trade who was incited by the overthrow of the July Monarchy in 1848, and much of his early writing was an appraisal of the reasons this revolution failed. Déjacque was adamantly opposed to all the variants of social republicanism and viewed governments resulting from an insurrection as reactionary fetters on the free initiative of the proletariat. The new French government Déjacque was critiquing took notice of his writings and in June 1848, arrested and sent him to the Brest prisons. In October of 1851, he was condemned to another two years imprisonment for his collection of poems, *Les Lazareennes: Fables et Poesies sociales*, but he escaped to London without serving his sentence. After a brief sojourn in the Channel Islands among the small minority of exiles fleeing persecution and collecting there, Déjacque left for the US, where he became a perceptive critic of the American experiment and the new tyrant people had delivered themselves over to: The Constitution. “Down with the written constitution of the majestic and antique American Union!” Déjacque indignantly wrote, for “it contradicts the moral authority of the people.” Seeking work as a printer, Déjacque relocated several times between New York and New Orleans, where he had the opportunity to view Louisiana’s brutal slave system firsthand. When he finally settled in New York, he became avidly engaged with the émigré radical community and launched his **coruscating** journal *Le Liberaire* (1858–1861), singlehandedly producing twentyseven issues over the course of three years (the journal considered itself both communistic and individualistic). In its pages, he editorialized against chattel slavery (openly advocating insurrection as the remedy), attacked civilization as slavery of the passions (in all of Déjacque’s writings, *civilization* is scornful shorthand for social dictatorship by the propertied class and their plexus of controlling institutions), applauded John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry (Déjacque also wrote an unpublished abolitionist pamphlet—*Le Terreur aux Etats-Unis*— around this time), and tried to detonate a more generalized slave revolt against all politicians and bosses. In 1857, Déjacque published an open letter to Proudhon called “On Being Human,” in which he attacked Proudhon for his reactionary anti-feminism, which Déjacque saw as being in direct contradiction to anarchist ideals (Déjacque was unusual among the anarchists of his era for his uncompromising commitment to full social and political equality for women; he even assisted in the editing of Pauline Roland’s journal *La Voix des femmes*). “You cry out against the robber-barons of capitalism,” he chided the extremely limited Proudhon, and yet “you would rebuild a proud barony of man on vassal-women.”

Déjacque’s crowning achievement was his extravagant anarchist utopia *The Humanisphere*, set in the year 2858, although he had to serialize it in the first two volumes of his journal because he couldn’t get enough subscribers to print it all at once. *The Humanisphere* has become a small classic of utopian prose that seizes the reader in its clutches and carries them off in winged flight, out of the mundane and to those subtle, philosophic spheres where all conventional history (and conventional lies) are reevaluated. It wasn’t enough for Déjacque to just critique authoritarian society and civilization: he wanted also to outdo in imaginative reach all previous utopian speculations. Déjacque, like Coeurderoy, was essentially individualistic in his social attitudes, but remained concerned with assuring material bounty on a social level so that every individual would be free to explore his or her own human potentialities unimpeded by poverty or hunger. To this end, Déjacque reformulated communism in a way that sought to be resolutely free of the hierarchy and statism of his contemporaries, drawing instead upon the writings of the utopian madman Charles Fourier (Fourier’s central idea of **passional attraction** provided

a very profitable working vein for those engaged in experiments involving human combination and cooperation) in an attempt to show that complex social organization doesn't have to involve an expansion of authoritarian control. Readers unaccustomed to the Fourierian vocabulary of ideas with which Déjacque worked might initially be puzzled by Déjacque's use of the terms *Civilization* and *Harmony*, so a brief synopsis is probably in order.

To Charles Fourier, civilization was the miserable reverse image of how human society was meant to function, an unbridled horror that divided humanity into the few rich and the many poor, and where the interests of the masses were separated from the progress of the civilized system itself (and in fact came to be in an inverse relationship to it). Fourier's case against civilization was sweeping and comprehensive, with specific and minute analysis applied to the ways civilization mismanaged, frustrated, and suppressed all the **passions**, and the resultant inevitable misery of the human being. All political measures and solutions were equally hopeless to this far-reaching theoretician, who argued incessantly for nothing less than a total abolition of civilization (together with all politics) and an introduction of what he called Harmony. Harmony, to Fourier, was the next stage beyond civilization, a stage of planetary equilibrium that will bring together, by an elaborate system of grouping, those of like interests and tastes—or “affective passions”—and provide adequate avenues for their expression. The repressive doctrines of civilization had created a state of internal war within every person because they suffocated the passions, which were imperious and could only be denied at the price of acute pain and mental disease. Work in particular, under civilization, was enslaving and destructive of pleasure, but the elaborately contrived structure of life under Harmony would remedy this by facilitating *passional fulfillment* between instinctive human desires and work. Fourier was absolutely convinced that his meticulously precise arrangements for communal organization were going to “rouse mankind from the frightful dream of civilization and usher in an era of universal happiness” and the essential elements of his utopian scheme provide bountiful food for thought, but his rigid designs for everything from architecture to gastronomy to amorous relations become comically mathematical and are, therefore, of only partial use to anarchists. What Dejacque did in *The Humanisphere* was take the less dogmatic of Fourier's insights and use them in the service of a specifically libertarian social ideal, as this following passage demonstrates:

*In the Humanisphere, there is no government. An attractive organization takes the place of legislation. The liberty of sovereign individuals presides over all collective decisions. The authority of anarchy, the absence of all dictatorship of number or strength, replaces arbitrary authority, the despotism of the sword and the law. Faith in ourselves is the religion of the Humanisphereans. Gods and priests, religious superstitions will rouse against themselves universal disapproval. It is by their own laws that each governs themselves, and it is on that government of each by himself that the social order is founded.*

In certain sections of *The Humanisphere*, the intensity of Dejacques writing effaces all the limitations of “rationality” and becomes pure creation—a series of anarchic dreams of marvelous textures and wondrous designs that breathlessly jump from one page to the next, moving by the weight of their own imaginative momentum and a spiraling desire to make an unparalleled start and build another form of reality. The fantastical nature of his proposals contain more than a touch of genius, showing clearly that utopian prose, though exploited by so many hack authors, is still rich in unsounded potentialities.



Dejacque is a superb example of the French tendency to take anarchist ideas to their most unrestrained conclusions, but “radicals” who can’t relate to anything with a dash of visionary breadth or fantasy (and who favor the contraction of a boundless ideal) will be repelled and should probably confine their reading to Chomsky or the findings of the Census Bureau (there, if anywhere, they’ll find themselves on safe ground). Dejacque wrote *The Humanisphere* during a time when proscribed limits on the development of anarchist thought had yet to be established and his frenzied, romantic expositions will prove most attractive to those with a wild aspiration towards the unknown, the uncharted, and the ungovernable. The rich clarity and daring beauty of Dejacque’s literary style is one of the glories of anarchism’s first intellectual age, and offers a rare union of mighty conceptions with an almost *lyrical* beauty of form.

# The Revolutionary Question (excerpts)

Translated by Paul Sharkey

As mentioned, Joseph Déjacque was active in the 1848 Revolution in France. Imprisoned in June 1848 and June 1849, he eventually escaped into exile around the time of Louis Napoleon's December 1851 coup d'état. The following excerpts are taken from his 64-page pamphlet, *La Question révolutionnaire* (The Revolutionary Question) and occupy a "developmental" phase in Déjacque's canon, when he began to come into his own as a writer and thinker. These excerpts show Déjacque analyzing with bitter eloquence the events of 1848 and the terrible gap between revolutionary aspiration and fulfillment.

## Of Revolution

Principles: *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.*

Consequences: Abolition of government in all its guises, be they monarchist or republican, the supremacy of an individual or of a majority;

Rather, anarchy, individual sovereignty, complete, boundless, utter freedom to do anything and everything that is in human nature.

Abolition of Religion, be it Catholic or Jewish, Protestant or other. Abolition of clergy and altar, of priest—be he curate or pope, minister or rabbi—of Divinity, be it an idol with one person or with three, autocracy or universal oligarchy;

Rather man—at once creature and creator—with no God but Nature, no priest but Science, no altar but humanity.

Abolition of personal property, ownership of the soil, buildings, workshops, stores and of anything that is an instrument of labor, production or consumption;

Rather collective property, one and indivisible, held in common.

Abolition of the family, the family based on marriage, the authority of father and spouse, and on inheritance;

Rather the great family of man, a family as one and indivisible as property.

The liberation of woman, the emancipation of the child.

At last, the abolition of authority, privilege, and strife.

Rather, liberty, equality and fraternity embodied in humanity;

Instead, all of the implications of the triple formula transplanted from theoretical abstraction to practical reality, to positivism.

Which is to say Harmony, the oasis of our dreams, no longer fleeing like a mirage before the caravan of generations but delivering to each and every one of us, under its fraternal auspices and in universal unity, the sources of happiness, the fruits of liberty: a life of delights at last after more than eighteen centuries' worth of agony in the desert wastes of civilization!

## Of Government

No more government, that machine press, that fulcrum of the lever of reaction.

All government—and by government I mean all delegation and all authority beyond the people—is essentially conservative—narrow-mindedly conservative, backward-looking conservative—just as selfishness is a part of human nature. In the case of man, the selfishness of one is tempered by the selfishness of others, by the solidarity that nature has established between him and his fellows, no matter what he may do. But, government being singular and therefore bereft of counter-balance, it follows that it arrogates everything to itself, that anyone who fails to prostrate himself before its image, everyone who contradicts its oracles, everything that poses a threat to its survival, in short, everything that represents progress, is necessarily its enemy. Thus, a government emerges—initially as an improvement upon a predecessor government—and soon, simply to survive the new thinking that poses a threat to it, it will summon the reaction to its aid; from the arsenal of the arbitrary it will draw the measures most inimical to the needs of the age; emergency law follows upon emergency law, spreading like fire-damp until the mine caves in and the fuse of revolution is ignited and it is blown asunder along with its whole array of defensive measures. Could it have done otherwise and surrendered a single one of its bastions? The enemy, to wit, the revolution, would only have overrun it and turned it into a gun emplacement. Surrender? It was called upon to sue for mercy: and it knew that the enemy sought the ruination of its interests, its enslavement and finally its death.

It is not the men but rather the thing itself that is evil. Depending on their surroundings, and the circumstances in which they operate, men are useful or harmful to those about them.

What is required is that they should not be set apart from the common herd, so that they have no need to do harm. What is required is that we dispense with shepherds if we would not become a flock and dispense with rulers if we would not be slaves.

No more government, so no more of these malignant ambitions that merely clamber on to the shoulders of an ignorant, credulous people in order to make it a stepping-stone for their cravings. No more acrobatic candidates walking the tight-rope of professions of faith, right foot this side, left foot that side. No more of these political sleight-of-hand merchants juggling with the three words from the Republic's motto, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, like three cups brandished before the eyes of the onlooker, only to be palmed into the recesses of their conscience, that other poacher's pocket. No more of these charlatans of public life who, from the balcony of the Tuilleries or the Hôtel de Ville, or the floor of the Convention or Constituent Assembly, have spent so many years regaling us with the same parade, the same sham *finest of republics*, for which we must all finish up paying with our sweat and our blood—poor ninnies that we are.

No more government, so no more army to oppress the people in the people's own name. No more University to crush young intelligence beneath the yoke of cretinism, tinkering with hearts and minds, kneading and molding them in the image of an obsolete world. No more magistrate-inquisitors to torture on the rack of indictment and to sentence the voices of the press and the clubs, the stirring of consciousness and thought, to the silence of imprisonment or exile. No more hangmen, no more jailers, no more gendarmes, no more town sergeants, no more snitches to spy upon, knife, arrest and put to death anyone less than devoted to the authorities. No more prescriptive centralization, no more prefects, no more ordinary or extraordinary envoys to carry the state of siege to every department of the land. No more budgets for regimentation, arming and equipping, for buttering the potatoes or truffles and for intoxicating grog or champagne

for liveried retainers, ranging from trooper to general, from prefect to town sergeant and from hangman to judge.

No more government, freeing up a million men and two million strong arms for work and for production.

Toothless crone, light-fingered Shrew, snake-haired Medusa, away with you, Authority! Make way for freedom!

Make way for the people in direct possession of its sovereignty, make way for the organized commune.

# Le Liberaire

the opening editorial to the 1858 debut issue

Translated by vincent stone

Contrary to the multitude of its journalistic predecessors, *Le Liberaire* is not here for commercial speculation, to use its presses for minting coins, or to issue *assignats*<sup>1</sup>; it leaves this duty to the venality of its colleagues. Let them go on as Praetorian Guard for the powers that be, fallen into idiocy, that royal guard of capitalism; let them use their rags to glorify the storage depots of monarchic second-hand shops, the druidic stones of patriotic and authoritarian divinities, the shrine of the Host-civilization (civilization, that is to say the ensemble of dismembered institutions, the putrified cadaver upon which gnawing worms are the only sign of life, the life swarming about all Montfaucons). In other words: as for the media circus, the wandering minstrels of the old press, these commonplace organs of the king (and of the privileged, who are also kings), let them drape themselves in their faded old rags, let them turn out their traditional and relatively honest tirades against the pioneers and revolutionaries; let them depict the sequences of their benefactors' tragic and burlesque passions for their readership... *Le Liberaire* has no intention to compete with them. It aspires naturally and with humanity to the lives of future generations. It is a gesture of conscience, a cry from the heart, a spark from the front. What it wants is to put new ideas forward and propagate them into circulation; to print them, if it can, in flaming characters and aim its rays into the darkness of hearts and minds.

*Le Liberaire* will trample many people and many things in its path, anything and everything that has stasis as a rule. It elbows and steps on the toes of prejudiced imbeciles and countless people and men; armed with history, like an instrument of destruction, it works to pulverize the old order, or rather the legal *disorder*. And with the assistance of social science, the magic wand, it seeks to make the vibrant sources of free harmony gush from the heart of humanity, a race all-too-recently wild, then barbaric, now civilized.

It has a singular and superior principle: Freedom, complete and for all. It recognizes only the authority of progress. Complete and for all, it wants the abolition of all slavery in all its forms, the emancipation of all flesh and all intelligences.

*Le Liberaire* has no homeland but the universal homeland. It is the enemy of limits: limit-borders of nations, property of the State; limit-borders of fields, houses, workshops, personal property; limit-borders of the family, marital and paternal property. For *Le Liberaire*, Humanity is a single body in which all members have the same and equal right to their free and complete development, be he the son of one continent or another, may he or she belong to one or the other sex, to this or that race.

As for religion, it has none; it is a protestant against them all. It professes the negation of God and the spirit; it is atheist and materialist, since it maintains universal unity and infinite

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<sup>1</sup> *Tr*—A bank note issued during the French Revolution

progress; and that unity can exist neither individually nor universally with matter enslaved by the mind and the mind the oppressor of matter, just as progress cannot be infinitely perfectible if it is limited by that barrier or limit where humanicides have traced the name of God in blood and mire.

Presently, *Le Libertaire* is only for those who can read French. But, if the public spares its life, this small format may grow into something big; it aims to appear in English, German, Italian, Russian, even in Chinese. Its pages, so precious few, will be entirely consecrated, from cover to cover, to revolutionary propaganda, to the confession of social insights. Additionally, in order to be admitted in its columns as a writer, that is to say as an insertion, we need to be supplied with prose or rhymes rich in serious logic or joking and bitter irony; prove your originality; show your poetic side, if not in form then at least at heart; be at once caustic and affectionate in the capricious fantasies of the imagination, and searing with truth in the stormy conceptions of thought; have the songs of a warbler in your voice for singing songs of grace, goodwill, beauty, intelligence, human light; and make your gullet and lips into a locomotive whistle with which to shriek vapor at ugliness, stupidity, meanness, deformity, and the shadows of the hearts and minds of such vile imbeciles disguised as men who dishonor the human species.

The Editor of *Le Libertaire* thusly calls on the good will of all comrades from all countries and all conditions, to all those men and women in whom new thoughts are aboil with the lavas of social reform. The crater is open, but if it is to continue throwing out fire and flames it must be fed. Will we lack revolutionaries? or rather will these revolutionaries lack the brains and the heart?

The publication in the United States of this small insurrectionary rag is a work which, if it is without profit, is perhaps not without peril for the signatory responsible. Also he is right to expect his brothers and sisters (who, like him, sacrifice for the movement, for progress) to support him with their strength and wisdom. Leaving aside the laws restricting freedom of the press, and even without the imperial proclamations of France to worry about, there exist in the various States of the *Union* quite a few “civilized” wolves in human clothing with bourgeois ears, and who, some in the name of American chauvinism or in the name of French chauvinism, the others in the name of feudal religious inquisition or in the name of the sacred institution of slavery—ceaselessly menace the existence of the free speaker with their dagger blades or canons or pistolets, or better yet devote him to the infernal gods of unemployment and fasting. But no matter! The costs are set for a certain group of slave-rebels who will suffer, if necessary, to make the journal live. And, for him who puts his name beneath these lines ; if in this tournament in which he presents himself as champion of the future for fighting with the pen the golden-vested interests or the prejudiced packs hiding under the guise of serfdom; if it should so happen that he falls under the blows of the ignorant proletariat or the learned knights of industry, high loafers<sup>2</sup> or lowly assassins; so be it! at least as he bleeds he will go down bearing your scarlet sash, and in saluting you still with his last look and his last breath, oh flower of love, dame of his thoughts: FREEDOM!

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<sup>2</sup> *Tr*—In English in the original.

# Scandal

Translation by Shawn P. Wilbur

We live in an era of decadence. The world is peopled only with walking corpses. Everything that moves, moves slowly. A sovereign indolence weighs on nations and individuals alike. However, looking deeply into this human charnel house, we glimpse the subterranean life that stirs, swarms and sometimes ventures to the surface. Our century is a century of transition; under its visible inertia an immense transformation is taking place. This is not yet the complete death of the old social order, but it is already the beginning of the new. The operation, although it is latent, is nonetheless real. Government, property, family, religion, everything that makes up the organism of the civilized societies breaks down and begins to rot. There are no more morals; the morals of the past no longer have any sap; those of the future are still only a sprout. What is good for the one, is evil for the other. Justice has no criterion other than force; success legitimates all crimes. Mind and body are prostituted in the commerce of mercantile interests. Pleasures are no longer possible, if they are not the pleasures of the brute. Dignity, friendship, and love are banished from our mores, lie separated from one another, or perish, strangled, as soon as they want to dawn across this officially bourgeois society. There is no more grace or beauty in this world, no naïve smile or delicate kiss. The feeling for art is replaced by the taste for the disgusting and grotesque. Society, in its decrepitude, resorts to bloody flagellations to over-stimulate its old carcass and sometimes still give itself some dreadful semblance of virility. Atony and gangrene have blunted all its capacities for labor, as well as for pleasure. It can no longer enjoy anything. For it, work is a punishment and pleasure a labor. It does not know what it wants or what it does not want. Everything weighs on it; it stumbles and sinks in all sorts of depravity and cowardice. It wants to escape from that horrible nightmare, to shake off the burden of degradation that suffocates it; it looks forward to waking up; it knows that it only has to stand up on its feet to destroy that oppression, and it is so drained that it does not have the strength to rise, or the courage to conquer its numbness. And yet the idea ferments in it, and enlightens it internally in its sleep, until it is powerful enough to make it open its eyes and shine from its pupils. One side of its life, its robe of flesh, is left in the sepulcher of the past; the other side, its mind or spirit, floats on the winds of the future.

It is up to us, revolutionaries, tatters of humanity whom the breath of progress lifts, social rags that the light of understanding colors with its purple fires, and that it displays above the Civilized like a scarecrow or a flag,—a scarecrow for those who want to remain stationary, and a flag for those who want to press forward,—it is up to us to stimulate the work of decomposition, up to us to try to indicate the stone that holds Humanity in immobility, up to us to open the paths of universal regeneration.

Two manners of acting present themselves to those who want to become propagators of new ideas. One is calm, scientific discussion, without renouncing anything of principles, to report them, and comment on them with a fine courtesy and firm restraint. This process consists of

injecting truth drop by drop into minds that are already prepared, elite intelligences, still beset by error, but animated by good will. Missionaries of Liberty, preachers with smiling faces and caressing voices, (but not hypocrites,) with the honey of their words they pour conviction into the hearts of those who listen to them; they initiate into the knowledge of truth those who have a feeling for it. The other is bitter argument, although scientific as well, but which, standing firm in the principles as in a coat of mail, arms itself with Scandal as with an axe, to strike redoubled blows on the skulls of the prejudiced, and force them to move under their thick covering. For those, there are no words blistering enough, no expressions cutting enough to shatter all these ignorances of hardened steel, that dark and weighty armor that blinds and deafens the dull masses of the people. All is good to them—the sharp sting and the boiling oil—in order to make these apathetic minds tremble to their heart of hearts, under their tortoise shells, and to make resonate, by tearing at them, these fibers which do not ring out. Aggressive circulators, wandering damned and damnators, they march, bloodthirsty and bleeding, sarcasm on the lips, the idea before them, torch in the hand, across hatreds and hisses, to the accomplishment of their fateful task; they convert as the spirit of hell converts: by bite and fire.

The two approaches are good and useful, depending on the sorts of listeners we encounter along our way. Some require one, and some require the other. For both, it is a matter of temperament, a question of their condition in the current society. They can even be alternately applied, according to the disposition of the mind or the environment in which we find ourselves. Both, if they do not back down from the principles, if they cling firmly to liberty, are *agents provocateurs* [in the sense of *inciting agents*] of the Revolution. However, in our civilized societies, it is the smallest number who are disposed to listen. The greatest number turn a deaf ear, and it is by Scandal that one pierces the eardrum.

How, anyway, not to employ words forged with the tongue of scorn to penetrate into this manure of the world where strut, some like some poisonous mushrooms, the round, flat faces of the ignominious bourgeoisie. Can one employ anything but the teeth of a pitchfork to speak to these vegetations of legal matters? Does all of that feel? Does all of that think? Can a man with a heart live in such a society? Is he called to live only to drag along his days among that filthy rabble? Is it my fault, is it our fault, who have in our heart the poetry of the future, if nature has given us some disposition to love, an intelligence of the good, enthusiasm for the beautiful, and if we encounter at every step only intellectual and moral deformities? Is it our fault if in such a society we only find hate to dispense, if there we can only revel in disgust?

O Scandal! Vengeful fury, be my companion as long as the world remains the old world, as long as bourgeois obesity and obscenity ripen on the velour of exploitation, as long as the servility and idiocy of the workers will grovel in the rut and under the halter of capital!

Yes, there must be some like me, like us—the cursed, the rebels—to march unbending—in the direction of progress, to move the inert blocks, to face the avalanches of stones and smooth the way for those who have the same goal, but who make the propaganda in less irritating forms, who engage in polemics with more peaceful epithets.

Scandal, avenging fury, to you my pen and my lips!

It is through you that shame enters the hearts of men. It is through you that their minds awaken to enlightenment. It is through you that the wicked tremble, and through you that the good hope.

If there is still, or rather if there is already some modesty in the world, Scandal, avenging fury, great redresser of morals, it is to you that it is owed.



It is you that forces enemies of the new idea to serve this idea by criticizing it. All who speak of socialism, for good or evil, spread socialism by spreading its name. Sooner or later truth emerges from untruth, it gets the better of its detractors in the long run. Only silence is harmful, and it is you, Scandal, who imposes speech on the mute and, whether they like it or not, forces them to make themselves heralds of that which they persecute.

Scandal, anarchic authority, you are more powerful than all the authorities of the official world. The kings and the bourgeois, the emperors and their subjects can only put the gag of death on the mouths of men; you, voice strident, fiber electric, you make even the stones speak!

O Scandal! Great educator of the deaf and mute, revolutionary breath, satanic deity, spread your wings and vibrate over the world; bring forth the idea from all these skulls of granite, like the sibylline sounds from the depths of the grottos.

Scandal, you are the organ that makes the Civilized bow down their heads in their shame, and that their thought raises up to the spheres of future harmony.

Bellow and rumble still, provocative storm. Your thunder-bursts are a salutary anthem.

My pen and my lips are yours, Scandal!

—*Le Liberaire* No. 4, August 2, 1858

# The Servile War

Translated by Shawn P. Wilbur

*Property is robbery./Slavery is murder.*  
—P.H. Proudhon

*We are Abolitionists from the North, come to take and release your slaves; our organization is large, and must succeed. I suffered much in Kansas, and expect to suffer here, in the cause of human freedom. Slaveholders I regard as robbers and murderers; and I have sworn to abolish slavery and liberate my fellow-men.*

— John Brown

A handful of *free soilers* have just attempted a relief of slaves on the frontiers of Virginia and Maryland. They have not won and they are dead, but they have at least died fighting; they have sown the future victory in the fields of defeat. John Brown, who had previously fought in Kansas, where one of his three sons had been killed by the slave-holders and whose other two sons have just perished at his side. John Brown is the Spartacus who called the modern helots to break their irons, the blacks to take up arms. The attempt has failed. The blacks have not responded in any numbers to the call. The standard of the revolt is sunk in the blood of those who carried it. That standard... it was that of liberty... and I salute it! And I kiss its bloody folds on the pierced bosom of the vanquished, on the battered brow of the martyrs!—Let it sparkle in my eyes, standing or fallen. Let it provoke the slaves, black or white, to revolt: let it unfurl on the barricades of the old continent and the new. Let it serve as a screen to the *soldiers* of the legal order. Let it be pierced by the bullets of the bourgeois assassins of Washington or Paris; trampled under foot by the national guards and *gardes mobiles* of France or America, insulted by the prostitutes of the press of the *model* Republic or of the *honest* and *moderate* Republic; from far or near, whether there is peril or not in approaching it, that flag, it is mine! Everywhere that it appears, I rise to its call. I answer: *Present!* I line up behind it. I proclaim moral complicity, solidarity with all its acts. Whoever touches it, touches me:—Vendetta!!

The insurrection of Harper's Ferry has passed like a flash. The clouds are dark once again, but they contain electricity. After your flashes the thunderbolt will erupt, oh Liberty!...

In France, in '39, another John Brown, Armand Barbes, also made a skirmish. That political riot was one of the precursory flashes of which February was the lightning strike. (June '48, the first exclusive uprising of the Proletariat, commences the series of precursory social flashes of the libertarian Revolution.) The privileged have treated Barbes as a mad assassin, as they treat Brown as an insane bandit. The one was a bourgeois, the other a white, both enthusiasts for the freedom of slaves. Like Barbes in 39, Brown is a heroic fanatic, an enthusiastic abolitionist who marches to the accomplishment of his designs without seriously considering the causes of success or failure. More a man of feeling than of thinking, given over entirely to the impetuous passion

that inflames him, he has judged the moment opportune, the place favorable for action, and he has acted. Certainly, I won't be the one to blame him for it. Every insurrection, be it individual, be it vanquished in advance, is always worthy of the ardent sympathy of revolutionaries, and the more audacious it is, the more worthy it is as well. Those who today disclaim John Brown and his companions, or insult them with their drivel:—the makers of abolitionist banalities who lie tomorrow in their daily spreads, should at least have delicacy about the mouth, for want of the heart that they lack;—the mercenaries of the French empire, these henchmen of the throne, these scribes of the altar, these traitors who daily chant *Te Deum* to the glory of the armies and sprinkle with holy-ink the brave harvesters of laurels, the heroes of the battlefield crowned with the turban of the zouaves or the turcos; those especially should recall that the *free soilers* of Harper's Ferry, these fighters for liberty, have at least on virtue which merits their feigned respect: valor in the face of the enemy! Is it then to the soldier of the emperors or kings that they would know how to say: "Honor to the courageous in misfortune"? These insurgents, whom the *soldiers* and volunteers of slavery have murdered with arms or that the bought judges will murder with the law, they have fought one against one hundred, even... and those who have been left for dead and who, like Brown, have survived their wounds, will be hung, it is said... Infamy! That these mercenary pens who hammer away with a cold rage on the bodies of the defeated and distort the features eagerly... Hideous scribblers, they have only the faces of men; their skulls conceal the instincts of a hyena. It is those or their ilk who, eighteen hundred years ago, before another gallows, cast in the face of Jesus, bloodied Jesus, the bloody muck of their words!!

But let us leave these *daughters* of the press to their abject state. There are insults that honor as there are kisses that sear: these are the insults and the kisses of prostitution!

Let us examine the facts and draw out the lessons.

For a successful insurrection in the slave states, is the initiative of a few fired-up, free, white abolitionists enough? No. The initiative must come from the blacks, from the slaves themselves. The white man is suspect to the black man groaning in helotism and under the whip of the whites, his masters. In the so-called free states, the people of color are regarded like dogs; they are not permitted to go by public carriage, nor to the theater, nor elsewhere, if there is not a spot reserved: they are lepers in a lazaretto. The white aristocracy, the abolitionists of the North hold them at a distance and drive them back with contempt. They cannot take a step without encountering idiotic, absurd, and monstrous prejudices which bar them passage. The ballot box, like the public coach, the theater and the rest, is refused them. They are deprived of their civil rights, treated always and everywhere as pariahs. The black people of the slave states know this. They know that they are the subject and stake of all sorts of intrigues; that for the masters of the North, the exploiters of the proletariat and the electors, the owners of white slaves, abolitionism means industrial and commercial profits, nominations for political employment, government appointments, piracy and sinecures. They also mistrust some whites, with good reason; so that the good, those who are sincerely fraternal towards them, suffer for the bad. And then, what is that liberty to which we generally invite them? The liberty to die of hunger... the liberty of the proletarian... So they show little urgency to risk their lives to obtain it, though their lives might be most miserable and liberty their greatest desire. Many of the negroes, moreover, are held in such a profound ignorance, such a rigorous captivity, that they hardly know what happens a few miles outside the plantation where they are penned up and they readily take those limits for the limits of the world!... The foray of John Brown is good, in that the story will resound, with echoes upon echoes, to the remotest of shanties, that it will stir the independent streak of the

slaves, will dispose them to sedition, and will be a recruiting agent for another insurrectional movement. But the uprising of Harper's Ferry had one fault, and a grave one: it is to have been insanely generous, when he was master of the field; to have spared the lives of the legal criminals; to have been content to take prisoners, to take hostages, instead of putting to death the planters that he had in hand, traffickers in human flesh, and to have thus given hostages to the rebellion. Property in man by man is murder, the most horrible of crimes. In such a circumstance, one does not negotiate with the crime: one suppresses it! When one has recourse, against legal violence, to the force of arms, it is in order to use it: he must not be afraid to shed the blood of the enemy. For slaves and masters, it is a war of extermination. Steel must be brought first, and then, in case of setbacks, flame must be brought to all the Plantations. There must be—if victorious—not one planter,—if vanquished—not one Plantation left standing. The enemy is more logical. He gives no quarter!...

Every producer has a right to the instruments and products of their labor. The Plantations of the South belong by right to the slaves who cultivate them. The masters should be expropriated in the cause of public morality, for the crime of lese-Humanity. This is what John Brown seems to have recognized in the Provisional Constitution that he wanted to proclaim, an elaboration of ideas barely lucid and full of darkness, but which testify to the need for justice and social reparations with which his valiant heart was animated, and, as a consequence, with which the hearts of the masses, source and seat of his own, is animated. Sooner or later, the drop will become a flood, the spark will become a flame! So demands Progress, natural and enduring Law.

1860 will soon dawn over the world, the daybreak of great revolutionary events.

All Europe is under arms:

It is the last rattle of the kings...

Kings of high and low degree. In America, let the proletarian of the North and the slave of the South outfit themselves for the great war, the proletarian and servile war, the war against "the master, our enemy;" and, then, let the old and the new continent utter with one fraternal voice that cry of social insurrection, that cry of human conscience:— Liberty!!!

And you, Martyrs! John Brown, Shields, Aaron C. Stephens, Green, Copie, Copeland, Cook, you will be no more, perhaps! Given over to the executioner, strangled by the cord of the laws, you will have rejoined your companions, fallen before iron and lead... And we, your accomplices in the idea, we will have been powerless to save you... we have even, I say, been the accomplices of your murderers!... by not taking up arms to defend you, by acting only with speech or pen, with sentiments, instead of also acting with the sword and rifle, with the muscles. What! We, your assassins? Alas! yes... It is horrible! Isn't it?—Ah! Let that blood fall back on us and our children... let our consciences and theirs be soaked in it... let it make them overflow with hatred and insurrection against Legal Crime!...—The time of Redemption is near. Captives that we are in the web of civilized institutions, we will redeem then our forced faults, our painful inaction... Martyrs! You will be avenged!...

Oh!Vendetta!Vendetta!!!...

— from *Le Libertaire*, October 26, 1859

## **Section Three: Zo d'Axa (1864–1930)**

Clownish, rascally, seductive, impudent and brazen, Zo d'Axa was a great magician of the pen and an unyielding enemy of authority who pursued anarchy with the adventurous spirit of a pirate hunting a ship laden with potential riches. What remains so refreshing about Zo d'Axa, to this day, is that he had no "system" concealed up his sleeve and lived instead for vivid sensations and for the joy of plucking forbidden fruit— not for an ideal or for a preoccupation with "social reform". Creeds were tombs to him and his belief that the act of rebellion itself took precedent over the cause made him the rarest of products in anarchist thought: a rebel without a program aside from elegant personal emancipation.

The genius of Zo d'Axa is romantic and ironic; it's the genius of one who knows the tremendous power of words and can smash his enemies in a single line, of one who inhales life and exhales beautiful sentences that bite like acid—and these qualities make him one of the most delightfully dangerous thinkers anarchism has ever generated. His blazing images are a manifestation of stylish lawlessness and irrepressible force of character; a heroic exaltation of **self** mated with a wholehearted abrogation of social constraints that echoed the vital unrest of an entire generation.

Zo d'Axa exfoliated his rollicking interpretation of anarchy in the pages of his landmark journal *L'Endehors* (On The Outside), from the basement of a building located on a little street in Paris called rue Bochart de Saron, where he wrote and printed about six thousand copies every week. Displaying great sophistication in the art of parody, each issue of *L'Endehors* contained a delicious editorial titled "First Shout" on the front page, which denounced the latest governmental atrocity with irony and sarcasm. Another regular feature was "Hourras, Tolles, et Rites Maigres" (Hurrahs, Outcries and Thin Laughter), an unexpurgated column which d'Axa created and then turned over to the enigmatic anarchist aesthete Félix Fénéon (Fénéon also provided art and literary criticism to the journal and proofread every issue). Idiosyncratic and bohemian, *L'Endehors* attracted a number of other first-rate writers, artists, and avant-garde intellectuals to its publishing conspiracy, including the intense and temperamental young novelist Georges Darien; the French Jewish anarchist Bernard Lazare, who went on to author the important study *Anti-Semitism: Its History and Its Causes* and later attempted to infuse the early Zionist movement with anarchist principles (Lazare's Zionism was not nationalist, nor did it advocate the creation of a state, but rather argued for a "free collectivity" for the self-defense of the Jewish proletarians); the self-taught artist and wood engraver Maximilien Luce, who gifted countless illustrations to anarchist and syndicalist publications (Luce provided more than two hundred designs or lithographs to Émile Pouget's *Père Peinard* alone and was also the principal illustrator for Jean Grave's paper *Les Temps Nouveaux*); and, most symbolically, the archetypal fin-de-siecle anarchist terrorist Émile Henry, a brilliant Polytechnique student who abandoned his studies at nineteen and threw himself into the anarchist movement (and later threw a bomb at the Café Terminus!). D'Axa, determined to disturb the peace and never to compromise with the public, allowed the most anarchic liberty to all his contributors and *L'Endehors* quickly became a haven for poets, painters, bandits, and bombers with axes to grind.

*L'Endehors* published ninety-one explosive issues between May 5, 1891 and February 19, 1893. The purest expression of cultural anarchism of that era, *L'Endehors* succeeded because it defied the limitations of a stale medium (the political journal)—a medium that had become so unfortunately stifled in its range of expression by trite, moralistic periodicals produced *ad infinitum* and *ad nauseum* by non-imaginative writers. It was as if Zo d'Axa chose to put on a straightjacket and then made a vigorous display of springing out of it with no lockpicks—using aesthetic ju-jitsu

to breathe new life into what seemed like a necrotic, hopeless genre, by turning the weight of negative expectation around and creating something *dynamic*, rather than static and programmatic. As a connoisseur of the full life, d'Axa grasped that anarchist journalism would gain more height with unfettered wings and the sphere of its enjoyment and influence would be broader: To this end, he banished slavish, uninspired, and commonplace argumentation from his innovative journal and pioneered a new literary style of anti-political discourse that was supple and caustic at the same time, and which was never presented explicitly in a dogmatic way. The hostile and exquisitely clear writing in *L'Endehors* was so far beyond the mundane sphere of "political" thinking (and the feculent political programs of mediocre minds) that it terrified some people and enthralled others, but in the end the pungent mirth of the journal provoked animated discussion and garnered acclaim from friend and foe alike.

*L'Endehors* was even publicly praised by socialist politician (and future assassination target) Georges Clemenceau and by members of the intellectual *elite* of France, such as Henri Bauer, Laurent-Tailhade, and Jean de Mitty. The last-named said of it:

*This little sheet so modest in appearance and at the same time so fastidious in make-up that it might easily have been taken for a club periodical or for the exclusive organ of a few aesthetes, raised more tempests and provoked more passions than a riot in the street. Violent it certainly was, and with a violence which, for wearing always a literary, subtle, and complex form, penetrated no less deeply, and gained no less to its object the scattered energies and wills that were craving definite guidance. Opportune or not, the influence of L'Endehors was exerted effectively... But, aside from its action on public affairs, the journal of Zo d'Axa realized an incontestable intellectual effort; and it is for the beauty of this effort that it pleases me to invoke it.*

Lucien Descaves compared Zo d'Axa's writings to "a beautiful road bordered with pity and hatred and paved with wrath and revolt," writing further that: "Zo d'Axa's phrase is rapid. The fuse of his articles is short. When a match is applied to them, something is bound to explode; and d'Axa is quite capable of sacrificing himself, if need be, in the explosion. He has proved this."

This last statement was much more than hyperbole. Whereas most French intellectuals who sympathized with anarchism distanced themselves from propaganda by deed, d'Axa and his cohorts positively glorified bombings as an existential alternative to political talk and as a means of regenerating one's existence through "perfect gestures." Victor Barrucand described Ravachol as a "violent Christ" in *L'Endehors*, writing that "when dynamite speaks, people listen and the conspiracy of silence is vanquished." When another bomb exploded in Paris after the police had found it and carried it back to their headquarters, the laconic Félix Fénéon dryly remarked, "what intimate charm in this story" and defended the "explosions that awakened the bourgeois from their torpor." Even Louise Michel entered the fray with a bold, poetic piece on Ravochol called "Today or Tomorrow" in *L'Endehors*, number 63. *L'Endehors* also prophesied in an article entitled "Notre Complot" Vaillant's attempt against the Chamber, and members of the papers staff participated in the phenomenal demonstrations at Vaillant's tomb. Zo d'Axa himself mocked the incomprehension of the establishment press towards this new wave of propaganda by deed in a piece titled "Articles de Paris," where he vented:

*They believe they have seen furious vengeance at work.it is something else.a primitive propagandist of Anarchy has wanted to force their attention by the brutality of the act.*

*Behind this deed is the faith, so often denied, on which he led the fruitful discussion. It is an Idea that the dynamiter deploys.*

In the August 21, 1892 issue of *L'Endehors*, Errico Malatesta published an article called “A Little Theory” in which he denounced “propaganda by deed” as “going beyond the limit determined by necessity.” Malatesta’s letter infuriated Émile Henry, who considered individual initiative the most effective means of attacking the social order and who saw Ravachol as the “opposition party” of his decayed age. Henry savagely countered Malatesta’s restrained, wishy-washy views in a long letter published in the August 28, 1892 issue of *L'Endehors*, in which he angrily asks:

*Will future Ravachols have to submit their projects for the acceptance by some sort of Grand Tribunal at which sits Malatesta or someone else, which will pass judgment on whether acts are appropriate or not? It was up to the individual, and anarchists should welcome with pleasure every energetic act against bourgeois society.*

Words like these reverberated throughout French society and exerted a far-flung influence on anarchists outside of France; they also inspired lawmakers to execute a directive aimed at the complete eradication of the anarchist press. The campaign against Zo d’Axa started with thirty days of captivity in Mazas prison, during which he refused to respond to interrogations or sign anything, and was held incommunicado (after his release on bail, d’Axa quipped: “our poor freedom, always provisional”). The repression continued and searches, prosecutions, seizures, and arrests became regular events, but never weakened d’Axa’s verve or his action. Feeling the heat closing in, Zo d’Axa stole away to London (the right of asylum was a British tradition since the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and anarchists utilized this legal loophole to give French authorities the slip) and took refuge among the growing French exile community—which included the second-generation anarchist Charles Malato (accused by French police in 1905 of orchestrating an assassination attempt on King Alfonso of Spain), Louise Michel (friend to d’Axa’s grandfather), Georges Darien, and Émile Pouget (Pouget, in order to support himself in London, masterminded a swindle where he sold to a collector some teeth supposedly extracted from Ravachol).

After d’Axa’s narrow escape, Émile Henry (!) stepped in temporarily as managing director of *L'Endehors* (d’Axa had been supremely impressed with the cold, logical young intellectual “whose constant obsession was to work for anarchism”). Despite some differences in theory (d’Axa considered these a vital aspect of anarchist individualism), the solemn Émile had infiltrated his way into d’Axa’s inner circle through his painfully mature convictions, which d’Axa said “were as those no longer troubled by religious faith, those who see—and are even hypnotized by—a goal, and then reason, judge, and make decisions with a mathematical certainty.” However, shortly after taking over the tedious administrative responsibilities of publishing the paper, Émile Henry suddenly quit, without explanation, leaving *L'Endehors* in the hands of the inscrutable anarchist dandy Félix Fénéon, until, six months later, it was finally silenced, its vendors jailed, and its last copies destroyed (the reasons for Émile Henry’s vanishing act became clear shortly afterwards when he reemerged as an “avenger of social wrongs”). Back in the United Kingdom, d’Axa made the most of his fugitive status and went on an extended, wayfaring pilgrimage across much of Europe, starting with a jaunt to the Netherlands with a troupe of itinerant musicians, then over to Germany (living for a short time in the Black Forest with loggers), continuing onward to Italy and Greece, before finally rambling to Constantinople and the Middle East.



All the while though, the authorities were in hot pursuit and in Jaffa he walked into a trap and was put in irons. Transferred to Paris, he spent eighteen months at Sainte Pélagie as a political prisoner. His next “enforced residence” at Mazas lasted forty-eight days before he was acquitted and freed, though it is here that he writes most of his aristocratically-antisocial masterpiece *From Mazas To Jerusalem* (d’Axa’s old friend, the anarchist artist Maximillien Luce, also did a stint in the same prison and subsequently recounted his experiences in the lithographic series *Mazas*).

Of those anarchists who remained strictly “*en dehors*,” Zo d’Axa, uncorrected by the hard experiences of prison and exile, resumed in 1898 his assault upon the abuses of society in his now famous *Feuilles* (The Leaflet) with a fierceness, a versatility, an independence, a finesse, a facility in anathema, and a sharpshooting in disdain that have rarely, if ever, been matched in revolutionary pamphleteering—and it created an enormous sensation. It was as if Octave Mirbeau, with all the withering force of his mighty scorn, had descended into the street, or as if Émile Pouget’s *Père Peinard* had attained the level of literature.

“To the argument of the multitude,” he wrote in his inaugural editorial, “to the catechism of the crowds, behold, the personal reasons of the Individual oppose themselves! ... He goes his way, he acts, he takes aim, because a combative instinct makes him prefer the chase to the nostalgic siesta. On the borders of the code he poaches the big game,—the officers and judges, bucks or *carnivori*. He dislodges from the forests of Bondy the herd of politicians. He amuses himself by snaring the ravaging financier. He beats up at all the cross-roads the domesticated *gent de lettres*, fur and feathers; all the debauchers of ideas, all the monsters of the press and the police.”

*L’Feuille* published twenty-five issues between October 6, 1897 and March 28, 1899, and still provides a model for concise, insurrectionary prose that bypasses the barren, outworn jargon of most anarchist propagandizing.

By 1900, Zo d’Axa had had enough of playing the *enfant terrible* of anarchism. He had said what he had to say about the mechanisms of social control and now sought only to evade them, through a return to his traveling lifestyle. The freedom of movement held by the vagabond—the unchained wanderer living off his pillage—occupies an emblematic place in d’Axa’s writings from this point on, as he visits Africa, North and South America, China, Japan, and India, and assumes the fresh persona of “exotic journalist.” Prefiguring the in-depth news coverage of *National Geographic*, d’Axa dispatched reports and bulletins of his globetrotting escapades to French gazettes like *La Vie illustré*—and in the process helped launch a whole literary subgenre of picaresque journalism.

To those who conceive the anarchist struggle in terms of drama, to those who are interested in history primarily for the aesthetic and imaginative pleasure to be derived from the rise and fall of visions, the writings of Zo d’Axa will prove a source of transcendent pleasure. The following section contains a fuller biographical piece on d’Axa, as well as previously untranslated texts by him, including the final chapter of his travelogue *From Mazas To Jerusalem*, where d’Axa seems to call for something **beyond** anarchism—something which has as yet accepted no name.

# Zo d'Axa, Pamphleteer and Libertarian Journalist

## Charles Jacquier

Alphonse Gallaud—the future Zo d'Axa—was born on May 24, 1864 in Paris to a well-to-do family, his father being a municipal engineer in the city. After completing his studies in Chaptal College, he entered Saint-Cyr's military academy. He enlisted in a grenadier cavalry regiment and departed with infantrymen to Africa. But the adventure wasn't as colorful as he dreamed. The youth was bored stiff, and then, in a sudden move, he deserted, with an officer's wife. Throughout the rest of his life he would be strongly anti-militarist and, at every opportunity, would demonstrate his solidarity with the victims of military institutions. As a refugee in Belgium, he became a journalist for *Nouvelles du Jour*, but the sedentary life did not suit him well, and he traveled to Switzerland and then Italy. When he was amnestied in 1889, he returned to Paris.

According to Jean Grave, "He made his appearance in the literary environment of Montmartre, where he began to make himself known in some minor circles by announcing his intention of publishing a journal." Initially, he vacillated between faithfulness to monarchy or to anarchy, as Grave said, classifying him among "those original types who come to probe anarchy." There were no obvious points in common between Zo d'Axa and the "Pope of rue Mouffetard"<sup>1</sup>! Despite opposed personalities—Lucien Descaves speaks of "errant chivalry with regard to the former and calls the latter a "sedentary plebeian"—Grave recognized in Zo d'Axa an aristocratic temperament and the merit of publishing excellent articles.

In May 1891, Zo d'Axa published the first issue of *L'Endehors*, "essentially a literary organ of anarchy" (Flor O'Squarr) of which six thousand copies were printed. Lucien Descaves, a young writer and future member of the Goncourt Academy, knew Zo d'Axa at the time and gives a portrait full of admiration in his memoirs. "With a red beard cut to a point, Zo d'Axa resembled a musketeer dressed in civilian clothes. He was beautiful, daring, sarcastic and of unequaled independence. He didn't mince words either with friends or opponents, when it came to what he held to be truth, his truth. He was *en dehors* (outside, beyond) with his entire person. He didn't have to wait for provocation to put up his guard. As independent as he was incapable of calculation, he followed his impulses without answering to anyone. Under the eloquent banner *L'Endehors*, he had hired at his own risk the low-tonnage boat chartered to torpedo a corrupt society." An engraving from that time shows the editorial staff of the journal in a basement on boulevard Rochechouart. Alongside Zo d'Axa are Jean Grave, Augustin Hamon, Bernard Lazare, Charles Malato, Octave Mirbeau. People as varied as Tristan Bernard, Georges Darien, Lucien Descaves, Sébastien Faure, Félix Fénéon, Émile Henry, Camille Mauclair, Pierre Quillard, Émile Verhaeren would collaborate with him. Zo d'Axa offered each one a platform from which they could "express themselves without discreet euphemisms or timorous reticence." In *Le Figaro*, Jules Huret wrote: "*L'Endehors* is a weekly that publishes anarchic writings and ultra-modern literary

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<sup>1</sup> A nickname for Jean Grave

criticism with unbridled vehemence. It is the refuge of refractories like Georges Darien and pure poets like Henri de Regnier and Saint-Pol Roux. The editor, Zo d'Axa, is a courageous man." According to Paul Adam "Zo d'Axa is a journalist of valor" and his articles "offer excellent and correct diatribes against the wickedness of the times" (*Entretiens politiques et littéraires*, volume VI, #37, February 25, 1893).

Very soon, of course, the authorities began to focus on *L'Endehors*. The authors of an article, the editorial director, Louis Matha, and Zo d'Axa, were sentenced to pay a fine of a thousand francs each. In the next issue, Zo d'Axa commented, "Three thousand francs is not expensive;" and he gave the magistrature another thrashing! After the arrest of Ravachol and his comrades in March 1892, *L'Endehors* opened a subscription "in order to keep the kids whose parents are implacably struck by Society as rebels from starving to death." Zo d'Axa was arrested, charged with association to commit crimes and imprisoned in Mazas. *L'Endehors* continued to come out during his imprisonment, thanks above all to Félix Fénéon. A bit later, another article led to further persecution. Without waiting to be arrested again, Zo d'Axa went across the channel. On June 1 and July 5 of 1892, he was sentenced to eighteen months and then to two years and two thousand francs, for incitement to murder and pillage.

In exile along with Matha, he briefly found asylum with Charles Malato, one of many political exiles in the French Quarter of London. His host depicted him as a "writer and knight errante..., wrapped in a coat of dark color, with a sombrero on his head. Under its wide brim, only the tufts of his luxuriant beard could be distinguished... Zo d'Axa could have claimed the pen, the sword and the guitar as weapons, since he was a formidable polemicist, a valiant swordsman, and an irresistible Don Juan." After three months, weary of the gray life on the banks of the Thames, he decided to leave on a long journey that would carry him through Europe to the Middle East. In the course of that strange journey, he asked himself if "by taking advantage of the suspicions of the authorities and benefiting from the consequent expulsions— locomotive forces that haul you from one side of a country to the other— one might not be able to go around the world with a minimum of goodwill?" In December of same year he was arrested in Jaffa by the French military that, *manu militari*<sup>2</sup>, force him to return home on a French Delivery Service boat. He was arrested on his arrival and spent a few days in the Marseilles prison before being transferred to Saint-Pélagie prison in Paris, where he refused to sign a petition for reprieve. He was freed on the day that the corpse of the President of the Republic, Sadi Carnot, who had been killed in Lyon on June 24 by Italian anarchist Sante Caserio, was buried and passed by the depot at the time of the funeral.

While in prison, he wrote the tale of his journey, *De Mazas à Jérusalem*. The work received an excellent reception from the critics, from Jules Renard to Octave Mirbeau, from Laurent Tailhade to Georges Clémenceau. For example, Jules Renard says, "his book makes you love his character."

Heedless of any literary career, Zo d'Axa managed the ephemeral anarchist daily *La Renaissance* (December 1895-January 1896), for which he wrote along with Félix Fénéon, Mécislas Goldberg, Bernard Lazare, Laurent Tailhade, Michel Zévaco. At the end of this experiment, he returned to his traveling life.

In October 1897, in the middle of the Dreyfus affair, Zo d'Axa tried a new experiment. Whenever he could, he published *La Feuille*. The following fragment could be its manifesto:

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<sup>2</sup> By force of arms

“We will also speak to the people, and not in order to flatter them, nor to promise them oceans and mountains, rivers and natural borders, nor even an upright republic or an honest candidate; nor a revolution that foreshadows the advent of an earthly paradise...

“All these anthems are currently crooned; here we will speak clearly. No promises. No deceptions. We will speak of more varied events, we will show the latent causes, we will point out the reasons. And we will reveal the tricks and tell the names of swindlers, thieving politicians, literati— all the sir whatevers.

“We will speak of simple things in a simple manner.”

A single sheet on which we find a design on the front by Maximilien Luce, Steinlein, Wilette, etc., and on the back an article by Zo d’Axa. To give an idea of what the newspaper was like, let’s take the case of the tone used with regard to the Dreyfus affair that enraged France. “Though this gentleman was not a traitor—he was still a captain. Best to drop it.” Of course, there were also words for the copyists of the elder statesman (“Ready! Aim! Distort!”), and for the anti-semitic pipsqueaks of *La libre parole* (“Drumont and Vacher”). But his master stroke was the proclamation of *La Feuille*’s candidate, as ass named Nul, that was hoisted on to a cart and walked around Paris on election day to the cheers of passers-by. When the forces of order intervened, Zo d’Axa declared: “Let’s not dwell on it, now that he’s an official candidate.” Hadn’t he presented the little donkey as “a not overly educated ass, a peaceful being who drinks only water and would back away from a glass of wine. More or less the perfect example of a majority representative (m.p.)”?

At the dawn of the new century, Zo d’Axa, weary of so much struggle, closed *La Feuille* and took up the vagabond life on three continents. He sent his impressions of his wanderings to various journals. He wrote for *L’Ennemi du peuple*, edited by Emile Janvion, who published it from August 1, 1903 through October 1, 1904. In the United States, he went to Paterson (New Jersey) where, in his words, “refugees from the Old World go to sharpen their knives and brood over bullets against the quiet of kings.” In an outskirt of Jersey City, he met the widow of anarchist Gaetano Bresci who had killed King Umberto I of Italy on July 30, 1900. *The Revue Blanche* of the Natanson brothers published his story in September 1902.

When he returned to France, he settled in Marsailles, where one could have met him “in passing on the Canebiere or riding his bicycle around the sunny Corniche” (L.Champion). In 1917, when the chief editor of *L’Ordre*, Emile Bure—”well-known renegade, but a journalist of talent” according to Mualdes— asked him to write his memoirs, Zo d’Axa responded: “It’s no accident that I no longer write, and if, by chance, I should want to dedicate myself to the vain pleasure of thinking out loud, it would not be retrospective. It is the present that I would talk about and, believe, well outside the purr that the Sacred Union makes, since I am still the same despite white hair and silence...” He was still a refractory, “neither the war of 1914–1918 nor the Bolshevik dictatorship had his approval” (L. Champion). In 1921, while passing through Paris, he published his last article in *Le Journal du Peuple* to respond to journalistic nonsense. The man had aged, but his pen was still sharp and brilliant: “to remain silent would not serve to preserve me from the honor of appearing to be a penitent... The last friends of *L’Endehors* and *La Feuille* know the significance of a past that the present has no intention of disowning. For a good stretch, we reacted together against the disgusting reality of the times. We were treated as anarchists. The label wasn’t very important... So what is living? I enjoy the morning on near and distant paths, and without a pen, with the sole aim of comprehending the clear day outside of any wavering mirage, far from the pages on which one writes.”

Zo d'Axa first attempted suicide in 1927. Three years later on August 30, 1930, while living at 71 Promenade de la Corniche in Marseilles, he put an end to his life. The previous night, he had burnt almost all of his papers.

Contrary to Victor Meric's prediction, Zo d'Axa's name is not still printed "in fiery letters" in anthologies of great French writers and pamphleteers. All the more reason to simply recall his memory in expectation of a possible but belated recognition of his quality as a writer and his moral rectitude as one of the most original and engaging figures of "fin de siecle" anarchism.

# Any Opportunity

Translated by vincent stone

When you go your own way, alone, you take any opportunity to delight in saying what the average person wouldn't dare. Concern for edifying neighbors or gossips is over. No more morality! No more games! Enough of partisan-traps...

To the argument of the masses, to the catechisms of the crowds, to all of the community's national interests: to these are opposed the Individual's personal interests.

Which interests?

To each their own. The isolated one is careful not to preach a common rule. The defiant makes no place for a doctrine. Think for yourself! What is your situation? Your age? Your desire? Your strength? Do you need the crutches religion offers you? If so, go back to your church, from now on by your own choice, validated. Do you prefer, still a disciple, the sociologists' dream? Fine then, tell us your plans for the year two thousand. Or rather, are you feeling insolent? So you want to live? Are you ready? Well quit waiting on somebody, go where your hatred, your joys, carry you—the joys of complete openness, of dangers and of dignity.

One marches, acts, aims, because of a combative instinct, a nostalgic sleep makes you prefer the fight. Fully aware of the limits of the code, you poach the big game: officers and judges, deer and carnivores; you flush out the herds of politicians from the forests of Bondy; you're happy to grab a ravaging *financier* by the collar; at all the intersections; you release the domesticated tribe of authors and writers, furry and feathered alike, defilers of ideas, terrors of the press and the police.

With the quarrels between sects, races, and parties, every day, by the chance of events and shots to be taken, it becomes clear: *Dreyfus Affair!*<sup>1</sup> *Read all about it!* or the way of describing the Magistrature and the Army as they deserve it... Let us celebrate the ermine and the madder! The conscious destroyers don't specialize: in turns, according to the situation, they point right or they point left.

At the same time, *l'esprit de corps* will produce great results: the magistrates, the military, the suits, the liveries, all of the servants of Society badmouth the old madam. An office full of rumors goes sour. The robes,<sup>2</sup> rabbis and curés, the officiators, the officials and the officers, the accomplices in the antechamber juggle objects of worship. They scandalize the believers. Doubt will unstitch their eyelids. In a few months the child-people will be shocked to find that they hid "things" from them... Now confidence is dead: the bad shepherds killed it. Near the smashed flagpole, the scales of justice lie there like scrap iron next to the wood pile...

It's in vain that, with the crisis over, the junk traders of the Fatherland try to fix anything. This practice will become increasingly rare. The farce of a France signifying, amongst nations, progress

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<sup>1</sup> *Tr*—The Dreyfus Affair is discussed in introductory materials elsewhere in this volume. D'axa makes frequent references to (and word play on) various scandals and events of the time.

<sup>2</sup> *Tr*—*Robins* is derogatory slang for the magistrature, meaning 'robed ones.'

or generosity won't fool too many onlookers: never has there been a tribe more persistent in keeping mankind at the whipping post.

Moreover, it's only with contradiction that one buys the legend of Dreyfusism any more—such a spectacle of real Truth. The nude woman before the mirror sees far too little in her glass. She sings the praises of legality, forgetting that they legally shoot conscripts convicted of a simple gesture; and that also legally, in our streets, on winter nights, men and little children die in front of closed doors. Down with these closed doors—the worst! As for these necessary revisions, the beautiful lady won't say a word about them.

Always the big words: law, duty, honor, public safety—ring out in every clan, under opposing banners. They use sensationalist words. It's military music, a church song, the various couplets of a public gathering. Those men who don't get enlisted turn their nose up at sensationalist words.

Not serving in the camps, they save their passionate loyalty in the fight for the right word and the precise blow. One leadership can't count on them any more than another. They despise diplomacy, tactics, hesitations. They are suspect: in every camp, naturally, they are viewed as loose cannons. They leave the soldiers' pay, the stripes, and the new lies to others.

It's a lie to continue to promise, after so many promises. The prophets and the pontiffs, the preachers, and the utopians hoodwink us and show us, off in the distance, an era of love. We'll be dead: the promised land is the one in which we will rot. What reason, what motives are there to hypnotize ourselves? No more mirages! We want—and by all possible means, disrespectful by nature of laws and prejudices, we want—immediately—to conquer all the fruits and flowers that life has to offer. If later a revolution results from scattered efforts—so much the better! That would be good. Impatient, we will have preceded it.

So continue to declaim, good sirs, if it pleases you. And you, professionals, if it pleases you, cry over Society. But another grown-up, France, it seems, is also sick. Let's not doubt it, it's serious. Two abstractions are better than one. So go on then! Into the face of peril! Conspiracy here... corruption there! Let's hunt down the jew “who is bringing us ruin and dishonoring us.” Let's expel the congregationalists. Flamidien! Dreyfus! What's next? For the *République*! For Society! Long live Loubet! yada, yada, Panamada.<sup>3</sup>

The more French the merrier.

I say that in fact a fifteen year old boy who recruitment officers, hall monitors, and headmasters haven't yet stupefied would be more upright than any voter. It's all so clear. What's happening? Nothing. A toppling society, a people drowning itself... this is of no importance:

The individual will reach the riverbank.

Standing on the solid ground that his efforts can achieve, the Escapee from social drudgeries no longer falls into old dreams. The experiments have all been done. We've all seen that, barely freed from the kneeling folly of the priest, men accept the duperies of patriotism *en bloc*. In the name of new principles, they take that age-old yoke right back. Slavery was secularized, the yoke painted in three colors. No matter the dogma! In truth, it's just a government procedure. They slightly adjust it to the people's taste. But the colors quickly fade. They speak of humanity, of one family... Watch out! In honor of this family, they prepare to rig it again! And this individual I refer to, the one who knows, the one who thinks, the Escapee of social drudgeries, the one who

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<sup>3</sup> *Tr*—D'Axa uses a bit of wordplay here; in place of the phrase *et patati et patata*, meaning 'etc.', he writes *et patati et Panama*. This is a reference to the Panama scandals of the 1890s, in which the French government wasted nearly a billion francs. Newspapers used similar nonsensical wordplay during the scandals.

no longer boards the bedecked ships of religion and fatherland, will not heedlessly disembark on the humanitarian rafts of the Medusa.<sup>4</sup>

Have you understood, citizen?

The notion of revolt, in this way, is not just some mania, a new faith meant to again trump your appetites and desires. It's the individual energy to defend oneself against the masses. It's the willful arrogance to live. It's the art of going on one's own—

*Endehors*—you only have to dare!

At every opportunity, in these *feuilles*, such a way of feeling and being emerges. The sparking events, clashing like flint, shed light on facets of the question along the way. And light-hearted or serious, these *feuilles* follow, cohere, and complement, in accordance with the formal scenario of Life, ever-vivid.

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<sup>4</sup> *Tr*—“The Raft of the Medusa” is a famous painting depicting the tragic wreck of the *Méduse*. It became a symbol of French Romanticism, dramatically featuring desperate passengers crashing onto a rocky shore atop a dilapidated raft. Leading the boat is a man waving a handkerchief, suggesting a flag.



# On the Street

Translated by Wolfi Landstreicher

Should I say: from Mazas to Jerusalem—and back (via Marseilles, Sainte-Pélagie and the holding prison)? I might think so. On the occasion of Carnot's funeral,<sup>1</sup> I found a handful of comrades in prison who they arrest at every celebration including May Day.

These festivals usually end for them in Mazas.

But the warden called me almost immediately:

I am free.

The idiotic police arrested me too soon. They overstepped their order, which was to leave me at least a few hours of liberty—the ethical time in which to commit a crime. That's what it's like to be in a rush!

The mistake granted me a few days' reprieve. So I left without further hindrance...

Around the warden's apartment, the side streets and docks speak softly, and it is like a transition to the clamor of the avenues.

The eighteen months robbed from my life already belong to the past.

Only the present matters.

When he first goes out, a convalescent tends to be flustered. I shook off the lethargy of prison more quickly, because it was so brutal. And now the passersby that I brush against, the noise of the streetcars and the pungent air don't daze me at all. My step is still familiar on the Parisian pavement. Where will it lead me?

To join the anarchists again?

Here I am forced to conclude: I am not an anarchist.

In the criminal court, in the preliminary investigation as well as the hearings, I scorned this explanation. My words of rage and compassion were characterized as anarchist. I made no comment under threat.

Now I would like to clarify my first thought, the desire I have always had.

It must not sink into vague approximation.

No more grouped into anarchy, than recruited into socialism. Being a free man, a loner who searches beyond; but not bewitched by a dream. Having the ferocity to affirm oneself, outside of schools and sects:

Outside.

The facetious journalists commented rather superficially, exclaiming: "But they're inside!" when we were thrown into prison.

And then, above the grayness of all doubts, this appears in the brilliance of vigorous color: The Will to Live.

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<sup>1</sup> The French President assassinated by Italian anarchist Sante Caserio. Caserio's cry before the guillotine was: "Courage, cousins! Long live anarchy!"

And to live outside oppressive laws, outside narrow rules, even outside the ideally formulated theories of the world to come.

To live without believing in a divine paradise or hoping too much for a paradise on earth.

To live for the present, outside of the mirage of future society; to live and to feel this existence in the proud enjoyment of social conflict.

It is more than a state of mind; it is a way of being—here and now.

For too long, men have been led along, being shown the conquest of the heavens. We don't even want to wait until we've conquered the earth.

Let each of us go on for his own pleasure.

And if there are those who get left along the way, if there are those whom nothing can awaken, if there are innate slaves, people who are incurably degraded, so much the worse for them! Understanding this means going on ahead. And joy lies in acting. We don't have the time to show the way: life is short. Individually, we rush to the attacks that call us.

Someone has spoken of dilettantism. But this isn't gratuitous, nor platonic: we pay...

And we start again.

## **Section Four: Georges Darien (1862 — 1921)**

*Man has been so stupefied by centuries of despotism and most of all by a century of false freedom that the very idea that he do away with masters terrifies him. As soon as it is liberated from the ties that a crowned scoundrel imposes on it, the people rushes to enslave itself, entitling itself Sovereign People; which allows it, immediately, to delegate its sovereignty; after which it squats down on its pile of manure, which it loves, and begins scratching at its ulcers, which it calls laws; and gives Thanks to the Lord, which he pictures as a bloody mannequin woven in his image, for having created the People, and sovereign, and imbecilic, and lazy.*

— Georges Darien

Georges-Hippolyte Adrien (he used the anagram “Darien” as a nom de plume) was a self-declared “adversary of the general order of things” and an outstanding novelist of anarchist tendencies who made it a point, early in life, to disclaim all political affiliations:

*It is useless to tell you that I present myself neither as a socialist nor as an anarchist; I have nothing to do with these relics. I am simply a man revolted by the horror of the general situation and, being neither sufficiently intelligent nor sufficiently learned to comport myself as a citizen of the world, I wish to revolt simply as a Frenchman.*

Darien burst upon the scene in 1890 (a period when anarchists were developing an interest in radical literature) with his first novel *Biribi*, a grim, intelligent, and above all, *vitriolic* literary attack on the Military System. Drawn from the author’s life, it is a novel intended to shock. The experiences it recounts through its hero/narrator, Jean Froissard, are based on Darien’s harrowing years in army disciplinary companies in Tunisia (*Biribi* is the nickname given by French and native soldiers in Algeria to the punishment-battalions of the Franco-African army; a slangy *petit nom* given to one of the most awful hells on earth). From its first appearance the brutal revelations contained in *Biribi* were met by official obstruction and attempted suppression, but the popularity of the book conquered these attempts, and it was able to carry its scathing light into the dark corridors of military administration and oppression—and actually initiated some minor reforms. In an intense, coarse, and non-ornamental style that’s utterly his own, Darien indicts the military as a tyrannical institution that is nourished by taxation and war and which functions through corrupt, stupid and unchanging officialdom.

Darien had been the man he describes in this subversive text; and was writing portions of his own autobiography—which accounts for the directness, simplicity, and gallows humor that are the distinguishing characteristics of this explosive volume. It’s a book saturated with a strong man’s tears of blood, a man who feels his own impotency to rouse his generation, or to change humanity, who knows that he is a prophet crying in the wilderness, voice echoing over a desert of dead bones and drifting sand. *Biribi* caused a huge sensation when it first appeared, but to this day it has resisted assimilation by the literary establishment—though it’s always had its ardent admirers amongst other writers of transgressive literature, like the Surrealists. (Andre Breton characterized Darien as “A heart too big and beating too well not to knock in every sense against the walls of its cage” and described his writings as “the most rigorous assault that I know against imposture, stupidity, cowardice.”)

A few excerpts from *Biribi* should suffice to give an impression of the blistering, farcical manner in which Darien attacks militarism as an institution *and* as a set of mentalities founded on fear:

*This craven would throw himself into fire or flood today to save a comrade's life; but he would blow his comrade's brains out tomorrow at the word of command of a non-commissioned officer. He is not base: he is frightened. His courage disappears before a watchword: his boldness shrinks and vanishes under a regimental order. What crows him is the apprehension of punishment, the fear of the men set above him. Fear is the keystone of the ark of the temple of Janus. The army is a laundry where they throw the consciences of men into a tub of soapsuds, and where the characters of men are wrung and twisted like wet linen, and are placed, shapeless, under the woodenbeater of a brutalizing discipline. It is only by means of fear that the military system has been able to establish itself. It is only by such fear that it maintains its position. It is obliged to affect the imagination by terror, as it must extinguish the soul and sense of nations to prevent each from seeing farther than the stupid limit of a frontier. It is obliged to surround itself with a mysterious ceremony, with a religious pomp in which horror is united to magnificence; in which the trumpet blast joins in the death-shrieks; in which one can see confused together the bloodstained robe of glory, the plume of generals, the handcuffs of gendarmes, the marshal's baton, and the dozen balls of the execution-volley, the golden palms of triumph and the shattered bones of the dead. It must present this spectacle to the crowds which stare and tremble before it as they stand openmouthed before a charlatan quack doctor at a fair, whose tinsel and feathers attract them, but from whom they shrink alarmed as soon as they see a forceps or a lancet glitter ominously in his hand. It must do this in order that the people, always in ecstasy before the marvellous, which it does not attempt to analyze, shall be seized before it with awe and admiration; even as a savage who prostrates himself in terror and respect before the shooting-iron which he does not understand, but which he knows possesses the power to strike him to the earth.*

*It is commonly said, he continues, that the army incarnates the nation. History puts this into our heads by means of all her subtlest lies. Ten martial anecdotes resume a century; a boast describes a reign. History preaches hatred of the people, respect for the pillager, the sanctification of carnage, the glorification of slaughter by them. The weak, the sensitive, the timid succumb beneath it, and are buried in the red clay or left on the sand for the vultures and jackals. The strong (sometimes, not always) lives to have his whole future poisoned by these memories, his whole temperament warped and embittered; or he forces his tormentors to shoot him by some unpardonable breach of discipline; some blow to a superior, or some intentionally insolent reply; death is the continually recurring sentence in the military code; if the man does not bend he must be broken; broken in two with a volley which smashes his spine. The punishment-battalions, the workshops of the Travaux Forces, are the immediate consequences of the standing armies. Society, to protect its interests, makes of a young citizen a soldier, and of the soldier a galley slave at the first effort in him to shake off the yoke of that discipline which degrades and brutalizes him, requiring like all tyrants and usurpers to support its rule by terror, to make itself dreaded that its prestige may dazzle and its tottering throne be secured.*

It was unavoidable that such a dynamic, antiauthoritarian text would come to the attention of French anarchists, who were then actively courting alliances with radical artists.

## Intersections with Anarchism

What made Darien's writing popular among many anarchists were the very qualities that made it alienating to the general public: his sustained and withering irony and his complete lack of human sympathy for that mass of mediocrity that forms nine-tenths of the population of the world. The apathy and sheepishness of the general multitude filled him with wrath and he had the courage to point out that the great majority of people are neither the martyrs or the heroes, neither the victims or the tyrants of their time, but a mass considerably alone by its numbers, who go meekly and stupidly as sheep to the slaughter, under the pressure of their sovereigns and statesmen. From Darien's bitter perspective all humanity has been inoculated with the serum of concentrated cowardice and fear; some are robust enough to resist the contagion, but the majority absorb it and develop the disease. And so for thousands of years the Juggernaut of governmental and military despotism has rolled over the living pavement of the prostrate multitudes, and there is no sign as yet that those multitudes will arise and assert their dignity.

Darien's early fiction thus blends angry rejection of all established authority with skeptical disdain for the consenting mass of obedient dupes: a combination of anarchism and elitism. He has little hope in the resistance of the people and expects that the majority of them will always continue to be thwarted, dazzled, made dumb and helpless by the powers which ruin and slay them. What are we to look for from Masses which voluntarily lie down to be stamped on, Darien repeatedly asks? Walter Redfern, in his biographical study of Darien, explains his perspective on the "masses" in more detail:

*According to Darien's logic, one has to resist all that is illusion, including the favorite illusion of the revolutionary Left: the **people**. Darien's unremitting detestation of the French middle classes by no means made him less critical of the common masses. He returns time and again to the enigma: Why do the masses have a mania for the trivial, and show such a lack of interest for what truly concerns them? Between the State and its supporters on the one hand and the "people", seen largely in terms of an unthinking mob on the other (who get what they deserve when they submit), Darien's anti-heroes swim largely alone, sleek autonomous submarines taking potshots at ships of all flags.*

In another revealing passage, Redfern describes Darien's strained relationship with movements, including the anarchist movement:

*Darien was a lifelong outsider. Even the anarchists, loosely linked in shifting groups as they were, usually proved to be too suffocatingly regimented for him. A recurring pattern was this: Darien becomes hopeful about convincing himself and a given group that he can work with them: anarchists, anti-militarists, various syndicates, and later in his life, urban conservationists: Then, in despair and anger, he breaks with them to go it alone. The only organization he worked with for any length of time was the international Georgist movement.*

Darien viewed the anarchist movement as the freest but also the most naïve movement fighting for a new society, and in an article titled "**Anarchistes?;**" published in a 1904 issue of *L'Ennemi du peuple*, he complained about the "religious nature of Anarchism," whose doctrine he defined in the following terms:

1) There was once a Golden Age, which disappeared with the birth of authority. 2) We must return to that Golden Age, and for that a revolution is desirable. 3) Once the revolution has been carried out, there will be a general interruption of life on earth. 4) After that, the Golden Age will return.

In spite of these lucid critiques of anarchism as a vaporous miracle-cult, Darien took full advantage of the thriving anarchist press in Paris, regularly contributing to several anarchist periodicals such as *The Pug*, *the Endehors*, *The Skirmish* (where he also appears to have been the main editor), and *L'Ennemi du Peuple* (until its demise in 1904), as well as publishing eleven issues of his own satirical journal *L'Escarmouche*. During his prolonged involvement with *L'Ennemi du Peuple*, Darien attacked virtually everybody: bourgeois, revolutionaries, freemasons, jesuits, radicals, socialists—and even took a shot at Tolstoy, who represented to Darien “the incarnation of silliness, cowardice, and hypocrisy”. Darien also gave Jean Grave permission to reproduce, free of charge, passages from his novels in the literary supplement to *La Revolte*. Not surprisingly, the anarchist journal where he felt most “at home” was Zo d'Axa's *L'Endehors* (On The Outside), to which he contributed five articles in 1891, including a study of libertarian art entitled *The Anarchist Novel*. In contrast to the “socialist novel,” which revels in the misery and resignation of the Present Order, Darien asserts that the “anarchist novel is violent, arousing the indignation of the reader, trying to provide solutions to the extreme injustice of the contemporary world. It is defined as a “cry.” In 1892, Darien published another series of articles in *L'Endehors* under the pseudonym George Brandal, which are particularly violent apologies for propaganda by deed, asking for the unequivocal death of exploiters. Darien was then targeted by the French State as one of the most “radical voices within anarchism,” prompting his flight to England in August 1894, after a crackdown that struck at anarchists and intellectual sympathizers.

## The Thief?

*You see, existence is as stupid, as empty, and as illogical for those who steal it as it is for those who earn it.*

— *Le Voleur*

Between 1894 and 1905, Darien frequently travelled to and resided in London, becoming a fluent speaker and writer of English. Darien's life-long paucity of official earnings has inspired some of his readers to impute the fictional exploits of Georges Randal, the daring burglar protagonist of his next 1897 novel *Le Voleur*, to its author (at the time, London was a veritable paradise for theft due to slack laws on ownership and sale of goods in comparison to France). For most of the 1890s, Darien was an absent, rather mysterious figure, living in London (where much of the novel is set), and the details of burglars' techniques in the novel have such a ring of authenticity about them that confusion between Darien and his anti-hero Randal is inevitable—in fact, Darien positively cultivates it! So, a certain ambiguity remains about this novel and hardcore admirers of Darien—such as the surrealists Benjamin Pèret and Andre Breton (who devoted an entire 1955 issue of the weekly *Arts* to a study of Darien)—consider it autobiographical, though Darien himself was dismissive of such speculation: “I have not yet been able to understand what the private life of a hack writer could have to do with the publication or the representation of his work”.

The story itself has an almost egoist orientation to it: a young thief seeks to satisfy his personal desires through the opportunities skilled burglary affords, but in Darien's hands this narrative device is presented as an anti-political strategy. All over the modern world would-be revolutionaries chatter of liberty, but do not anywhere possess it, or even know actually what it means; citizens, deluded with talk of security and freedom, had neither and were merely wards of the State, which devised various ways to keep them chasing money and allayed their discontent with a host of bread and circus programs. This is because the mass is by nature docile, passive, and wants to be led and herded—by parties, by banners, and by ideologies—which is why Darien's "alter-ego" Randal rejects both socialism and anarchism as such; the *chic* criminals among whom Randal moves are the élite of a world whose organization is changing through the medium of theft, and rapidly leaving simple capitalism behind. The thief is in no way glorified in the book—he's just another human being like everyone else. His revolt, however, is the only true revolt against collectivities and states: the revolt of the individual. Darien's social analysis in this novel is based on a division between ruling figures (*bourreaux*) and slaves, and much of the character interest of the novel lies in observing figures shifting between the two camps (Darien anticipated the convergence of the aspirations of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie towards their consolidation within a single class—with outlaws being the only "class" capable of experiencing genuine autonomy). *Le Voleur* generated a cult following, but was a commercial flop and didn't even sell a thousand copies after two years. *La Belle France*, the book/pamphlet which followed *Le Voleur*, appeared in 1900 and was even less successful. In its pages he attacked with evergrowing hatred "the French bourgeoisie, the most ferocious, hypocritical, the most ignorant of the whole world and also the most deplorable!" whose mindset "has not stopped in reigning as master, has not ceased in dumbing down, has not interrupted its task as assassin".

## Later Degeneration

In 1905, Darien finally returns to France. Nobody is waiting for him. He is forty-three years old and no longer deludes himself: "I wanted to live as I liked, and I didn't succeed all that often. I did a lot of harm to my peers, like others; and even a bit of good, like others; all of it without much reason and sometimes despite myself, like others." Later in life, Darien's political idiosyncrasy gave way to an espousal of the gospel of Henry George, an American religio-economic crackpot whose writings Darien discovered some time in the late 1890s. George believed in a preposterous "single tax" scheme of social redemption and encouraged his disciples to run for political office on this platform (George himself ran several times—unsuccessfully—for the U.S. Senate and for mayor of New York City). Georgism became an international movement and once Darien got involved he approached the Georgist doctrine as if it were the **final** doctrine, one yielding a complete answer and a perfected synthesis of all the philosophies and sciences since the dawn of history, now placed at the service of the disinherited—a cure-all for every human-made evil. Unlike Randal, the proud, self-respecting thief of *Le Voleur* who situated himself on the margins of society (maintaining only the most minimal relations with people and institutions), Darien was now concerned with proselytizing an absolutist social palliative—and was seemingly uncritical of the "messiahship" of Henry George himself. Starting in 1912, Darien squandered his writing talents by vigorously promoting the Georgist ideal of a single land value tax through the newsletter *Ligue pour l'Impôt unique*. Toward the same end, he disgracefully made some (ineffectual) for-



ays into politics by running (without any luck) in the local, cantonal, and legislative elections of Paris.

The roots of this madness remain a mystery, but towards the end of his life Darien was proposing increasingly bizarre ideas, as in the ridiculous book *Can We Disarm?*, an examination of the whole subject of militarism coauthored by Darien and Joseph McCabe (the ex-catholic priest/notorious atheist). In it, the authors take the view that global disarmament is impossible because armaments are so firmly rooted in our social system that they can no more be done away with (without serious economic disturbance) than can any other equally solidifying factor in modern society. Then the authors venture two possible solutions to the undeniable horrors of militarism; first, that the have-nots will rise in revolution and throw off the burdens that excessive armaments impose, and second, that papal intervention may bring about a new condition of international relations, and by doing away with the need for armies gradually do away with the armies themselves! This last solution verges on the absurd and is indicative of Darien's degeneration from a clear-thinking individualist to a muddled, collectivist theorist; unable to make balanced use of insights gained during his individualist youth Darien was now shamefully drawing up blueprints for verbal abstractions like "the public" and "the world." Darien's decline and theoretical breakdown are unfortunate because his contributions to anarchist thought, however erratic, were compelling ones.

# **Le Voleur (exerpts)**

Translated by vincent stone

## *from Chapter XI: Hair, Beards, and Shams*

For three weeks now, I have been frequenting the “socialist circles”—30 cents a half-pint—and I’m beginning to wonder if the priest wasn’t right. I have never granted much importance to his opinion, however, I’ve left aside all preconceived notions and I’ve put aside all of the prejudices which sleep in the depths of the most errant bourgeois, and I was ready to hear the good news. Alas! this good news was not good, and it was not new either.

I got to know the mysteries of socialism, the one, the true—scientific socialism—and I studied its prophets. I looked at those of ‘48 with their beards, those of ‘71 with their hair, and all the others with their hot air.

I participated in meetings in which they showed the good people that the seeds of collectivist Society exist in the heart of the capitalist Society; that all we need to do is win over public authority and everything would work without a hitch; and that the fourth estate, which they represent, the prophets, would be holding the reins. And I thought that it would be even better if there were no reins at all, and if nobody would let themselves be reined in, period... I heard them claim the existence of iron laws, and also the need to equalize wages, equal work, between men and women... And I thought that the bourgeois Code, at least, had the decency of not making women work... I heard them recommend that people stay calm and collected, and not react to governmental provocation, respecting legality... And the good people, the “electoral material,” applauded. Then, they declared that the notion of a general strike was reactionary. And the good people applauded even more.

I spoke with a few of them, too; deputies, journalists, complete nobodies. A professor who quit his chair to join the forum, to the great benefit of the department; a showoff, full of pompousness, swollen with vanity, his yap stuffed with rhetorical jujubes. Another, exuberant vulture, grand priest of the church of Karl Marx, nasal orator and publisher of intricate nonsense. Another one, hopelessly dedicated to universal suffrage, with an intelligent face but dumb as a goose—how terrible!—whose only thought is to denounce people who don’t share his opinion. Another ... and how many others? . All of the others.

I read their literature—the art of rearranging the leftovers of *Capital*. They cut, measure, decide, and dogmatize without restraint... The naïve egoism, the base ambition, the incurable stupidity and the most vile jealousy underlines their words, seems to soak their pages. People read this stuff? Hardly anymore, it seems. With all that these press-gang theoreticians have scribbled, there won’t be enough paper, when the time comes, to pack a rifle.

Ah! something to wonder, is how the idea of this collectivist barracks could ever germinate in man’s brain.

“A man!” cries out a thin and pallid being who hears me say these last words, coming into the café as I’m leaving. “Do you even know what a man is? Well, let me offer you...”

“Yes, yes, I know... you want to pay my bill. Alright, what is a man?”

“A man, a man is a machine who, running counter to the norm, endlessly renews all of its parts. Scientific socialism...”

I don't listen to this pallid being: I look at him. A pinched, angry face with the air of a ferret that's jealous of a polecat's defenses. A renegade bourgeois who thought he found paté in the socialist trough, and then realized, like many others, that it is often empty. A venomous loser whose soul, reminiscent of Fouquier-Tinville, can be seen between his yellowed teeth, who probably beats his wife to take vengeance on his own failures. It is true that she suffers to feed him. Equal work for... But the pallid being caught on to my inattention.

"Listen to me carefully, he said: it is very important if you want to know why scientific socialism can only see man as a machine... The food for an adult male, as I was saying, is roughly equal to the energy contained in half a kilogram of coal; this half kilogram of coal is in turn equal to one fifth-horsepower for twenty-four hours. As one horsepower is equal to the force of twenty-four men, the average day of work of an ordinary man comes to about one-fifth the potential energy stored in the food that this man consumes and which is equivalent, are you starting to see, to one half kilogram of coal. What happens to the other fifths?"

I don't know, I don't know! I don't want to know. Let them do anything they want—provided I leave this place and never step foot here again!

One night, I met a socialist.

He was an industrious, sober, calm worker who put up with a lot to meet his family's needs and raise his children. He would be quite happy if life were less miserable for all, specifically for those who work as hard as he does, and were misery to altogether cease to exist. I think he would do anything for that, this brave man; but I also think that he had only mediocre trust in the procedures recommended by the pontiffs of the legal revolution.

"In all conscience," I asked him, "to whom do you believe socialist propaganda is useful? Does it help the unfortunate?"

"No, certainly not. For, since it has been fashionable to put forward socialist theories, I see no improvement in the conditions of the underprivileged; rather, they have gotten worse."

"Well, well, take for instance the arguments of your rivals, the anarchists, do you believe that this propaganda benefits the government?"

"No, certainly not. The government, bad as it may be, doubtless will certainly decide to make a few concessions to the poor, by simple politics, if it weren't harassed by the peddlers of collectivist doctrines; and were it more solid than it is."

"Who, then, does it benefit, this propaganda?"

He thought for a second and responded.

"The snitch."

## *from Chapter XIII: Happy and Unhappy Meetings*

So, that's it, the red specter: that's it, the monster that will devour capitalist Society!

This socialism, which is changing the worker, narrowly but profoundly conscious of his role and his interests, into a political idealist who's wildly proud of his bogus science; which instills vanity and patience in him; which dazzles him with the future splendors of the fourth estate, existing independently and ascending, in one fell swoop, to power.

This anarchy, which codifies the truisms dying in the streets, fills the most over-used of platitudes with passion, and speculates on the future as if the immediate present weren't enough, as if the notion of the future were necessary to act—as if Hercules, fighting Cacus in the shadows, needed to see clearly to bring the brigand down.

Breeding grounds of exploiters, seminaries for dupes, accessory shops for the Vidocqs<sup>1</sup> of the world...

Governments too, anonymous enterprises of deception, like their counterpart, despotisms tempered by blackmail; the governed unceasingly criticize governments, like despotisms, for immorality; but they never think about their own moral poverty. The Revolution takes on the airs of a wise and wordy nemesis, established and vaguely legitimate, which is no longer concerned with balance, but has become calculating, and has traded the torch of freedom for the streetlamp gallows. Up high, the popes, on the throne of Karl Marx's ghost, or the specter of Bakunin, pontificating, judging, and rambling; whole conclaves of theoreticians, doctrinaires, system devisors, ... who advocate for forced participation—for all groupings of humans are based on dispossession and servitude—below, the crowds, imbued with otherworldly ideas, always ready to lend a hand to the most grotesque ambitions so they can hoist themselves up on the ship of state, which is no longer but a funeral march of street performers; the stupid, servile, prudish, cynical, jealous, lazy, cruel (and virtuous, always virtuous!) masses!

Ah! How we understand the great laugh of the all-powerful bureaucratic army before Individuality, how we understand the definitive victory of the administrative plan, and the triumph of the pen-pusher! And if you also consider the teachings of 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophers, the respect for the Law that they preach, their cult of absolute State power, their glorification of the citizen... The citizen—that public institution—has replaced the man. The unlimited sovereignty of the State passed from the hands of the monarchy to the hands of the bourgeoisie, from those of the bourgeoisie to those of socialism; it continues to exist. It will become more atrocious, even; for it grows in its own degradation. What a dogma!... But what a terrible thing to imagine, suddenly, the possibility of abolishing it, and to imagine having to think, act, and live for oneself!

As a result of submitting to the infinite authority of the State, and moral activity having ceased along with the existence of the Individual, all of the progress made by the human mind

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<sup>1</sup> *Tr.*—Eugene François Vidocq (1775–1857) was a thief who became a detective, generally viewed as the father of criminology and the French police department.

turns back on man and becomes a scourge; all of humanity's steps toward happiness are steps toward slavery and suicide. The tools once forged as means become ends. They are no longer instruments of liberation, but the dawn of all plundering, all corruption. And the administrative machine, which has killed the Individual, will become more intelligent, less egoist, and more liberal than the herd of maniacal serfs that it governs!

They have so crushed the feeling of individuality that individuals who rebel against injustice are forced to lash out against Society, the vague, intangible, invulnerable reality, nonexistent in itself, instead of attacking the scoundrel who caused his griefs. They have managed to turn a virile hatred into a declamatory hatred. Ah! If the victims of financial corporations, the victims of arbitrary governments had stood up and acted against the flesh and blood perpetrators of their miseries, there would not be inequity after this disaster, or infamy after this ruin. Vendettas are not always bad things, when all is said and done, nor immoral things; and with the universal approval that would have welcomed, for example, the execution of a finance pirate, this quagmire would not be necessary. But there you have institutions today, which are guilty of everything; we have forgotten that they only exist because of men. And now nobody is guilty anywhere, neither in politics nor elsewhere... Ah! it is tempting, certainly, the conquest of political powers!

These socialists, these anarchists!... Not a single one of them who is an active socialist; not a single one who lives as an anarchist... It will all end up in the bourgeois cesspool, so may Prudhomme<sup>2</sup> show some teeth, may the anti-patriots salute the flag; may the illegalists take their conscience into their own hands to swear innocence; may the Godless give up and hang up their old Bonnat crucifixes like sleazy shop owners.

Alright, the bourgeoisie can sleep easy; good times are still ahead.

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<sup>2</sup> *Tr*—Prudhomme is a character from Monnier, a pompous bourgeois.

## *from Chapter XXII: “Hello, my nephew”*

Retaliation has no need for explanation and it is silly to vent my anger, yet again, into the haze of sociological quibbles. To the airs and graces of civilization’s Tartuffes, to the smug posturing of the prison guards of the penal colony known as Society, only the acts of an animal can respond. A wild animal’s action, terrible and mute, the tiger’s leap, just like the flight of a swift bird, which seemingly soars as it stretches out to silently swoop down on its prey, in a single blow its claws enter the bloody meat, and howling, it sinks its fangs into the panting flesh, which is all that hears the laughing cry of victory that penetrates it in its final gasps.

# Enemy of the People

Translated by Wolfi Landstreicher

One of the many ridiculous beliefs of the unfortunate is that their miseries should necessarily arouse sympathy.

This is truly their most persistent conviction.

It is never a mistake to show, in their own interest, the extent to which such a belief is grotesque. If the disinherited were victims of an implacable fate and could not in any way improve their position, undoubtedly it would be fitting to feel sorry for them and even to transform the pity they inspire into love. But, in fact, this is not so. The unfortunate are not so in spite of themselves. They are so because they want to be so. They have willingly placed their neck under the yoke and they prefer not to remove it. It is therefore understandable that a certain number of people feel no compassion toward them, or even feel full-fledged rage and disgust toward so much stupidity and degradation.

“The people” has friends. Let it have them! In general, they deserve each other. But let it have its enemies as well, however unworthy of them it may be! I understand that one can be a friend of a poor animal, of a horse or an ass condemned to the hardest labor without defense and without speech. I don’t understand how, in our times, there could be friends of the people. The abominable and tyrannical popular submission might have had, up to now, its alibis and justifications: ignorance or the material impossibility of any struggle. Today, **the people** is aware and knows where to find the weapons fit for its needs. It has no excuse.

What is the people? It is that portion of the human species that is not free, that could be so, but doesn’t want it; that lives oppressed, amidst incomprehensible suffering; or that oppresses with stupid enjoyment. And it always respects social conventions.

It is almost all of the poor and almost all of the rich. It is the herd of sheep and the herd of shepherds. It is the majority with Callused Hands and Satisfied Teeth, with Tired Eyes and Redone Asses. Hillary Clinton<sup>1</sup> and George W. Bush, Bill Gates and Stephen King, Barack Obama and John McCain, Reverend Keith Anderson and Stephen Spielberg are all part of the people, just like all the workers and unemployed who demand wages and rights.

Beyond the people, there are individuals, the outsiders-of-all-peoples. No need to name names. They are the persons who have nurtured hatred for what existed in their times and made this hatred concrete in accordance with their personal attitudes and their possibilities. They are all those who hate what currently exists, that refuse the so-called social contract and refuse to grant their sympathy to the cowards that accept it or to the hypocrites that discuss it. The outsiders-of-all-peoples are those who are aware that victims no longer exist, that the self-styled victims of the social lie know quite well what of this social lie to cling to and accept it as truth only from cowardice and self-interest.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tr*—The names in this paragraph and other references (e.g., to the Bonnot Gang and the Winter Palace) have been updated and “modernized” to make the references more relevant to present day readers.



Up to now, the friends of the people have done nothing but falsify the most authentic feeling, having for the most part exercised or submitted to power. Instincts have been so utterly smothered that Hatred is looked upon as a horrible vice, an unmentionable passion that dishonors the lowest minority that it still torments. In fact, it rarely exists and one hardly dares to predict it. There are those who believe that without great, raging individuals who relite the spark in the heart of human beings, leaving them, with or without reason, against each other, the faculty of hating would have ceased to be a human possibility. The Sparticuses, the Attilas, the Ravachols, the Bonnots deserve our eternal gratitude. Thanks to them, the individual has not yet fallen to the rank of sheep. He can still hate. He can still be shaken by the greatest and most generous of passions.

From the moment a being learns to hate, she stops belonging to the people. The people cannot hate; there is no hatred between the rich and the poor that compose it, only a certain degree of envy. The rich even admit that they envy the fortune of the poor, they recognize it. The people cannot even hate individuals. It can't do it. It adores them, trembling; or it excommunicates them with a sigh.

The hatred of the individual for the people will have to be intense and constant. Sooner or later, this will happen, this hatred will find formidable means of expression. But for the moment it is plenty difficult for a beyond-the-people being to constantly hate the bleating herd. Just as it is equally difficult for a friend of the people to conserve the same dampness of the eye at every temperature. The good anarchist can gnash his teeth every now and then, and the authoritarian revolutionary might have a tear in her eye; it wouldn't surprise me. It's a question of the environment, of the moment, who knows? When the pope is guillotined, it will be the good anarchist who asks that he be given a moment to say a prayer, and it will be the authoritarian revolutionary who draws the cord in response.

But the distinction between friends and enemies of the people is not limited to pointing at a difference in temperaments; it separates two general ideas. The consideration of these general ideas is useful for avoiding a loss of time. Each of the two ideas points to a different path to follow toward an aim that is—I acknowledge it—unstable and vague enough and that can appeal to happiness; but that I consider is adequately named *other*.

We know the foretold way of the good anarchist. It is the Sacred Way of failure. The road signs are scientific for the left and religious for the right. Furthermore, you can't go wrong: tombstones, decorated with the names of reformers, point the way. You usually die along the way, but if you reach the goal, you may rise to the heaven of ideal happiness. I will not insult the good anarchist by saying that she acts in good faith. But I haven't given a damn about him for some time, and I don't miss him at all. Not that esteem for her is lacking; he would have to be mad to disown the rectitude of his character. But in my opinion, her romantic tendencies are ominous; it is necessary to prevent him from gaining a following. One good anarchist, fine; a party of good anarchists, no. Before anything else, the good anarchist is a hopeful person. She has faith in every possibility, is tolerant and stops before the "free course of our institutions", precisely so. He defends democracy from clerical-authoritarian coalitions. He defends it—like other less selfless friends of the people—in the name of Principles, convinced that in this guise he is doing a service to the people, of whom he is the faithful friend. And it is still the service of the people that she enlists in the pacifist mob.

The good anarchist informs us that pacifism can be useful; priests also make the same thing known. Furthermore, he teaches us that pacifism has always struggled against power and that it has channeled its efforts toward this admirable objective: the liberation of humanity. I don't like

telling the good anarchist that she is wrong. He is wrong in the good company of many—this is true—together with all sincere democrats; but he is wrong.

The elimination of capitalism and the state is the only possibility we have for changing things. It would be nice to believe the fables and think that the powerful will voluntarily give up their privileges without our lashing out against their henchmen. But since instead they will react with force, we will have to fight them in some way. How?

I invite the good anarchist to consult his Great Master, from which he will undoubtedly get some information about this. Besides, “historical documents” are not hard to find. She will discover things that will surprise her. He will probably lose a bit of his faith in Principles, a bit of his boundless confidence. But I have already said that today there are no more victims.

And this is what the enemies of the people desire above all: not to be victims. And not even to pretend to be so.

They are not friends of the people because they consider that the people, which doesn’t love itself, is really not lovable. They think that the people is only a herd, and they think so because they *see* that the people is a herd. With contempt for the human balms that the old social abscesses mold with their accommodating commiseration, the enemies of the people want something utterly different; they seek the authentic, the immediate. They think that many means are good—even some of those that seem atrocious to the friends of the people—and that the basis for their choice doesn’t depend on the people, since this isn’t their reference point.

They maintain that only one crime exists: inaction. They don’t try to conform their actions to an Ideal, that is not only prejudicial, but also rotten from their preconceptions. They allow the ideal to emanate from itself, from deeds and actions. The path that those beyond the people foresee, we know very little about it. All the more reason to be interested in it.

We are sure that we will not meet the fetid residue of the Past at every step, as happens on the authoritarian revolutionary’s path: the Bastille, the Winter Palace, etc. We aren’t sure *where* we will go and we gladly admit it; but we know *how* we will go. We will go however the fuck we want. The task of liberating Humanity doesn’t interest us. We want to satisfy *our* need for freedom, now, immediately. Those who are beyond the people are full of illogicality. We hope never to be free of it. Fantasy is often more necessary than Principles.

But the individual who refuses all the doctrines held sacred by the people and its friends should not condemn herself to the mere role of “living protest”; he would only find inadequate pleasure there. After all, she would feel greater joy destroying idols than in not having fun with the controversies of their believers. Besides, the more the virulence of the superstitions of the masses diminishes, the greater will be the freedom of action left to the individual. Thus, the individual has an egoistic interest in hastening the struggle between the two parts that make up the people: the beings who have nothing and respect property, and the beings who have everything and respect poverty. Consequently, it is necessary to make one’s position as solid as possible, both for attack and defense.

Characteristic of the sheep-like people, or of its friends, is their stubbornness in placing their hopes and the causes into which they put their sad energies outside themselves, in empty and abstract formulas.

On the other hand, the characteristic of those who are beyond the people must be their firm resolution to place their motives and desires within themselves.

Man being an earthly animal—a thing overlooked by the people and its friends, who are citizens of Never-never-lands—the individual must remain in a close relationship to his normal

base, the Earth. He must oppose this monstrosity: the ascent into Heaven. Precisely because the individual is rooted in the mud she has to do everything possible to put an end to the idealistic abomination that is hoped-for Paradise. The march of the individual, far from being a new march toward the stars, will be the ever-freer journey over an ever-freer earth.

These last considerations, that acknowledge a progression, should not cause me to be confused with a gradualist. I believe in revolutions that produce not laws (sterile) but methods (fruitful). It is necessary to oppose the deterministic and fatalistic opinion according to which a human revolution is a “scientific fact” and “no one can do anything about it”. A revolution also arises from an act of the will.

Naturally, the good anarchist believes that a revolution is always the “unavoidable consequence of blah blah blah”. What is prepared, in his opinion, will be “the outcome of the evolution of a formidably industrial century”. It’s true, industrial and scientific development could offer powerful means of action to the revolution. But it will not lead, for this reason, to a revolution. Its action, if not blocked or prevented, will lead to the domination of a class of privileged “technicians”. A single aspect of human labor—the least necessary—is now paid for; the tendency is getting worse. At the same time the monstrous dogma of the beauty and sanctity of Work grows. A large portion of the human species is thrown back into the social void. Among them are those who are beyond the people, aware or unaware, inciting revolution, pushing the people to cut its own throat—at last! And if this revolution is going to be “the outcome of the evolution etc.”, it is necessary to consider that this outcome will be quite indirect.

In any case, it will certainly not be “a proletarian victory”. This is not possible. The People, rich or poor, the baby-producing people, the people that is perpetuated in small millionaires and in small deaths from starvation—this Proletariat of Authority and Obedience—has already achieved its victory. It has achieved the only victory for which it could hope. It enjoys it. It abuses it. All it has to wait for is defeat. And it is good for the people to know that this defeat is the hope of individuals that nourish nothing but hatred for the people and that refuse it any sympathy which they see as complicity.

We are also occupying ourselves with those who are beyond the people, with the women and men of rage and fury, with the enemies of the people and of social convention. But we will not blindly exalt them.

We will not forge new idols before which to bow. What we want is to blow on the fire, to incite social hatred, to foment revolt. As always, forever.

## Bon Mots!

“These socialists! These anarchists! There is nobody who acts like a socialist, not a single one living as an anarchist. It’s all headed for the bourgeois cesspool..”

“Individualism crushes superstitions, passivities, lies, and if there are people underneath these nasty things, too bad for the people.”

“Killing is necessary. Return evil for evil, and with interest. That is the only means to eliminate the evildoers. If we want something to cease existing, it must be destroyed. And if some men want to defend that thing, those men must be killed.”

“Men are nothing more than the desperate and unhealthy souls of captive children, devastated by visions of wastelands, by desolate and bleak dreams.”

“And yet the masses refuse to listen to calls for an independence that horrifies them because it would give them responsibilities,” and are perfectly adapted to their poverty, a “slow poverty, mathematically determined by the exploiters and dogmatically regulated by the platonic agitators, the poverty that thinks it knows and which watches its own suffering, –which, consequently, will not act.”

“I do not believe in Congresses. People discuss, they darn old truisms, they put forward wishes, they express hopes, they vote on resolutions. Prayer wheels.” — *This statement appeared in the first volume of a pacifist journal prior to the corresponding first congress.*

“When you step in a manure pile, one can expect splatters. Underneath the detritus and rotten hay, there is always a bloated and stinking carcass that the weight of a boot causes to burst and pus spits out, fetid..I stepped in the manure: the Freemasons: and I made a carcass burst: Malato.” — *Written in response to a freemason (the anarchist Charles Malato) who attacked Darien for his writings against Freemasonry.*

*To his editor (by certified mail):* “Monsieur Stock, I received your card, and here is my response. If you do not publish my novel next October, I will kill you.”

*The final words of Le Voleur:* “To think that one is always being stolen from. Ah, life’s a bitch!”

# The Road to Individualism

In our opinion, the best thing to be said in behalf of Individualism, from a general viewpoint, is that it is the conception which allows of the smallest amount of lies and humbugs; with it, everything takes place in the open, or at least, when necessity arises, can easily be brought into the light. On the contrary, all that flavors of Communism is from its origin tainted with secrecy and falsehood; Privilege under all its forms steals and murders at will behind the stalking-horse of “general interests” or of the “imperious needs of the community;” masks are everywhere, faces nowhere. Anonymous and irresponsible Bureaucracy governs; the State, as an enormous octopus, pumps and poisons the blood of the nation. If the terrible period which we are going through can teach us a lesson, it must be that of the thoroughly malevolent character of the State and of its accomplice, Communism.

The road to true Individualism (not to the hideous sham which has for so long masqueraded under its fair name), is through the abolition of the central government, through the complete suppression of privilege, and through the recognition of the fact that, outside Agriculture, no occupation can be useful or even honest which cannot give a satisfactory proof of its utility and of its honesty. Our civilization is infected with parasitism, the cause of which, materially, is the existence of Monopoly, on all hands; but the cause of which, morally (and here is the crux of the matter), is our miserable admission, in the teeth of all evidence, of this atrocious lie: that all the occupations of man, whatever they may be, are equally fruitful (at least potentially), and possess the power of returning a revenue.

It is not from yesterday—for instance, from the introduction of machinery, steam, electricity, etc.,— that misery under all its aspects reigns on our planet. The evil has existed from the remote day when Agriculture was pushed back to the last rank, with other pursuits, such as Industry, Bureaucracy, Trade, Militarism, Law-botching, etc., following in gradation above its despised sconce. Of course, the evil increased both in magnitude and in turpitude in proportion as invention, discoveries, etc., were shedding a new splendor over the barren or parasitic occupations and as Agriculture, accordingly, was falling into the most shameful disrepute. Our generations, that lived and grew up in the era of great cities and of ceaseless improvements (generally useless), in all directions, were little thinking of the danger which mankind was running by crushing Agriculture under the weight of parasitic Industry and Officialism, by trying to make the social pyramid stand on its apex. To awaken them to the sense of the realities, will the unspeakable abominations of this war be sufficient? Will the men of tomorrow, escaped from the slaughter-pens, understand the hard lesson that the facts are impressing upon them? ...

—*The Public.*

June 1, 1917

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**Section Five: Octave Mirbeau  
(1848–1917)**

*Each footstep taken in this society bristles with privileges, and is marked with a blood-stain; each turn of the government machinery grinds the tumbling, gasping flesh of the poor; and tears are running from everywhere in the impenetrable night of suffering. Facing these endless murders and continuous tortures, what's the meaning of society, this crumbling wall, this collapsing staircase?*

—Octave Mirbeau

Octave Mirbeau—anarchist, journalist, lampoonist, art critic, novelist and playwright—was one of the more notorious figures associated with “literary anarchism”—a loose collection of avant-garde writers and artists who saw parallels between their unrestrained aesthetic visions and anarchist thought; Literary anarchism flourished in Fin de Siecle France and included amongst its pantheon of creative giants Georges Darien, Zo d’Axa, Bernard Lazare, Félix Fénéon, Paul Adam, Pierre Quillard, Adolphe Rette and Camille Pissarro. Many of the young literati who gravitated to anarchism as a passing fad were never truly radicalized, however, and after achieving fame abandoned any notion of anarchism. Octave Mirbeau was one who did not. For him, anarchism was not adopted for shock value, nor was it a fashionable “career building” phase, or part of a misspent youth. This might be due to the fact that Mirbeau came to anarchist thought much later in life and from an unlikely direction.

Mirbeau discovered the ideas of the anarchists Proudhon and Kropotkin in his mid-thirties after having been a writer for right-wing Bonapartist and anti-Semitic newspapers. Tolstoy and Kropotkin, in particular, made a very strong impression on him and he often referred to this initial exposure to anarchist philosophy as his “redemption.” Beginning in 1883, as he grappled with this new fountainhead of ideas, Mirbeau slowly began to change tack, starting with editing *Les Grimaces*, a biting satirical journal. By 1885, he fully identified as an anarchist and began to adopt more and more openly anarchist positions in print, developing a literary aesthetic of *revelation* and assigning himself the mission of “forcing the willfully blind to look Medusa in the face.”

Mirbeau’s personal interpretation of anarchism can’t be easily encapsulated, except perhaps as “pessimistic anarchy.” On the one hand, he felt that the dreams and aspirations of the poor were inextricably interwoven with their economic problems, and this orientation led to his sympathy for the work of anarcho-communists like Jean Grave, Sébastien Fuare, and Élisée Reclus. On the other hand, it was also perfectly clear to Mirbeau that republics and democracies, as well as socialistic and communistic governments, repress individuality every bit as effectively as do monarchies or overt tyrannies—and he once referred to socialism as “that imbecilic erasing of the individual, wanting to number, regiment, level the species”. In a sense, his supreme ideal was a world where humans, unbound by laws, untrammelled by any maxims of universal morality or proper conduct, will nevertheless live in mutual cooperation like affectionate relatives. Compassionate as he ultimately was towards human suffering, Mirbeau was pessimistic about the present and future and in his literary work sought to open people’s eyes and force his readers to encounter beings and things, values and institutions, as **they are**, not as we have been conditioned to see them— or, rather, **not** to see them. In his mature novels and plays, Mirbeau was above all else a great demystifier, and a powerful debunker of people and institutions dedicated to alienation, oppression and systemic killing.

After Mirbeau’s conversion to anarchism, he started to devote his time and money to its actualization: Continuously writing articles for anarchist periodicals, he was from the late 1880s

well-known as one of the leading anarchist men of letters and could always be counted on for generous donations in support of imprisoned anarchists (in addition to being the main financial supporter of the anarchist newspaper *Les Temps Nouveaux*). He was personal friends with Jean Grave, Zo D'Axa, Sébastien Faure, and Félix Fénéon, all prominent anarchist figures that he passionately defended during the famous "Trial of the Thirty" in 1894. During the Dreyfus Affair of 1897–98, Mirbeau was among the most visible Dreyfusards in France, going out of his way to make up for the ignorant antisemitism of his youth.

Mirbeau regularly lent his aid to the work of the perpetually-harassed anarchist-communist Jean Grave. He was one of his most loyal defenders in print following Grave's trial over his work *The Dying Society and Anarchy*, and even went on to write a preface for the book. Throughout the thirty-two years of his anarchist period, Mirbeau remained intensely antimilitarist and anti-clerical, and placed special emphasis in his journalistic rants on subjects such as feminism, the abolition of child labor, abolition of capital punishment, defending the rights of working people and their unions, and the defense of libertarian education. In a particularly controversial article, Mirbeau attempted to explain the actions of Ravachol to a bewildered public, pointing to the social reasons for them, while simultaneously underlining their political limitations.

But although Mirbeau had raised his eloquent voice in support of Ravachol in 1892, Émile Henry's later assault on the Café Terminus was incomprehensible to him and he was quick to denounce it. In the February 19, 1893 issue of *Le Journal* he wrote: "A mortal enemy of anarchism could not have acted more effectively than did this Émile Henry, when he threw his inexplicable bomb amid a crowd of tranquil and anonymous people gathered in a café to drink a beer before going home to bed."

## The Torture garden

*You're obliged to pretend respect for people and institutions you think absurd. You live attached in a cowardly fashion to moral and social conventions you despise, condemn, and know lack all foundation. It is that permanent contradiction between your ideas and desires and all the dead formalities and vain pretenses of your civilization which makes you sad, troubled and unbalanced. In that intolerable conflict you lose all joy of life and all feeling of personality, because at every moment they suppress and restrain and check the free play of your powers. That's the poisoned and mortal wound of the civilized world.*

— The Torture Garden (1899)

In the 1890s, Mirbeau went through a prolonged existential crisis, which coincided with a serious marital crisis and a return of the crippling depression that he had suffered since a child. What finally helped distract him from his depression was immersion in a socially useful activity, the Dreyfus affair, to which he dedicated himself with his usual generosity on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1897, only two days after Émile Zola entered the fray. He wrote the second "intellectuals" petition: he went with Zola to his trial every day; he paid out 7,500 francs on Zola's behalf and took part in many Dreyfusist meetings in Paris and the provinces, but most significantly he published in *L'Aurore*, the famous Dreyfusist newspaper, around fifty columns, seeking to mobilize the working class and the intellectual professions and mocking the nationalists, clerics, and anti-semites,



making gleeful use of imaginary interviews. For more than a month he followed Alfred Dreyfus' trial in Rennes with great indignation and returned to Paris in a desperate frame of mind after the absurd sentence.

It was during those painful, pessimistic years that he also published, in serial form, the first drafts of his morbid masterwork *Le Jardin des supplices* (The Torture Garden), which offers perhaps one of the ugliest illustrations of Government and the motives thereof ever written in any language. In this scandalous work, Mirbeau situated his narrative in an over-ripe society whose members had already lost their creative powers, a society so sick from sophistication and civilized pretense that it's difficult to distinguish the oppressor from the oppressed. Mirbeau makes terrific use of grotesque caricature in this novel, depicting all cops, judges, lawyers, businessmen, and politicians as monstrous, gurgling aberrations who wear their spiritual disfigurement as visible stains. In fact, Mirbeau presents even the very *structure* of the story—a complex sado-masochistic allegory—as itself a symptom of the cultural morbidity he is diagnosing.

*The Torture Garden's* opening dedication “To priests, soldiers, judges, men who educate, lead and govern men, I dedicate these pages of Murder and Blood” makes the book's intentions clear immediately. “Why are certain crimes illegal and not others?” Mirbeau asks and goes on to list industry, colonial commerce, war, hunting, and anti-Semitism as legal forms of murder, boldly claiming that: ***Murder being the very foundation of our social institutions, it is consequently the most imperious necessity of civilized life. If there were no murder, government of any sort would be inconceivable.***

In this book—and in most subsequent works—Mirbeau engages in a brutal study of Power as a god with an inhuman face that presides over all the surface of the earth and has turned it into a terrifying “torture garden”. His concern is not just how Power is exorcized over the individual but how it is internalized and how it is used by those who govern us. Mirbeau considered forcible revolutions fruitless, because, once the oppressed organize themselves, and supposedly drive their Masters out, they are left holding Power, and wondering what to do next. It quickly becomes the old tyranny repeated, with little or no hope of ever eliminating authoritarianism from the social scheme.

## Other Literary Bombs

All of Mirbeau's later literary offerings were in some way a reflection of his anarchist commitment, and usually describe deprived lives trapped within the absurdities of bureaucracy and the corruption of Power. Very little of Mirbeau's work was translated into English during the author's lifetime, but he was well known within multilingual anarchist circles. In 1901, the American anarchist Benjamin Tucker attempted to publish his own translation of the novel *A Chambermaid's Diary* (where Mirbeau denounced domestic service as a modern form of slavery, and exposed the unsavory secrets of the bourgeoisie), but the US Postal Service, under the puritanical guidance of Anthony Comstock, put a stop to it on grounds of obscenity; Tucker deleted some of the book's best passages in order to release a sadly abridged edition (*The Diary of a Chambermaid* is not just a tale about the corruption of the upper classes but of the rise to power of an anti-Semite. Luis Bunuel, the Spanish surrealist filmmaker understood this, and in his film of Mirbeau's novel, he shows how the rise of fascism is linked to the ideas and values of the ruling class).

Mirbeau's play about a ruthless millionaire, *Business is Business*, was eventually produced on the New York stage in 1904, but with some greatly deflating changes of plot and a drastically altered ending, since the original is so extremely cynical. Mirbeau's other plays are mostly very dark comedies, and include *The Foyer*, *The Bad Shepherds*, *The Epidemic*, and *Scruples*.

One of his last novels was *Dingo* (1913), an almost "magical realist" fantasy about a marauding wild dog that ignores his master's lessons in French radical socialism, jumps the fence, and takes to the countryside, where he empties forests of partridges and rips out the throats of sheep.

In the 1990s, a surprising and previously unknown Mirbeau text emerged titled *L'Amour de la femme vénale*, which was a 24-page pamphlet on prostitution that was only published in Bulgaria (in 1922, five years after Mirbeau's death) by a small press called Spolouka. The existence of this pamphlet was completely unsuspected by Mirbeau scholars, as it didn't appear in any inventory of Mirbeau's articles, nor was it mentioned by any of the literary critics of that time. Equally surprising is the genre of the text, which is unusual in Mirbeau's oeuvre. Of course, Mirbeau had been fascinated by social issues since the genesis of his writing career, but he almost always dealt with them in a lively literary form—in the novel, short story, dialogue, or report—either with the demystifying humor evident in the imaginary interviews he specialized in; or in conformity with the strict, compulsory format of the daily chronicle (three hundred lines). There, the serious issue had to be addressed in an engaging way, with a great many anecdotes about the goings-on in Paris. Prostitution, for a long time, had been a key and recurring issue to him. This subject was "awkward," "vile," and "repulsive;" but, as Mirbeau said, "we have no right to ignore the misery, the shame, the crime, the sorrow of the people," for we can progress "towards a better world" only through "the attentive and continuous study of social realities." Burying one's head in the sand was the worst response and prostitution was "at the same time the most appalling misery, the most horrifying shame, the most atrocious crime, the most intense sorrow." According to Mirbeau, it was essential to "display this issue on the dissecting table" and to show "its vices, its shames, its miseries, and its crimes" in order finally to "make society look at itself and loathe itself" without the usual "sentimentalism" or the usual allegations of "pornography." These feelings were even more powerful since he was aware of sharing the "miseries" and "shames" of those involved. During that period, Mirbeau led the life of a "proletarian of letters," being forced to hire out his mind and pen like the prostitute who sells their charms. He composed for successive employers political editorials, speeches, private letters, in which he was required to blindly serve their interests and promote their ideas without having the right "to live for his own." In *Un Gentilhomme*, an important novel that was unfortunately left unfinished, Mirbeau expressed the bitterness and disgust caused by this slavery, which, to him, was even worse than domestic service, since it required one to "renounce his personality and his conscience" and agree to "the complete abnegation of the self in the most essential things of one's inner life."

This parallel between two forms of prostitution, the one of the body and the one of the mind, between manual and intellectual proletarians, street and Parisian press prostitutes—to Mirbeau all of them were miserable creatures who faced the struggle for life in a Darwinian society. We have no other choice than to sell to the highest bidder whatever in we have in trade-value, delivering ourselves to any willing buyer on the slave market. Mirbeau used this subversive analysis of prostitution to denounce the abominations of a mercenary society, where everything was bought and sold: titles, decorations, and works of art, intelligence, talent, and conscience.

After the turn of the century Mirbeau was a wealthy man, and was sometimes called the "red millionaire." Unfortunately his health started failing him around 1912. He was plagued with black

depressions his whole life, sometimes staring into the foliage of his garden for weeks at a time, where flowers and paintings from his friends were his solace from human turpitude. The 1914–1918 war was the final straw for the impenitent pacifist, who had spent his whole life denouncing the criminal enterprise of war and advocating Franco-German friendship. When he then started to suffer from strokes and the general hopelessness of the war hysteria, he declined rapidly. World War I demoralized and broke the already pessimistic Mirbeau, although he remained firmly antimilitarist to the bitter end. He died on his sixty-ninth birthday, on February 16, 1917. A few days later, his treacherous widow published in *Le Petit Parisien* a pseudo-“Octave Mirbeau’s Political Legacy,” a nauseating patriotic forgery concocted at her request by the opportunistic nationalist Gustave Hervé. The friends of this great writer denounced this vile disinformation operation, but it left an enduring stain on Octave Mirbeau’s memory.

Mirbeau was in many ways the prototype of the campaigning, libertarian, and individualistic writer whose crime was to have compelled society to see itself in its own hideous nudity and to be horrified at its ugliness. In effect, for forty years, Mirbeau unmasked, stigmatized, and—with jubilant ferocity—twisted into grimaces the faces of those whom an empty-headed, cretinous populace persisted in respecting: the demagogues, the political parasites, the financial speculators and wheelerdealers, the Stock Market mafia, the sharks of industry and commerce, the deformed functionaries of an iniquitous and repressive system called “Justice,” the cretinism of the Church (charged with shaping souls), the puppets and blackmailers of a venal and desensitizing press, and finally, all the bourgeois who grew rich from the suffering of the poor, and who—for their own intellectual and moral comfort—awarded themselves a good conscience that was self-deceptive and homicidal. It was this human propensity for self-deception that most discouraged Mirbeau throughout his life, and that he felt accounted for the so many contradictory theories concerning the struggle for freedom.

# Ravachol

Translated and

introduced by Robert Helms

*Francois-Claudius Koenigstein (Oct. 14, 1859—July 11, 1892), known to posterity as Ravachol, was born to Dutch and French parents at Saint-Chamond, near St. Etienne in Eastern France. He was angered by two actions taken by the French government on May 1, 1891. One was at Fourmies, where the newly designed Lebel machine gun was used against a peaceful May Day rally at which women and children were carrying flowers and palms. Casualties there numbered 14 dead and 40 wounded. The other incident was at Clichy, where police attacked a six-man anarchist labor rally. The workers defended themselves with pistol-shots and were subsequently given long terms at hard labor.*

*Ravachol took retribution for the Clichy defendants by bombing the homes of the presiding judge (Mar. 11, 1892) and the prosecutor (Mar. 27, 1892). During the same month he bombed the Lobau Barracks in Paris in response to the Army's slaughter of innocents at Fourmies. These three attentats caused extensive property damage, but no deaths. Ravachol was pointed out to police by a waiter in a restaurant, and then on the night before his trial began on April 25, the restaurant was bombed, killing its owner. A long cycle of vendetta between the anarchists and the government was to follow.*

*Ravachol's first trial resulted in a sentence of life at forced labor. Octave Mirbeau's article appeared the following week in L'Endehors, 52 (May 1, 1892), giving one of the most balanced anarchist views of Ravachol's terrorist activity. Two months later, though, he was extradited to Montbrison in his native region and condemned to death for the killings of an old hermit and a certain landlady he once knew. Before his death Ravachol denied having committed these murders, but he admitted to some burglaries and grave-robbings. He was beheaded at Montbrison and buried there. Today, Ravachol is an important cult hero among French anarchists.*

His head escapes the guillotine!

The jurors who have dared to do this, who covered their ears to the barking clamors of death,—were they afraid? Were they afraid to kill a man whose mysterious vengeance won't entirely die with him? Or indeed, beyond the act itself, the awesome horror of which was being howled at them, did they hear the voice of that forward-looking idea, the dominant idea that specifically characterizes this act and ennoble it? I don't know. One never knows what can happen in the conscience of a juror, or what ultimate compulsion he obeys, when dishing out life and death.

The jurors didn't tremble as much as the press that sneered at them, abused them, and damned them. The press wanted blood. Just like the crude middle class, whose blind instincts they reflect, and whose threatened privileges they defend, the journalists are afraid. And fear is a savage thing. For to give itself the illusion of a fierce courage, fear likes to apply rouge to its pale features. They believe, also, that the sound of the legal blade, and the sound of mutilated flesh bouncing on that infamous plank, can drown out the sound of the grinding teeth, the racing pulses, and the voices which grow bolder and angrier every day, boiling up from the hellish underbelly of society. The

press is mistaken. There are certain corpses that walk again, and certain voices that won't be stifled. And the void is filled with terrible enigmas.

I am horrified by the bloodshed, the ruins, and the death; I love life, and all life is sacred to me. This is why I'm going to ask for the anarchist ideal which no form of government can create: love, beauty, and peace between men. Ravachol doesn't frighten me. He is as transient as the terror he inspires. He is the thunder clap that is followed by the glory of the sun and the calm sky.

Beyond the somber task at hand smiles the admirable Kropotkin's dream of universal harmony.

Besides, our society has no right to complain, since it has given birth to Ravachol: it sowed misery, and reaped revolution.

This is just.

And this begs the question...

Who is it—throughout this endless procession of tortures which has been the history of the human race—who is it that sheds the blood, always the same, relentlessly, without any pause for the sake of mercy? Governments, religions, industries, forced labor camps, all of these are drenched in blood. The murder is weary of their laws, their prayers, and their progress. Again just recently, there were the frenzied butchers who turned Paris into a slaughterhouse as the Commune perished. There were pointless massacres, such as at Fourmies where the bodies of innocent women and little kids tried out the ballistic virtues of the Lebel's machine gun for the first time. And there are always the mines in which fifty, a hundred, or five hundred poor devils are suffocated, swallowed in a single moment of horrible destruction, their charred bodies never to see daylight again. And there are also the horrid conquests of distant countries where happy races, unknown and peaceful, groan under the boot of that robber of continents, that filthy rapist of forest communities and virgin lands, the western slave trader.

Each footstep taken in this society bristles with privileges, and is marked with a bloodstain; each turn of the government machinery grinds the tumbling, gasping flesh of the poor; and tears are running from everywhere in the impenetrable night of suffering. Facing these endless murders and continuous tortures, what's the meaning of society, this crumbling wall, this collapsing staircase?

We live in ugly times. The misery has never been worse, because it's never been more obvious, and it's never stood closer to the spectacle of wasted riches and the promised land of well-being from which it is relentlessly turned away. Never has the law, which protects only the banks, pressed so hard upon the tortured shoulders of the poor. Capitalism is insatiable, and the wage system compounds the evils of ancient slavery. The shops are packed full of clothing, and there are those who go about completely naked; the indifferent rich are puking up food, while others perish from hunger in their doorways. No cry is heeded: whenever a single, louder complaint penetrates the din of sad murmurs, the Lebel's is loaded and the troops are mobilized.

And that's not all.

A population does not live solely on its stomach. It also has a life of the mind. Its intellectual joys are just as necessary as its physical joys. It has a right to beauty just as it has a right to bread. Indeed, those who could give it its higher pleasures, those who could introduce to the people this vital beauty are treated like public enemies, hunted down as criminals, hounded for being anarchists and beaten like beggars. They are reduced to a solitary life. An enormous barrier separates them from the crowd, by whom they are regarded as repulsive spectacles, and over whom there

is spread the enormous, sordid, impenetrable veil of triumphant stupidity. We are witnessing an incredible social moment: at this time, while abundant with great thinkers, the public taste has never been so degraded, nor has ignorance ever enjoyed such base pleasures. Surely, if the hour in which we live is hideous, it is formidable as well: it's the hour of popular awakening. And this hour is full of uncertainty. The patience of the downtrodden and the dispossessed has lasted long enough. They want to live, they want to enjoy, they want their share of all the happiness and sunshine. Whatever the rulers do, reacting to their worst fears, they will not forestall the inevitable course of events. We're touching upon a decisive moment in human history. The old world is collapsing under the weight of its own crimes, and is itself lighting the fuse of the bomb that will blast it all away. This bomb will be all the more terrible because it will contain neither gunpowder nor dynamite. It'll contain compassion and an idea; two forces against which nothing can be done.

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# Murder Foul and Murder Fair

Translated by Benjamin Tucker

When I read anywhere that a man has been condemned to death because he has killed, it always seems to me an extraordinary and disconcertingly unjust thing. I could understand the condemnation to death of people who refuse to be killed; they are derelict in their social duties. But in a society founded exclusively on murder is it not illogical to a degree bordering on madness to guillotine those who kill?

The necessity of killing is born in man with the necessity of eating and is confounded with it. This instinctive necessity, which is the basis and motive of all living organisms, is developed rather than curbed by education; religions sanctify it, instead of cursing it; everything conspires to make it the pivot upon which our admirable society turns. As soon as man awakens to consciousness, the spirit of murder is breathed into his brain. Murder, lifted into duty, popularized into heroism, will accompany him through all the stages of his life. He will be made to worship strange gods, insane gods, who take pleasure only in cataclysms and who mow down peoples like crops of wheat; he will be made to respect only heroes, those disgusting brutes all red with human blood; virtues by which he will raise himself above others, by which he will hope to gain glory, fortune, pleasure—love, like courage, for example—will rest solely on murder. He will find in war the supreme synthesis of the eternal and universal craze for murder, murder regularized and regimented, obligatory murder considered as a necessity from which he cannot escape, murder toward which he does not feel himself impelled in order to satisfy revenge or a vice or an interest, or the horrible joy of a physiological pleasure, murder in short as a social function. Wherever he may go, whatever he may do, always will be seen this word “murder” immortally inscribed upon the front of the vast slaughterhouse called humanity.

Then why do you expect this man, in whom you have inculcated a contempt for human life, whom you consecrate to assassination when such is your pleasure, to shrink from murder, when it serves his interest or amuses him?

In the name of what right, of what principle, does society condemn the assassins, who in reality have only conformed to the homicidal laws which it enacts and followed the bloody examples which it sets them? Assassins at least have an excuse superior to any which Napoleon, Thiers, and Bismark could plead. “We do not make the laws,” they could say; we have nothing to do with social arrangements. What do you expect? One day you tell us to kill; you force us to strike down a multitude of people whom we do not know, against whom we have no hatred. And the more we kill the more you thank us, and the more money and honors you shower upon us! Another day, trusting in your protection, we slay beings because we detest them, because we desire their money, their wives, what-not? In fine, we have a reason. And your police come to arrest us. Yesterday this pleased you, today it displeases you. Really, we ought to come to some understanding.

—published in *Liberty*, June 11, 1892

## Voters Strike!

One thing astonishes me prodigiously—I almost said it “stupefies me”—namely, that in this scientific hour at which I write, after so many daily scandals and revelations, there can still exist in our dear France (as they say in the Treasury Department) one voter, one single *voter*—that irrational animal, inorganic, hallucinatory—who allows his life to be deranged, all his dreams and pleasures interrupted, merely to vote for someone or something. When one reflects for a moment on this surprising phenomenon, does it not topple the subtlest philosophies, and confound even Reason itself? Where is there a Balzac to give us the physiology of the modern voter? Where a Charcot to explain for us the anatomy and mentality of this incurable lunatic? We await them.

Oh, I understand how a crook always finds suckers; I understand that censorship always finds its defenders, that musical comedy always finds its fans, the daily newspapers their subscribers; that M. Carnot will find painters to celebrate his triumphal and rigid entry into some languedocian city; I understand how M. Chantavoine persists in looking for rhymes; yes, I understand *all*. But— that a deputy or senator or president or whatever strange joker claiming whatever elective function, should be able to dig up one *voter*—that undreamed-of being, that improbable martyr who will nourish you with bread, dress you in his coat, fatten you on his flesh, enrich you with his purse—all this, only in the hope of receiving in return for such prodigious generosity a clout on the noggin, a kick in the ass, or maybe a bullet in the belly; verily, this surpasses even the most pessimistic opinion I’ve held till now of human beastliness in general and French stupidity in particular ... yes, our own “dear” and immortal silliness, oh chauvinists!

I speak of course of the *believing* voter, the convinced voter, the philosophical voter who imagines (poor devil) that his is the act of a free citizen demonstrating his sovereignty, expressing his opinions, imposing political programs (O admirable and disconcerting folly!) and righting social wrongs. I am not talking about the voter who “knows the tune,” who mocks, who sees in his “mandate” nothing but right-wing cold cuts or liberal stew; the “sovereignty” of such a voter consists of guzzling at the springs of Universal Suffrage—and after all, why not? He’s looking after himself and not hurting anyone else; he knows what he’s doing. But the others?

Ah yes, the others! The serious ones, the austere ones, the *sovereign people*, those who feel a great intoxication seize them as they look around and say to themselves, “I am a voter! Nothing can be done without me! I am the basis of modern society. By my will Floquet makes laws which bind 36 million human beings, and Saudry d’Asson, and even Pierre Alype.” Where are these fools being manufactured?! How can they be so stubborn, so swollen-headed, so paradoxical as not to have become long ago discouraged and embarrassed by their actions? How can one hope to discover anywhere—from the backwoods of lost Brittany to the inaccessible caverns of Cévennes or the Pyrenees—a chap so stupid, so irrational, so blind to what he sees and deaf to what he hears, as to vote for Blue or White or Red without being forced, without being paid, without even a free drink?

What baroque sentiment, what mysterious mesmeric suggestion does he obey, this thinking biped endowed with free will (or so I am told), that he should delude himself, puffed up with



his “rights,” into thinking he’s done his “duty” by dropping some piece of paper inscribed with some name into some ballot-box? What can he possibly say to himself to justify or even explain this extravagant act? What does he hope for? Because finally, in order that he agree to surrender himself to these greedy bosses who will sponge off him and bludgeon him to a pulp, he must tell himself something and hope for something so extraordinary we can scarcely imagine it. Somehow, by some potent cerebral deviation, the idea of the DEPUTY has come to stand for the idea of Science, of Justice, of Devotion, of Labor and of Probity. In the very names themselves—of Barbe or Baihaut no less than Rouvier and Wilson—he must have discovered some special magic and seen, as if through a mirage, flowering and blooming in Vergoin or Hubbard some promise of future felicity and instant gratification. And that’s what’s *really* dreadful. It seems nothing teaches him a lesson, neither the most burlesque of comedies not the most sinister of tragedies.

Look how during Earth’s long centuries societies have risen and fallen, all alike in this one fact which rules all history: the great are protected, the small are crushed. And yet our voter still cannot grasp the sole real reason for his historic existence: to pay for heaps of things he’ll never enjoy, and to die for some political cabal which is none of his business.

Why should it matter to him whether it’s Peter or John who demands, “Your money or your life!” since he’s obliged to lose both in the end? No! Really! He thinks one bunch of thieves and torturers preferable to another—and casts his vote for the most rapacious and ferocious of the lot! He voted yesterday, he’ll vote tomorrow; he *always* votes. Sheep run to the slaughterhouse! Silent, hopeless! But sheep at least never vote for the butcher who kills them or the bourgeois who eats them. More beastly than any beast, more sheepish than any sheep, the voter names his own executioner and chooses his own devourer—and for this precious “right” he fought a Revolution!

O good voter, unspeakable imbecile, poor dupe, suppose for once that instead of reading the same old bilge with which the morning paper regales you for a penny (big paper, small paper, patriotic or papist, monarchist or socialist—all of them earn their money by skinning *you*)—suppose that instead of swallowing that chimerical flattery that caresses your vanity and props up your lamentable and tattered “sovereignty”; suppose that instead of gawking and rubbernecking at the weighty chicanery of *politics*—suppose that just once you curled up by the fire with Schopenhauer and Max Nordau, two philosophers who have meditated deeply about you and your masters ... why, who knows? Perhaps you might learn something amazing and useful. And perhaps after you’ve read them you’ll feel less obligated to put on your air of gravity and your fine frock coat and run back to those murderous Polls where no matter whose name you choose you’ve picked the name of your worst enemy. They will tell you, those two connoisseurs of humanity (Schopenhauer and Nordau) that politics is an abominable lie, opposed to all common sense, justice and right, and that meddling in it will gain you no credit, you whose fate is already written in the Grand Account of Human Destiny!

After that, dream if you will of paradises of light and perfumes, of impossible brotherhood, of unreal happiness. It’s good to dream; it eases our troubled minds. But keep human beings out of your dream, for wherever humans are found, there too are sadness, hatred and murder. Above all, remember that he who solicits your vote is by that very fact revealed as a scoundrel, since in exchange for your advantage and fortune he promises a cornucopia of marvels he’ll never deliver because he hasn’t the power to deliver them. The man you elect represents neither your misery nor your aspirations—nor anything of yours—but rather his own passions and interests, which are all opposed to yours. Do not imagine (in order to comfort yourself and revive your hopes,

so quickly dashed) that the sorry spectacle at which you assist today is peculiar to one epoch or one regime, and that it will pass away. All epochs and all regimes are worth the same—that is, they're worthless. So go home, my good chap, and go on strike against universal suffrage. I tell you, you've nothing to lose . and at least it should keep you amused for a while. From behind the threshold of your door, shut firmly against all beggars of political alms, you'll watch the rout march past and smoke your pipe in silence.

And if there should exist in some unknown corner some honest man capable of governing you *and* loving you—don't regret his loss. He would be too jealous of his dignity to hurl himself into the mud-wrestling of politics, too proud to accept from you a mandate you accord only to the boldest cynic, to insults and lies.

I tell you, good chap! Go home! Go on strike!

*“La Grève des Électeurs” (“Voters Strike!”) was originally published in Le Figaro in 1888 and then reprinted by Jean Grave in his anarchist paper La Révolte. It subsequently went through innumerable editions as a pamphlet, and has long been considered the last word on anarchist “abstentionist” anti-politics. In 1893, Jean Grave wrote to Mirbeau, “I will have an order for 50,000 Greve des Electeurs—and I doubt that even this will suffice. In four years, we’ve distributed more than 100,000.” This particular translation (which is probably the best English version out there) first appeared in the anthology, Rants and Incendiary Tracts: Voices of Desperate Illumination, co-published by Amok Press and Loompanics Unlimited in 1989.*

# Moribund Society and Anarchy (preface)

Translated and introduced by Shawn P. Wilbur

*Voltaireine de Cleyre translated Jean Grave's "Moribund Society and Anarchy" in 1899 (it was first published in French in 1893 as La Société mourante et L'Anarchie), though she admitted she was not in complete agreement with it.*

*"As to the principal object of the work," she said in her Preface, "that of furnishing an inclusive criticism of the institutions of our moribund society and the necessity of its speedy dissolution, I think any fair-minded reader will be convinced that it has been pretty thoroughly done. As to the "What next?" it is far less certain. With this, however, Jean Grave,—sturdy, patient, indomitable Jean Grave, sitting today in his fifth-floor Parisian garret, untouched by his imprisonment, convinced as ever, steadily writing, writing to the workers of the world, casting forth images of the "Future Society,"—would not agree. He is sure of his remedy—Communism; I, of his criticism, Anarchy."*

*The Preface to the original French edition of Grave's book was written by Octave Mirbeau in 1893, during the most intense period of anarchist "propaganda by deed" (certainly a time when it was risky to confess anarchist sympathies too loudly). Jean Grave and Mirbeau had been friends for a good five years at that point, and the views expressed in this Preface affirmed Mirbeau's solidarity with the theories of Kropotkin and the milieu of Grave's journal La Revolte, and represented the clearest statement Mirbeau ever made about the nature of his own anarchist views (thereby demonstrating conclusively that Mirbeau was more than a mere "literary anarchist").*

## to Jean Grave, *Moribund Society and Anarchy* (preface)

I have a friend who shows a strong desire, a truly touching desire, to understand things. Naturally, he aspires to that which is simple, great and beautiful. But his education, fouled with the prejudices and lies inherent in all the education called “higher,” almost always stops him in his dash towards spiritual deliverance. He would like to free himself completely from traditional ideas, from the ancient routines where his mind is bogged down, despite himself, but he cannot. Often, he comes to see me and we have long talks. The doctrines of anarchism, so maligned by some, so misunderstood by others, greatly concern him; and his honesty is great enough, if not to embrace them all, at least to understand them. He does not believe, as so many people believe in his circles, that those doctrines consist solely in blowing up houses. He glimpses, on the contrary, in a fog that will perhaps dissipate, some beauties and harmonic forms; and he takes an interest in them as we do in a thing that we like, but which seems still a bit terrible to us, and which we dread because we do not understand it well.

My friend has read the admirable books of Kropotkin, and the eloquent, fervent and wise protestations of Élisée Reclus, against the impiety of governments and societies based on crime. Of Bakunin, he knows what the anarchist journals, here and there, have published. He has labored through the uneven Proudhon and the aristocratic Spencer. And recently, the declarations of Etiévant have moved him. All of that sweeps him along, for a moment, toward those heights where the intelligence is purified. But from those brief excursions through the realm of the ideal, he returns more troubled than ever. A thousand obstacles, purely subjective, detain him; he loses himself in an infinity of ifs, ands and buts, an inextricable forest, from which he sometimes asks me to extricate him.

Just yesterday, he confided in me the torment of his soul, and I said to him:

— Grave, whose judicious and manly spirit you know, is going to publish a book: *Moribund Society and Anarchy*. This book is a masterpiece of logic. It is full of light. This book is not the cry of a blind and narrow-minded sectarian; nor is it the tom-tom beat of an ambitious propagandist; it is the considered, reflective, reasoned work of one who is passionate, it is true, of one “who has faith,” but who knows, compares, questions, analyzes, and who, with a singular lucidity of critique, glides among the facts of social history, the lessons of science, the problems of philosophy, in order to reach those infrangible conclusions of which you are aware, and of which you can deny neither the greatness nor the justice.

My friend sharply interrupted me:

— I deny nothing... I understand, indeed, that Grave, whose ardent campaigns I have followed in *La Révolte*, dreams of the suppression of the State, for example. Myself, I do not have all his boldness, but I dream of it too. The State bears down on the individual with a weight that is greater, more intolerable each day. Of the man it unnerves and exhausts, it makes only a bundle of flesh to tax. His sole mission is to live for it, as a louse lives on the beast on which it has fixed

its suckers. The State takes from the man his money, pitifully acquired in this prison: work; it filches from him at every minute his liberty, already shackled by the laws; from his birth, it kills his individual and administrative faculties, or it distorts them, which amounts to the same thing. Assassin and thief—yes, I am convinced that the State is indeed this sort of double criminal. As soon as a man walks, the State breaks his legs; as soon as he stretches out his arms, the State busts them; as soon as he dares think, the State takes his head, and tells him: “Walk, take, and think.”

— Well? said I.

My friend continued:

— Anarchy, on the contrary, is the winning back of the individual, it is liberty of development for the individual, in a normal and harmonic sense. We can define it, in short, as the spontaneous utilization of all the human energies, criminally squandered by the State! I know that... and understand why all sorts of young artists and thinkers,—the contemporary elite—look forward impatiently to rising to that long-awaited dawn, where they glimpse not only an ideal of justice, but an ideal of beauty.

— Well? said I anew.

— Well, one thing concerns and troubles me, the terrorist side of Anarchy. I detest violent means; I have a horror of blood and death, and I want anarchy to await its triumph from the coming justice alone.

— Do you believe then, I replied, that the anarchists are drinkers of blood? Don't you feel, on the contrary, all the immense tenderness, the immense love of life, with which the heart of a Kropotkin swells. Alas! Those are struggles inseparable from all human struggles, and against which we can do nothing... So!... do you want me to give you a classical comparison? The earth is parched; all the little plants, all the little flowers are burned by a blazing, by a persistent, deadly sun; they blanch, wilt, and they will die... But then a single cloud darkens the horizon, it advances and covers the blazing sky. Lightning and thunder burst forth, and the waters stream over the shaken earth. What matter if the lightning has broken, here and there, an oak grown too tall, if the little plants that would have died, the little plants watered and refreshed, straighten their stems, and again raise their flowers in the newly calm air?... We should not, you see, be moved too much by the death of the ravenous oaks... Read Grave's book... Grave has said, in this regard, some excellent things. And if, after having read this book, where so many ideas are turned over and clarified, if after having thought through it, as befits a work of such intellectual stature, you cannot manage to reach a stable and calm opinion, you would be better off, I warn you, to give up becoming the anarchist that you want to be, and remain the good bourgeois, the inveterate and hopeless bourgeois, the bourgeois “despite himself,” that perhaps you are...

## Octave Mirbeau Obituary

From Paris comes the report that Octave Mirbeau has died there, 57 years of age.

Amongst the French writers of the last decades who analyzed and attacked our decayed bourgeois society, Octave Mirbeau was the most daring and passionate. The satire in his essays, short stories, novels directed against smug satiated philistinism, against church, politics, militarism, is of the fierce, savage kind. He well knew the art of how to unmask the priest, the judge, the “representative of the people,” the “great military leader.” He was an artist who commanded great power

for realistic description, and psychological analysis, which made him an equal of Emile Zola and Anatole France, in company with whom he fought the plotters and forgers of the Dreyfus case.

He was the exponent of the most advanced radical, revolutionary philosophy. His strong sympathies were very often found on the side of the Anarchists. For Jean Graves' **Moribund Society**, he wrote an introduction and paid a glowing tribute to the disinterestedness, grand simplicity, and courage of Ravachol, who went to the guillotine undaunted and with a revolutionary, "blasphemous" song on his lips. The unfortunates and outcasts find in Mirbeau their champion. In dealing with them he becomes the understanding, humane, generous brother, who would like to carry them out of misery and mire in his arms.

When a certain Mr. Piot proposed a law to the French Senate for the purpose of checking birth control, Mirbeau wrote:

"I dispute that depopulation is an evil. In a social state like ours, in a social state which fosters preciously, scientifically, in special cultures, poverty and its derivative, crime; in a social state which, in spite of new discoveries and in spite of new philosophies, relies chiefly on the prehistoric forces—murder and massacre—what matters to the people this much-discussed question of depopulation? If the people were intelligent, logical in their wretchedness and their servitude, they would desire, not the cessation of depopulation, but its redoubling. We are constantly being told that depopulation is the gravest danger which threatens the future of the country. In what, pray, dear Monsieur Piot, and you also excellent legislators, who lull us with your accursed twaddle? In this, you say, that there will come inevitably a time when we shall no more have enough men to send out to be killed in the Soudan, in Madagascar, in China, in the bagnes, and in the barracks. You are dreaming of re-peopling, then, only for the sake of **de**-peopling later on? Ah, no, thank you! If we must die, we like better to die at once and by a death of our own choosing".

Politics and politicians Mirbeau characterized in the following sentences:

*Look at the employer; sure he tries to sit heavy on you back but he is a man like you. One can speak to him, move him, threaten him, kill him. He has at least a visage. But go and move this being without visage called politician! Go kill this thing called politics—this slimy, slippery thing which you think you hold and which always escapes you, which you believe dead and which always comes to life again. This abominable thing by which everything has been debased, everything corrupted, everything bought, everything sold—justice, love, beauty!—which has made venality of conscience a national institution; which has done worse still, since with its filthy slaver it has befouled the august face of the poor! Worse still, since it has destroyed in you your last ideal—faith in revolution.*

—from *Mother Earth*, Volume 12, March 1917

**Section Six: Émile Pouget (1869 —  
1931)**

*Property and authority are merely differing manifestations and expressions of one and the same “principle” which boils down to the enforcement and enshrinement of the servitude of man. Consequently, the only difference between them is one of vantage point: viewed from one angle, slavery appears as a PROPERTY CRIME, whereas, viewed from a different angle, it constitutes an AUTHORITY CRIME. This is why the Hell of Wage-Slavery is a lightless Gehenna: the vast majority of human beings languish there, bereft of well-being and liberty. And in that Gehenna, for all its cosmetic trappings of democracy, a rich harvest of misery and grief grows.*

—Émile Pouget

Émile Pouget (1860–1931) was the driving force behind the inflammatory anarchist weekly *Le Père Peinard*, which appeared irregularly—but in large numbers—between 1889 and 1902. Pouget was a wily propagandist of considerable imagination and what most strikingly distinguished *Le Père Peinard* from the over twenty Parisian anarchist journals published during the late 1880s was its unique communicative methods; written almost entirely in working class vernacular, Pouget (and various anonymous collaborators) assumed the persona of a cobbler turned journalist whose informal first-person ruminations operated at a vast distance from anarchism’s intellectual faction, and which were far more concerned with the pragmatic business of rabble-rousing in the name of the “great upheaval.” Pouget’s literary strategy of inserting the conceptual framework of anarchism into a pre-existent argot that pretended to spring unmediated from the ill-mannered working class is well illustrated by this excerpt from the March 16, 1890 issue of *Le Père Peinard*

*The written language spoken in books is an idiotic invention, real good for mucking up ideas and keeping the people from understanding.*

*If, on the contrary, books were written in plain and simple language, with words known to all, everybody would understand!*

*But the first thing people would understand is that rich folks and politicians steal from them, and don’t give a shit about them either; so instead of putting up with those scum, the people would beat the living daylights out of them.*

Pouget’s clever rhetorical formula evidently struck a chord with the disenchanting working class audience he was courting. In November 1891, French police made a comprehensive assessment of the anarchist movement and estimated that the circulation of *Le Père Peinard* was between 14,000 and 20,000 an issue—a figure that they calculated represented 100,000 regular readers! The militant propagandist Charles Malato mischievously commented that the menacing tone of *Le Père Peinard* horrified “*les délicats*” and drew into the anarchist struggle, from the working class bastions of Paris, “simple folk who, when push comes to shove, are the best fighters.” Pouget’s experimental search for alternative, non-academic modes of communication bore fruit, and subscriptions and sales for *Le Père Peinard* quickly surpassed that of even the movement’s most visible publications, such as Jean Grave’s solemn, pedantic and overbearingly proselytizing *Le Révolté*.

With its belligerent rhetoric, its irony and invective, and its staunch advocacy of the “revolutionary solution,” *Le Père Peinard* perfectly articulated the deeply felt underclass oppositional reflexes of vindictive rage and vulgar, scatological humor towards the ruling elite. Pouget felt strongly that popular culture was oral, and he strove to employ a language that people actually spoke rather than that which the bourgeoisie wrote.



If any “theory” at all appeared in the pages of Pouget’s journal, it was theory aimed at the objects of his contempt: The law was described as “Nothing but dogshit as far as Père Peinard is concerned,” and the arrest warrant as “ass wiping paper”; rather than appease the state’s impending prosecution of anarchist publishers with tempered language or half-hearted retractions, Pouget instead declared that “it’s only when a mass insurrection has finally stuck it up your asses that a little humane reason will get through your thick skulls.” The tenor of Pouget’s prose was uncompromising, and he not only seconded the view of Ravachol, Émile Henry and Vaillant as heroes, but went on to suggest Rothschild and the Prince of Wales as prime targets for liquidation!

Pouget’s weekly diatribes against authority soon provoked a tried and true response from the French state, which attempted to prosecute Pouget under the so-called “villainous laws,” which were aimed at the anarchist press and had been passed just a few days after Auguste Vaillant’s bombing of the *Chambre des députés*. The repressions of 1894 prompted Pouget to escape to England, where he spent a year in exile and continued to produce a London series of *Le Père Peinard*. It was during this period that Pouget had the opportunity to study British tactics of resistance—most importantly, *sabotage*—which Pouget saw as a relatively risk-free course of action that provided an ideal weapon to the exploited. It was also here that he penned his classic text *Sabotage*, which made its public debut in the July 1896 issue of *La Sociale*, and has gone on to become one of the most widely reproduced anarchist pamphlets of all time.

In his introduction to the 1912 expanded book edition of *Sabotage*, Arturo M. Giovannitti states: *There can be no injunction against it. No policeman’s club. No rifle diet. No prison bars. It cannot be starved into submission. It cannot be discharged. It cannot be blacklisted. It is present everywhere, invisible, like the airship that soars high above the clouds in the dead of night, beyond the reach of the cannon and the searchlight, and drops the deadliest bombs into the enemy’s encampment.*

*Sabotage* remains a timeless text, and for Pouget the tactic provided the logical solution to the theory/praxis dilemma, as well as to the difficulties implicit in a propagandistic program that promised a Revolution it could never possibly deliver. Unfortunately, Pouget’s interest in “revolutionary pragmatism” also brought him into contact with anarcho-syndicalism around this time, and this particular slant on class struggle seemed to him a powerfully attractive method of thought and action that provided the exploited with real options, where Marxism and evangelical socialism had nothing to offer. These days, anarcho-syndicalism is viciously ridiculed by other anarchist currents as a silly and embarrassing distant relative—and understandably so: the late 1800s far exceeded any other period in human history in the sheer number and variety of schemes designed to usher in the millennium by altering outward social circumstances, and “anarcho”-syndicalism was just one of many ludicrous panaceas being peddled. Of course, when Pouget began this shift in orientation syndicalism was still in its embryonic stages and had not yet ossified into a black-and-white abstract system. Pouget had a very *insurrectionary* interpretation of syndicalism and sought to develop it as a weapon, and not as just another ideology devoted to the worship of the bulk, the social organization, and a mythical working-class universality. Pouget’s increased involvement after 1895 with the CGT led to him becoming one of the leading theorists of French syndicalism, and in 1909 he even co-authored (with Émile Pataud) a fictionalized blueprint for a syndicalist revolution titled “*Comment Nous Ferons la Révolution*” (How We Will Carry Out the Revolution), which was serialized in Emma Goldman’s *Mother Earth*. In this work, Pouget rejects the parliamentary strategies of socialism which always seek “to move the revolution along statist paths”, but then (rather inconsistently) provides an explicit picture of the

post-revolutionary society, in which a “federal congress” was to “enforce the spontaneous decentralization of all authority that the general strike would accomplish.” It’s here that Pouget falls into the trap of all utopian schemers and inadvertently confirms what *individualist* anarchists have always had to say regarding this futile cycle: that the free and unique individual pays no respect, nor renders homage, to *any* group (whether it calls itself the federal congress, or one big union), and that a free society is not a society of free individuals. The real question, then as now, is: why should we throw off the binding and confining elements of one social order only to tie ourselves, or ask our “fellow workers” to tie us, with the ropes of another oppressive system? If all these revolutionary false starts were just learning experiences, then questions like these would only be of philosophic concern, but they’re the material of life-and-death to all participants in the struggle for self-rule—and for this reason Pouget’s syndicalist writings are slightly repugnant to us.

That being said, Pouget’s earlier writings from *Le Père Peinard* still retain great entertainment value, and it’s these sardonic gems that we showcase in this section.

# Boss Assassin

Translated by vincent stone

That a boss kills proles, that's a damned common thing, jesus christ! Except the criminal's hand is often so hidden in the pomp and circumstance and prejudices of today's bitch of a society that the good guys don't see from whence the blow is coming.

In the case of the crime I'm going to rattle on about, it's totally impossible to make a mistake: the boss man's claws are right there—and, good god—the bandit wasn't content with one victim, he helped himself to two!

Here's the story: The other day, in the Haute-Seine canal, next to the Saint-Luc chapel, two kilometers from Troyes, somebody fished out the cadavers of two young lasses of 17 years of age.

Before chucking themselves into the water, the poor little things tied themselves to one another with their aprons; then, perhaps so as to not see one another dying, they blindfolded themselves.

That done, oop! they took a dive into the canal.

To kill themselves at 17, such nice little things and with a future whispering sweet nothings into their ears, it's damned terrible!

One of these two lasses was named Octavie Dupont; she stayed with her aunt in Troyes. The forensic doctor who examined her found her to be two months pregnant (no one, however, knew her to have a lover). Her friend was named Marie Renaud and lived with her mother on Auxerre street.

'Course, it's their boss man that pushed them to suicide. He didn't gag them and chuck them in the water, but it's just as if...

He is as guilty as if he had drowned them with his bare hands.

This jackass is named Oscar Hirlet, a hosiery maker on Ouest street in Saint Savine. Just like most exploiters, this scoundrel practices the *droit du seigneur*<sup>1</sup> on a large scale.

It happened to Octavie Dupont ... And when, one fine day, she declared to this swine that she was pregnant of his doing, he burst out laughing and sent her packing.

The poor little thing told the whole story to Marie Renaud, recommending that she be wary, for some morning the boss would come after her. No reason to believe she was any safer than the others.

And that's what happened, jesus christ!

The pig Hirlet lured Marie into one of the shop corners, jumped on her, trying to knock her down and pull down her skirt. The little dame showed her claws, and as she began to holler, the scumball let her go without achieving his ends, scared to attract attention.

The crook was hopping mad, having failed in his attempts, that's an understatement! To get back at her he was always riding her ass, scrutinizing her work for minor faults, and many times over, made her start over. Seeing that she would not soften up, he gave her the boot.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tr*—This term refers to the medieval right of a lord to take the virginity of female serfs.

That day, the kid went home as usual to have lunch with her mother, said nothing of her problems, and before taking off, she made herself a bouquet.

When Octavie found that her friend got sacked, she wanted to leave the workshop on the spot; her companions lectured her and she finished the day.

That night, upon leaving, the two poor little things met up and, arm in arm, they went to the countryside. For part of the night, they hung around along the canal.

Then, seeing themselves as victims of this boss man; thinking of what one had suffered and the other had escaped, of what they would have to endure tomorrow and beyond ... that made their heads spin.

The horror of living as slaves, of serving as their exploiter's mattress overtook them—a horror so strong that they preferred ending things pronto rather than living this bitch of a life.

The idea to dig their heels in against their sad fate did not occur to them. And yet, since they had had their fill of existence, it would have cost them little to give a hand to their friends in the workshop.

If they had come after the boss man, if like tigresses, they had come at his throat, scratched him, skinned him, bitten him, what a great example!

*Mille marmites*,<sup>2</sup> I say that the dirty pig would have hesitated to rape his workers after that.

After having smartly avenged themselves, the two girls could have gone and had their last soup, at least they would die in good spirits.

But yeah, all my blathering is contradictory! You would do one or the other, not both.

When you are resigned, when you have not the nerves to kick up a fuss in the workshops, you leave peacefully to death,—as Marie and Ocavie went.

On the contrary, when you want to go beat your enemy and executioner's ass, you get going quick, and you think little of doing away with yourself.

This sad ending of two poor little things has the plebs of Troyes damned shaken up.

— from *Le Père Peinard*

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<sup>2</sup> *Tr*—Literally “a thousand fleshpots.” A *marmite*, or stockpot, was Parisian slang for a whore or the mistress of a bully. Pouget used this as an exclamation of exasperation frequently in his writings and may have coined it.

# In the Meantime, Let's Castrate Those Frocks!

Translated by vincent stone

Last week, as I was putting the finishing touches on my project, the dailies covered the disappearance of a Lillois whippersnapper, the little Gaston Foveaux, whose parents had had the criminal nittwittedness of sticking him in the school of Ignorantines, Notre-Dame-de-la-Treille.

— another poor little thing that the bigots have trounced! I must reflect.

The next day, my speculations were confirmed by the facts:

The little Foveaux was well and truly a victim of the Ignorantines! His cadaver was discovered in the cockroach<sup>1</sup> nest and there isn't a doubt. Immediately, the magistrates' suspicions centered around the enfrockt' Flamidien and a shitload of overwhelming proof supported these suspicions.

Did the monster act alone?

Nobody knows!

But what we know perfectly well is that his encassockt' buddies knew about the crime and that they worked damn hard to save Flamidien's skin.

Ah, if only the swine could have snuck the body out, schlepped it out of the convent! They would have had to abandon it. That's when they decided to take the victim out of his hiding place and place it in the middle of a parlor, where, the next day the judgers (sic) would find it without trouble.

Next to the cadaver, the frocks left a letter that they wanted to be attributed to the assassin—it was just a bit of imbecilic hogwash:

"I am a socialist, said the babbler, and I killed the little Foveaux to torment the priests..."

I smell a cockroach! 'Course, that one didn't catch on.

So the enfrockt' had another scheme, which was to denounce one of their friends, a fanatical zealot and a soiler of little kids—but who doesn't wear a cassock.

If they were able to push off the assassination of Foveaux onto the carpenter Mulo, the enfrockt's honor would be sound.

I call bullshit! Flamidien is still, despite the manoeuvrings of his friends, the sodomiser and the assassin.

So the jesuitites<sup>2</sup> burst into a different canticle:

"Why does the guilt of an individual crime fall onto a collectivity?"

Well shit, we're not used to hearing jesuits making arguments like this. It wasn't so long ago that these same jackasses hurled insults at the anarchists and, for the act of a single one, bawled that it was time to start attacking them at random.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tr—Cafard*, or cockroach, is a euphemism for a religious hypocrite.

<sup>2</sup> *Tr—Pouget* uses the pejorative suffix *-aille* here (*jesuitaille*) as well as in the title (*frocaille*). The prefix is drawn from words like *canaille* (a scoundrel, the rabble) and *racaille* (rabble or riff-raff). I've rendered these 'jesuitites' and 'those frocks' respectively.

So, too bad for what's happening to them: they put the hogwash out there that's coming back to them—they spit into the wind and a loogie is coming back in their face.

Well done.

What's more is there is no possible comparison between the act of an anarchist and the crime of an encassockt' swine.

If an anarchist openly takes on and breaks society's windows it's because he is friggin' fed up with the abominations around him and he wants to protest against the nastiness of the rich and the leaders.

Whose fault! The whole societies! That's what engenders poverty and oppression—that's what is responsible for revolt.

Anarchists aren't there for nothing: they seek to point out that everything's going awry in capitalist society and to call it out without restraint.

If you fall into a precipice will you hold a good lad responsible for your fall, the one who had warned you of the peril and whose warning you didn't listen to?

Obviously not!

Well, anarchists are nothing but warners.

And so, between them and the encassockt' pigs, there isn't the slightest relation to unearth.

The enfrockt' are feigners who, had they remained men, would neither be more filthy, meaner, nor more criminal than anybody else. But they did not remain men! They isolated themselves, created a separate existence for themselves, an anti-human life... So there is nothing amazing about them becoming monsters. And it's no mistake: given the circumstances and environmental influence, swine of Flamidien's caliber are a necessary result of donning the rat-skin.

And one is right to go up against not only the pig on whom the responsibility for the murder of little Foveaux falls, but also his buddies—all the frocks, all the jesuitites.

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Mores against nature are the inevitable product of the penning up of guys of the same sex: in prisons, such crazy filthiness goes on and it's basically the same situation in the African biribis.<sup>3</sup>

The frocks cannot escape fatality!

Much to the contrary, the vow of chastity that the encassockt' pronounce predisposes them to all manner of hanky-panky: this vow makes them flip-flop, lust burns them and they quickly end up wallowing in every kind of filth!

When the encassockt' are Ignorantines who specialize in the stultifying of kids—woe to the little tykes!

The good folks who had the hard luck of going to the friars will not refute me: the Flamidiens are legion!

There is only one means of throwing the encassockt' out of reach of unsavory vices: geld them!

That's the only option, castrate them!

Oh yeah, what's so funny?

Since these swine swear to remain chaste, there is no harm in making it impossible for them to give into temptation; once castrated, they can be let loose without us having to worry that they will violate their word or little kids.

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<sup>3</sup> Tr—See the biographical introduction to Georges Darien for a discussion of this word.

Moreover, my idea isn't all that preposterous: a saint of the cretin calendar,<sup>4</sup> Origen, who, by golly, was not such a wretched beast, was an ardent champion of castrating curés.

The guy was a bishop—and preached by example, bloody hell!

He had himself gelded!

Unfortunately, his example was not followed.

Because the frocks only take the vow of chastity to hide their game: having no family, and having cut off all social ties, these animals quickly end up loathing humanity; thusly they are able to do harm to the people in feeding us their lies; as for their passions, far from refraining from them, they submit to them without measure... And this is how they end up being, from all points

of view—as much moral as physical—perfect jesuits, complete monsters!

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The social working stiffs speak of laying down<sup>5</sup> a law that forbids the enfrockt' from running schools.

That's an idiotic solution! That won't prevent priests from soiling our children.

My little ploy is a hell of a lot more effective:

Let's castrate them!

It's not radical—it's simply expedient!

The radical remedy would be much more elegant... a little outburst of serious pandemonium and the frocks wouldn't bother us anymore.

In the meantime, there's something to be said for gelding!

Snake charmers take care to remove the venomous fangs from the reptiles of their collections.

What's so funny about doing the exact same thing vis-à-vis the cockroaches?

Since we are such damned numbskulls as to let these venomous beasts roam about in our space, the most elementary of precautions would be to make them incapable ... of biting!

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<sup>4</sup> *Tr*—The french *cretin* is very close to *chrétien*, “christian.”

<sup>5</sup> *Tr*—The original phrasing suggests a chicken laying an egg.

# Revolutionary Bread

*Émile Pouget's short 1896 article for L'Almanach du Pere Peinard on capitalism and "the conquest of bread"*

The ancients said: "The wise man carries his law within him."

This is all of anarchy in one word.

But it'll be said: "Sure, but are all men wise?"

This would be misunderstanding the question, for no one has the measuring-stick to size up wisdom. The true wisdom for all would be for everyone to be himself. But to reach this individualism in conditions that can be generalized it has to be recognized that men have points of contact among each other, the result of which are liberties that are praised by all, and whose agreement constitutes the social milieu.

In the first rank of these entities comes the need for bread, which is common to all. Those men who don't live on bread alone nevertheless have to live in the first place—and then philosophize. However revolutionary you might be it's difficult to reverse the order of these two things: the most wild-eyed idealist also eats his daily bread.

We can thus recognize that despite every declaration of political principles and the lying Declaration of Rights, that the most outlaw of individuals, the most outsider to society, is he who will die of hunger. Now legally, any individual can die of hunger, and if the economists were honest that would even say that *he should* when the general conditions oblige him to do so. Without exaggeration, it can be seen that the whole of our current society rests on the legality of famine, which denies the individual any liberty to reach and to determine himself. It is a crime to be without work—or to not accept it under imposed conditions. And this crime, not spoken of in the Code, is punished with the death penalty.

It's from this point of view that the question of bread assured for all contains in germ the entire social question. If life in its elementary form was made for everyone to make common cause, if the social milieu offered this unmoving, this fixed and inflexible point, assured to all, the freedom that would result from it would suffice to constitute a rational society. It would be the basis upon which to build something solid, an entirely new architecture where all social units would be in perfect equilibrium.

Whatever the beauty of the dreams and hoped for horizons, we cannot lose our grip and forget to recognize how essential is the conquest of bread. This minimal right of life, we can't disdain it and we must assure it. The day we have it, without concessions or stooping to low acts, we will have all the benefits of liberty and all rights. The plan of the new world (which will perhaps not conform to the programs we know) must spontaneously grow from this great social principle, like a vigorous oak develops from its seed, solidly implanted in a nourishing terrain.



**Section Seven: Albert Libertad  
(1875–1908)**

*The criminal is the voter...You make the choice, you the voter, you, who accept what exists; you, who, by way of your ballot, sanction all your misery; you, who, by voting, consecrate all your servitude. You are a threat to us, free men, anarchists. You are just as dangerous as the tyrants, as the masters to whom you deliver yourselves, who you elect, who you support, who you feed, who you protect with your bayonets, who you defend with brute force, who you praise with your ignorance, who you legitimate with your ballots and who you impose upon us through your imbecility... If candidates lusting for mandates and bursting with stupidity, scratch your back and pinch the ass of your paper sovereignty; if you become intoxicated on the incense and promises in which you are steeped by those who have always betrayed you, who deceived you before and who will deceive you again tomorrow; it is because you are like them: Go ahead, vote! Have faith in your delegates, believe in those you have voted for. But stop complaining. The yokes you bear, you took upon yourself. The crimes that you suffer, you commit. You are the master, you are the criminal, and, ironically enough, you are also the slave and the victim.*

—A. Libertad, *Le Culte de la charogne*.  
*Anarchisme, un état de revolution permanente (1897–1908)*,  
Marseilles, Agone, 2006

Albert Libertad was an intransigent individualist and ardent freethinker whose **immanent** perspective on anarchy placed him in antagonism to anarchism’s collectivist variety (with its “future” brotherhood of caring and sharing), as well as with its Proudhonian-oriented mutualist strains (with their people’s banks, fair dealing and honest trading). Libertad is probably best remembered for founding the radical individualist mouthpiece *L’Anarchie*, which published 485 issues between April 13, 1905 and July 30, 1914.

When *L’Anarchie* made its roaring public debut in 1905, the long-standing French tradition of revolutionary journalism was approaching its anabasis and new journals were springing up for all factions within anarchism, as the modern press became a veritable battlefield of ideas. What most differentiated Libertad’s bombshell of a paper from the more standard anarchist fare available was its unapologetically illegalist and individualist orientation, and the strong influence of Max Stirner in the material *L’Anarchie* accentuated. For at least six years *L’Anarchie* was a *daily* publication and formed the centerpiece of an anarcho-individualist core in France that included Libertad, *L’Anarchie*’s future editors É. Armand and André Lorulot, and lively regular contributors Jean Marestan, Maurice Vandamme (“Mauricius”), Rirette Maitrejean and the young Victor Serge (who published under the nom de guerre *Le Retif*).

Libertad’s own writings suggested broad new vistas for the application of anarchist ideas to **lived experience** and sardonically attacked aspects of traditional anarchism that he found untenable, such as the fictitious superior virtues of the “workers” compared to those of the “capitalists”. Libertad had a heightened scorn for the masses—whom he referred to as the “electoral cattle”—and no more accepted the authority of the “sovereign electorate” than he did the authority of the “divine king”. Consequently, Libertad often clashed with the partisans of labor in the anarchist movement, with their centralization, their elected posts, and their vaguely democratic prescriptive ideals. Libertad claimed the most extreme concepts within anarchist thought as his own and developed them in a violently direct manner; some of his favorite targets were the architects of “revolution” who dreamed up rigorous new moralities in which the interests

of the individual were sacrificed to the interests of the “future society”. One suspects a certain malicious enjoyment on Libertad’s part in his talent for exposing the liberalism and humbug in the collectivist systems of his anarchist contemporaries, and in their social, sexual and economic moralities. But if one can get over the shock of having their cherished anarchist conventions and myths torn to pieces and mercilessly analyzed, then Libertad’s writings are a powerful means to clear thinking.

In her 1913 *Souvenirs d’Anarchie*, Rirette Maitrejean describes Libertad as an “elemental force”, a view which is seconded by Victor Serge in the following passage from his *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, where he explains the catalytic influence Libertad (with his oratorical fury) had on his generation of anarchists and how he personified an era:

*Anarchism swept us away completely because it both demanded everything of us and offered everything to us. There was no remotest corner of life that it failed to illumine, at least so it seemed to us. A man could be a Catholic, a Protestant, a Liberal, a Radical, a Socialist, even a syndicalist, without in any way changing his own life, and therefore life in general. It was enough for him, after all, to read the appropriate newspaper; or, if he was strict, to frequent the café associated with whatever tendency claimed his allegiance. Shot through with contradictions, fragmented into varieties and sub-varieties, anarchism demanded, before anything else, harmony between deeds and words (which, in truth, is demanded by all forms of idealism, but which they all forget as they become complacent). That is why we adopted what was (at that moment) the extremist variety, which by vigorous dialectic had succeeded, through the logic of its revolutionism, in discarding the necessity of revolution. To a certain extent we were impelled in that direction by our disgust with a certain type of rather mellow, academic anarchism, whose Pope was Jean Grave in *Temps Nouveaux*. Individualism had just been affirmed by our hero Albert Libertad. No one knew his real name, or anything of him before he started preaching. Crippled in both legs, walking on crutches which he plied vigorously in fights (he was a great one for fighting, despite his handicap), he bore, on a powerful body, a bearded head whose face was finely proportioned. Destitute, having come as a tramp from the south, he began his preaching in Montmarte, among libertarian circles and the queues of poor devils waiting for their dole of soup not far from the site of Sacre Coeur. Violent, magnetically attractive, he became the heart and soul of a movement of such exceptional dynamism that it is not entirely dead even at this day. Libertad loved streets, crowds, fights, ideas, and women. On two occasions he set up house with a pair of sisters, the Mahes and then the Morands. He had children to whom he refused to give State registration. “The State? Don’t know it. The name? I don’t give a damn, they’ll pick one that suits them. The law? To the devil with it.” He died in a hospital in 1908 as the result of a fight, bequeathing his body (that “carrion of mine”, he called it), for dissection in the cause of science. His teaching, which we adopted almost wholesale, was: “Don’t wait for the revolution. Those who promise revolution are frauds just like the others. Make your own revolution, by being free men and living in comradeship.” Obviously I am simplifying, but the idea itself had a beautiful simplicity. Its absolute commandment and rule of life was: Let the old world go to blazes!*

Libertad’s personal flame burned brightly, but he was tragically killed in a brawl in 1908, after which *L’Anarchie* fell into the hands of André Lorulot and, eventually, future members of the Bonnot Gang. In spite of his young death, Libertad’s existential, free-swimming and independent version of anarchism left its mark, and by 1920 there were numerous French journals of an individualist and Nietzschean bent, including H.L. Follin’s *L’Ordre Naturel*, Rene Edme’s and Andre du Bief’s *Le Pal*, and André Lorulot’s *L’Idée Libre*.

# Albert Libertad

**Anonymous**

Translated by Wolfi Landstreicher

*(An introductory note from an Italian collection of Libertad's works)*

Albert Joseph known as Libertad, one of the least understood figures of French anarchism, appears to some to be an individualist from folklore, lover of actions as spectacular as they were useless, lacking a solid theory. The imprisonments he suffered for having disturbed a mass or for having shouted "Down with the army!" at a military parade are brought forth as proof of this conception.

In fact, upon reading his writings, which have a natural immediacy, one comes to see how baseless such considerations are, and how deep his ideas were in relation to the widespread commonplaces in the anarchist milieu of the time. Libertad's analyses are striking for their originality as well as their freshness, with the exception of his excessive faith in the progress of Science and in Reason, an outgrowth of the positivism of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that has now, with time, shown its harmfulness.

In times like our own, marked by specialization, some of Libertad's reflections resound:

*The social order forms a block. A block of its own amalgamation...it is not possible to deal a blow to one vein with a pickaxe without damaging another.*

Or again, His thoughts on various alliances: "I only want to associate myself out of affinity striving to maintain my autonomy to the greatest extent possible... Let's take care not to build the staircase for climbing to power." On unionism: "The unions will discipline the practices of labor, much more than has occurred previously, and will become, for good or for ill, the best guardians of capital." On the troubling search for guarantees before acting: "Anyone who contemplates the goal from the first steps, anyone who needs to be certain of reaching it before starting out, will never get there. the joy of the outcome already exists in the joy of the effort." On the dangers of recuperation: "often the most daring theories have become—with some compromise—the most respected theory of property and of order."

But, of course, the individual is Libertad's preferred subject, and he proves to have extremely clear ideas about this. A bitter enemy of liberal individualism, here is how he described his conception of freedom: "In order to move toward freedom, it is necessary that we develop our individuality.—When I speak of moving toward freedom, I mean: moving toward the complete development of our individual being." Libertad, anarchist and not libertarian—by his own admission—who does not "confuse the shadow with the prey", is perfectly aware that freedom is not a question of faith or rights: "We are prepared to receive freedom from a State, a Redeemer, a Revolution; we never apply ourselves so that it develops in each individual."

Libertad didn't just express his "Joy of Life" in one of his articles; rather, it stood out arrogantly in every act of his brief existence, often coming into conflict with the moralism of the time.

Libertad had the merit of managing to bring a different, decidedly new, tone into the anarchist movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when it still limited itself to hurling darts against the recognized structures and sources of oppression, not noticing how the responsibility for social tyranny resides to a great extent in the acquiescence of the exploited.

The concise synthesis that he makes of anarchism as he conceives it surpasses all the barriers erected by anarchists themselves in one bound, due to some very personal and provocative interpretations: "the communist current and the individualist current fused at last into one another and ... found their logical outlet in anarchism."

Politics is dead—this is still an expectation. The great systems, those that explain, justify, control, regulate have fallen in the dust of history. Perhaps this is why the anarchism of Libertad, a visceral anarchism that rises from the depths of the individual and not from reasonable ideological adhesion still maintains its value and charm today.

His prophecy is ours: "May the old world die!"

## The Patriotic Herd

Translated by vincent stone

To the barracks! To the barracks! Go, young man of twenty years, mechanics and teachers, masons and draftsmen, stretch out on the bed... on Procrustes' bed. You are too short... we are going to stretch you out. You are too tall... we are going to shorten you up. Here, this is the barracks... nobody gets smart here, nobody shows off... all are equal, all are brothers... Brothers in what? In stupidity and obedience, of course. Ah! ah! Your body, your head, your form! Who cares about that. Your sentiments, your tastes, your tendencies go down the drain. It's for the fatherland... so they tell you.

You are no longer a man, you are a sheep. You are in the barracks to serve the fatherland. If you don't know what that is, too bad for you. Anyway you don't need to know. You only need to obey. Look right. Look left. Fall into line. Rest. Eat! Drink! Sleep! Ah! You speak of your initiative, your will. Don't know it here. There is only discipline. What! What are you saying? Someone taught you to reason, to discuss, to form an opinion about men and things? Here, you button it, you shut your mouth. You do not have, you should not have other concerns or opinions other than your bosses'. You don't want to, you cannot follow anyone but those whom you have recognized as authority resulting from experience? No joking here, young man. You have a mechanical means for knowing who to obey... Count the gold strips on the sleeve of a dolman.<sup>1</sup>

So what's your problem? They taught you to not have idols, to adore nothing? No matter, bend down, kiss the ground, be respectful to the symbol of the fatherland, the idol of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the democratic icon. That, my friend, is the republican form of Joan of Arc's standard. So, check your mind, your intelligence, your will at the door... You are a part of the herd... they only ask for your wool... Enter... and stop thinking. To the barracks! To the barracks!

The army, I said recently, is not raised against an exterior enemy; the army is not raised against an interior enemy; the army is raised against ourselves; against our will, our "me." The army is

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<sup>1</sup> *Tr*—A style of military jacket.

the revenge of the crowd against the individual, of the numbers against the single. The army is not the school of crime; the army is not the school of debauchery, or if it is, that's the least of its faults; the army is the school of spinelessness, the school of emasculation.

Despite the family, despite school, despite the workshop, there is still a little personality in every man; from time to time movements arise in reaction against the milieu. The army, whose locale is the barracks, comes to annihilate the individual. The twenty year old man has the strong virility that allows him to dedicate himself to the development of an idea. He does not have the fetters of habit, the watering down of the home, the weight of years. He can push his logic to the point of revolt. He has, within himself, the lifeblood needed to make the buds burst and the flowers blossom. At the bend in the road comes the ambush of the fatherland, the army pitfall, the mousetrap barracks. Then, all faculties are obstructed. Thinking must stop. Reading must stop. Writing must stop. And in no case can there be any will. From head to toe, your body belongs to the army. You no longer choose a hairstyle nor the shoes that you would like. You no longer wear clothing that is roomy or loose around the waist. You no longer go to bed when you get tired... There is one regulation shoe, one regulation haircut, one regulation style of clothing. Bread is made in communal batches and your break time has been set for years. What's that? A case of endurance!

But there's worse... in the streets you don't speak with whom you'd like! You don't go to the places you want! You don't read the papers you're interested in! Your visits, your meetings and your readings are all subjects to regulations! And if by chance you have sexual problems, there is a whorehouse for the soldiers and one for the officers, as there are also different places to drink alcohol.

Everything is regulated, everything is planned out. The individual is assassinated. Initiative is dead. The barracks are the stables for the patriotic herd. From them come herds ready to become the electoral herds. The army is the formidable instrument raised by governments against individuals; the barracks is the channeling of the human forces of the all for the benefit of the few. You enter a man, become a soldier, exit a citizen.

—*L'Anarchie*, 26 October, 1905

# The Greater of Two Thieves

translated by vincent stone

Every day, every hour, without rest nor remittance; the battle of life. A horrible battle if so, where the cadavers pile up, the wounded number in the millions. Battle of Life for life. Battle against the elements, battle against the self. Battle against other humans. Battle of those who are rich against those who aren't. Battle of those who have against those who don't. Battle of the future against the past, of science against ignorance.

Right now, in Amiens, it seems to be taking a more cruel form, which makes it more noticeable to everybody.

Two groups of individuals are grappling with one another. One of them seems to have achieved victory. It no longer fights, it judges. It has named delegates who put on uniforms and decorate themselves with special names, gendarmes, judges, soldiers, prosecutors, jurors. But nobody's fooled; everybody knows the usual collaborators of the social war: thieves, counterfeiters, assassins, depending on the situation.

Securely held, the members of the other gang face them. They are there, in person. They did not send delegates. One has the sense that they are bound but not defeated. And when they shake their heads, the delegates and the spectators cower.

Those of the first gang call this process bringing justice and say they are prosecuting crime. Everyone sees that it isn't remorse that leads their enemies, but handcuffs. And the debate begins. They are two terrible gangs and their organization strikes fear. To think of all the spirit lost in the subtleties and the ruses of these fighters. What improvements of the fate of each and every person would come out of their combined efforts. What steps forward science could have made with all of these brains preoccupied with falsifying to survive.

This notion comes to us in thinking about those strong and energetic minds who are, for the moment, defeated. The others, the delegates, crystallized in their beatitude and trembling with fear, have pathetically mediocre mugs. They and those who they represent have chosen violence and theft, trickery, lies; they are shopkeepers, soldiers, gendarmes, judges, preachers, out of personal interest and vocation. They are the people who stop the march of science and beauty so as to continue the reign of ignorance and ugliness. To them laziness is a virtue and it's to avoid moving their arms and for the sacred cult of their stomach that they kill, steal, rape, and cheat. Those of the other gang, thieves without hypocrisy, burglars without laziness, they did not voluntarily choose their mode of living. Pirates, corsairs, they sought to bring balance to unfair deals. And they did it with such spirit! Not like the act of a policeman on a street corner robbing a man who got drunk on one glass of wine after the week's abstinence, or of a bailiff taking a laborer's last set of sheets, or the officer setting aside hungry men's rations for himself, or the great dukes stealing dressings from the wounded, or the administrators of the Congo preparing

the negro [sic] bouillon.<sup>1</sup> It's not to the weaker, the poorer, that they extend their hands, it's to the powerful and the rich. You can look. They don't forget it in the poor-houses, perhaps for a practical reason, but also because they did not want to just live; they also wanted to destroy.

The people of the Little Gang are anarchists. They aren't thieves because they are anarchists. Nor anarchists because they are thieves. They are one and the other, they could have been one and the other.

To steal, to burgle, this is not to perform an act for anarchy, nor against anarchy. It's a personal act, a way to make a living, just as disgusting and useless as that of a laceworker, a sign painter, a broker, an accountant, a gunsmith, a safemaker, etc. And it's not because they are thieves that the people of the Abbeville gang interest me but because they are anarchists.

I am against the big gang, against respectable society because it wants to live in an inveterate state of laziness and uselessness; because it willfully continues to waste human strength and products of the land; because through a special pleasure in neurotics, the sick, it continues to make thousands of men, women and children die of starvation, work and tuberculosis, and that these tortures seems to bring them pleasure. Lazy or useless, they are judges, guardians of the peace, shopkeepers, inspectors, administrators, and never has useful work come out of their ten fingers. They have not made the bread that they eat, nor the chateaux in which they live, nor the clothing they wear, nor the cars in which they ride. So what they live on—they have stolen.

I am for those of the little gang, the gang of burglars from Abbeville, because I feel that these men are ready to do what is necessary when given the opportunity. They aren't thieves out of laziness or by choice, but by obligation. They didn't want to starve to death. They could have set out to become stock traders and shopkeepers and stolen in peace; or cops and prison wards, and knocked people out without trouble; or officers and industrialists, and killed without risk. But they didn't want to support the present society. They got together to live by burglary, with the hope, perhaps mistaken, that it would bring about a disruption in its organization.

In another society, Jacob and his friends could usefully employ themselves. Few could doubt this, given their skill, their knowledge, their strength, and their courage. Their hands know labor, and with what ardor, I am convinced, they would work usefully, earn their own bread and some for the weak around them. Jacob's accomplices could live in any well-organized society; their competence would find a useful outlet.

But I wonder what to do with the Wehekindes and the Regnaults, the Macques and all of those of the caste whose hands have never done anything but raised a plate to their traps, and whose brain masturbates themselves with the search for decrees, laws, and lies to keep their disintegrating society together.

So, what to do with them, what to do with them, maybe use them as a scarecrow in the fields...

In the current society, they are something special, according to the stupidity of those who produce, but may they not take on these airs; show rather that they can only be, in the great association of thieves of which they are part, anything but sheep lying in wait for the dying and the insane.

—*Germinal*, n 11, 19 March, 1905

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<sup>1</sup> *Tr*—One month before this issue of *Germinal*, Libertad would have read in Paris newspapers about a French official in the Congo making soup from the head of an African man, then serving it to indigenous guests of a feast. See Jean-Marc Nkouka-Menga's *Chronique politique congolaise: Du nani-kongo a la guerre civile*.



## To Our Friends Who Stop

Under different titles, on behalf of many comrades here, the same lament gets repeated: “What’s happening to the anarchists?” It’s the echo of other equally respectable laments: “What’s happening to the fatherland?”, “What’s happening to the French?”, “What’s happening to the family?”, “What’s happening to us?”, “What’s happening to the religious spirit?” A respectable refrain that is translated for simple people: “Alas! Our times!”

The people who have fallen asleep or become petrified, no longer recognizing themselves— or better, no longer recognizing the surrounding environment that has slowly but surely changed— begin to shriek: “Watch out, danger, danger,” exactly as one of our grandparents might have done upon seeing the electric streetcar.

Relax, my friends, there is no danger in delay. Wake up. Rouse yourselves. Anarchy is not dead. It is alive, and therefore it transforms itself.

For some, anarchy may be, at most, a split with revolutionary socialism. It can be granted that when this idea was launched, it was nothing else. But nowadays it is something else.

A new philosophy has freed itself from all the old philosophies, a living philosophy from dead philosophies: Lao-Tse and Epictetus, Confucius and Epicurus, Rabelais and Pascal, Fourier and Proudhon, Marx and Bakunin, Stirner and Nietzsche—not to mention the works of creation and adaptation of still living minds—have all cooperated in providing it with a form that every individual can comprehend.

All the encyclopedists, with Diderot in the lead, all the critics of the old regime, Voltaire, Rousseau, all the authentic destroyers of religion: the priest Meslier,<sup>1</sup> Volney, Dupuis, have contributed their critiques to it.

Scholars all offer their support to its science, and if they don’t yet live it socially, they still live it in their laboratories when they apply its method of free examination in their research. Thus, whether they like it or not, every one of their discoveries increases the strength of this philosophy and overturns the authority of routine.

We want to put this philosophy, this knowledge that I say makes everything rise back up to the individual, finally giving him the place that he deserves, into practice. We intend to make it come out of the books to which it has been confined, out of the academic seats where it was taught only to the privileged, out of the laboratories in which it was reduced to pure experimentation, so that we can hurl it onto the multiform terrain of life, at grips with individuals in the field of experience that is the world.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tr*—Jean Meslier (1664–1729) was a French priest who, for his own safety, kept his actual ideas hidden all his life. Upon his death a lengthy *Testament* that he had written was discovered in which he harshly denounced religion and presented a strong atheistic perspective which was to influence such people as Baron d’Holbach and Denis Diderot

# Individualism

Translated by vincent stone

All the readers of *L'Anarchie* know that I'm a guy on crutches. I like useful work, and I have a marked antipathy for lacemakers; with difficulty I read sociology books and I try to ignore the deputies' declarations, the senators' stammerings, and our great men's writings. Being this way, I have the pleasure of not having suffered the least disillusion when Clemenceau described himself as the premier cow<sup>1</sup> of France, when Briand became a firm supporter of the fatherland and the Church, when Urbain Gohier got involved with Bunau-Varilla from *Le Matin*. I simply smiled as if I had smiled to the long faces of *anarchists* when Rochefort got involved with Mercier of the military staff.

As I myself like to recognize, that makes me a bit of a jerk, but don't think that I can take all of my theories to completion. To assure my existence, I do a lot of stupid things; I have tick-inspector friends; I know that Loubet is no longer president of the *République*... and I just read a six-hundred page sociology book. Five-hundred ninety pages in 18 volumes, if you want to push the point, and that just after having read another five-hundred fifty pages in 18 volumes. All that to do a favor for a bibliographer who claimed to be overburdened. There's good reason to be uneasy here and to not know what to think anymore amongst all of these economic systems, whether individualist or socialist.

These books came direct from Armand Colin, a publishing house specializing, it seems, in this genre of honest sociology. The serious and liberal Academy publishes through it. Coming direct, by means of money, for this editor does not seem particularly concerned about a critique in *L'Anarchie* and doesn't find it worthwhile to do us the favor of giving us one even after requesting it. So, despite a few strokes of bad luck, the critique marches in three columns.

I'll quickly go over the first book. It is entitled *Les systèmes socialistes et l'évolution économique*. The author is Maurice Bourguin, a professor in some law school. Written "for men preoccupied with the social question, who are sincerely working to direct themselves toward the search for truth," it's a mediocre and hypocritical work. The slant is obvious from the first line to the last. Socialist systems—systems that I myself fight quite bitterly—are presented in the most dishonest light possible. All that is of an essentially working class nature, likely to produce some true changes in the very bases of capitalism, of property, is sketched out in the most absurd fashion. All the palliatives, all the middle grounds, all of the governmental scams are drawn with firm traits so as to emphasize the benefits given to the working class. Under the pretext of using the scientific method, the author makes use of statistics and figures that do not prove a thing. In a few details, when he doesn't have something to say, Bourguin provides documentation that, if it is true, is not without utility. But that's it. This book has the advantage for us of not being "dangerous." It is detestable, monotonous. The least capable of readers will see the bias; the price itself makes it out of the question for us. It speaks to those who, at all costs, need arguments,

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<sup>1</sup> Slang for cop.

unlikely as they may be. Obviously, “anarchism and communism fall outside of the scope of this study” the author tells us. Many thanks.

I certainly wouldn't have bothered you about it if the second book were the same. It's not at all. Its title: *L'individualisme économique et sociale*; it's author: Albert Schatz, also a professor at some law university. The style is clear, agreeable. The different doctrines are presented with wit. The author endeavors to delve deeply into the way of thinking of each of the economists he discusses in sequence, and, let's admit it, he succeeded at that. Perhaps he only selected the material that supported his thesis? If so, at least he has the advantage of knowing how to get a little sun. When we follow the course of the past, should we linger a little while reading the works of individualists against the State, we cannot help but revive their words. I had the same impression when I took a class from Victor Basch, on the same subject, in the academic associations. But this impression is only one of sentiments, it doesn't hold up to reasoning (Ah! that cursed reason, Albert Schatz would say). One will quickly guess where the author is leading us: to accepting the famous theory of individualism—the classical... and liberal one.

We will not deny the value of individualist theorists that he presents to us, nor even his skill in doing so. But we know that, always, the work of the best of the intellectual elite has been subject to being hijacked by those who have. And often the most daring theories become—with a few adjustments—the most respectful of the propriety<sup>2</sup> of “the order!” The most powerful minds hire themselves out!

So to the matter at hand: it's a summary of a history course on economic doctrines, the author tells us. It's the history of doctrines adopted and presented by those who have to those who do not—meaning even those who seek to possess “too much”—in order to avoid the invasion of their property, we say more precisely.

From the anti-mercantilists up to Spencer through those from the English moral school, to Malthus and his theory on population, to Ricardo and his theory on rent, to Dunoyer and his absolute liberalism, to those of the orthodox school of Bastiat, to those of the historic school of Taine and those of the christian school with Le Play. There you only have different forms of the *Liberal* bourgeois mind—liberal, for words do have their irony.

It's the glorification of the individual who has, that's his defense, the history of different doctrines presented in turns as the best for preventing the majority of humans from achieving the free development of their individuality. It is true that it's always in the name of individualism... of those who have succeeded.

These different individualist methods wishing to accept no master, no law, nor any restriction that can infringe upon the power of the individual, accept the very premise of the ownership of land and industrial wealth as an established and sacred fact. They apply to those who have ... and their lackeys.

Man, depending on whether he is the son of a property owner or non-property owner, may or may not assert his individuality. In the name of the glory of the individual, one has to work for the affirmation of the power of the other. The latter will have to do all he can to assure the integrity of his fortune, the former will have to do all he can to begin his own... except attack the

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<sup>2</sup> *Tr - Propriété*, in the sense of ‘property’ and ‘propriety.’ These English words share their origin with the French *propriété*, which below will also be translated as “usufruct” and a variant (*propriétaire*) as “property owner.” It's worth pointing out that Libertad uses this word in many of its senses, frequently suggesting double-meaning, as here.

foundations of property... those are sacrosanct! Under the cover of liberalism, of individualism, they destroy the development of the majority of individuals for the benefit of the minority.

If the individual has to do everything to succeed in conquering a “situation,” in developing himself, he must, however, observe certain morals, certain respects. Anything that could seek to counterbalance the strength of individuals in power with that of individuals gaining strength is considered as an infringement on the rights of the former. Our liberals let out loud cries. If a law *seems to favor* the weak, meaning those who are born without economic means, the author shows us that it’s an anti-individual law, but he forgets to mention all of the underground work of morality, philosophy, and customs that make the social reparation of wealth an accepted and inviolable fact.

Our individualism has no relation with this truncated individualism, prepared for the use of the present society. The me, the individual who we want to free from other men appears with equal means similar to those of other “mes,” of other individuals. It would not be logical to preserve the current reparation of material or “moral” wealth and profits and to speak of developed or nondeveloped individuals while all we see are more or less favored individuals. While not desiring that individuals be identical, we would like to see them equal before economic and social forces. And we work to bring an end to the inequality between the rich and the poor, for it doesn’t affirm the power of individuals, but, much to the contrary, that of fortunes.

Nothing is more curious than the ignorance of classical sociologist authors when they speak about anarchism in its present form. They cannot know the emergence of the individual, the life of a people, the reality of an idea by reading books and reports, they aren’t able to see anything but what they are told to see.

When, speaking about individualism, Schatz is obliged to touch on anarchism, and he gets over with it in a few words. There are, he says, two anarchist doctrines: one is a magnification of socialism, the other one of individualism. The first is that of prince Kropotkin, the other that of Stirner, a bit of Proudhon. And he takes on these two authors.

If instead of looking to Eltsbacher, he had tried to gather information himself, he might have managed to find a new anarchist current that would have disconcerted him. This current, to tell the truth, is not new: it is but the natural evolution of the anarchist idea. Those who defend it call themselves, simply, anarchists, but when one pushes them further, they declare themselves “anarchist communists,” and parting from the utopian domain Schatz is so quick to grant us, they seek to live their ideas by immediately putting them into practice.

These men, my good friend Schatz, can invoke de Mandeville, as well as many of the phisocrats, Malthus, Stuart Mill, and leave, truly, Bastiat, Le Play and Sangnier to you. They can take from Dunoyer and Spencer, but they do not understand that the individual is curbed by obedience to a hypothetical God and the respect of an all too real property.

If the aristocracy of a Nietzsche or an Ibsen, the reactive passion of a Stirner or a Proudhon solicits their attention, they will no less conclude that reality is more interesting than utopia.

To your great regret, I’m sure, those who don’t have the taste for liberal individualists have no more interest in cultivating the paradoxes of the “me” or the “unique” whose usufruct would be to die of hunger.

The author said in his preface that he wrote this review to reach the largest audience. The conclusion he gives almost allows me to establish that this book ought to claim to satisfy the practical tendency of the youth of today’s generation. Anarchists don’t let themselves be fooled by such games.

After having struck on all the chords of individualism, meaning catholic and papal with Le Play, Sangnier and Leon XIII, glorified in the moral and economic development of the individual with Malthus, Stuart Mill, Nietzsche and Renan, the author makes a conclusion that could seem in complete disagreement with his thesis, as it is so vague and feeble, but which is truly the logical conclusion of the type of individualism towards which he leans. This method can lead to nothing but masters and slaves, never men.

The author proposes that educators choose among their students “he” in whom he sees “a future leader of the people” and behold, in essence, what they should say to him: “You know the world only by poets, meaning you know it poorly. The economists are who you need to complete your education. Do not believe that accepting their discipline means to lower yourself. All these men have done much to support the social wealth created by the unseen masses of workers. Men are not good, interest is what makes them live in peace; never ask a favor of them if it doesn’t serve you. Have respect for the natural order as your primary concern. If your reason protests against it, do not go and destroy this order, but force your reason to understand its necessity. Reason has come to us late in life: it is the eleventh hour worker, if it is not the backseat driver. Beware of its indiscrete demands.”

I cite this textual passage to highlight the author’s general tendency against rationalism, a tendency that I have forgotten to point out. It’s with this art that the author makes use of certain arguments to turn them back around on those who use them. In this way, declaring that man has no rights, he ends up saying: “You do not need to demand your rights, but to fulfill your duties. You will show no *joie de vivre*, you will only be strong by cultivating your own strength and in the sorrows of life, it’s in yourself that you will find solace. So develop in yourself less reason than intelligent will, for reason is weak, despite its pride. *Do not have ambitions to change the world, even if you dislike it, you will waste your time. Accept it courageously as it is, only ask of it what it can give and only take time to courageously and powerfully complete your task. What is needed and what you can change, is yourself.*”

Parting thusly with a thinking like our own—the culture of the me, of the will of a being— the author adeptly reaches completely contradictory conclusions. The me that must be transformed, the tenacious will that one must have, it’s all with the aim to scale any situation, to carve out one’s place. And this is the final development of the individual according to Schatz. He continues, critiquing, with as much art as the task is easy, workers’ reforms, and radical and socialist promises.

A long time ago in *L’Anarchie*, Anna Mahe spoke of the admiration she had for the book *Le tour de france par deux enfants*. She said how much it achieved the author’s aim, that of moralizing, influencing, stupefying in a word, the brains of young common people. She showed the respect he was able to inspire for the law, justice, the fatherland, property, etc. Schatz’ book addresses a different “class,” the sons of the bourgeoisie, functionaries, to the young men who may have felt the desire for more beauty and a more logical economy throughout the world. This book is a cold shower. The realist form the author takes is false, but still you have to discover his trick, and many could let themselves be deceived.

This book wants to destroy, wants to hamper a new force that would liberate men once they knew how to become masters of it.

This force is made up of the communist current and the individualist current finally fusing together and finding their logical end in anarchism.

—*L’Anarchie*, 23 January 1908

# To the Resigned

I hate the resigned!

I hate the resigned like I hate the filthy, like I hate idlers.

I hate resignation! I hate filth, I hate inaction.

I feel sympathy for the sick man, brought down by some malignant fever; I hate the one who imagines he's sick, whom a bit of willpower would put back on his feet.

I feel sympathy for the man in chains, surrounded by guards, crushed by the weight of iron and numbers.

I hate the soldier bent under the weight of the chevron or three stars; the worker bent under the weight of capital.

I love the man who says what he thinks wherever he finds himself. I hate the candidate perpetually out to conquer a majority.

I love the scholar overwhelmed by the weight of scientific research. I hate the individual who hunches his body under the weight of an unknown power, of some X, of a God.

I hate all those who through fear, through resignation, surrender a part of their human potency to others, and thus crush not only themselves, but me and those I love as well, with the weight of their awful competition and their idiotic inertia.

I hate them, yes, I hate them, because I feel it. I don't abase myself before the officer's chevron, below the mayor's sash, under capital's gold, under any morality or religion. For a long time, I have known that all this is merely a gewgaw that shatters like glass... I'm bent under the weight of other people's resignation. I hate resignation!

I love life.

I want to live, not wretchedly like those who limit themselves to only satisfying a portion of their muscles, of their nerves, but broadly satisfying both my facial muscles and calf muscles, the mass of my kidneys as well as my brain.

I don't want to trade any portion of today for a fictitious bit of tomorrow; I don't want to surrender anything of the present for the wind of the future.

I don't want to bend the least part of me under the word Fatherland—God—Honor. I know the emptiness of these words much too well: religious and secular specters.

I make fun of pensions and of paradises, in hope of which people are kept resigned by religion and capital.

I laugh at all those who save up for their old age and deprive themselves of their youth, those who go hungry at twenty so that they'll eat when they're seventy.

I want to eat when I have strong teeth to rip out and crush large pieces of meat and succulent fruits. I want to do it when the juices of my stomach digest without any problem. I want to satisfy my thirst with refreshing tonic liquids.

I want to love women, or a woman, insofar as it fits with out common desires, and I don't want to resign myself to the family, to laws, to regulations. No one has rights over my body. You desire, I desire. Let's laugh at the family, the law, ancient forms of resignation.

But that's not all: Since I have eyes and ears, along with eating drinking and making love, I want other forms of enjoyment. I want to see beautiful sculptures and pictures, to admire Rodin and Manet. I want to hear the best works of Beethoven and Wagner. I want to know the classics of comedy, to peruse the literary and artistic knowledge that human beings of the past have bequeathed to human beings of the present or better, to browse through the ever-evolving works of humanity.

I want joy for myself, my chosen companion, my children, my friends. I want a house where I can rest my eyes pleasantly when work is done.

So I also want the joy of work, this healthy joy, this strong joy. I want my arms to use the plane, the hammer, the spade or the scythe. So that the muscles grow and the chest broadens in powerful, useful and reasonable movements.

I want to be useful; I want us all to be useful. I want to be useful to my neighbor and I want my neighbor to be useful to me. I want us all to work a lot because I am insatiable in enjoyment. And because I want to enjoy, I am not resigned.

Yes, yes, I want to produce, but I want to enjoy. I want to knead dough, but so that I can eat the finest bread; harvest grapes, but so that I can drink the finest wine; build a house, but so that I can live in the finest rooms; make furniture, but so that I can possess something useful, indeed even beautiful; I want to make theaters, but large enough to accommodate me and mine. I want to take part in productions, but so that I can take part in consumption.

Let some dream of producing for others to whom, ironically, they will leave their best efforts; as for me, I want to produce in free association with others, but to consume.

Look out, resigned ones, I spit on your idols. I spit on God. I spit on fatherland. I spit on Christ. I spit on flags. I spit on capital and its golden fleece. I spit on religion. They are baubles; I mock them; I laugh at them. They are nothing without you, abandon them and they fall to pieces.

So, resigned ones, you are a force, one of those forces that don't know it, but that is no less a force, and I cannot spit on you, I can only hate you... or love you.

Of all my desires, the greatest is to see you shaking off your resignation in a terrible awakening to life.

We're alive! Let's live! Resignation is death. Revolt is life.

# Albert Libertad

M. N.

DEATH, more cruel and stupid than ever, struck down comrade Albert Libertad, of Paris, the propagandist orator, and one of the founders of *L'Anarchie*, the weekly paper started in 1905, and the *Causeries Populaires* (1902), those local popular meetings which form a new kind of propaganda worthy of more general use. After climbing up nearly the full height of Montmartre, one is faced, in the rue de la Barre 22, by a two-roomed shop, door and windows in summer wide open to the street, which forms a quiet corner here. Even without entering, one sees one room full of young compositors at their printing cases, and next to them, near the open door, some young women doing needlework or preparing food, with a baby or two thrown in, in the middle near the table where all the office work is done, literature briskly sent out, etc. The back walls contain the stock of pamphlets, and a collection of advanced books forming a lending library.

In the evening the room is cleared a little, and forms are put up; the "popular discussions" begin—informal discussions, attended by people from the neighborhood and comrades, just the way to come in real contact with average people who feel shy of meetings, have no trust in orators, but may gradually be thawed by ordinary, unpretentious conversation. They get the books they want to take home; they soon see that these young Anarchists, not hindered by conventionalities and thoroughly disinterested, can help them in many little ways; they see them hard at work and yet free at the same time, arranging matters their own way and always merry. Such a milieu Libertad greatly helped to create, and I feel sure that his friends will keep together and continue the work.

For to me this example seems of no small importance. A Communist colony is mostly situated in a remote, isolated district; and an attempt to produce almost everything on the spot is hard work, tiring, often disappointing, and bringing too many cares for keeping the unbounded spirit of propagandism still alive in the off-hours. The transition, moreover, from ordinary to Communist life is too sudden to appeal to greater numbers of surrounding people. A Syndicat, again, unites men of the same trade, but living all over the city; if trade interest keeps them together, the absence of common local interest leaves them strangers in many respects. Public meetings and lectures are never frequented by large masses of people, whom in many cases a certain shyness, the consciousness of their ignorance, the unwillingness of grown-up people to be "educated," the distrust of ambitious orators and politicians, etc., keep away; whilst ordinary common-sense discussion may open their minds and clear away their prejudices.

Here, I think, the means adopted by Libertad and his friends show the right way to reach new strata of people. If more generalized, it would mean that everywhere, in the popular quarters, groups of Anarchists would start such small, informal, co-operative workshops, the real basis of effective local propaganda. Many could emancipate themselves, if not from a very frugal life, at least from the brutality of their slave-drivers, if with half-a-dozen comrades they would only co-operate steadily and practically at some trade where this is possible without a great outlay of capital; Show the people in this way that it is possible not to let oneself be crushed by the



capitalist system, but to make a stand against it. Only in such a way can be created the great number of really independent propagandists that will help to make a popular and efficient movement in place of spasmodic and ephemeral agitation. For these reasons, these self-supporting propagandist groups in the midst of the people seemed worthy of fuller description.

Libertad—whose real name was Joseph Albert, born at Bordeaux in 1875—and Anna Maht were the soul of the paper *L'Anarchie*. This is not so much a popular organ to hammer away with unceasing patience in the same place—useful and necessary work, no doubt, but not the exclusive task of all Anarchist papers. It is an organ where each article tries to contribute something new and original to the continuous evolution of Anarchist ideas. Libertad and his friends did so much popular propagandist work that they instinctively found the means to avoid monotony by abstaining from producing popular literature the rest of the day, by trying to sharpen their minds by thinking further on the lines of Anarchist evolution. This seems to me an excellent way to recreate the mind of routine propaganda, and to advance further at the same time; diversity of efforts is often more efficient than the much-praised unity.

Not all these efforts are of equal value, but there is certainly no Anarchist paper in which, during the last three years, Anarchism has obtained so many new sidelights and is shown so much to be a living idea in full evolution. E. Armand, whom another variety of stupid fatality keeps away now, helped on this elaboration of new ideas; only lately the group *L'Anarchie* published his remarkable book, *Qu'est ce qu'un Anarchiste?* (What is an Anarchist?) A new feature of the paper was a weekly review of the other French Anarchist papers, signed "Le Liseur," probably Libertad's work. This was not a repetition of commonplace summaries and compliments, but reckless, pithy criticism, adding many hints in the right direction. This criticism stops at nothing—neither at ideas nor at men; and this made *L'Anarchie* unwelcome to many, some of whom cannot bear the light of criticism, whilst others wish the appearance of solidarity kept up by all means. Libertad had no sympathy nor mercy nor patience with either of them, which caused him to be considered as "anti-syndicalist," "individualist," and very troublesome in general. In reality, his mind was open to all possibilities of propaganda, all nuances of our ideas, their perpetual evolution, and improvement. He detested exclusivism—the Syndicalist proclaiming Syndicalism "self-sufficient," the Communist despising the slightest trace of Individualism, etc. He would also think and say: If we criticize and reject the political leaders, why should we silently submit to the Syndicalist leaders, simply because at present they seem to work in our interest? By this uncompromising attitude he became the bugbear of many, but certainly helped to awaken independent thinking in as many others.

His third field of action was numerous meetings. He could move only on crutches, but his thundering voice filled large halls, and many were his lecturing tours, extending as far as Geneva, before he was expelled from Switzerland. Once he was put on trial for advocating incendiarism, but he developed to the jury with great common sense the hygienic character of setting fire to slum dwellings, destroying thus the horrible, squalid surroundings which stifle people's energy, and which no patching up will ever mend. He was acquitted. He and his friends also attended most other public meetings, and insisted on getting a fair hearing. If this was refused, they would stop at nothing, and this gave them a terribly bad reputation with all chairmen who pooh-pooh unwelcome discussion; still, they had to give way, and Anarchism conquered the platform.

From all this it will be concluded that Libertad was not very tender to his enemies, nor were they to him. To friends he was courteous and genial; it was a pleasure to discuss Anarchism with him. His untimely death—though an old propagandist, he was still young—will, I hope, not

disperse the hopeful young movement which he had so much contributed to create around him and his group on Montmartre.

—*Mother Earth*, Volume 4, 1909

## **Section Eight: Illegalism**

*Outlaws, marginal, bandits—they are the only ones who dare to assert their right to life.*

—Le Retif, *Anarchists and Criminals*

The seeds of illegalism developed on the fertile ground of post-commune Paris. The decades that followed saw witness to increasingly repressive measures enacted by the ‘Third Republic’ that racked up class tensions to a frenzied and violent heat. Everyday life in 1880’s France left little room for optimism to those whose lives were framed and regulated by crippling, systemic poverty. A subterranean hatred was slowly accumulating and there was a raw impulse for savage revenge starting to appear in the interstices. Governmental suppression of working class and revolutionary movements forced anarchists into the adoption of clandestine and illegal methods of resistance, the result of which was an acceptance and normalization of criminality amongst Parisian anarchists, with expropriation, reprisals and retaliatory violence being commonly considered as part and parcel of the ongoing social struggle. This was expressed in two general themes: bombings and assassinations, and the theft of bourgeois property. If dynamite and knives characterized the period of propaganda of the deed, then stealth, cunning, and ingenuity characterized *la reprise individuelle*. This secret activity was initially carried out by both individuals and small collectives who saw burglary of the bourgeois as a **morally** informed act of class vengeance. Working in separate and wholly independent groups, these cells belonged to effective larger communities of social rebels who laundered the material blessings of their burglar confederates into projects that fit their social ambitions, such as the funding of the anarchist press and libertarian schools. Social awareness and personal pleasureseeking are often at odds, but one illegalist who maintained a synthesis between the two tendencies was the anarchist Marius Jacob (1879–1954), who pulled off over 150 enterprising heists in strict accordance with a predetermined ethical code. After a series of masterful operations against wealthy priests, bankers and military officers, Jacob’s winning streak soured and he and his co-conspirators were captured, but in his unapologetic, incisive sentencing statement he assumed the mixed role of culture hero, trickster and public enemy—and demonstrated that Anarchism is inexorably outlaw and inherently oppositional.

The publication of *The Ego And Its Own* in France was also to have a profound influence on the development of illegalism as both a theory and praxis; influenced by Max Stirner’s ‘anti-essentialism’, later illegalists would abandon **any** attempts at an ethical framework, proposing and embracing criminality as a lifestyle, living it as a total challenge to the rank they occupied in class society, and attempting to impress their will on events as sovereign beings. Rather than remain shameful prisoners doing time with the servile multitudes under the shadow of capitalism, anarchists like E. Bertran, Jules Bonnot and Raymond Callemin gave themselves up to the maddening intoxication of danger and undertook the “conquest of bread” on their own. Sacred property is an institution of society and its laws are binding only upon those within the social pale: for those whom society has outlawed every duty to society is annulled and “crime” becomes a stepping-stone to self-liberation. As amoralist motivations began to set the template for French anarchist criminality, the conservative anarcho-communists (determined to keep their puritanical crusade on an orderly course) sought to distance themselves, scapegoating illegal exploits as a pursuit more in keeping with capitalism than communism, rather than acknowledging illegalism as a mode of existence that exists outside of both toxic systems. In 1913 the Federation Communiste-Anarchistes (an allegedly “revolutionary” organization that was ready to run and

hide at the slightest real turbulence) publicly condemned illegalism as a “betrayal” of “the highest principles” (evidently so high that they always remain out of grasp!). The pages of London’s Freedom, wallowing in the lazy tranquility of pure theory, would also lend criticism to the illegalists, starting with a letter attributed to the “all-knowing” charlatan Kropotkin which argued that “the simple-minded young comrades were often led away by the illegalist’s apparent anarchist logic; outsiders simply felt disgusted with anarchist ideas and definitely stopped their ears to any propaganda.” Being of a fundamentally pious character, Kropotkin and the reformers in his orbit were horrified by a world without moral laws and stabbed their more consistent comrades in the back as if they were cops themselves.

*We have neither to approve nor disapprove of illegal actions. We say: they are logical. The anarchist is always illegal—theoretically. The sole word “anarchist” means rebellion in every sense.*

—Le Retif

Illegalism provided the impetus to rise above the degraded and slave-like condition of the property-less through an immediate programme of self-serving expropriation. The failure of **all** anarchist agitation to create lasting breaches in the coherence of society (coupled with the frustrating, but undissolvable fact that the anarchist movement has generated very few useful tools or tactics to overcome the tremendous handicaps we’re impaired with) make the enriching principles of **illegalism** a luminous alternative to weak, defeating prayers for a mass uprising. “Movement building” is and must be ineffectual precisely because it must come to grips at the prevailing level of political process: **anarchist illegalists** arrived at a much more realistic strategy to realize their liberatory ambitions, but this time from the shadows rather than the spotlight of a foolhardy frontal attack. For anarchists bored with the paltry fireworks and utterly insipid theatrical performances of Occupy or the humiliating constraints of all legal “activism”, illegalism is the deal of a lifetime—yielding as it does such tangible remuneration for risks taken. Of course, theft, smuggling, counterfeiting, black marketeering, and other forms of illegalism are, in many respects, just another kind of job, but a kind of job in which the division of labor, working hours, profit and results all belong to **you**. Living in permanent struggle allows one to retain personal dignity and sharpen some valuable skills and atrophied instincts, and in the end—if you’ve been successful!—you’ll have had the pleasure of having averted the fate designed for you by a historical pattern of exploitation. To piss on the legal codes and assume full responsibility for the breaking of one’s own shackles is to cross a threshold and traverse a zone of danger, but it can also represent a turning point in a formerly unequal struggle with a stratified social dictatorship.

# The “Illegalists”

Doug Imrie

*It is idiotic that those who have figured things out are forced to wait for the mass of cretins who are blocking the way to evolve. The herd will always be the herd. So let's leave it to stagnate and work on our own emancipation (...) Put your old refrains aside. We have had enough of always sacrificing ourselves for something. The Fatherland, Society and Morality have fallen (...) That's fine, but don't contribute to reviving new entities for us: the Idea, the Revolution, Propaganda, Solidarity; we don't give a damn. What we want is to live, to have the comforts and well-being we have a right to. What we want to accomplish is the development of our individuality in the full sense of the word, in its entirety. The individual has a right to all possible well-being, and must try to attain it all the time, by any means... —Hégot, an illegalist, writing to the anarchist journal *Les Temps Nouveaux* in 1903, on behalf of a “small circle” who shared his opinions.*

Parallel to the social, collectivist anarchist current there was an individualist one whose partisans emphasized their individual freedom and advised other individuals to do the same. Individualist anarchist activity spanned the full spectrum of alternatives to authoritarian society, subverting it by undermining its way of life facet by facet. The vast majority of individualist anarchists were caught in the trap of wage labor like their collectivist comrades and the proletariat in general: they had to work for peanuts or starve. Some individualists rebelled by withdrawing from the economy and forming voluntary associations to achieve self-sufficiency. Others took the route of illegalism, attacking the economy through the direct individual reappropriation of wealth. Thus theft, counterfeiting, swindling and robbery became a way of life for hundreds of individualists, as it was already for countless thousands of proletarians. The wave of anarchist bombings and assassinations of the 1890s (Auguste Vaillant, Ravachol, Émile Henry, Sante Caserio) and the practice of illegalism from the mid-1880s to the start of the First World War (Clément Duval, Pini, Marius Jacob, the Bonnot gang) were twin aspects of the same proletarian offensive, but were expressed in an individualist practice, one that *complemented* the great collective struggles against capital. The illegalist comrades were tired of waiting for the revolution. The acts of the anarchist bombers and assassins (“propaganda by the deed”) and the anarchist burglars (“individual reappropriation”) expressed their desperation and their personal, violent rejection of an intolerable society. Moreover, they were clearly meant to be *exemplary*, invitations to revolt.

All of society's snares lay in wait for the **illegalists**, and to survive they were forced to make compromises, such as dealing with organized crime. They were constantly at risk of being set up by informers and agents provocateurs. When their nearly inevitable arrests occurred, some made deals with the cops and turned in their friends; others did long prison terms. In France the laws were draconian then. Prisons were much worse and the penal colonies were basically death camps. The guillotines were constantly supplied with fresh meat. Hundreds of illegalists

were imprisoned. Many abandoned their anarchist politics, degenerating to the point where they behaved in a completely mercenary way. What started out as a revolt against bourgeois society usually turned into a purely economic affair, reproducing the cycle of “crime” and repression.

Marius Jacob was one of the foremost exponents and practitioners of anarchist illegalism in pre-war France. He was born to working class parents in Marseilles on Sept. 27, 1879. After finishing school he went to sea to train as a sailor. His sailing included a long voyage along the west coast of Africa. At sixteen he had to abandon his life as a sailor for health reasons, and returned to France. By then he had already been introduced to the anarchist milieu by a friend, and became an anarchist. Soon after, in 1896, at the end of the period of “propaganda by the deed” in France, he was set up by an agent provocateur who procured explosives then snatched him off. He was sentenced to six months’ imprisonment at age seventeen. After his release, the police systematically visited each of his employers and got him fired. Together with two anarchist friends he hatched a scheme to pass himself off as a senior police officer, and carried out a fake raid on a pawnshop in Marseilles in May, 1899. He then traveled to Spain and Italy. Upon his return to France he was arrested in Toulon, then imprisoned in Aix-la-Provenec. He escaped and turned to illegalism full-time.

Around 1900, Jacob formed a band, based in Paris but operating throughout France, Italy, and Belgium, of anarchist illegalists who specialized in burglaries and fencing stolen goods. The band was well-organized and very professional. The members’ activities fell into three main categories: the scouts, who went from town to town looking for homes whose owners were absent and collected the information necessary to make the break-ins function flawlessly; the burglars, with a set of first-rate tools at their disposal, valued at 10,000 francs (easily \$2500); and a fencing operation to sell the loot. Jacob persuaded some of the members to contribute ten percent of their take to anarchist propaganda efforts; some refused on individualist grounds, preferring to keep their share. The band stole only from “social parasites” like priests, the wealthy and military officers. They spared the poor and those whose occupations they considered useful, like doctors, architects, and writers. While they were armed, by common agreement, murder was excluded as an option except in cases of legitimate self defense. To minimize the risk of violence, they perfected a system of door seats that they attached to all exits of the buildings they were working in. Jacob later admitted that he participated in one hundred six burglaries, whose take was estimated at 5 million francs (an estimate, by the way, that Jacob considerably inflated). One of the most memorable break-ins was at the Cathedral of Tours, where the band stole 17<sup>th</sup> century tapestries valued at 200,000 francs. They left behind a graffito: “All-powerful god, find your thieves!”

In late 1903, three members of the band were caught in Abbeville by a cop, Provost, who was shot dead. The burglars escaped, but two were caught in a trap set for them in Paris, and this arrest led to the arrests of most of the members. After eighteen months investigation by a magistrate, the trial of twenty-three out of the twenty-nine accused members began in March 1905. Most were found guilty: Jacob and Bour (who apparently killed Provost) were sentenced to hard labor for life in the penal colonies. Fourteen other members received sentences totaling a hundred years. Another ten, among them Jacob’s mother, were acquitted. Jacob was deported to the penal colony in January 1906 and served twenty years, including almost nine years in chains. Due to a campaign for his release organized primarily by his mother, he was released in 1925. He took up work as a traveling salesman, selling hosiery and clothing until his death by a deliberate morphine overdose on August 28, 1954. The accounts of his friends show that Marius Jacob did not commit suicide out of despair, but out of a calm desire to avoid the infirmities of old age.

Looking back on his experiences in 1948 Jacob observed:

*I don't think that illegalism can free the individual in present-day society. If he manages to free himself of a few constraints using this means, the unequal nature of the struggle will create others that are even worse and, in the end, will lead to the loss of his freedom, the little freedom he had, and sometimes his life. Basically, illegalism, considered as an act of revolt, is more a matter of temperament than of doctrine. This is why it cannot have an educational effect on the working masses as a whole. By this, I mean a worthwhile educational effect.*

For good accounts of Jacob's life, see A. Sergeant's *Un Anarchiste de la Bella Epoque, Marius Jacob*, Bernard Thomas' *Jacob* and Jacob's text of September 1948, *Souvenirs d'un demi-siecle* (published posthumously). Richard Parry's *The Bonnot Gang* is a highly recommended account of the illegalist individualists whose actions followed Jacob's arrest by a mere five years. Finally, *The Art of Anarchy* contains magnificent illustrations by anarchist Flavio Costantini that portray the actions of Jacob's band and of other illegalists.

—*Anarchy: A Journal Of Desire Armed*, Fall/Winter 1994–1995



# An Anarchist on Devil's Island

Paul Albert

Paris, October 1886

Hidden in the shadow of an archway, Brigadier Rossignol tugged nervously at his moustache. If everything went according to plan, he was about to bring another brilliant police operation to an end; yet another success to add to his already fat personal record. He had no reason to doubt the success of the plan. He was a self-confident man, this Brigadier, one of the Calabrians of his time, famous for the courage and efficiency with which he persecuted wrongdoers. This time it was a question of arresting a dangerous subversive, suspected of burglary and arson, and the ambush had been planned with all necessary precautions; so there was nothing to worry about. There were 20 cops strategically placed; he himself was there under the archway, ready to give the signal. If he was nervous it was because of the waiting.

Perhaps it was through an excessive faith in his plan, or through his obsessive desire to cut a good figure, or for both of these reasons, that as soon as the person in question appeared, Brigadier Rossignol jumped without hesitation from his hiding place, followed by his colleagues.

In a flash he was on top of his quarry, shouting like a madman his favorite phrase of all those available to him in the police vocabulary: "I arrest you in the name of the law". This was the technique he used in such cases, both to frighten the suspect and to dissuade them from any idea of resisting arrest. But it didn't work. Instead of trembling resignation, his cry was met with a snarl of "And I kill you in the name of freedom!" To confirm his intentions, the man had drawn a long-blade knife. The scuffle that followed was very violent. While the other participants vainly tried to block him, the persistently aggressive individual made half a dozen lunges at Rossignol and, in a desperate attempt to get free, managed to put out one of the Brigadier's eyes. In the end, numbers told. He was handcuffed and taken to jail. Meanwhile the Brigadier went to hospital, one up in terms of success, one down in terms of eyes. The antagonist of the overconfident policeman was Clement Duval, *anarchist* expropriator, who that day had bloodily finished his career as a militant revolutionary, to start another as a convict deported to Guyana. The inescapable consequence of his violent act of rebellion was to be a joyless existence, suffering under the yoke of exploitation and tyranny. From this point of view, what happened to Duval is of great significance because it is a mirror of an epoch, in which is exhibited the reactionary face of newly-industrialized France, imperialist, exploitative and repressive. This story could have happened to anyone at that time, and in effect it happened to many. It is in its unexceptional nature that the value of the story lies.

## **Proletarian**

Duval was of working class origin and he quickly learned what this meant. He had his first brusque contact with reality in the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, when he was just twenty. As a member of the fifth infantry battalion he was sent to the front, there to find out for himself what the glory of the nation cost, and who had to pay the price. Thanks to the French army's standards of hygiene, he contracted smallpox, from which he was lucky to recover. At Villorau he was seriously wounded by a mortar bomb and had to spend six months in a miserable military hospital.

He returned to Paris in 1873, where, as his father had died, he was now the sole breadwinner of the family: he was still in one piece, but he suffered for the rest of his life with arthritis and rheumatism—a legacy of his war wounds and the stay in hospital. Ironically, he found that the family for which he had to provide no longer existed as such. His young wife (who had married him just before he left for the front), unable to cope with being left alone, had had an affair with another man, and poor Duval, after the joys of the martial life, found himself wearing horns on his return from the war.

With regard to sexual customs and extra-marital relationships, the mentality of the era was not very broad-minded. And Duval, although he was of progressive views, was in no state of mind to view matters with the serenity his ideas required. Fourteen months of bitterness and jealousy followed, until the young couple succeeded in forgetting the matter. It was the beginning of a period of relative tranquility. He worked as a mechanic in a Paris factory, and she took care of domestic affairs; and his life, although hard, seemed almost happy compared with that of the front, even if it was not all hearts and flowers. At the factory, fourteen hours a day under iron discipline, always with the threat of the sack for any form of minor deficiency. At home, a poor life, dirty and squalid, long silences because of fatigue and misery. It was normal working class life in the industrialized countries at the time.

It was in this period that Duval's libertarian ideas matured; he refined them through reading and direct experience, realizing the nature of exploitation and that the only chance for the emancipation of the lower classes lay in revolution. But, more than for his subversive ideas and intentions, he was known for his proud firmness of character, for his honesty, and for the passion which, in spite of everything, he put into his work.

But he was a marked man. Not by a supernatural destiny; not even so much by the ideas he professed; but by his position as one of the exploited, one of the rejects from which society demanded everything—grief, sacrifice, resignation and gave nothing in return. After just three years of normal life, a terrible attack of rheumatism came to remind him of his battles for the fatherland. He was bedridden almost continuously until 1878. He lost his job, and if previously there had been poverty, now there was pauperdom. And, with misery came family quarrels, recriminations, the contempt of others, the anguish of an existence without prospects and without mercy. Desperation. Hatred.

## **Expropriator**

...And Duval stole. In order to live, to eat, without questions about morality, only conscious of the fact that he had no alternative. The first time, he took a few francs from the till in the railway

ticket office while the clerk was absent, and all went well. The second time, a little later, he tried the same thing in the same place, but he was caught in the act. The immediate result was a year in Mazas prison and the final departure of his wife. But this was not the only result, nor was it the most important. That first contact with illegality made him think and convinced him not only of the substantial legality of theft (or “individual reappropriation” as it was called then) but of the possibility that it was a means of struggle. A means, let it be understood, not an end in itself. It was precisely in this conception, whether or not it is acceptable in a plan of revolutionary strategy, that Clement Duval’s greatness of spirit stands out. Others, after him, would turn to theft, but only for its own sake, substituting individual revolt (however understandable) for revolution, convinced that all that was necessary was to rob the rich, without thinking about what to do next. On the other hand, Duval saw theft as a means for financing political activity, for printing subversive literature, agitating among the masses, getting hold of the arms needed to confront the bourgeois exploiters, in effect a tool for making the anarchist revolution.

Although solitary because of the conditions in which he was forced to act, his was not an egoistic struggle. After his first unaware attempts, he knew how to go beyond his own personal tragedy, finding in it a point of departure for a fuller vision, the rationale of a struggle fought not for his own benefit, nor for that of a few others, but for *everyone*.

When Duval was released from prison, he started actively spreading libertarian propaganda in the Paris factories, and he realized he was at war. Violence was not excluded: this was a war without international conventions or any aristocratic notions of fair play. Every wage claim was met by massive sackings, every strike was met with gunfire, many were wounded or killed, every public demonstration was an occasion for mass arrests (and then it was jail, deportation or the guillotine). Duval thought (and who is to say that he was wrong?) that the only way to answer violence was with violence. And he answered.

A piano factory, the offices of a bus company, a furniture factory, the Choubersky workshops where he himself worked, the firm of Belvalette de Passy; all places where the most inhuman exploitation was practiced, where workers had their health ruined for fourteen hours a day in exchange for four miserable francs, where the most unfair advantages were taken, all these became ruins, gutted by fire or explosives. It was in this period that the figure of the anarchist bomber, somber vindicator of the wrongs done to the proletariat, nightmare of the bourgeoisie, became part of the iconography of the regime. By now Duval was one.

The episode which brought him to ruin happened on the night of 25<sup>th</sup> October 1886. Duval broke into the apartment of Mme. Lemaire, a rich lady who lived at Rue de Monceau. The residents were away on holiday in the country, and he was able to move about undisturbed: he carefully put aside all the precious objects that he could find, and smashed all that he was forced to leave behind because it was too heavy or inconvenient. While leaving, he accidentally (for he had no desire to attract attention while he was at work) set fire to the house. The damage caused by both the theft and fire was worth more than ten thousand francs, a respectable sum, which gave a certain renown to the event. The police were not slow in finding out who was responsible. The expropriated jewels, put up for sale too soon, left an obvious trail, which led back to the ‘fence’, and thus to Duval. Taken by surprise in front of a comrade’s door, both were arrested, not without trouble, as we have already mentioned.

## The Trial

The trial, which was held on 11 and 12 February 1887 at the Seine Court of Assizes, was also a far from tranquil affair. The accused answered the judges with firmness, refusing the role of the common delinquent which they wished to assign him, proclaiming loudly the political nature of his activity, and contesting the pretence that the men in robes were handing out justice. From being the accused he became accuser, denouncing embezzlement, the injustice of exploitation, mystification, and the wrongs suffered by himself and those like him. The crowd which packed out the court-room was carried away by his vehemence, and echoed his words.

The final hearing ended uproariously with Duval expelled shouting "Long live anarchy," the police overwhelmed by the crowd, the judges in *flight* to their chambers, and then insults and blows, fights and arrests. An hour later, when the uproar had been quelled, the Court delivered its verdict: death. A penalty dictated by fear, certainly disproportionate to the gravity of the offences under trial. On February 28 perhaps revealing this lack of proportion, the President of the Republic commuted the sentence to one of deportation for life.

Freedom was closing its doors on him, and the inferno was to take him in, forever.

At four o'clock on the afternoon of 25 March, Duval departed the city on the Orne, from the military fortress of Toulon, bound for the vaults of Guyana. He had a ghastly anticipation of what to expect from the very first day of his stay in the fortress. His own words, for all their tone, are so eloquent as to not need comment: "... I would never dare to repeat the experience of the putrid corruption which poisoned every human emotion and sentiment to the last stages of decomposition. Along the walls, lying on their beds made from scraps of material those exhausted people who had said goodbye to all hope... In hidden corners, where neither the flickering light of the oil-lamps nor the gaze of the curious reached, they were trembling and sobbing; lust showed itself in delirious, bestial fornication. One of Sodom's slums, built in the shade of the well-meaning bourgeoisie's Third Republic, a tribute to their modest morality and their positive penal science."

## The Inferno

The thirty-day sea trip aboard the prison ship to Guyana dispelled any remaining illusions. His companions in misfortune were thieves, assassins, soulless brutes; the sons of abjection, misery, and ignorance. Lebou, sentenced for having shot his mother; Faure who had killed his brother for money, then chopped him up and fed him to the pigs; Mentier, who had killed two old women in order to rape the corpses, and other worthy products of the society which had begotten them. This frightening section of humanity was paraded on deck for inspection every day, and met with the mockery, vulgarity, and stupid comments of the crew, the guards, and the civilian passengers.

Duval was not the sort to accept this treatment willingly. On the first occasion he rebelled, answering the provocations in the same vein, and thus he had a taste of what was awaiting him in the penitentiary: naked as a worm, he was thrown into a water-logged cell where he stayed for two days, unable to stand upright because the ceiling was too low, and unable to lie down because the cell was too small. Repression inside repression.

Guyana was a real hell-hole, a filthy abyss of violence and depravity made even more intolerable by the hot and humid tropical climate. There the lie was given to the hypocritical idea that prison can lead to atonement and repentance. Guyana was synonymous with forced labor,

fettered ankles, rotting food, punishment cells, swarms of insects, scurvy, dysentery. Redemption? In captivity, men lost their health, their dignity, they died of disease and want, their bodies and spirits scarred, humiliated, broken, brutalized, reduced against their will to the level of animals. The more assertive among them achieved some squalid privilege at the expense of their companions. The most cynical curried favor with the guards by crawling and informing on the others. The weakest went under. The penitentiary was the perverted image of all the vices, every misery, all the oppression of the society which had produced it. Because of this, those who had not submitted before, when they were free, did not accept the idea of submitting now that they were in a society that was more vicious but otherwise not dissimilar. Duval (and in general all the anarchists who ended up in prison) was no exception.

The story of his stay on the terrible island is the story of the pride of his unbeatable fighting spirit, of the constant struggle with the situation, not to lose his identity, of his refusal to fall into the abyss of misery that confronted him. And he succeeded. He opposed the guard's traps, rebelled against the injustices, helped the most wretched fellow prisoners, unmasked spies and provocateurs. The cruelest bullies, the drunken directors, the scum, the murderers, the mindless brutes that peopled the prison camp, learned to pay him a sort of respect, certainly worthy of better circles, in which admiration for his correctness was united with fear for his toughness. A respect that was merited, if one thinks of the terrible price that had to be paid for it.

## **The Revolt**

On the night of 21/22 October 1895 there broke out a revolt on the island, organized by the quite large group of anarchists who were there at the time. It was a hopeless enterprise, undertaken more to compensate for the continual vexations which the comrades had to put up with, rather than for any real hope of success. Duval took an active part in its preparation, which was long, much disputed and laborious. But he was sent elsewhere as a punishment and had to cease his active contribution. All in all, this was a stroke of luck. In fact, the prison administration was informed on all the goings on through the reports of a couple of informers, and had decided to take this opportunity to do away with the whole anarchist group, which caused them continual problems because of the comrades' independent character. And so it happened. As soon as the rebels left their rooms they found themselves confronted by the guards' rifles. "Cold blood and no quarter given" had been the orders of the Commander Bonafi, Chief of Internal Security, whose men had got as drunk as pigs for the occasion. In an incredible massacre, the following anarchists were overpowered and mercilessly killed, one by one: Garnier, Boasi, Simon (aka Biscuit), Leauthier, Lebeau, Mazarguil, Thiervoz, Chevenet, Meyrueis and Marpaux; the next day their bullet ridden bodies were thrown into the sea for the sharks to eat, while the hurriedly appointed Commission of Inquiry continued the repression, arresting and putting in irons anyone who was even slightly suspected of helping the rebels.

Duval stayed fourteen years in Guyana. In this time, he tried to escape more than twenty times, seizing every chance, every means: rafts, stolen or patiently-built boats, hiding in passing ships. Every time something went wrong.

He was captured, suffered from the inevitable punishment, and began again. Had he given up after the first attempts he would have died in prison like so many others, killed either by fever

or by the guards. Instead, unable to resign himself to his fate, he was saved. After trying again and again, the time finally came when luck turned his way.

## The Escape

On 13 April 1901, Duval, with eight of his fellow-prisoners, put to sea in a fragile canoe and silently made for the open waters. It was in the dead of night, and no guards noticed the escape until the next day. Thus the convicts, rowing with all their strength, made an undisturbed getaway. In the morning they raised a sail and made for the Northeast, to avoid the territories under French jurisdiction. A warship came close to them without showing the slightest interest, and continued on its way. A good start.

Backed by a light breeze, they sailed all day. At the helm was a cabin-boy, an excellent sailor, whose experience of the sea helped to keep the morale of the others high. But in the evening the weather changed, turned nasty. The breeze soon became a hurricane, making huge waves that filled the boat with water, forcing the men to a nerve wracking bailing. Further, the cabin-boy was quite unable to see in the dark because of a lack of vitamins in the penitentiary's diet, and thus his ability was rendered less useful. It was a hellish night, and they many times risked ending up as shark food.

The next day weather conditions were better, and Duval and his companions soon sighted land. It was the district of Paramaraibo, in Dutch Guyana. Outside the claws of the penitentiary administration. The worst was past. However, the fugitives were still in danger. As escaped convicts, they could still be imprisoned by the Dutch police. If the French got to hear about it, they could be extradited and again interned on the terrible island.

The odyssey was not yet over. It would last another two years. Always with false names, always on the lookout against discovery, always struggling against hunger and the authorities, forced into the most worthless and poor jobs. Duval made his way to British Guyana, then to Martinique, finally reaching Puerto Rico. Here he stayed a while, somewhat recovering his broken health and recommencing a normal life. On 16 June 1903 he left for the United States, with the prospect at least of living in liberty. Deportation was by now only a memory, even if an indelible one.

—*Black Flag Quarterly*, Vol 7, Number 5 (Winter 1984)

# Expropriation and the Right to Live

Clement Duval

Translated by Jules Scarceriaux

With Clement Duval appeared the theory of individual expropriation. On October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1886, the hotel of Madame Lamaire, then a well-known artist painter, was partially burned by unknown persons. Silverware, gold medals, brooches, and bracelets all set with fine stones and valued at 15,000 francs, had been taken away.

The description of the stolen goods was given to the jewelers of Paris. Not long after, on October 10, a jeweler of the rue Throuchet informed the police that one of the brooches in question had been offered to him. A trap was set. A few individuals declared on arrest that they had received the goods from Duval, whom they knew to be attending the Anarchist groups. Numerous detectives were put on Duval's trail and he was soon apprehended by the famous Rossignol. Duval's capture was really dramatic; only with the help of many policemen and a hard fight, did they succeed in holding him.

At first the press presented his case as ordinary, but a letter from Duval addressed to the prosecuting attorney lifted the veil and rendered the case sensational. The letter as published by the newspapers reads as follows:—

Oct. 21, 1886

To the Prosecuting Attorney

Sir:

Upon my incarceration sheet in Mazas I see written:

... attempt to murder; to the contrary, I believe that I was in a position of legitimate defense. It is true that you and I do not see this in the same light because I am an anarchist, or better, say a partisan of anarchy. I could not be an anarchist in our present society. In view of these facts I cannot recognize the law, knowing by experience that law is a prostitute that is handled at will for the advantage or detriment of this or that individual class. Therefore, if I have attacked the police officer Rossignol, it is because he threw himself upon me to arrest me in the name of the law; I, in the name of freedom, stabbed him.

Consequently, I am within the logic of my principles; far from this is the attempt to murder!

With revolutionary greetings  
Clement Duval

At the same time, he addressed the following declaration to Jean Grave, editor of *Le Revolte*, which appeared in that publication:

Comrade:

Although very little known to you, you are aware of the fact that I am an anarchist. I am writing this letter to you to protest against the insanities that have been slapped upon me in particular, and upon the anarchists in general, by the newspapers of all shades. They went so far as to say, when I was arrested, that I was an ex-convict and that I had been in jail for theft. Could it be possible to describe "thief" as a worker who owns nothing but misery? In my point of view, theft consists only in the exploitation of man by man; that is to say, in the existence of all those who live at the expense of the productive class.

Here is why and how I committed that offense which they call theft. In 1870 I was, as many others, foolish enough to go and defend the properties and privileges of others; but then I was only twenty years old! From there I brought back two wounds and rheumatism; a terrible sickness that had already made me spend four years in various hospitals. After having served as cannon fodder I then served as experimental flesh for those masters of science. Thus, in 1878, I was only out of the hospital for three months when I started to work. After one week I fell sick again and had to remain at home for a month. I was the father of two children... Somewhat later my wife too fell sick. There was neither money nor bread in the house. I was not in the anarchist movement, which in fact did not really exist at the time. The study of sociology was yet in its embryonic stage; heads had not been chopped off to spread its significance. I was long ago free from the prejudices that weigh upon the masses' brain; I was an enemy of all authority, an anarchist at heart. I loved all that was right, great, and generous, and revolted against abuses and injustices. From this fact I recognized that undeniable right which nature has given to every human being—the right to existence. An occasion presented itself. Without scruple, I helped myself to the strong-box of a railroad station master which yielded eighty francs. One cannot go very far with eighty francs when one is lacking in everything—drugs are very dear.

And so, I resolved to go back and again see the strong-box of the railroad station master, saying to myself, "Pshaw! The Company steals enough from its employees and I, lacking the necessities of life, am certainly entitled to take part of that which is superfluous." That was my misfortune. I was arrested and sentenced to one year in jail. Far from being ashamed of it I vindicate it. When society refuses you the right to existence, you have the right to take without begging; begging is cowardice.

The above, comrade, is the truth as at the time of my condemnation. No comrade knew of it. I assume, then, the entire responsibility for my acts. Those who make use of human stupidity to discredit an idea so just, so noble as the one defended by the anarchists, in attempting to throw upon a whole party the faults or the wrongs (if wrong there is) of one of its defenders, are idiots who have interests, and who tremble before the tight logic of anarchist ideas. I think that this explanation to the anarchist comrades is necessary and I beg you to publish my letter in your next issue.



Clement Duval  
Masas, Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>, 1886

*English version in MAN!, volume 4, no. 4, April 1936.*

# Obituary: Clement Duval

## Jules Scarceriaux

The sad news of the death of Clement Duval has just come to us from New York City. He was eighty-five years old.

Comrade Clement (our “Nonno”) was connected with the revolutionary movement from the age of fifteen. With his father, he went to the Republican Clubs in which, at that time, men like Raspail and Blanqui were leaders. On this subject, a few months ago, Clement wrote to Paicentino:—“The word Republic meant abolition of all privileges and arbitrary rules; the Republic would do away with idleness, parasitism, and bring about the cooperation of all the people in general for the common cause ... That is the reason why, when the French Empire crumbled down, it was easy for my father to convince me that I had a duty to protect the French Republic from the German invasion . Surely, I was forced to, made as were thousands of fathers and sons who ignore the fact that all governments are alike; and that those who take part in them, no matter what good intentions they might have, become invariably despots.”

Wounded during the war of 1870, suffering with arthritis and rheumatism, Clement passed years and years in hospitals. And then, France rewarded his patriotic services by leaving him to starve in the streets of Paris. However, he would not stand by to see his wife and child go hungry. What was the alternative? Work? He could not find any. Need he beg? He was too much of a man to lower himself to such degradation. And then it was that Clement decided to help himself to food. He was arrested and sent to jail for one year.

Back in the movement, he passed six months in the hospital, in 1876, as the result of the war and his sojourn in jail. Now the movement was lacking in financial support. Clement as a man of action decided to procure the necessary means and was determined to get those means. In 1888, on 18<sup>th</sup> October, he entered the house of a wealthy woman—Madeleine Lemaire—and helped himself to all the jewels he could put his hands on. A few days later, Rossignol, a police officer, came to arrest him:—“In the name of the law I arrest you!” exclaimed Rossignol:—“In the name of Freedom, I suppress you!” answered Clement. Rossignol was wounded and twenty police arrested the well-known anarchist Clement Duval.

Duval’s trial took place on the 11 and 12 of February, 1887. His defense, as a man who asserted that he had dedicated his life to Anarchism, was a master-piece of propaganda:—“I am neither a thief nor a murderer. I am only a rebel. And I shall tell you why I am an anarchist ... I accuse you and the wretched society you represent . a society in which thieves are venerated in their unmolested triumph upon the misery and sufferings of the starving masses—...”

But Duval was sentenced to death. However, he was a kind of French John Brown, and through the numerous protests on the part of the thinking element, he was sent to the Guayan Penitentiary for life. One must really read his autobiography to grasp the sufferings our comrade went through.

After fourteen years of infernal life, Clement succeeded in escaping; but only after thousands of difficulties. He landed in the United States in 1903. And here, he has been venerated by all those who knew him.

And why this veneration? In one of his letters to Piacentino, he wrote:—"To be an anarchist, one must really be human, love beauty, love that which is noble, generous; be proud of oneself, have personal dignity and an upright character. One must also have compassion for those who suffer, not as cowardly sufferers, but as victims of the wicked oppressors. And when a man lives up to such a standard, only then, can he speak as a renovator of society ."

Clement's wife came to him in New York, but twenty years of separation had rendered them total strangers. She returned to France.

In conclusion, we shall give a quotation from his last letter to Comrade Piacentino, to whom Clement wrote:—"I am ready to pay nature her inevitable tribute. Discouraged? Yes, I am discouraged. But certainly not for myself. At the age of eighty-five, I can say that I have lived my span of years. There are not ten per cent who reach a ripe age such as mine. What discourages me is the vision of the actual conditions. Men ought to awaken with a boiling conscience! Still, what do we see? Apathy, passivity. Nevertheless, the work must go on. It does not pay to quit or even then, to be a renegade. The Comrades have been so kind and generous towards me. always, always."

And to think that the life of such a man has been stolen from him by condemnation. Clement Duval died of uncompromising purposes, in full possession of his senses as well as with all his intellectual faculties. There are few men like him and we shall always keep a warm place in our hearts for our Comrade "Nonno" (Grandfather).

—*MAN!*, volume 3, no. 5, May 1935

## Why I Became a Burglar (1905)

Marius Jacob Translated by Doug Imrie Messieurs:

Now you know who I am: a rebel who lives off the proceeds of his burglaries. Moreover I have set fire to several villas and have defended my freedom against aggression by the agents of the State. I have laid bare to you my entire life of struggle and submit it as a problem for your intelligences. Since I acknowledge no one's right to judge me, I am begging for a neither a pardon nor leniency. I will not appeal to those I hate and despise. You are the stronger; Dispose of me as you wish; Send me to the penal colony or the scaffold. It matters little! But before we part company, I would like to say a final word...

Since you primarily condemn me for being a thief it's useful to define what theft is.

In my opinion theft is a need that is felt by all men to take in order to satisfy their appetites. This need manifests itself in everything: from the stars that are born and die like beings, to the insect in space, so small, so infinite that our eyes can barely distinguish it. Life is nothing but theft and massacre. Plants and beasts devour each other in order to survive.

One is born only to serve as feed for the other. Despite the degree of civilization or, to phrase it better, perfectibility to which he has arrived, man is also subject to this law, and can only escape it under pain of death. He kills both plants and beasts to feed himself: he is insatiable.

Aside from objects of alimentation that assure him life, man also nourishes himself on air, water, and light. But have we ever seen two men kill each other for the sharing of these aliments? Not that I know of. Nevertheless these are the most precious of items, without which a man cannot live.

We can remain several days without absorbing the substances for which we make ourselves slaves. Can we do the same when it comes to air? Not even for a quarter of an hour. Water accounts for three quarters of our organism and is indispensable in maintaining the elasticity of our tissues. Without heat, without the sun, life would be completely impossible.

And so every man takes, steals his aliments. Do we accuse him of committing a crime? Of course not! Why then do we differentiate these from the rest? Because the rest demand the expending of effort, a certain amount of labor. But labor is the very essence of society; that is, the association of all individuals to conquer with little effort much well-being. Is this truly the image of what exists? Are your institutions based on such a mode of organization? The truth demonstrates the contrary.

The more a man works the less he earns. The less he produces the more he benefits. Merit is not taken into consideration. Only the bold take hold of power and hasten to legalize their rapine.

From top to bottom of the social scale everything is but dastardy on one side and idiocy on the other. How can you expect that penetrated with these truths I could have respected such a state of things?

A liquor seller and the boss of a brothel enrich themselves, while a man of genius dies of poverty in a hospital bed. The baker who bakes bread doesn't get any; the shoemaker who makes

thousands of shoes shows his toes; the weaver who makes stocks of clothing doesn't have any to cover himself with; the bricklayer who builds castles and palaces wants for air in a filthy hovel. Those who produce everything have nothing, and those who produce nothing have everything.

Such a state of affairs can only produce antagonism between the laboring class and the owning, i.e., do-nothing, class. The fight breaks out and hatred delivers its blows.

You call a man a thief and bandit; you apply the rigor of the law against him without asking yourself if he could be something else. Have we ever seen a *rentier* become a burglar? I admit that I've never known of this. But I, who am neither *rentier* nor landlord, I who am only a man who owns just his arms and his brains to ensure his preservation, had to conduct myself differently. Society only granted me three means of existence: work, begging, or theft. Work, far from being hateful, pleases me: man cannot do without working. His muscles and brain possess a sum of energy that must be spent. What I hated was sweating blood and tears for a pittance of a salary; it was creating wealth that wouldn't be allowed me.

In a word, I found it hateful to surrender to the prostitution of work. Begging is degradation, the negation of all dignity. Every man has a right to life's banquet.

*The right to live isn't begged for, it's taken.*

Theft is the restitution, the regaining of possession. Instead of being cloistered in a factory, like in a penal colony; instead of begging for what I had a right to, I preferred to rebel and fight my enemy face to face by making war on the rich, by attacking their goods.

Of course I understand that you would have preferred that I submit to your laws; that as a docile and worn out worker I would have created wealth in exchange for a miserable salary, and when my body would have been worn out and my brain softened I would have died on a street corner. Then you wouldn't have called me a "cynical bandit," but an "honest worker." Using flattery, you would even have given me the medal of labor. Priests promise paradise to their dupes. You are less abstract: you offer them a piece of paper.

I thank you for so much goodness, so much gratitude, messieurs. I'd prefer to be a cynic conscious of my rights instead of an automaton, a caryatid.

As soon as I took possession of my consciousness I gave myself over to theft without any scruples. I have no part in your so-called morality that advocates the respect of property as a virtue when in reality there are no worse thieves than landlords.

Consider yourselves lucky, messieurs, that this prejudice has taken root in the people, for this serves as your best gendarme. Knowing the powerlessness of the law, of force, to phrase it better, you have made them the most solid of your protectors. But beware: everything only lasts a certain time. Everything that is constructed, built by ruse and force, can be demolished by ruse and force.

The people are evolving every day. Can't you see that having learned these truths, conscious of their rights, that all the starving, all the wretched, in a word: all your victims, are arming themselves with jimmies and assaulting your homes to take back the wealth they created and that you stole from them

Do you think they'll be any more unhappy? I think the contrary. If they were to think carefully about this they would prefer to run all possible risks rather than fatten you while groaning in misery.

"Prison...penal colonies...the scaffold," it will be said. But what are these prospects in comparison with the life of a beast made up of all possible sufferings.

The miner who fights for his bread in the earth's entrails, never seeing the sun shine, can perish from one minute to the next, victim of an explosion; the roofer who wanders across the roofs can fall and be smashed to pieces; the sailor knows the day of his departure but doesn't know if he'll return to port. A good number of other workers contract fatal maladies in the exercise of their métier, wear themselves out, poison themselves, kill themselves to create for you. Even gendarmes and policemen—your valets—who, for the bone you give them to nibble on, sometimes meet death in the fight they undertake against your enemies.

Obstinate in your narrow egoism, do you not remain skeptical in regard to this vision? The people are frightened, you seem to be saying. We govern them through fear and repression. If he cries out we'll throw him in prison; if he stumbles we'll deport him to the penal colony; if he acts we'll guillotine him! All of this is poorly calculated, messieurs, believe you me. The sentences you inflict are not a remedy against acts of revolt. Repression, far from being a remedy, or even a palliative, is only an aggravation of the evil.

Collective measures only plant hatred and vengeance. It's a fatal cycle. In any case, since you have been cutting off heads, since you have been populating the prisons and the penal colonies, have you prevented hatred from manifesting itself? Say something! Answer! The facts demonstrate your impotence.

For my part I knew full well that my conduct could have no other issue than the penal colony or the scaffold. You must see that this did not prevent me from acting. If I gave myself over to theft it was not a question of gain, of lucre, but a question of principle, of right. I preferred to preserve my liberty, my independence, my dignity as a man rather than to make myself the artisan of someone else's fortune. To put it crudely, with no euphemisms: I preferred to rob rather than be robbed!

Of course I, too, condemn the act through which a man violently and through ruse takes possession of the fruits of someone else's labor. But it's precisely because of this that I made war on the rich, thieves of the goods of the poor. I too want to live in a society from which theft is banished. I only approved of and used theft as the means of revolt most appropriate for combating the most unjust of all thefts: individual property.

In order to destroy an effect you must first destroy the cause. If there is theft it is only because there is abundance on one hand and famine on the other; because *everything* only belongs to *some*. *The struggle will only disappear when men will put their joys and suffering in common, their labors and their riches, when all will belong to everyone.*

*Revolutionary anarchist, I made my revolution. Vive L'Anarchie!*

For Germinal, to you, to the cause.

—*Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, Fall/Winter 1994–95

From Jean Maitron, *Histoire du mouvement anarchiste en France*. Paris, Société universitaire d'éditions et de librairie, 1951. Jacob's statement originally appeared in the *Balai Social* in April 1905.

## The Paris Auto-Bandits (The “Bonnot Gang”)

Anonymous

The world stands aghast at the reign of terror that held the city of Paris in its grip. At last the “bandits” have been hounded to death. Many and varied have been the opinions expressed in the radical press of the world. We had not contemplated writing our opinion on this subject, but when we read the condemnation of these men in one of the leading revolutionary weeklies, last week, we could not refrain from expressing our small tribute to the men who had the strength of their convictions to risk all that they possessed, a miserable life, in carrying them to their logical conclusion.

For years these men had preached the expropriation of the master class, and pray why should they wait until the Social Revolution had conquered before carrying out their plans? Why should they submit like sheep to exploitation and tyranny and do naught but raise a feeble baa of protest?

Before condemning these men let us try and imagine ourselves in their position. Let us try and understand the motives which led them to commit the acts of violence for which they have been condemned.

Expropriation of the master class. What real revolutionist can condemn expropriation? Now, or in the future? It matters not. Expropriation of the means of existence or for the spreading of propaganda is always justifiable.

But in this case there are also some circumstances which must be considered. Hounded by the police and detectives these men were denounced as anarchists and agitators, wherever and whenever they succeeded in obtaining work. What then was left for them to do? Were they to starve slowly in the midst of wealth and luxury? Become parasites on the workers, or expropriate the wealth that was rightly theirs? Not only was it their actual right to expropriate the means of existence, it was their duty.

As to the horrible murders to which they were driven, by the bloodhounds of the law, who can hold them responsible?

“Smitten stones will talk with fiery tongue  
And the worm when trodden will turn.”

It is all well and good to speak of the ideal life, but in reality, for we all get down to brass tacks once in a while, life itself is a compromise in this miserable parasitic society.

Our good friends who speak of having a model life for the sake of the cause, remind me very much of the metaphysicians who teach that the body is naught and must be sacrificed as an offering to the almighty god in order that the soul may live.

Speaking of such men as Bakunin and Cafiero and the beautiful lessons of their lives, let us remember that both Bakunin and Cafiero—although they gave their fortunes to the spreading of propaganda—had the full benefit of their wealth in the leisure time and opportunities that they had had to study and develop themselves into super-men, so to speak. Neither of these two great intellectuals, at any time, had to suffer spiritual hunger along with material hunger as did the so-called auto-bandits of Paris.

The one great mistake that we all make is that when a really great man dies we canonize him right away, and hold his life up as an example to future humanity. His ideas are likewise crystallized in a stage of evolution, while the world and all life goes on evolving so that we come to live in the domain of the unreal, thinking in the past and living in the present.

And when a case like the so-called bandits of Paris is put before us, living as we do in the realm of the past, we are horrified, for it is impossible for us to perceive the motives, conditions, and circumstances that led up to the so-called crime.

—*The Social War*, New York, v. 1, n. 3, March 26<sup>th</sup> 1913



# “Why I Took Part in a Burglary, Why I Committed Murder”

**Raymond Callemin**

*The Trial Statement of Callemin, also known as Raymond-la-Science, a member of the turn-of-the-century Parisian illegalist culture and the celebrated Bonnot Gang.*

Every being comes into the world with a right to live a real life. This is indisputable, for it is nature's law. Also I ask myself why, on this earth, there are people who expect to have all the rights. They give the pretext that they have money, but if one asks them where they got their money from, what do they answer? As for myself, I answer as follows: "I give no one the right to impose his own wishes, regardless of the pretext given. I don't see why I wouldn't have the right to eat those grapes or those apples just because they are the property of Mr. X... What did he do that I have not that let's him alone gain an advantage? I answer nothing and consequently I have the right to make use of things according to my need and if he wants to prevent me forcibly I will revolt and against his strength I will oppose my own because, finding myself attacked, I will defend myself by any means at my disposal."

"That's why, to those who will say that they have money and, thus, I must obey them, I will say; 'When you are able to demonstrate that part of the whole represents the whole, that this is another earth than that on which you have been born, as I have, and that this is another sun the one which lights the way and makes plants grow and fruit ripen, when you have proven that, I will give you the right to keep me from living, because, well, where DOES money come from: from the earth, and silver is one part of the earth transformed into a metal that came to be called silver and one part of the world monopolized this silver and, in using this metal, violently forced the rest of the world to obey it. For this end, they invented all kinds of torture systems such as prisons, etc.

Why does this minority which "has" seem stronger than the majority which "has not"? Because this majority is ignorant and lacking in energy; it allows all sorts of caprices on the part of those who "have" by simply slouching its shoulders at each new caprice that comes up. These people are too faint-hearted to revolt themselves and, even better, if amongst them there are some who leave the flock, the others hold them back, either directly or indirectly, to without knowing it, but nevertheless in just as dangerous a manner. They claim honesty, but underneath that facade hides a hypocrisy and a cowardice which cannot be disavowed.

That someone could bring an honest man before me!

It is due to all of these things that I have revolted, it's because I didn't want to live the life of the present society, because I didn't want to wait until death to be alive that I defended myself against my oppressors by all means at my disposition.

From my earliest days, I knew the authority of the father and mother and before I was even old enough to understand what it all meant, I rebelled against that authority, just as I did against the authority of the educational system.

I was thirteen at the time. I started working; when I began to experience and understand what was going on around me. I also became familiar with life and social abuse; I saw people I found to be bad and corrupt, and told myself: "I must find a way to get out of this shit of bosses, workers, bourgeoisie, judges, officers, and others; all of these people disgust me, some become they allow themselves to go through the motions of life without really doing a thing." Not wanting to be exploited or, on the other hand, to be an exploiter of others, I stole from the shelves of stores, without getting too far head, the first time I was arrested I was seventeen; I was sentenced to three months in prison; and then I understood justice as it really was; my chum who was charged with the same crime (because we were working together) was given only two months, and that only a suspended sentence (of observation and good conduct). Why that was, I have always wondered. But I can say that I give no one the right to judge me, be he a judge from the educational system or one from the tribunal, because no one can possibly understand or know the reasons for my actions; no one can put himself in my place in one word no one can be me.

When I got out of prison, I returned to my parents, who reproached me severely. But to have undergone what I did in the name of "Justice", that is, prison, made me all the more rebellious. I started working again, although not the same job. (See, after having worked in an office for some time, I threw myself into work with a butcher, then into work in a deli, something which I did well, but, now wherever I went, people asked me for some sort of certification. I didn't have any, no one wanted to hire me, and that made me even more rebellious. That's when I began to play games in order to find work, I fixed up false certificates and finally found work for sixteen to eighteen hours a day for 70 to 80 francs a week, seven days a week, and when I asked for a day's vacation Monsieur the Boss got angry.

At the end of these months of work there, I was distraught and exhausted and yet I had to keep going for fear of dying of hunger, seeing that what I earned was just enough to pay for my most basic needs, but to look at what was going on the other side of the street, I felt that my boss was reaping all the benefits of MY work and what was he doing to deserve THAT? Nothing, other than reminding me that I had arrived ten minutes late or criticizing my work and threatening me with losing my job if my work didn't improve.

Anyway, as I don't like doing the same thing all the time (I don't think of myself as a machine), I would have liked to teach myself, to know lots of things, to develop my intelligence, as well as my body, in one word, to become a being incapable of moving out in all directions as he pleases, needing as little as possible from others around him. But to get to that point, I needed time, I needed books. How could I get those things while remaining so tied to my work? It was impossible for me to pull these things together as I had to eat and in order to do that I had to work and for whom? For a boss. I thought all this over and said for myself: I am going to change jobs once again, maybe things will go better for me now, but I really hadn't expected to encounter a social system such as the one I find myself fighting constantly these days; I was pretty interested in mechanical work, but when I inquired about working, mechanics responded: We'd like to take you on but we can't pay you because you wouldn't work fast enough since you don't know anything about what it takes to be a mechanic... they would (one day) pay me, but only once I know the rudiments of the trade, which meant in fifteen to eighteen months (or more) and then they could pay me six to eight francs a day for ten to twelve hours of work per day. The state really began to disgust me at this point. In the end I found work digging embankments but nothing changed: I had to work a lot in order to fall short of satisfying even my most basic needs. I came to the same conclusions in looking at situations all around me; I saw nothing but poverty

for those who worked at my side and, worse, all these miserable people instead of trying to get out of the rut they were in, dug in their heels and drank themselves into oblivion, thereby casting their faculties of reason to the wind.

I saw all that, I saw the exploiter getting satisfied by the whole thing, and worse, I saw him pay for rounds of drinks for men who had already drunk too much; and for good reason, for while they got smashed, the workers couldn't think and that's what was necessary to keep them under the authority of the exploiting bosses.

When, accidentally, there was a gesture of revolt by the imbeciles (I make no distinction by trade here), the boss threatened to fire them and the imbeciles calmed down immediately.

I went on strike once too but I quickly understood the meaning and the ramifications of this token gesture. All of those 'men', incapable of acting individually, appointed a leader whose responsibility it was to discuss the discontent amongst our members with the boss.

Some times, this stupid leader sold out to the boss by asking for a small bribe, whereas when the other brutes had no money, he suggested they return to work if they needed to pay for things. These were the results, the rewards we got from the strikes, and when we did finally get a raise, the capitalists reacted by increasing the cost of our food, so much so that nothing really changed, we had lost a lot of time and energy, that's all. Also, in the unions, I only made one short appearance, as I was quickly aware that all of these gentlemen were noting more than profiteers and careerists who screamed for rebellion everywhere, but why? I understood that they wanted to destroy the present state so that they could put themselves in power, to change the whole apparatus in name only. Like the capitalists, they utilized the same technique: promises. One's sincerity, in the end, is only one more lousy working class trait to be exploited. When I left this, I came upon a group which was somewhat different: the revolutionaries. I then became an anarchist. I was eighteen, I didn't want to return to work and I started my campaign of individual reprisals once more, with the same unfortunate luck as before. After three or four months, I was arrested. I was sentenced to two months imprisonment. When I got out I tried to find work. I worked on a general strike, during which we had a lot of trouble with the police. I was arrested and sentenced to six days in jail.

All of this sharpened my character and, naturally, the more I learned, the more I understood about life. I spent time with anarchists, I understood their theories and became a fervent supporter of their point of view, not because the theories seemed good but because I found them to be the most just of those that were current at the time.

In the anarchist milieu I encountered individuals who were trying as much as possible to get rid of their prejudices, those same prejudices which made this world so stupid and so savage, people with whom I enjoyed talking because they showed me things I could see and touch rather than utopias. More than that, these people were sober, clear thinkers. When with them I didn't need to turn my head the other way as I did with most of the brutes, their mouths didn't reek of alcohol or tobacco. They seemed reasonable and I found them to have lots of energy and wills of iron.

My opinions solidified, I became a part of the group, I wanted no part of the world in which I worked for others, I wanted to work for myself, but in order to do that, I didn't have much choice, but I had acquired some experience in some areas, and, full of energy myself, I resolved to defend myself to the death, against the stupid yelping of the present society.

I left Paris when I was nineteen and a half, because I saw that everything in the city was becoming regimented. I understood what the words republic, liberty, equality, fraternity, flag,

country and so on meant. I mulled these words over, what part I was to take in all of this and I also spoke with my friends about the supposed valor of that social vocabulary that surrounded me; I understood the horrible hypocrisy represented by the language of the state. It's all nothing more than a religion, like God's religion that gets slopped out to the world's religious folk. They say to them. 'respect your country, die for your country, but what is the nation for me, it's all the earth without borders. "Country" is where I live, whether it is in Germany, Russia, or France, for me "country" or "nation" knows no bounds, it is everywhere that I am contented. I don't distinguish between peoples, I seek only mutual understanding, but around me I see only religious types and Christians or deceitful hypocrites. If the workers would think a bit, they would see and understand that between capitalists there are no boundaries, these rapacious wrongdoers organize themselves to oppress others better. It is only now that I am here and it is now that I must live and I shall do just that by any means that science puts at my disposition. I may not live to be terribly old, I will probably be overtaken by the open struggle between me and the society which has better means of winning than I will ever have, but I will defend myself as best I can, to deceitfulness and tricking I will respond in kind, likewise to force, until I am beaten, that is to say, dead.

Around May of 1910, I tried going to the provinces, hoping to leave the country and thereby escape military service, but in July I was put into prison for assault and battery. I got out at the end of August, one month before my class of military trainees was to leave. As soon as I left prison, I got a job with a ditch-digging concern to earn some money; I took the train for the Belgian border, paying for part of the trip, but not all of it—I had to have money to eat on the train. Once in Valenciennes, I got off the train, looked for the exit doors of the station, and was spied on by a policeman, who asked me a few questions, then let me go. I didn't have any money, so I took a job for a week. I committed two robberies and left the country for Belgium. I got to Charleroi about the sixth of October, found a job for a few days, got to know a group of anarchists and in the early part of November I was arrested and then released eight days later (they couldn't prove the charges against me).

I worked a bit, met some people with similar opinions, people who were frank, motivated, with whom I did some robberies. I was twenty and a half years old.

February 1911. I had to get out of Brussels as they were looking to accuse me of doing those robberies at Charleroi; I returned to Paris, where I worked on the newspaper ANARCHY, something I worked hard for. I worked hard, just about every day of the week, and as usual, I was a bit thin, so I did a couple of robberies without much real success. I started printing counterfeit bills, but that wasn't too successful and it was just as risky as doing a big job that would bring in more money. I stopped the counterfeiting.

In July, lots of my friends were arrested. I was upset and determined to avenge my position in this criminal society. I left the newspaper and moved to Vincennes with some friends.

While working on the newspaper, we decided to rent a number of rooms so as to better insure our security. We didn't have much money so we robbed some places to get what we needed.

For a time I had been looking for a friend to drive me places, but I couldn't find anyone. I had learned to drive, but not being very skillful at it, I was hesitant to try stealing a car and risk causing our group more trouble than we could handle. It was during this time that I met Bonnot.

It was about December 10, 1911, at night, that we stole a car in Boulogne and proceeded to hide it in a friend's garage. I told him simply that we would be back for it in eight hours or so. I gave him a false name and false address and we left.

We discussed what we had to do. We had two big jobs to do. We were four strong. We drove around Paris for the rest of the night until; 8:30 the next morning. I stayed at the wheel and grew confident in my own abilities to handle the curves in the road, even at high speed. That was good, we really needed two drivers in case one was wounded in the pursuit.

At 8:30 I let Bonnot take over.

We hadn't mutually decided how we were to pull off what we wanted to do—rob a cash collector. We had already observed the collector and timed his arrival at the rue Ordineur but still, it was nine in the morning, right out in the middle of the street, and in a quarter which was rather heavily populated.

At 9:00 exactly we spotted him stepping off the street car as usual, accompanied by someone else assigned to protect him. We don't have a second to lose; the car approaches him, I get out, hand on my revolver. My companion, on the other side of the sidewalk, is a few steps behind me.

Three feet away from the cashier, I take out my revolver, coldly, and shoot him twice; he falls, his accompanying guard runs off; I pick up one sack, my companion takes another.

We get back on the car, some passerby trying to keep us from getting in. We pull out our revolvers, shoot and everyone flees. We take the route to Le Havre, taking lots of detours to keep from getting caught or having to put up a fight (we aren't poorly armed). I have no less than six revolvers on my person. We had about four hundred rounds and had decided to fight to the death if we had to.

We were hungry. I let Bonnot drive. Later, we started running out of gas and decided to leave the car behind, having arrived at the sea and the sandy earth pulling our tires down into it. We threw the license plates away. We got to the train station to get tickets to Paris and arrive without incident, although the national security agency is close at our feet. I expect they thought the revolution had begun! To think that it was only a slightly serious prank. They are going to see quite a few more before they fall...

# Is the Anarchist Illegalist Our Comrade?

E. Armand

Translated by Wolfi Landstreicher

*And when we regard the thief in himself, we cannot say that we find him less human than other classes of society. The sentiment of large bodies of thieves is highly communitistic among themselves; and if they thus represent a survival from an earlier age, they might also be looked upon as the precursors of a better age in the future. They have their pals in every town, with runs and refuges always open, and are lavish and generous to a degree to their own kind. And if they look upon the rich as their natural enemies and fair prey, a view which it might be difficult to gainsay, many of them at any rate are animated by a good deal of the Robin Hood spirit, and are really helpful to the poor.*

Edward Carpenter, *Civilization, Its Causes and Cures*

I am not an enthusiast of illegalism. I am an *alegal*. Illegalism is a risky expedient for the one who engages in it even just temporarily, an expedient that should neither be reprimanded nor praised. But the question I propose to examine is not whether the practice of an illegal trade is risky or not, but whether the anarchist who gets his bread by resorting to trades that the police and the courts condemn is right or wrong in expecting anarchists who accept working for a boss to treat him as a comrade. As a comrade whose point of view we defend in broad daylight and who we don't disavow when he falls into the clutches of the police or the judge (unless he asks us to keep silent about his case).

The anarchist who practices illegalism really doesn't want us to treat him as a "poor relation" that we do not dare to publicly acknowledge because it would damage the anarchist cause, because if we don't distance ourselves from him when the representatives of capitalist revenge give vent to their fury against him, we run the risk of alienating the sympathies of syndicalists or the customers of petite-bourgeois anarchists from the anarchist movement.

This is why the illegalist anarchist addresses himself to his comrade who is exploited by the boss, that is, to the one who *feels* exploited. He doesn't expect those who have work they like to understand him very well. Among these, he includes anarchist pedagogues and propagandists who circulate, defend and expound ideas that coincide with their opinions—at least that's what we hope. Although they receive only the most pitiful wage, their moral situation isn't comparable to that of the anarchist who works under the supervision of a foreman and is forced to submit every day to the crowding of a humanity whose company is antagonistic to him. This is why the anarchist illegalist does not let those who have jobs that they like judge his profession on the fringe of the law.

All those who make written or oral propaganda at their pleasure, all those who practice a profession that pleases them, far too often forget that they are privileged with respect to the

great mass of others, their comrades, those who are forced to give themselves up from morning until night, from January 1 until New Year's eve, to tasks from which they get no pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

The anarchist illegalist claims to be a comrade like the small shop owner, the town clerk, or the dance teacher, none of whom change the economic conditions of life in the present social environment any more than he does. A lawyer, a doctor, a teacher may send articles to an anarchist paper and take part in small anarchist circles, but this does not eliminate the supports and the sustaining elements of the anarchist system, which granted them the monopoly to practice their profession, nor the rule that they are obliged to follow if they want to continue their trade.

It is no exaggeration to say that any anarchist who submits to being exploited to the benefit of a particular master or of a master-state commits an act of betrayal against anarchist ideas. In fact, in every case it reinforces domination and exploitation, contributing to keeping anarchism alive. Without a doubt, while remaining aware of his inconsistency, the anarchist tries to make up for or repair his behavior by making propaganda; but no matter how much propaganda an exploited individual makes, he is still an accomplice of the exploiter, who cooperates with the system of exploitation that governs the conditions under which production takes place.

This is why it is not precise to say that the "working" anarchist, who submits to the current system of domination and exploitation, is a victim. He is as much an *accomplice* as a victim. Every exploited person, whether legal or illegal, cooperates in the state of exploitation; everyone who is dominated, legally or illegally, cooperates in the state of domination. There is no difference between the anarchist worker who earns 175,000 to 200,000 francs in thirty years of work and buys a house in the country with his savings and the anarchist illegalist who seizes a strong-box containing 200,000 francs and acquires a house on the seashore with this sum. Both are anarchists in words, it is true, but the difference between them is that the anarchist worker submits to the terms of the economic contract that the rulers of the social order impose on her, whereas the anarchist burglar *does not submit to it*.

The law protects both the exploited and the exploiter, the ruled and the ruler, in the social relationships they have with each other, and when the anarchist submits, he is protected as well in his goods and his person as the anarchist. The law makes no distinction between the anarchist and the anarchist if both obey the injunctions of the social contract. Whether they like it or not, anarchists who *submit*, bosses, workers, clerks and functionaries, have the police, the courts, social conventions and official educators on their side. It is the reward for their submission; when they compel the anarchist employer to pay his anarchist employee by moral persuasion or by the force of law, the forces of social conservation care little that in his innermost thoughts or even openly, that wage work is hostile to the wage system.

On the other hand, the insubordinate one, the refractory to the social contract, the illegal anarchist, has the entire social organization against him when, to "live his life," he starts to take shortcuts to immediately reach the goal that the submissive anarchist will only reach much later, if ever. He takes a huge risk, and it's only fair that this risk be rewarded with an immediate result; if there is any result.

The recourse to cunning that the anarchist illegalist constantly practices is a method all revolutionaries use. Secret societies are a type of cunning. One waits to put up subversive posters

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<sup>1</sup> Once, in Brussels, I discussed the question with Elisee Reclus. He told me, in conclusion: "I do work that pleases me and don't consider it right for me to pass judgment on those who do not want to do a job that does not please them."

until the cops have wandered off to another place. An anarchist who goes to America conceals his ethical, political, philosophical viewpoint. Whether apparently submissive or openly rebellious, the anarchist is always an outlaw with regard to the law; whenever he spreads his anarchist ideas, he violates specific laws that repress anarchist propaganda, and furthermore, because of his anarchist way of thinking, he opposes written law itself, in its essence, because law is the crystallization of the archism.<sup>2</sup>

The rebellious anarchist can't help but be likable to the submissive anarchist who feels he is submissive; in the illegal behavior of the former, the anarchist who is unable or unwilling to break with legality recognizes himself, logically realized. The temperament and the reflections of the submissive anarchist might lead him to disapprove of certain actions carried out by the rebellious anarchist, but this would never make the rebellious anarchist personally unlikable to him.<sup>3</sup>

When the revolutionary anarchist reproaches him for seeking his economic well-being immediately, the illegalist sees that the revolutionary does no differently. The economic revolutionary expects an improvement in his personal situation from the revolution, otherwise he would not be a revolutionary; the revolution will either give him what he desires or not in just the same way that an illegal endeavor will either provide the one who carries it out with what he expects or it won't. It's simply a question of timing. Even when the economic question doesn't come into play, a person makes revolution because he personally expects some benefit from it, perhaps a religious, political, intellectual or ethical benefit. Every revolutionary is an egoist.

Does the explanation of acts of reappropriation that illegalists commit have an unfavorable influence on anarchist propaganda in general and in particular?

To answer this objection, which is the most important of all, it is necessary not to lose sight of that human unity a person finds in the conditions of economic life imposed on him when he comes into the world or enters a particular country. What are the opinions of those who must submit to a constraint so they can live in peace (or die)? Whatever their opinions, they must submit to a constraint to live peacefully (or die). Where there is constraint, the contract is no longer valid, because it is one-sided, and the bourgeois legal codes themselves recognize that a commitment made under duress has no legal value. So the anarchist is always in a situation of self-defense against the administrators or the partisans of the imposed legal contract. No anarchist has ever felt that the reason he practices an illegal trade is to theorize a society based on universal banditry. No one has ever heard an anarchist who practices an illegal trade advocating a society based on universal banditry, for example. His situation, his actions are only related to

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<sup>2</sup> Although I don't have the appropriate statistics, the reading of anarchist papers indicates that the number condemned, wrongly or rightly, to prison, to penal colonies, to the gallows or killed on the spot for acts of anarchist revolutionary agitation (including "propaganda of the deed") surpasses by a long shot the number condemned, rightly or wrongly, or killed on the field for illegalism. In these condemnations, the theorists of revolutionary anarchism have a great deal of responsibility, since they have never expressed the same reservations in their propaganda favoring revolutionary activity that sincere "commentators" on illegalist activity oppose to the practice of illegalism.

<sup>3</sup> The anarchist whose illegalism attacks the state and known exploiters has never upset "the worker" in his view of anarchism. At Amiens, during the trial of [Alexander Marius] Jacob, who was often attacked by colonial officials, workers sympathized greatly with Jacob and with the idea of individual expropriation due to the explanations in *Germinal*. Even if not anarchist, the outlaw who robs an industrialist, a manufacturer, a banker, a treasurer, a mail van, etc. remains sympathetic to the exploited who consider those paid to defend the coins or banknotes of private or state bosses as lackeys or snitches. I have seen this verified hundreds of times.



the economic contract that the capitalists on the one side impose even on those who rebel against these stipulations. Anarchist illegalism is only temporary, a stopgap.

If social environments granted the inalienable possession of the means of personal production to the anarchists, if they could freely dispose of their product without any fiscal restrictions (taxes, customs duties, grants), if they were allowed to use an exchange value among themselves that didn't hit them with any tax, at their own risk, illegalism in my sense (economic illegalism) would no longer be understandable. Economic illegalism is therefore purely incidental.<sup>4</sup>

Whether economic or not, illegalism depends on legalism. On the day that authority disappears—political, economic and intellectual authority—illegalists will also disappear.

This is the direction we have to go to make the explanation of illegalist actions profitable for anarchist propaganda.

All anarchists, whether submissive or not, would look upon those among them who refuse to accept military servitude as a comrade. There's no explaining why this attitude changes when it's a question of refusing to serve economically.

One can clearly understand why anarchists don't want to contribute to the economic life of a country that doesn't grant them the possibility of expressing themselves with pen or with speech, that limits their capacity for realization or association in every field, when they intend to let nonanarchists do as they please. Anarchists who agree to participate in the economic functioning of societies in which they cannot live as they please are inconsistent. One can't understand why they object to those who rebel against the state of things.

The rebel against economic servitude is forced to appropriate the production of others *by the instinct of self-preservation*, by need and by the will to live. Illegalists affirm that this instinct is not just primordial, but also justifiable when we compare it to capitalist accumulation which the capitalist, as an individual, does not need to exist, accumulation that is therefore superfluous. Now who is this "other" that the thinking illegalist—the anarchist who practices an illegal profession—takes on? This "other" is the one who wants the majority to dominate or oppress the minority, the partisans of domination or the dictatorship of one class or caste over another, the voter, the supporter of the state, monopolies, and the privilege that they imply. This other is in reality an enemy of the anarchist—an irreconcilable adversary. At the moment when he takes him on economically, the illegalist anarchist sees him, can **only** see him, as a tool of the anarchist regime.

Given these explanations, we should know not to blame the illegalist anarchist who feels betrayed and abandoned when anarchists who prefer to follow a less dangerous path than the one he has taken abandon him and don't take the trouble to explain their attitude.

I repeat what I said at the beginning of this essay: as a stopgap, illegalism is risky to the highest degree, and it is necessary to show that it brings in more than it costs, which is a quite exceptional case. The anarchist illegalist who is thrown in prison has no hope of any favors in terms of parole or sentence reduction; his file, as they say, is marked with red ink. But given this warning, it is necessary to also point out that to be seriously practiced illegalism requires an exceptionally tough temperament, composure, self-confidence that is not within everyone's reach. As with all the experiences of anarchist life that are not consistent with the routine of daily existence, there is reason to fear that the illegalist practice will take over the will and thoughts of the illegalist to the point of making him insensitive to any other activity, to any other attitude.

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<sup>4</sup> Socially speaking, on the day that the expense of guarding property comes to exceed that which it yields, property, the child of exploitation, will have disappeared.

But this is also true for certain small legal trades that spare those who practice them from being in the factory or the office.

## Conclusions: Anarchist economics

Economic anarchists, economic leaders and rulers *impose* working conditions on workers that are incompatible with the anarchist notion of life, that is to say, with the absence of the exploitation of one human being over another. In principle, an anarchist would refuse to let working conditions be imposed on him, to let himself be exploited; he accepts it only as the condition of surrender or submission.

And there is no difference between submitting to paying taxes, submitting to exploitation and submitting to military service.

That the majority of anarchists submit is understood. “You get more out of legality, by playing tricks with it, deceiving it, rather than facing it head on.” Precisely. But the anarchist who plays tricks with the law is acting with neither pride nor cleverness. In doing this, he escapes the dangerous consequences of non-submission, such as prison, the “most abject slavery.” But even though he doesn’t suffer this, the submissive anarchist has to deal with “professional deformation”; because they outwardly conform to the law, many anarchists end up not reacting at all and pass to the other side of the barricades. One must have an exceptional temperament to play tricks on the law without falling into the net of legality!

As for the anarchist producer in the current economic environment, this is a myth. Where are the anarchists who produce anti-authoritarian values? Almost all anarchists contribute in their production to maintaining the economic situation. I will never be convinced that the anarchist who builds prisons, barracks, churches; manufactures arms, ammunition, uniforms; prints legal codes, political newspapers, religious books; maintains these things, transports them or sells them, is doing anti-authoritarian production. Even the anarchist who makes objects of prime necessity for use by voters or by those they elect gives the lie to his convictions.

It doesn’t fall to verbal propagandists or men of letters to accuse obscure individualists of drawing benefit from their ideas. Don’t the “moral” and occasional financial benefits that their efforts provide count for anything? Fame spreads their names to “all corners of the world”; they have followers, translators, slanderers and persecutors. So why do they count all that?

I consider it fair that every effort receive a wage in every field; it is fair that one who suffers for his opinions should also draw profit from them. What matters is that, whether through violence, deceit, cunning, theft, smuggling or imposition of any sort, one does not realize this profit at the expense of his comrades, those of “his world.”

In the actual social environment, anarchy extends from Tolstoy to Bonnot: Warren, Proudhon, Kropotkin, Ravachol, Caserio, Louise Michel, Libertad, Pierre Chardon, Tchorny, the tendencies that they represent or that certain living organizers and instigators, whose names matter little, represent are like the hues of a rainbow where each individual chases those colors that best express his vision.

From a strictly individualist anarchist point of view—and it is here that I will conclude, the criterion for comradeship does not rest on being an office employee, a factory worker, a civil servant, a peddler, a smuggler or a burglar—it rests in how, legally or illegally, *my* comrade will first

seek to forge his individuality and spread anarchist ideas wherever he can, and finally—making the most pleasant life possible among those he likes—reduce useless and avoidable suffering to an ever lower minimum.

—From *L'illégaliste anarchiste, est-il notre camarade?*"

Paris and Orleans, Editions de l'en-dehors

## **Section Nine: Stirner's Influence in France**

*I say: liberate yourself as far as you can, and you have done your part; for it is not given to everyone to break through all limits, or, more expressively, not to everyone is that a limit which is a limit for the rest. Consequently, do not tire yourself with toiling at the limits of others; enough if you tear down yours...He who overturns one of his limits may have shown others the way and the means; the overturning of their limits remains their affair.*

—Max Stirner

Max Stirner (1806–1856) should really require no introduction to anyone taking an interest in this book in the first place, so I'll just cut right to the chase: Stirner's empowering individualistic masterwork *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* appeared in translation in France as *L'Unique et sa Propriete* around 1900 and its influence gained force in tandem with the writings of Nietzsche (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was first translated into French in 1893). Stirner's all-destroying arguments received such an enthusiastic reception from French anarchists that by 1904 Victor Basch had already composed a well-grounded study titled *L'Individualist Anarchiste: Max Stirner* and the fashion for all things Stirner led to the adoption of individualist trajectories in many of Paris's radical journals. The main organ of individualism (and later illegalism) was Albert Libertad's *L'Anarchie*; in his excellent survey of the illegalist Bonnot Gang, Richard Parry elaborates on *L'Anarchie's* position as proponents of the "revolution of the self" and discusses how Stirner's "union of egoists" became the modus operandi for French illegalists, with anarchists collaborating to achieve their individual interests outside the realm of legality and disbanding once their aims were achieved. With one ferocious and unforgettable text, Stirner succeeded in carving out a conspicuous niche in *fin-de-siecle* anarchist culture, where a fairly long tradition of underclass criminality and hostility to moralism already existed. Stirner's seditious ideas were especially attractive to anarchists fed up with waiting patiently for the promised revolution, as conscious egoism demands no exalted self-sacrifice from individuals, but appeals instead to motives of intelligent self interest: it is a mode of life for the individual, independent of the existing societal and governmental framework, which can be had **now**, if the individual will take it. Nothing is sacred to the Unique One simply because it is beyond his or her control. He attempts to make it come within his reach, or she suffers it without bowing down reverently before it—retaining in this way the fullest possible strength of his/her freedom, or as Stirner puts it: "My freedom is fulfilled only when it is my power, but thus I cease merely to be a free man and become a self-possessor." The energizing influence of *The Ego and His Own* in France has persisted down to our own time, despite it being neglected, condemned, and maligned by the organizationalist and collectivist branches of anarchism—i.e., the revisionists who write most anarchist history.

To make sense of the enduring vitality of Stirner in France it's important to understand that, in many ways, *The Ego and His Own* presents the premier case for the individual against authority. It was forged in Europe during a time of rolling political change, when monarchy and the theocratic state were going down and liberalism was on the rise. "The State is us, its citizens," was the rallying cry and the modern secular state was beginning to emerge. "Liberty, equality, fraternity!" shouted the revolutionists of France. But Stirner provocatively asks "Of what good is it to a sheep to be permitted liberty of speech? It will nevertheless stick to bleating." Human Sheep will also only bleat, no matter what so-called freedom the law may permit them. As far as equality goes, under democracy this translates as equality of all as *citizens of the State*. Stirner's insolent scorn for Liberalism, with its insistence upon the basic equality of Man, is overt and

palpable. Liberals, he accuses, sacrifice the actual individual to an abstraction of individuality, to the religion of Man and the “free state.” “The Christian takes hold of my spirit, the liberal of my humanity,” he charges. How valuable is the liberty granted by a republic, a constitutional monarchy, or **any** statist formation? To Stirner, the State was the foremost enemy and would always be tyrannical, no matter its political philosophy, what form it took, or how good its intentions. All governments presume sovereignty over the individual and are therefore despotic; that is the nature of things when individuals subsume their egos to the power of an Other and unite as a herd. Fraternity was another closely related abstraction that would make Stirner—who insisted on the differences rather than the similarities between individuals—laugh out loud, pitilessly. But Stirner’s anti-Statism was only the beginning. He was vehemently against any sort of authority over the individual whatsoever. God is a foolish aberration—a mental spook—as are morality, family, country, theology, philosophy, and ideology. With an audacious, faithless coherency, *The Ego and His Own* sweeps the mind clean of all values, religious illusions (which appear in many varieties) and fixed ideas—all products of the mind that come to be reified and exact tribute from us. The goal of this process of selfliberation isn’t Freedom, which to Stirner was just one more unattainable ideal, but “self-ownership” or “ownness”. “Ownness” is a recognition that the higher beings and ideals before which one has bowed are figments of one’s mind, and a reclaiming of them as one’s property. Ownness, therefore, **includes** freedom, which prompts Stirner to scoff even more at the possessed liberals who petition the government for sham legislative “freedoms”. Freedom of this sort is nothing more than a dream; it is **self-ownership** that Stirner argues for.

It was never Stirner’s intent for *The Ego and His Own* to be translated into a formal political philosophy leading to “political” action. That would constitute a movement and movements impress their own authority over their adherents. *The Ego and His Own* is about self-liberation, a revolution of the mind. To be truly free individuals must be ruthlessly, relentlessly, and brutally honest with themselves to expunge all traces of authority from without that dwell within. Strip it away; it is interfering with the free and full expression of your sovereign self. Slavery to ideas is as pernicious as physical bondage. Each of us is a relative absolute—relative in his qualities, absolute in her unique potentialities. At bottom there is an everlasting war between society and the individual. Whether the battle for the preservation of self is carried on in the open or in the midnight silences of your own mind—it is one and the same. In so far as the Unique One resists and refuses he or she is strong. Conformity is cowardice, and all concessions corrode self-ownership. Authentic liberty is possible for a few only and is the privilege of individual courage, daring and might.

# Stirner versus Proudhon (1905)

Maxime Leroy

Translated by Shawn P. Wilbur

From the time of Louis-Philippe and of Napoleon III, it has not seemed possible that a mind could push the audacity of negation farther than Proudhon. He battled all parties, and all ideas with the same force: universal suffrage and the dogmas of the Church, God, property, authority, socialism and liberalism, and, a less pardonable crime, he treated men with more irreverence than books, ridiculing by terrible sarcasm the archbishop Mathieu, the socialist Louis Blanc, the orthodox economist Bastiat and the sinuous, ever-changing Prince-President. He summarized his audacities in short, blasphemous formulas: property is robbery; God is evil; Satan is good. One may recall his admirable lyric invocation to Satan, intelligence of the universe. He frightened, terrified. The pope excommunicated him, the tribunals condemned him, the priests denounced him as the Antichrist in the flesh, all opinion finally cast him as the fundamentally antisocial being. This small, spectacled man was, for thirty years, all disrespect and blasphemy. The civilized world ended at his books, like the ancient world at the columns of Hercules. Today it is necessary to change that geography. A keener negator, a more irreligious blasphemer, a more voracious "ideophage" has been revealed to the public; here is Max Stirner, the author of *The Unique and its Property*.

Little known in Germany, Stirner<sup>1</sup> is in France much more a name than a doctrine. He is cited, however, and his book has had the honor of two translations. Mr. Basch has dedicated a large volume to him. If he is cited, and even studied, it seems that there is too much tendency to situate him outside of contemporary thought, to consider him as an eccentric, a case of morbid intellectualism. This is an inexact view, for Stirner is very much of his era; he is even one of those types which best represent it, as one of the promoters of the extension of the scientific method to morals. Let us recognize in him one of those who have participated in the formation of modern skepticism. It is in this sense that we must treat him.

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Proudhon was indeed a skeptic, but he still believed, and believed too much; Stirner does not want to believe anything anymore. In that, he has gone beyond the author of *The Social Revolution*, who had, indeed, left something to demolish after him: Justice. "It is an enemy, an old enemy who has taken a new face." It is that last authority, intact among the most non-religious and the most revolutionary of our contemporaries, that Stirner would attack. Proudhon thought he had

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<sup>1</sup> Max Stirner is the pseudonym of Bavarian teacher Jean-Gaspard Schmitt. He was born in 1806 at Bayreuth, future town of Wagner. A student of Hegel and Schleiermacher, he studied philosophy and theology; he sojourned successively at Berlin, at Erlangen, at Königsberg, at Kulm, and returned finally to Berlin. He became a teacher of young girls and died there in poverty in 1856.



given post-revolutionary civilization its specific and irrefutable philosophical formula. Stirner would take up arms against this optimism and against Proudhon, the most dangerous heir of the tradition, and all the more dangerous because he did not know it. But Stirner, in battling that terrible polemicist, continued his work, also unconscious of his own traditional ties; he followed him against the same enemies; he is of the Proudhonian line.

Proudhon provided a faith, and made himself its apostle; he went so far as to be martyred in its defense: the martyrdom of prison. He was, however, a skeptic, and of a skepticism, at base, very close to that of Stirner; the filiation lies there.

It is necessary, Proudhon wrote, in his most famous book,<sup>2</sup> it is necessary, while the multitude is on its knees, to uproot the honor of the old mysticism, to eradicate from the heart of man the remainder of the latria<sup>3</sup> which, fostering superstition, destroys justice in it and perpetuates immorality.

In a prosopopoeia, an artifice with which he was familiar, Proudhon had already invoked irony, anticipating Stirner and our contemporary Anatole France. It forms the epilogue of the *Confessions of a Revolutionary*:

*Irony, true liberty! It is you who deliver me from the ambition of power, the servitude of parties, from respect for the routine, from the pedantry of science, from the admiration of great personages, from the mystifications of politics, the fanaticism of the reformers, from the superstition of this great universe and from the adoration of myself.*

And Proudhon continued, in a tender manner:

Sweet irony! You alone are pure, chaste and discrete. You give grace to beauty and seasoning to love; you inspire charity by tolerance; you dispel homicidal prejudice; you teach modesty to the woman, audacity to the warrior, prudence to the statesman... You make peace between brothers, you bring healing to the fanatic and the sectarian.

That prosopopoeia is Stirnerian by all the force of disrespect that animates it: these few lines contain virtually all the philosophy of the Unique.

But the faith prevails.

The criticism has scarcely indicated anything but Proudhon's negations. That is a grave error: Proudhon has a positive doctrine; Stirner saw it only too well. The quarrels of Stirner have helped us better discern all that was dogmatic in the work of that negator: he denounces in his turn the latria that remains in the mind of that enemy of the Church. "We call skeptics," said the author of the *Jardin d'Epicure*,<sup>4</sup> "those who do not share our own illusions, without even concerning ourselves if they have others." It was precisely the case that Proudhon had other illusions than his adversaries.

If Proudhon vigorously combated the concepts of the Church and the School, he was very far from disbelief. That skeptic had a horror of pyrrhonism. He said, in fact:

*In order to form a state, to give adhesion and stability to power, we require a political faith, without which the citizens, given over to the pure abstractions of individualism, could not, no matter what they do, be anything but an aggregation of incoherent existences.*

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<sup>2</sup> *Justice in the Revolution and in the Church*, Vol. I.

<sup>3</sup> *Tr-Latria* is "the worship given to god alone," the "highest form of worship."

<sup>4</sup> by Anatole France.

We can already see if Proudhon left more to deny: he had abandoned the cathedral; Stirner wanted to demolish it.

Stirner was no less brutal than the author of the *Anti-Proudhon*;<sup>5</sup> he took him by the throat and treated him as a dishonest man; Proudhon, elsewhere, had treated Rousseau as a “Genevan charlatan.”

“Thus,” wrote the author of *The Unique*, “Proudhon has said insolently: ‘Man is made to live without religion, but the moral law is eternal and absolute, who would dare to attack morals?’” The teacher from Berlin dared.<sup>6</sup> He was wrong to forget that Proudhon, despite his faith, had prepared the way for all his doubts.

Stirner, by still other points, strikes at Proudhon. Like him, he puts the individual will at the center of his philosophy; not without modification, for his will remains fiercely individual to himself: it will never be made to serve the reconstruction of society, as Proudhon did with Rousseau. Proudhon reproached Rousseau for having constructed society badly; Stirner reproaches Proudhon for not having destroyed it enough: this is where the differences begin.

Stirner separates himself from Proudhon, or better, surpasses him, when he considers morals as a purely superficial transformation of religion. It is to the democratic State, he thinks, what religion was to the autocratic State in times past. Its essence is the same, it is authoritarian, it is an intolerance, an unquestionable other; God is reincarnated in the popular imperative. It is the same tutelage: the moral laws command, they allow no discussion, they are absolute, they demand respect, arouse the apostolate, inspire fanaticism; one orthodoxy follows another orthodoxy; it is of orthodoxy in its narrow sense.

Even modified in a laic sense, morality is composed of “God-words,” truth, right, light, justice, which as soon as one dares touch them arouse a formidable clamor in all of society. The individual who questions them or just scoffs at them is called a profaner, accused of sacrilege, called in the current criminal terminology, utopian, revolutionary. What about it liberates us from religion? Morals is still a dogma, the most recent ritual of our credulity. “Moral faith is as fanatical as religious faith.”<sup>7</sup>

Stirner shows us then, with intensity and anger, how the man is the thing, the slave of the good and the just that he wants to realize: “The moral man acts to serve an end or an idea, he makes himself the instrument of the idea of good, absolutely as the religious man boasts of being the instrument of God.”<sup>8</sup> And, always rich in metaphors, like his master, he compares in various places the man to one “possessed” and thus we are no less gullible than our grandmothers who devoutly go to Easter communion. “The one who no longer believes in phantoms has only to be consistent, he must push farther in his disbelief to see that he does not hide any special being behind the scenes, no phantom, or, what amounts to the same thing, taking the word in its most naïve sense, *no spirit*.”<sup>9</sup> Stirner insists:

Truths, he writes again, are phrases, ways of speaking, words; brought into connection, or into an articulate series, they form logic, science, philosophy.<sup>10</sup>

He concludes finally that truth is the enemy of man:

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<sup>5</sup> Denis, de Chateaugiron, 1860.

<sup>6</sup> *L'Unique et sa propriété*, translation of Henry Lasvionks (Ed. do la Revue Blanche).

<sup>7</sup> P. 53.

<sup>8</sup> P. 43.

<sup>9</sup> P. 39; cf. P. 433.

<sup>10</sup> P. 446.

As long as you believe in the truth, you do not believe in yourself, and you are a—*servant, a—religious man*. You alone are the truth, or rather, you are more than the truth, which is nothing at all before you.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the human will only be liberated by skepticism. “Can I call myself free,” concludes the contemptuous critic of Proudhon, “if some verbal powers as vain as idols still command me?”

Henceforth the question is not how one can acquire life, but how one can squander, enjoy it; not how one is to produce the true self in himself, but how one is to dissolve himself, to live himself out.<sup>12</sup>

Let us have no more hunger for the ideal, no more “spiritual distress,” no more “temporal distress.” No more ecstasy: Stirner makes us turn our eyes toward the earth; he shows us the vast world that is ours, then casts us into it. But he immediately puts us on guard against the enthusiasm which watches the secular for a new terrestrial paradise. And here the author of “The Unique” notes the same transposition as in morals. once, it was a question of achieving the celestial homeland; today, the terrestrial homeland. The enemy has changed its face. It is still a collectivity which wants to oppress me, something outside of me that takes my liberty.

From concepts, still more concepts, one respect dispels another, authority renews itself insidiously, the forms of slavery are diversified and I remain eternally the fearful slave of the first disobedience. The world is peopled with *respectpersonen*; the Catholic saints took the place of the hamadryads and naiads of paganism, beside the springs and in the hollows of the ancient oaks. The companion of Bacchus is not dead, Pan survives, the “scoundrel” is resurrected:

*I am Pan, I am all; Jupiter, on your knees!*

What to do? The individual should not preoccupy himself with the men who come after him, with the family, peoples, humanity, or philosophy; he should consider himself as unique, he is not the property, the dependence of a man, nor of an idea, nor of a political organization. He is himself his God, his State, his Family, his Humanity. No more duties, no more obligations: every obligation is a restriction on my liberty. Neither socialism, nor Proudhonian justice, nor Christian morals: absolute skepticism.

Whether what I think and do is Christian, what do I care? Whether it is human, liberal, humane, whether nonhuman, illiberal, inhuman, what do I ask about that? If only it accomplishes what I want, if only I satisfy myself in it, then overlay it with predicates as you will; it is all alike to me.

And to the obligation of mutual aid, he responds: I know of no obligation to love.

Stirner does not content himself with this formidable negation which makes the wisdom of the centuries tremble; he pushes further down the road that a Florentine publicist once opened for him. He doubtless followed it too far, for it also leads him to a breviary: the one that he offers us was written by Machiavelli. Machiavelli is the Rousseau of that other Proudhon.

Perhaps you recall some of the strong thoughts of that skillful man of State:

“The prince, obliged to act as a beast, will strive to be at once a fox and a lion: for, if he is only a lion, he will not see the snares; if he is only a fox, he will not defend himself against wolves; and he has an equal need to be a fox in order to see the snares,

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<sup>11</sup> P. 453.

<sup>12</sup> P. 410.

and a lion in order to terrify the wolves. Those who stick to being just lions are very clumsy.”

“A wise prince ought not to fulfill his promise when that accomplishment would be against his interests...: such is the precept to give.”

“You can see that those who knew best how to act the fox are those who have prospered most.”

“Let the prince think then only of preserving his life and his State: if he succeeds, all the means that he has taken will be judged honorable and praised by everyone.”<sup>13</sup>

Stirner wants to extend the morality that Florentine secretary advocated for the sovereigns alone, to every individual in society: it is not Montesquieu, it is Machiavelli who seems to him to have “regained the titles of the human spirit.”

Thus, the ideophage counsels his “unique” to follow the maxims of the Prince in order to become skillful at giving and keeping, at being crafty, deceiving, lying, succeeding.

I evade the laws of a people, he says without artifice, until I can gather my strength to overturn them.

He says further: Turn yourself to good account.

Guizot said in the same era: Improve yourself!

There is all the wisdom of industrial competition. The work of egoism accomplished, Stirner raises, like the royal herald at Saint-Denis, the cry of deliverance and salvation: “The people is dead! *Bonjour moi!*”

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The book of the “Unique” is a carnage of ideas, the most savage act of ideophagy that the world has ever known. It is a devastation that leaves nothing behind it. That intellectual would have turned his arms against himself; he cries “No more ideas! Nothing but instinctive desires pressing rudely towards bliss. Let us kill the mind in order to give ourselves up to the joy of living freely.”

We can mark here a bit of the work of disintegration of the Kantian absolute, still dear to the academics, worked at once by the professionals of philosophy, such as Bergson, and in certain popular milieus, by the dispersed sect of the Stirnerian ideophages. Kant had only partially liberated us by ridding us of the absolute of faith: he had given us the absolute of reason. He had transposed elements, he had substituted one collective imperative with another, despite all the appearances of a forthright individualism; something of the Church still clung to it. Today, others want to rid us of this last master and deliver man up to himself, unbridle and unsaddle him, launch him, finally free of all social harnessing, out of door into limitless fields. But will he have the fortune to break the back?

Stirner recalled more or less confusedly the revolutionary idolatry of the goddess Reason. It is against the new cult that he protested with vehemence, with contempt, and with cruelty. Science, in opposing itself to religion, had not eliminated its rival, it even took from it its apostolic tendencies; reason, like faith, tends to sovereignty, it considers itself universal and irresistible. In sum, Stirner had only seen in science a sort of religion and in reason only the mother of another

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<sup>13</sup> *Le Prince*, chap. XVIII.

dogma: he heard the forming of new chains, and he was horrified. And me? he cried. His book is born of that horror, and, in fact, we feel a sort of suffocating anguish in the furious pages of the Unique. But the horror was too intense, pathological even, for it has led the author of the Unique to conclusions that science does not allow us to maintain.

What, then, is the “Unique”? The Papinians, according to Rabelais, already knew a personage by that name. Was this not the same one? It is precisely a question for a contemporary of Machiavelli:

Have you seen him, good passengers, have you seen him?—Who? asked Pantagruel... How, they said, gentlemen pilgrims don't you know the “Unique”?—Sirs, replied Epistemon, we do not understand those terms; but if you will be pleased to let us know who you mean, we will tell you the truth of the matter without any more ado.—We mean, said they, he that is. Did you ever see him? He that is, returned Pantagruel, according to our theological doctrine, is God, who said to Moses, I am that I am. We never saw him, nor can he be beheld by mortal eyes.

The “Unique” of Stirner appears to greatly resemble that of the Papinians: *onques ne le vimes*. Stirnerism has not seen the necessity of making of man a social phenomenon. Stirner has believed too readily, following the philosophy of the eighteenth century, that the human will could be the mistress of life and subdue it as it pleases. We know today that it is as chimerical to wish to escape the determinism of ideas and of the economic structure as the determinism of the laws of nature. Man follows a path that he has not plotted; as the Saint-Simonians say, “he is the inevitable work of the vast phenomenon of which he is a part.” He cannot escape from social life; he is its prisoner. Prisoner of laws, of institutions, of needs, and of history. Where to go? To the stars! Or fall into a pit? “Man can no more escape the action of right, than he can escape his own shadow.” (Edmond Picard.)

The optimism of the men of the Revolution was not realized; man has not been able to free himself from what they called “arbitrariness” and the world has grown beyond their expectations.

An anarchist who has made some noise in the world has insisted on these social necessities. “Man,” he wrote in *God and the State*, becomes man and comes to consciousness, to the realization of his humanity only in society and only through the collective action of society as a whole... Apart from society, man would remain eternally a savage beast or a saint, which would mean pretty much the same thing... Liberty is not a matter of isolation, but of mutual reflection.”

Where Stirner sees the maximum of liberty, Kropotkin indicates the maximum of dependence: “I am myself only human and free to the extent that I recognize the liberty and humanity of all the men that surround them... A slave-master is not a man, but a master.”

This, moreover, is the current theory of contemporary anarchists. “The most individualistic man is the man who is most interdependent,” wrote one of the principal editors of *Le Libertaire*. The publicists and jurists of the classical school no longer think otherwise; they no longer make an antagonistic distinction between liberty and association. The deepest and fairest thoughts on this new philosophy will be found in the admirable novel of J.-H. Rosny, *La Charpente*.

But the lesson in ideophagy of the philosopher Bavarian must not be lost despite that fundamental critique; it is full of sense; it will be the liberation of whomever will understand it. Redesigned, it is the best objection to the negative anti-dogmatism, which can no longer suffice.

We are idolaters, that is, we are *still* idolaters. Stirner properly combats that new faith. Ideas have replaced the idols of stone and wood. There is a change of materials, but they are neither less mad nor less inhuman. Our secular beliefs remain religious at base: no doubt sufficiently corrects their intransigence. Everyone thinks they possess the truth; people are killed for secular ideas;

modern men are little more than impious sextons. “Our atheists are pious men,” Stirner still says. We still don’t know how to doubt according to the scientific method; we give and retain at the same time, contrary to the old law school precept.

While it is natural that many opinions are born, that the differences between ideologies constantly become more marked with more abundant thought among men, this multiplication of ideas does not preserve us from the evils of the old belief. We still have the mindsets of Roman proprietors and catholic believers: absolutes collide with absolutes, and each carefully shuts the doors of his house. The old forms of brutality, of domination, are renewed. Formerly, at Montceau-les-Mines one saw the troupes of miners engaging in real religious rites: the new laic rites supplant the pomp of the Church. One demands other masters, other beliefs: here the processions in corps, there the socialist Noels and Easters, the open-air preaching, the civic baptisms.

Thus, naturally, we note how the most emancipatory ideas rapidly become instruments of oppression: how many men are dead in the factories, and down in the mines how many women and children irremediably weakened in the name of the principles of the Declaration of the rights of man, in the name of the liberty of commerce and industry! Christianity, a factor of emancipation, became Catholicism, the most frightening instrument of moral and economic oppression that the world has ever known. Wouldn’t it be necessary to conclude that if man comes spontaneously to belief, to the absolute, and submits to the shepherd’s crook, that it is not belief that it is necessary to preach: it is skepticism, it is doubt, it is the defiance of truth.

One could object, it is true, that the intolerance of the opposing parties has economic origins and that consequently no diffusion of the skeptical theory could prevent men from severely protecting the interests of their castes, their dogmatism being precisely the form of the attack and the resistance of their strength, of their force of domination.

One could respond as easily, it seems, that minds well penetrated, from infancy, with the principle of evolution would have less reluctance to accept social transformations which damage their individual interests, than men accustomed to consider institutions as eternal and unchangeable. Now, it is quite certain that all education, all morals, the academies, the salons, the churches, push us to belief, to dogmatism, to absolute conceptions. In this sense, Stirner is right. Only, if we no longer believe, will we still act?

But every action implies a prior affirmation, being itself an affirmation, to doubt and to act, aren’t they exclusive, contradictory terms? But let one to observe well that it is not at all a question of no longer believing, but of the manner of believing. The Stirnerian still believes—at least in himself.

Instead of definite, absolute beliefs, we would have, as Guyau has said, in his *Non-Religion of the Future*, provisional beliefs. Because I know that to act it is necessary to believe, to dogmatism *tout court* will be opposed transitory dogmatisms. We will still act in the name of our beliefs, but without impetuosity, without brutality. The human mind will be in perpetual movement, it will believe, as one goes from stage to stage, successively: its beliefs, offspring of its curiosity, would never become strong enough to kill that curiosity and close the world to it for the next stage. Man must be a skeptic: that is the lesson of the laboratory. Science is skeptical. Stirner would have been right on this point and he would have only given another form to the thought later formulated by Claude Bernard:

The theories are like the successive degrees that science mounts by broadening its horizons more and more. True progress is to change a theory in order to take one new ones that go father than the first one, until we find one that is based on a greater number of fact.<sup>14</sup>

And always thus.

Let us not think that the future man will believe as yesterday; his mentality will have complexities and delicacies which can seem contradictory to us today; he will believe and not believe at the same time. The spirit of a true *savant* can give us the intuition of the probable spirituality of the future. A character from *la Charpente*, Duhamel, represents, as a literary type, the man that we could dream of being. "The doubts that he had," writes J.-H. Rosny, "remained individual, not attaining the effort for the public good." The novelist had foreseen, himself, the mental type of the future.

That restores the skeptic, that the common wisdom considers as being necessarily dilettante; he looks, tastes the warmth of that spring morning, seeks to understand and, in the multiplicity of beliefs that solicit his adhesion, remains neutral, indifferent or amused. The world goes on without him. Men are thus divided into two classes: the believers who act, the skeptics who do not act, the social believers, the antisocial skeptics. Tell me the degree of your faith and I will tell you the strength and utility of your action and even the degree of your humanity.

Far from that methodical disbelief is the resigned acceptance of a powerlessness to find the solution of the problem, quite the contrary, it signifies activity, joy; it is the movement of the sower who advances. The ancient skepticism was a cry of defeat; ours is a patient hope that the repeated defeats does not blunt.

Thanks to science, Stirner has been able to complete Descartes. The author of the *Discourse on Method* has posited doubt as the commencement of his method of arriving at the truth. It is for him a provisory practice which leads to the definitive affirmation. It would be necessary that doubt be a permanent method which would allow reaching simply provisional affirmations, contemporary truths, momentarily recognized, which would not be the enemies of the truths of tomorrow. Dogmatism is immanent in Cartesianism, doubt is secondary; science demands that doubt becomes, on the contrary, the essential fact; it will lead to no absolute, it will not permit even the hope of it.

That philosophy is not way to repeat the commandment of Tolstoy: do not resist evil, to constantly tender the face to other blows, to bend the back under the yoke, without revolt, without anger.

There is a very profound difference between the two theories. It is not at all resignation, but an attenuation of the brutality of the struggle that is waged. There is a new dialectic to establish. Tolstoy is content to take us back to the wisdom of a time which was ignorant of science. Let us not resign ourselves, certainly, ever; but in struggling, let us know very distinctly that we do not fight in the name of the truth, the right, the justice, but of a truth, a right, a justice that is perishable, full of error, which are only moments of history, the expression of our needs and of our present interests. Stirner has given us here the most useful counsels: there is only to change its development, which truly is not solid. Let us be skeptics, without however becoming rascals, following the princes, such as the Florentine secretary and his Bavarian disciple irreverently conceive them, and let us understand our function in the social phenomenon.

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<sup>14</sup> Claude Bernard, *Introduction a la medecine experimentale*, I, H.

Stirner has given us a rule that will be profitable: not to have sovereign ideas. His error was to believe it possible to dispose of the times and of civilization.

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# The Theory of the Individual in Chinese Philosophy: Yang-Chou

Alexandra David-Neel

Translated by vincent stone

We have no idea, in Europe, of the diversity of philosophical theories which have already been formulated in China. The idea that Confucius encapsulates all of the thought of the yellow world (sic) has taken hold among us and, readily, judging the Chinese through the discourses of this Master, we believe them irremediably devoted to the “happy medium” and incapable of any extreme attitudes. This isn’t the case.

The Celestial Empire, shaking off the ancient torpor to which it had given in and forced by Western nations to leave behind its antique ideals of peace and tranquility, is seeking to shore up, on new foundations, its life and activities. A large number of Chinese, one cannot ignore, in their haste to transform themselves, seem to be throwing all of the philosophical heritage they have received from their forebears overboard. From a once manifest disdain for the Western “barbarians,” they are passing too easily, in the intellectual classes, to a perhaps exaggerated respect for their methods and their theories. However, such a centuries-old atavism as that of China does not go back on everything it once stood for in a few brief years. Too many generations were raised with a veneration for the antique wisdom for a large number of modern partisans of social reforms to not turn their eyes to the masters of the past. They should be praised for it. Without wanting to weigh the value of the philosophers we’ve adopted, the Chinese can find, in the thinkers of their race, all of the speculative and social ideas put forth by ours. There has been no lack of people, in China, who’ve realized it.

Whether it was born by this observation or by the persistent love of tradition, there exists, in China, an interesting and prominent movement to bring attention to certain philosophers whose theories seem to be appropriate for leading minds down the path of the social reforms and transformations that all enlightened men know to be indispensable and inevitable. If one is to make—unjustly, perhaps, in a certain regard—the official philosophy responsible for the stagnation China is suffering in its mentality, its civilization and its science, then one may turn, at times, to some of those excommunicated from the Confucian orthodoxy. These defeated ones, these cursed ones are brought back to light and, if not glorified, at least commentated on with ardor.

It is in this way that many Chinese works have been, in recent times, devoted to Meh-ti. It would have been bizarre, in effect, that, frequently in Europe where the word “solidarity” is, for the moment, in great fashion, the lettered Chinese have not realized that they have, among their illustrious thinkers, the great ancestor of all solidarity thinkers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On Meh-ti, see: “Le Philosophe Meh-ti et l’idée de solidarité”, by Alexandra David (Luzac, London; Victorion, Paris), reprinted by Plon publishers in *Deux Maîtres Chinois*.

But the apology of solidarity aside, aside from demonstrating its necessity for assuring the life and perpetuation of all social grouping, the Chinese intellectuals may have encountered, from us, a tendency toward individualism, toward the affirmation of the personality with its own life more and more freed from external hindrances, a tendency that marks, rather, the evolution of superior beings. In reading Max Stirner or other apologists of the intense and complete life, they will be reminded that, many centuries before we heard them, the bold lessons that today terrify many among us were given to them and the name Yang-chou will come alive again as does his contemporary, Meh-ti.

For us, spectators surprised by this reawakening of the Extreme-Orient that we thought, still but a few years ago, a sluggish prey ready to be carved up by western greed, the history of thought of the surprising yellow race is of exceptional interest. Better yet, and more sure than what can be drawn from superficial facts, it is capable of letting us glimpse into the destiny of a people whose spirit hides, full of surprises, behind a "great wall" a thousand times more impenetrable than the one enclosing their territory.

Our biographical information on Yang-chou reveals little. It appears that he lived in Daliang, capital of the State of Wei, circa the fifth century BC. We have reason to believe that he was a landowner of a small rural area. It does not appear that he ever held public office, contrary to many other philosophers who were functionaries of a more or less high ranking. This particularity is, for that matter, in perfect accord with the general tendency of his doctrine.

We possess no work, or fragment of a work, that we can attribute directly, either to Yang-chou or his immediate disciples. One chapter of a book by Lieh-tse is the unique source of our documents.

Lieh-tse was a part of the Taoist school. It is quite strange to find in his work this sort of enclave comprising chapter or book VII, which is devoted to very different theories from those he himself professed. We have no precise opinion on the way this heterogeneous addition took place.

I simply do not want to be weighted down by questions of details that can only interest orientalists. I daresay that if the personality of Yang-chou had absolutely no real existence, it means little to us. We aren't worried about a man, but a theory, a special manifestation of Chinese thought. Nevertheless, Yang-chou is truly a real figure. His name and his oeuvre are cited quite clearly by such authors as Meng-tse (Mencius) and Chuang-tse. If we must be ignorant as to the peripeteias of his life, we cannot place, in any way, as they have to Lieh-tse, his real existence into doubt.

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Yang-chou is not well known in Europe, outside of a limited circle of erudite orientalists.

Not a single study has yet been published on him in the French language. Abroad, the German sinologist Ernst Faber, gave us a translation of Yang-chou embedded, as in the original Chinese, in the work of Lieh-tse. The English sinologue, James Legge, has published a few fragments in the prolegomena of his translation of Meng-tse. I can mention, if only for the record, a few lines of analysis dedicated to Yang-chou by de Harlez. They are simply too brief to give an idea of this philosopher. Lastly, most recently, Dr. Forke published a very remarkable biography on this subject in English. His study is, by far the most interesting and the most complete; I would add that it seemed to me imbued by a philosophical spirit and a comprehension of the author it's translating which are, too often, lacking in many works in this genre.

I would be tempted to apply to Yang-chou the denomination of anarchist. Unfortunately, the term is so denatured, so distorted, that one can barely hear the simple etymological signification. It is to this that we must return if we want to attribute this proud epithet, wasted on the ignorance of the masses, to our philosopher. From the privative *a*, and *archy*, commandment, we have *no commandment*, and this absolute negator of arbitrary commandment, of exterior law, of all precepts whose principle does not emanate from us and does not have us for object and end, is, par excellence, personified by Yang-chou.

None has felt with more intensity than he the horror of constraint, of artificial morals, of codes imposing on individuals a behavior in flagrant contradiction with the imperative injunctions of the nature in them.

No commandments! Live your life! Live your instinct! Let your organism blossom and evolve according to its deep constitutive elements. Be yourself! ... Such is the language of Yang-chou. He states it without anger, quietly and with the placidity which forms the basis of the Chinese character. More than the affirmations of this prince of "amoralists" themselves, the peaceful assurance with which he brushes the most ingrained principles aside, disposes of the most unquestionable duties, troubled his Christian translators. The singular simplicity of expression of this "negator of the sacred", as Stirner would have said, appeared to them more appalling than the most thundering blasphemes. A breath of terror passed through their souls and they saw standing before them the ironic and terrifying face of the "Devil". Maybe the old philosopher can still shatter more than one conscience among his new readers. I will not dare to guarantee the contrary.

The amorality of Yang-chou, the invitations he addresses to us to live our life completely, to walk "as our heart guides us," are based on, in part, the brevity of our days and on the absence, in his works, of speculative theories regarding *post mortem* existence. Yang-chou refused to go beyond tangible truths.—What is there above the dissolution of the elements forming our individual sensibility? ... The philosopher can say nothing to us about it. One can observe that Chinese thinkers have, in general, kept prudently silent on our destinies across the tomb. It is only among inferior classes of the population where fantastical descriptions of heaven and hell thrive. The cultured Chinese is rationalist by temperament. Yet, while this question, by a sort of tacit agreement, was set aside from the philosophical discourses and played no role in the determination of normal and reasonable conduct one should offer man, Yang-chou made it, as it were, the lynchpin of his teaching. All of the advice he gives us looks toward an individuality that is eminently transitory, that tomorrow will be "dust and decay" with nothing remaining, if not a good or a bad memory, a few words of praise or blame that it will never hear.

The other guiding principle of Yang-chou's teachings, less openly expressed, perhaps, but easy to draw from numerous discourses, is an absolute faith to the law of *Causality*. Our philosopher is a convicted determinist. Not in the tepid and illogical way that most Westerners who adorn themselves with this title—all the while conserving in them the remainder of atavistic ideas, delighting in the belief of the divine, the free arbitrator, the arbitrary, going by a disguised name—but with the rigorous rectitude of reasoning and deduction. And that's the explanation of his glorification of life: intense, complete, and absent of all artificial barriers. Our instincts are the voice with which the law proper to the elements whose agglomeration constitutes our person expresses itself. They come from the very essence of the molecules that produce them. That which is, is that which cannot not be. It even seems that Yang-chou, attaching each and every one of these isolated manifestations to the one and only law, adopts all of them, even the most divergent, into one grand act of faith in the harmony, in the beauty of the universal order. The World, he

says to presumptuous moralists, is not concerned with your solicitudes, your virtues, the reforms which you claim to make upon it, the barriers which you, under the pretext of making it better, oppose its spontaneous manifestations. The World is Perfect. Your own order, dwarfed by narrow vision, is but disorder. Let nature do what it will and all will be fine.

The same considerations serve to prop up the famous discourse on “the hair.” This discourse is historic; it must have had, in its time, a huge impact, and Meng-tse mentions it with indignation: “If in sacrificing one of your hairs you could benefit the whole universe, you must not sacrifice it.” Some unexpected and striking developments came about around this paradoxical theme. It is very regrettable that the controversies, the apologies, the commentaries, which were certainly numerous, to which this sensational doctrine must have given birth, are unknown to us.

It has nothing to do with here, as one might think, a coarse and banal egoism, but with logically rationalized theories. Whatever one might say, it is not a call to frenetic enjoyment that comes out of the theories of Yang-chou, but the indication of a rule of thought and action that the philosopher holds to be rational.

Yang-chou does not get lost in the pride of metaphysical dissertations. Certainly, he is inclined to believe that the diverse movements through which our instinct guides us are coordinated by the universal order. The hypothesis is plausible, probable; he adheres to it, readily, but, in sum, problems of this genre exceed our scope and cannot but tickle our fancies. The reasonable man knows it. He also knows that, whatever this infinite universe around him might be, practically, he is himself the center and his only end. He is aware of the outside world only through himself and, when his consciousness fades, his universe will sink with it. It is for this reason that I believed I could recall the declaration of Max Stirner in regards to Yang-chou: “Nothing is, for me, above me.” It seemed to me to be capable of summing up an entire aspect of his doctrine. I have, moreover, while accounting for the difference in expression, found a profound resemblance between the old Chinese thinker and the modern German philosopher.

Another connection seems to become apparent: that between Yang-chou and Epicurus. Translators of Yang-chou, cited above, stopped themselves here, without entering, for that matter, into any development on this subject. Does the possible comparison between the two philosophers go below the surface and can it be taken all the way to the basic conceptions that form the bases of their theories? ... I believe, for my part, that there are certain notable divergences, but I won't dare to venture to sketch them out in a few lines.

It would have been interesting to see how Yang-chou understood the application of his theories in social life. But our curiosity will never be satisfied. While Meh-di wrote at length on how his law of solidarity should be understood and applied, Yang-chou did not envisage, in any of his works, the social organization of the country. Is this gap due to the fact that the texts which address this question have not reached us, or did the philosopher truly leave it aside? We cannot profess to know. Doubtless, if Yang-chou had entered this territory, we would not have seen him demonstrate that his law of egoism and free expansion of individual instincts fits with a society where, without hypocritical demonstrations, but practically, men would support one another mutually with more usefulness and benevolence. Did Meh-ti not establish, in this way, that intensive “Universal Love”, solidarity and altruism would serve, more than any other procedure, the interests of our egoism?

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A single exception, perhaps, among the thinkers of his time and place, Yang-chou stands out almost as boldly, today, among our modern philosophers. While our contemporary societies, rejecting old dogmas on the one hand, and, clinging stubbornly to the educational systems and the moral formulas they issue on the other, debate one another in an incoherent confusion, we may find some interest—and maybe enjoyment—in listening to the lessons of this independent mind.

When, considering, in its wake, the crowd of people heading for the tomb, bound by prejudices and sinking into the fatal chasm without ever having suspected what it means to live, we cry out with him: *How do they differ from criminals in chains?* Perhaps we would be closer to a real comprehension of existence, closer, at the very least, to finding whether there is, outside of the burlesque and tragic manner with which we conceive individual life and social relations, another, more normal, way of being and, leaving, more fertile with joy.

If Yang-chou can incite us to pursue this research, inspire in us this audacious—and more arduous to realize than one thinks—resolution to live the fullest life we might hold in our embrace by us and for us, to hold such a lesson of virile and intelligent energy in our heart and in our mind will be, more than ever, useful and beneficial.

# Le Stirnérisme

Émile Armand

## Stirnerism

It was in Bayreuth, in Bavaria, on October 25, 1806, that Max Stirner came into this world. He wasn't an author of extraordinary fecundity, as he was too preoccupied with life's worries. Of his writings, one has lingered—a volume to which he fully dedicated himself, the one in which he expressed all of his thought and attempted to show the way out for the men of his time: *The Unique and His Own*.

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There is Stirner and his œuvre, there is *The Unique and His Own* and “Stirnerism.” It so happened that in addressing the men of his time, Max Stirner addressed men of all time, but without assuming the role of alluring prophet theatrically thundering from the depths of his cavern as Nietzsche did so well. Nor does Stirner present himself to us as a professor addressing his students: he speaks to all who come to listen, as a lecturer or conversationalist who has gathered around himself an audience made up of all categories, laborer and intellectual alike.

Also, in order to understand the scope of Stirnerism, you have to cut out all that is relative to the era in which *The Unique and His Own* was written. Without this preparatory work, the reader may be tempted to believe that he is dealing with a confession or a philosophical testament. With this support in place, we have before us a robust and well-planted tree, a perfectly coherent doctrine and are no longer surprised that it has given birth to an entire movement.

Stirnerism holds that the individual human being is the basis and justification for humanity; without the human there is no humanity; the totality only makes sense via the individual. One may as well stop here if one does not assimilate this premise. This sociological individual is not a being to come, nor an *übermensch*—but a man like you or I whose determinism pushes him to be as he should be, as he must be—neither more nor less than what he has the force or the strength to be. But the man we know, is he really what his determinism wants—in other words, is he what he should be, what he could be? This man who is among us in places of work or pleasure, is he a natural product or an artificial confection, is he the voluntary executor of the social contract or does he but conform because education, prejudice, and conventions of all kind have brainwashed him? It is this problem that Stirnerism attempts to resolve. Stage One!

To return the individual to his natural determinism, Stirnerism seeks to weaken the pillars upon which the man of our times has built his shack as a member of society: God, State, Church, religion, cause, ethics, morality, liberty, justice, public good, abnegation, devotion, law, divine right, right of the people, piety, honor, patriotism, justice, hierarchy, truth, in short, ideals of all kinds. These ideals, those of the past as well as those of the present, these ideals are spooks lying

in wait in “every corner” of man’s mindset, who have taken hold of his brain, who have moved in and prevent him from following his egoist determinism.

The prejudice-spooks retreating one after the other, the pillars of his faith and his belief crumbling in succession, the individual finds himself alone. Finally, he is himself, his Me is disengaged from the whole gang who compromised him and prevented him from showing himself as such. The *tabula rasa* is complete, the clouds obscuring the horizon have disappeared, the sun shines brightly and the path is clear. The individual now knows only one cause: his own, and he doesn’t base this cause on anything exterior, on any of the spooky values which once stuffed his brain. He is the egoist in the absolute sense of the word: from now on his power is his only resource. All of the exterior rules have fallen away; he is freed from interior constraint, which is much worse than exterior imperative; now he must seek in himself alone his rule and his law. He is the Unique and he belongs to himself, with full ownership. For he there is one right superior to all rights: the right to his own well-being. “Punishment must disappear to make room for satisfaction.”

Think then to where the Unique has come! No truth exists outside of himself. He does nothing for the love of God or men, but for the love of self. There is but one relation between he and his neighbor: that of utility or benefit. All rights and all justice derive from him alone. That which he wants is that which is just. So to hell with all causes that are not his own! He himself is his cause and is neither “good” nor “bad” (such words...). He declares himself a mortal enemy of the State and an impious adversary to legal property.

A few citations taken from *The Unique and His Own* will help in understanding that Stirner spared nothing and that not a single idol found grace in his eyes:

*There is always only a new master set in the old one’s place, and the overthrow is a—reconstruction. It remains at the distinction between the young and the old Philistine. The Revolution began in a bourgeois fashion, with the uprising of the third estate, the middle class; in bourgeois fashion it peters out. If one day it became clear to you that God, the commandments, etc., only harm you, that they reduce and ruin you, indeed, you would cast them off from you just as the Christians condemned Apollo or Minerva or heathen morality.*

*As long as even one institution exists which the individual may not dismantle, my ownness and selfpossession are still very far away.*

*Without doubt education has made me powerful. It has given me power over all drives, over the impulses of my nature as well as over the impositions and outrages of the world. I know, and have gained the strength for it through education, that I don’t need to let myself be compelled by any of my desires, pleasures, emotional outbursts, etc.; I am their—master.*

*Anyone who overturns one of his limits may have shown others the way and the means; the overturning of their limits remains their affair.*

*A long time went by, in which people were satisfied with the delusion that they had the truth, without seriously thinking that perhaps they themselves must be true to possess the truth.*

*Whoever has to count on the lack of will in others in order to exist, is a shoddy product of these others, as the master is a shoddy product of the slave. If servility ceased, it would be all over for lordship.*

*For the rational, i.e. the 'intellectual human being,' there is no family as a natural force; a refusal of parents, siblings, etc., appears.*<sup>1</sup>

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For the egoist who has accomplished a *tabula rasa*, clear of prejudice-spooks, upon which shores will his determinism grow? And here is the second stage of Stirnerism.

Quite simply on the shores of union and association... But a voluntarily contracted union, an *association of egoists* not haunted by the spooks of selflessness, devotion, sacrifice, abnegation, etc... An association of egoists where our individual force will grow from all of the individual forces of our co-associates, where we will feed one another, where we will mutually provide food for one another. A union in which one serves oneself for one's own purposes, without you troubling over the obsession of "social duties". An association that you consider to be your property, your weapon, your tool, and that you will leave when it has ceased to be useful to you.

But let us not imagine that the association, if it allows the individual to realize himself through it, demands nothing in exchange.

Certainly, the Stirnerian association does not present itself to be a spiritual power superior to the associate—the association does not exist except by the associates, it is their creation; but look here: so that it may fulfill its purpose, that we might escape "the inseparable constraint of life in the State or society" it is necessary to understand that it not lack "restrictions on liberty and obstacles of the will." "Give and take." Egoist, my friend, you will consume other egoists, but on the condition of accepting to serve them food. In the Stirnerian association, one can even sacrifice to another, but not in invoking the sacred character of the Association; quite simply because it could be natural and agreeable to you to sacrifice yourself.

Stirnerism recognizes that the State relies on the slavery of work; may work be free and the State be immediately destroyed. (*Der Staat beruht auf der Sklaverei des Arbeit. Wird der Arbeit frei, so ist der Staat verloren*)<sup>2</sup>: that's why the effort of the worker must strive for the destruction of the State, or go without it, which amounts to the same thing.

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Stage three. What remains is the way in which the egoist or Association of Egoists reacts against adepts and tricksters who use the spooks that have taken possession of men's brains for the purposes of domination and exploitation. Stirnerism does not intend to play the role of the State after having destroyed or proclaimed its uselessness, to force those who would not or cannot form egoist associations. Stirnerism does not advocate revolution. Stirnerism is not synonymous with messianism. Against those who possess and exploit to the point of leaving the exploited neither bread to eat nor a place to rest their head nor to pay them a full salary for their effort, insurrection is a given, rebellion fitting. There are non-economic goods under the sun, overflowing vaults of them, dammit! And no sentimentalism when it comes to affirming one's own rights or those of an associate in well-being. The *ego*, guided by consciousness of self will not be held down by the scruples that can haunt those men whose minds are inhabited by spooks.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tr*—Stirner translations provided by Wolfi Landstreicher.

<sup>2</sup> *Tr*—Armand's rendering varies from the quoted German, which reads: "The State relies on the slavery of work. If work were free, so the State would be doomed."



*The revolution commands one to make arrangements, the insurrection [Empörung] demands that one stand or raise himself up [sich auf-oder empörzurichten].*

*I get around a rock that stands in my way, until I have enough powder to blow it up; I get around the laws of a people, until I've gathered the strength to overthrow them.*

*A people cannot be free except at the expense of the individual; because the individual is not the main point of this freedom, but rather the people. The freer the people, the more bound the individual; the people of Athens, precisely at its freest time, created ostracism, banished atheists, poisoned the most honest thinker. Therefore turn to yourselves rather than to your gods and idols. Bring out of yourselves what is in you, bring it to light, bring yourselves out as manifestation.*

Such is the essence of the message that Max Stirner, in delivering it to the men of his age, gives to men of all ages.

We have said that in Stirner there is the man and the œuvre. After having spoken of his doctrine, let us speak of the founder. Stirner is but the *nom de plume* of Johann Caspar Schmidt and this surname is but a sobriquet owing to the forehead (*Stirn* in German) of the author of *The Unique and His Own* and he kept it for his writings.

One of the episodes of Stirner's life that gets our full attention is his frequenting, for ten years, of the club "*Die Freien*," a group of intellectuals driven by liberal ideas and pre-'48 progressive minds. They gathered at a bar in an atmosphere made smoky by long earthenware pipes, to discuss all manner of subjects: theology, (Strauss's book on Jesus had just come out), literature, politics (the revolution of '48 was close). It was in 1843 that Max Stirner, the man with the impassive look and strong, meditative character, married his second wife—a dreamy and sentimental Meklem-bourgeoisie, and also a regular to "*Die Freien*," Marie Dahnhardt. However, their union was not a happy one. Mutual misunderstanding of the two spouses and the insinuating calumnies that Stirner sought to gain from the marriage through his wife's dowries, brought about the rupture in 1845.

Stirner continued to produce. *The Unique and His Own* dates back to the end of 1844. He went on to publish, from 1845 to '47 German translations of the major works of J.B. Say and Adam Smith with notes and commentary in eight volumes; in 1852, a "History of Reaction" in two volumes, all in his pen; also in 1852, the translation of an essay by J.B. Say on capital and interest, with commentary... Then he published nothing more. His last years were miserable. Reduced to earning his bread as he could, isolated, imprisoned twice for debts, he succumbed in 1856 to an anthracic infection in a hotel. From new research by my friend John-Henry Mackay, who died in May 1933, it seems that the end of his life was not as miserable nor as devoid of friendship as we once thought.

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Let us return to the Stirner's œuvre. One of the most remarkable passages of *The Unique and His Own* is the one in which he defines the bourgeoisie in relation to the dropouts. This citation is the best response to give to those who see in Stirner and his inheritors bourgeois individualists:

*The middle class<sup>3</sup> professes a morality that is most closely connected with its essence. Its first demand in this regard is that one pursue a solid business, an honest trade, lead a moral life. To it, the swindler, the prostitute, the thief, robber and murderer, the gambler, the penniless man without employment, the reckless one are immoral. The upright bourgeois describes the opinion against these ‘immoral’ people as his ‘deepest indignation.’ All of them lack a stable residence, the solidity of business, a solid, respectable life, the steady income, etc.; in short, because their existence doesn’t rest on a secure basis, they are among the dangerous ‘individuals or lone drifters,’<sup>4</sup> the dangerous proletariat; they are ‘individual troublemakers’ who have no ‘guarantees’ to offer and ‘nothing to lose,’ and so nothing to risk.*

*... every vagabond way of living displeases him [the bourgeois]. For there are also intellectual vagabonds to whom the ancestral home of their fathers seems too cramped and oppressive for them to be willing to content themselves with the limited space any more; instead of staying within the bounds of a moderate way of thinking, and taking as inviolable truth what grants consolation and reassurance to thousands, they leap over all boundaries of tradition and run wild with their impudent criticism and untamed skepticism, these extravagant vagabonds. They form the class of the vagrant, restless, changeable, i.e., and when they give voice to their unsettled essence, they are called ‘unruly guys.’*

*All those who appear suspicious, hostile, and dangerous to the bourgeois are included together under the name ‘vagabonds.’*

Stirner did not descend to the people, like the Bakunins, the Kropotkins, the Tolstoys, for example. He’s not a prodigious author like Proudhon—writing to the prejudices of average and typical bourgeoisie; he’s no scholar like Reclus, who had a spirit of well-meaning evangelism; nor an aristocrat like Nietzsche: he’s one of us. This is a man who never found himself well-off, in a sure position that was profitable or with private income. He knew the necessity of practicing the most diverse jobs for supporting himself. The glory that surrounds celebrated outcasts, revolutionary militants, or founders of schools of thought was unknown to him. He had to manage however he could—and in place of the shows of respect that the bourgeoisie bestows, despite everything, on certain illustrious revolutionaries, he received nothing from them but the rebuffs with which they burden individuals who have no situation or guarantee.

Instructed by his own experiences, Stirner thus traced a much more striking portrait of the bourgeois than that which Flaubert would later—Flaubert who made his own position purely aesthetic.

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<sup>3</sup> The German here is “*Bürgertum*” which means “bourgeoisie” in the broad sense which also includes petite-bourgeoisie (tradesmen and small business owners), but it doesn’t include wage workers, peasants, or so-called lumpen... Thus it isn’t the same as what the term “common people” would mean in the US.

<sup>4</sup> “*Vereinzelten*” is not usually used as a noun in German. As an adjective, it can be translated as “isolated,” “scattered,” “occasional,” and the like, so it carries the implication of some level of aloneness and lack of stability. I felt that the phrase “lone drifter” got these implications across the best. On this level, it’s important to realize that at this time “proletariat” referred to those without property (beyond what they might carry in a knapsack).

For Stirner, the characteristic of the bourgeois world is to have a serious occupation, an honorable profession, morality—in short that which constitutes a right to housing in life. The bourgeois could be a worker or a shareholder, call himself a *républicain*, radical, socialist, syndicalist, communist, even anarchist; he could belong to a Lodge, to the League of Human Rights, to an electoral socialist Committee, to a communist cell; he could even pay his dues to a revolutionary party. So long as his life rests upon a steady basis, so long as he offers moral guarantees, he is bourgeois and bourgeois he will remain.

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Even in Germany, fifty years went by before a second edition of *The Unique and His Own* appeared (1882). In 1893, the large publishing house Reclam of Leipzig, featured this book in its Popular Library. It made it available to all. In 1897, John-Henry Mackey, who went through a lot of trouble to find traces of Stirner and to dissipate the mystery that shrouds his life, published the first edition of *Max Stirner, sein Leben und sein Werk*.

In France, *L'Unique et sa Propriété* appeared in 1900 in two translations, that of Robert L. Reclaire, released by Stock: and that of Henri Lasvigne at the *White Review* (In 1894, Henri Albert translated a section of the piece in *Mercure de France*; a little later, Theodore Randal did the same in *Entretiens Politiques et Littéraires* and in the *Magazine International*).

In 1902, it was translated into Danish (with the preface by Georges Brandes), and into Italian (with a preface by Ettore Zoccoli); a second edition in Italian appeared in 1911 and was reprinted in 1920. In 1907, preceded by a preface from the author of the *Philosophy of Egoism*, James Walker, it appeared in English, translated by Steven T. Byington, edited by Benjamin Tucker (under the title *The Ego and His Own*). In 1912, *The Unique and His Own* was, moreover, translated into Russian (there are eight editions of this work in this language, the seventh translated by Leo Kasarnowski, the latest dating to 1920), into Spanish, Dutch, and Swedish. In 1930, two Japanese translations appeared, one cheap one by J. Tsuji. I think there are translations of *The Unique* in other languages. (I've heard talk of there being translations in eighteen languages, but I couldn't verify that).

Under the title *Kleinere Schriften—small writings*—John-Henry Mackay collected the studies, articles, accounts, and responses of Stirner to his critics during the years 1842 until 1848. I know of one edition in Italian of this work, titled *Scritti minori*. I translated the very interesting critique Stirner wrote of *Mystères de Paris* by Eugène Sue and an excerpt from *Faux Principe de notre éducation* in *l'Endehors*.

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**Section Ten: Emile Armand  
(1872–1963)**

*The individualist-anarchist makes “propaganda” in order to highlight individualist-anarchist dispositions which have been ignored, or at the very least to bring about an intellectual atmosphere favorable to their appearance.*

—E. Armand,

*A Little Manual of the Individualist Anarchist* (1911)

Emile Armand was born Ernest Juin in Paris. His father was a participant in the Paris Commune and attempted to give his son an education which was critical of church doctrine and dogmas, but this didn't prevent the rebellious Ernest from defiantly embracing the more mystical branches of Christianity for a period of about 8 years (1889–1897). By this time Armand came into contact with the anarcho-communism of Jean Grave and more importantly (to his own intellectual development), the writings of Tolstoy and the pacifist anarcho-Christian tendency. This orientation culminated in Armand launching his own magazine *L'Ere Nouvelle* in 1901. Tolstoy, who actually collaborated on the magazine, was certainly one of its main inspirers and at the time exerted great influence on Armand, but his theories were never accepted uncritically and Armand's questioning path eventually led him to read Max Stirner's *The Unique and Its Property* and to his embracing of anarchist-individualism.

Armand's discovery of Stirner had a life-changing impact on his theoretical assumptions, and he continued to constantly elaborate his own positions through subsequent research into other individualist thinkers such as Josiah Warren, Lysander Spooner, Emerson and Benjamin Tucker (in the process becoming friends and long-term correspondents with both Tucker and John Henry Mackay). Armand's indebtedness to these early pioneers of anarcho-individualism—particularly Stirner—is unquestionable, but his presentation and creative expression of ideas was so uniquely his own that he is justifiably credited with being one of the most original and influential thinkers to emerge from this tradition.

For Armand, it is our own lives and our own mentalities that are the first battleground where we initiate our struggle against the State, and to really develop a clearer understanding of how to create the “revolution” we desire, we need to begin with a critique of our daily lives—and of the subjective fears and inhibitions that keep us socially compliant. Armand understood that the anarchist “movement” was only a vehicle to freedom and not freedom itself, and that a healthy anarchist milieu must remain open and experiential; a place to discuss new ideas and to attack the old order's modes of thought—its religions, its morality, and its foundational philosophies. Anarchist critique was libertarian, not dictatorial, and anarchist *practice* was not just a concept, but a way of life: a dionysian force, a spirit of joy, freedom, vigor, excess, and delight intent on renewing life itself.

Armand and the other anarcho-individualists around him scoffed at the vague utopian dreams of their collectivist counterparts and sought to revolutionize the “here and now”—and in effect charted a different course for anarchism that bypassed traditional notions of “revolution” altogether. Armand felt that anarchists were the “oligo-elements”<sup>5</sup> of society and argued that when enough people became self-willed “oligo-elements” there would be no more society, but a multitude of individual consciousnesses—mature, radiant and balanced.

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<sup>5</sup> A term from chemistry that refers to trace elements found only in small amounts, but which are absolutely vital to the health of living organisms.

Armand's literary output was mammoth and his evolutionary process can be clearly observed in the periodicals he edited and published, such as *L'Anarchie* (founded in 1905 by the legendary Albert Libertad), *l'en-dehors* (a follow up to Zo d'Axa's infamous journal) that Armand published between May 1922 and October 1939 (for an impressive total of three hundred thirty five issues!), and *L'Unique* (one hundred ten issues published between 1945 and 1956). Armand's most fully realized statement of anarcho-individualism is generally considered to be his 581-page *L'Initiation Individualiste Anarchiste*, which was published in 1925, but was actually written in 1923, while Armand was in prison after the war. This detailed and uncompromising work was long ago translated into Italian and Spanish, but to date only scattered excerpts have appeared in English.

## E. Armand as I Knew Him

### Mauricius

I encountered E. Armand for the first time one beautiful night in the spring of 1905 at the Causeries Populaires in the rue Muller in Montmartre, where I had come that night in a very banal way.

I lived then on the place du Theatre-Montmartre and on this street was a police station, in front of which I saw some men talking. I approached them. Suddenly, I saw coming from the police station an almost completely naked man who was wearing only a small bathing suit. He was a young man about twenty-five years old with a short beard. Accompanied by a police agent, he was led towards the rue d'Orsel, followed by a crowd which grew larger each minute because no one had seen such a spectacle. Conceptions of modesty have evolved since 1905 but at this time, women bathed on the beaches in a vest fastened up to their necks and in pantaloons which came down to their ankles. Thus, by the time the crowd arrived at the rue Muller, it had grown considerable. It is necessary to say in fact that this naked man was the comrade who had come to present a lecture on hygiene at the Causeries Populaires.

Behind a table that his comrades had quickly set up on the pavement, the naked comrade told us his story.

Coming down the boulevard Rochechouart, the street where he lived, wearing his simple attire, he had been immediately arrested by two agents who led him to the police station. There, in front of the captain, he explained that he was a medical student, that heat created sweat and that sweat contained urine, among other poisonous products, and that if this sweat remained confined within clothing, it was reabsorbed by the skin and poisoned the organism. The police chief thought he was insane and brought the doctor to examine him. But after having listened to this comrade, the doctor declared that from a scientific point of view, the comrade's reasoning was perfectly correct and since his genitals were covered by the bathing suit, there was no reason to hold him in custody.

This was the first spectacular demonstration of the ideas on which Anna Mahe and Albert Libertad had founded *L'Anarchie* several months previously:

*Breaking with conventional wisdom, to be neither opportunists following the crowd nor idealists constructing beautiful Utopias, we want to live proudly and to the fullest extent, not caught up in the caprices of the mob or of neurotics, but in putting ourselves in accord with the best of present day science: the best hygiene, the best economics ... This newspaper desires to be the point of contact between those people, across the world, who live as anarchists under the sole control of their personal experience and free examination.*

Certainly the appearance of *L'Anarchie* profoundly transformed the idea of anarchist propaganda. Until then, this propaganda had been completely imbued with the ideas of Bakunin,

Kropotkin and Jean Grave, etc; it sought the destruction of capitalist society by social revolution. Such propaganda attempted to stir up revolts against the political, religious, and economic powers and could only conceive of a society “without God or Master” as a future hypothesis. In the remaining period, the anarchist could live as they choose: a rebel in their thoughts, he or she could be submissive in their acts, anarchists could be good workers, good law-abiding and respectable citizen; an anti-clerical, they could participate in building chapels; anti-militarists, they could participate in constructing barracks. All this was the fault of the social organization and he or she was not responsible.

Libertad said to us: “It is not in ten years that it is necessary to live as an anarchist, it is immediately. It is right now that the anarchist must put their acts in accord with their ideas.”

This is why the speaker at the street meeting, in protesting against laws which forced him to be clothed a certain way, spoke on the subject of clothing and hygiene while barely clothed.

I was 19 at this time and lived in a very conformist milieu and this demonstration made a great impression on me. It impressed Armand very strongly no doubt since it was from that night on that he assiduously frequented the *Causeries Populaires* and began to write for *L’Anarchie*.

É. Armand left the Salvation Army and professed a Christian anarchism, which truthfully, infused his whole life.

At the great Congress of 1905, which brought together free-thinking groups from fourteen countries, from a hundred and fifty Free Mason lodges, to sixty-six teachers associations, from the League of the Rights of Man to thousands of individual adherents, among them such well-known thinkers as Ernest Heachel, Marcelling Berthelot, Hectore Denis, etc. The anarchists took an active part in the debates on the burning questions of the day such as: “Morality Without God,” “The New Encyclopedia,” “Free Thought and Pacifism.” Present were Domela Nieuwenhuis, Sébastien Faure, Paraf-Javal, Libertad, Cyvoc, and others. Among the attendees were Lorulot and myself. But É. Armand didn’t participate in this congress, whose importance was considerable. He still professed at this time a pure Christianity from which he had retained especially the notion of personal responsibility in the work of collective liberation. “Salvation is within you.” This was his credo all of his life.

And even when he separated from Tolstoy, reproaching Tolstoy for his disdain for physical love and women, for his renouncement of the intensity of life, Armand still remained faithful to the Tolstoyian thesis of passive resistance, of moral opposition to oppression, of refusing to participate in state bureaucracies, of refusing to fabricate objects useless to human development: (weapons, church ornaments, military uniforms, etc). abandonment of work in the bosses factories or workshops, of refusing to participate in building churches, barracks, prisons, of refusing to be a soldier, to be a juror, to pay taxes, etc.

In this position, É. Armand was in complete accord with the line of *L’Anarchie*, laid out by Albert Libertad and Anna Mahé and perhaps he spoke too of resisting the force of society’s embrace. He made such arguments reluctantly, because Armand’s temperament and intellectual formation were opposed to overt confrontation. In all his subsequent writings Armand was a declared adversary of all violence.

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I can no longer recall when I first heard Armand pronounce this formula: “I expose, I propose, I don’t impose.” It was a good formula. Armand made it his own and repeated it many times. He



was so afraid of appearing dogmatic that the majority of his writings lacked firm conclusions. He uncovered ideas, he could analyze them in minute detail. But nearly always he ended with questions, without giving any solutions to the problems he studied. I know very well that he preached that each person must determine for themselves. But his own solutions and his contradictions left the reader with an impression of a very painful uncertainty.

In a long series of articles appearing in *L'Anarchie* in 1912 entitled: "Something Must Be Done—But What?," he treated numerous problems with a remarkable intelligence, a profound knowledge of his subject matter. But in no way did he resolve the questions posed by his title.

Among the responses which followed these articles, I mention one signed "A Reader" (*L'Anarchie* # 355 and 356):

*According to your study, I see that anarchist education must not be this or not be that. But I haven't seen what it must be. This is what interests me.*

*When it is a question of acting positively, I neither understand nor accept a negative method. To create anarchists by education is a positive act that can't be accomplished completely by negations.*

*A strange and remarkable thing: on most questions touching on anarchism directly, you are hesitant and drifting. By contrast, on the majority of things which are removed from you, you are absolutely conclusive. When it is no longer a question concerning anarchism directly, you relax your tortured and long-winded expressions, which continue endlessly without firm conclusion. You even arrive at launching the most astonishing and contradictory affirmations.*

*For example: you state that science is a phantom like God and replaces God, that science is an hypothesis having the same disadvantages as the deist hypothesis. Yet all of the books you recommend or that you sell have an anti-clerical and anti-spiritual thrust, making our education one-sided.*

Obviously, Armand was not a sectarian and it is to his honor that he saw himself as an educator, a pioneer, a propagandist. But you can't make propaganda by a series of questions.

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I said at the beginning of this study how the appearance of *L'Anarchie* and Libertad's formula: "This newspaper desires to be the point of contact between all those around the world living as anarchists, under the sole control of experience and free examination" had an influence on Armand's orientation.

Until that point his anarchism was strongly influenced by Tolstoy but also tending toward the anarchism expoused by Anglo-Saxon anarchists like Emerson, Carlyle, Walt Whitman and especially Crosby and Benjamin Tucker. A curious thing, he declared in April 1907, he was then 36 years old and had never read Nietzsche or Stirner, of whom much later he was to become a fervent disciple.

But his thirst for investigation and his knowledge of languages—he could read a book in English, German, Italian, Spanish or Dutch—put him in contact with all of the printed matter of the libertarian world.

Once he had in his hands a circular signed by well-known anarcho-communists inviting “groups, individual comrades, unions, etc” to an International Libertarian Communist Worker’s Congress in Amsterdam in the spring of 1907.

E. Armand spoke up immediately against what he perceived as the focus of the conference. “One can’t grasp anarchy in formulas, constitute and vote on principles. Anarchist education must not set out to form communists but to create individuals free of all constraint, not communist dogmas.” And he expressed his intention to go to Amsterdam “only to discuss with comrades from other countries and put forth certain ideas which are dear to me.”

I agreed with his suggestion and adapted as my own Armand’s title for our intervention “Anarchism as Life and Individual Activity.”

But Armand was very self-centered and didn’t like to collaborate. We each wrote our own report. *L’Anarchie* printed the two in the same brochure. Both had the same general line but, to reread them today, I can state that Armand’s was by far the better (mine contained certain youthful errors). Armand had written a more precise and valuable text on the anarchist attitude in the face of bourgeoisie society.

It should be reproduced in its entirety. Here are some excerpts:

*To ask that all anarchists have the same views on anarchism is to ask the impossible.*

*Nevertheless, it seems that a general thread links anarchists, it is the prediction of the possibility of a state of affairs where AUTHORITY—the intellectual and moral domination of man over man—and EXPLOITATION, the economic form of authority, will be unknown. He is an anarchist who denies authority and exploitation of man over man.*

*From this it follows that anarchism is not uniquely a philosophical doctrine: it is a LIFE.*

*The tendency of all healthy and living organisms is to reproduce , , , Therefore an anarchist seeks to find and perpetrate himself in other individuals who share his conceptions and who can make possible, on a vaster scale, a state of things where authority and exploitation will be banished.*

*It is this desire, this will, not only to LIVE—this would be a pure individualism which we consider an aberration—but also to reproduce that we call propaganda and we label our activity.*

It is because Armand remained all his life true to this “master thought” despite his variations, his contradictions, and let’s say the word, his vacillations that he remains a distinctive figure in anarchism.

Armand was arrested a little before the Congress and likewise, taking my school examinations, I couldn’t come up with the necessary funds for such a trip. Our reports were not discussed in Amsterdam. The Congress Secretary, Fuss-Amore pretended that they had gone astray. Nevertheless, these ideas are an important moment in the evolution of anarchist ideas.

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Producing and distributing counterfeit money, such was the motive behind Armand’s arrest. It was the Laxenaire affair, which earned our comrade five years in seclusion. We must pause here and tell the truth.

Armand was a theoretician of illegalism. Sometimes he made it in a poetic mood such as when he exalted the vagabond, the wanderer who strayed from his routes, evading the prison of workshop and factory. But Jean Richepin had done it before him in CHANSON DES GUEUX, describing the vagabond encountering the peasant struggling on his field and mocking the peasant's beast-like devotion to his work:

*Go, go to the riff-raff  
Toil hard, strong, and long  
To watch you pleases me  
It's for us that all this works  
Go, go turn the grindstone  
Me, I hibernate and make my stake there  
And it could be I'll scoff the flame there  
Lighting my mouth on fire*

But this was literature to shock the bourgeoisie and doesn't stand up to examination.

Perhaps the peasant is greedy, ignorant and narrow-minded; perhaps the peasant is religious and reactionary, but it is he who harvests the wheat. If there were only vagabonds who looked at peasants working and who used up all the peasants' surplus granaries in a night of carousing, I ask how Jean Richepin and E. Armand would eat bread.

Armand, moreover, recognized this in *L'Anarchie* # 375: "Truthfully, the illegal is always more of an abstraction than a reality to me. The Outsider, the irregular, that I exalt and defend, this marginal lives in my imagination." Indeed.

In any case, Armand didn't just produce poetry on vagabondage, he also presented the "economic refractory" as a product of the dissolution of capitalist society. Illegalism was a means for the anarchist to free himself from mercenary work and to live independently of economic slavery.

Armand had said beautifully and repeated many times that a person is only responsible for their own acts. This isn't true. The propagandist is responsible to those whom they address by their propaganda.

Obviously, an anarchist has no respect for property and refuses to be an exploiter or exploited; he is called to live on the margin of laws. The history of anarchy has produced many illustrious examples. Ravochol, Pini, Clement Duval, Ortiz, Emile Henry, Alexander Jacob, all were robbers or rather expropriators because they worked for the Idea, for propaganda. But one knows how they ended up. At that time, stealing, counterfeiting, swindling and even pimping were justified in certain anarchist milieus as a means of liberating oneself economically. Such a theory was a puerile and dangerous utopia. As I have written in *CONFESSIONS*: "Illegalism did not free the individual. It led to trials."

But Armand held to his theories. He only changed in 1912 when he wrote: "The end of Garnier and Vallet causes me to reflect.." It was a little late.

A little while previously, he had written in a famous article that I mentioned before, in which he had denied the value of Science: "I know well that Science has taken God and hurled him over the precipice so that he doesn't exist any longer. The defeated has given up his place to his

triumphant rival. Thus, it is one phantom who has taken the place of another phantom.” Armand only acknowledged the value of practical science, “a science which teaches anti-conceptual means, and a concern with the crowbar and blow torch”

But Armand didn’t have the physical courage nor the audacity to handle a crowbar. Counterfeiting, that was another thing. It was an easy temptation.

I don’t know if Armand made counterfeit money. It is fair to say about him that Armand never sought a material gain in making propaganda; he always lived very poorly. As did all of us. I lived in the vicinity of *L’Anarchie* in a flat without electricity and which didn’t have a sink where I could wash my hands. And when I produced the journal, printed it, edited it, and had meetings every night, I worked seventeen hours per day. In concrete tasks I was helped only by Guerin, the manager, and his mistress. Each morning I gave a cook four francs with which to nourish myself all day. Life was cheerful in 1914 but all the same, those were lean days! Nevertheless, we didn’t feel poor. We worked for our ideas, with enthusiasm and the joy of the battle.

When I needed a pair of shoes, an overcoat or a robe, I would take a quick nap and then do some outside paid work. But it was exhausting.

On one occasion, a comrade proposed a crazy theft of some pieces of chocolate.

I always resisted the temptation—and for good reason. At one painful moment when we didn’t know how we were going to pay our printer, a certain Pierre Jacob (no connection with Alexander Jacob, the heroic author of “Why I Have Stolen”) proposed to draw us into an affair which he had previously laid out in an article in 1911, where he stated “ I will practice illegalism, hurling my spear at all who get in my way, even the poor, what only interests me are my own concerns.” It is with such writings that prisons are filled. I refused. Then he sent his woman to me. She was a beautiful girl, the flesh is weak, she flirted with me. Then after her amorous displays, she presented me with a shiny louis of 20 francs. “I have more if you want them.” I refused.

Several months later Pierre-Napoleon Jacob and his woman, Antoinette Lepoix, appeared before the court charged for producing and distributing counterfeit money. In their defense, they declared that they were working in the service of the police and they were receiving 150 francs per month as compensation. They stated they had only made counterfeit money to be better seen in anarchist circles.

M. Court, the head of the “anarchist brigade” acknowledged that Jacob was an informer but declared that he was unaware of Jacob’s counterfeiting.

The two were sentenced to a light prison term; between themselves, the wolves didn’t eat. But I escaped beautifully.

I cannot say if the Laxenaire affair was similar to this case and I don’t know in what way Armand had himself escaped temptation or if he was only the victim of his libido because the author of “What is an Anarchist?” had sexual complexes, of which I will speak much later.

In any case, he could not ignore the activities of Laxenaire and one can’t understand how he could remain overnight in Laxenaire’s home if not for the hope of profiting carnally from a woman distraught over the abnormal absence of her husband.

When the police arrived at Laxenaire’s house to search the premises, they found Armand distraught and exhausted.

Armand was a pure intellectual, when he exited the domain of ideas, where he excelled, he was hesitant, indecisive, and evasive in life. This is what lost him.

I helped him prepare for the trial. There was no material proof against him, the only overwhelming evidence against him was Laxenaire's testimony and also, it must be said, Armand's own writings on illegalism.

It was necessary to hold one's head high, to assert oneself. But if Armand handled a pen with ease, he was a poor speaker and his voice undistinguished and thin. He had no sense of struggle, he lacked pluck. He attempted to explain his presence at Laxenaire's house at six in the morning insinuating—without at the same time affirming it clearly—that he was the woman's lover. The police, naturally, recounted everything that Laxenaire had told them. Laxenaire, jealous and wanting revenge, declared that it was Armand who had procured the counterfeit money but Laxenaire provided no proof of it. From then on the trial became a psychological proceeding and depended on Armand's attitude, especially when Laxenaire's wife testified. Either she loved her husband or for other reasons she protested vehemently against the insinuations of Armand, whom she treated as a liar.

I seethed in my seat. I felt it was necessary for Armand to respond to the judge's question; "Armand, what do you have to say?"

He was obligated to stand up and master of himself, with a bittersweet smile on his face, declare:

"Monsieur," in speaking thus, truly Armand appeared suave. But he remained on his bench, head lowered, overwhelmed like a guilty man, like a liar caught in the act and stammering in a voice painful voice. He was lost.

This repugnance in Armand to physically face an adversary in the face of combat perhaps had a congenital origin. But one could not stop thinking that the academic teachings which had filled him in his youth greatly aggravated this tendency.

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I knew Armand for more than fifty years and we never had a serious conflict. Our relations were always cordial until his death. But we didn't have frequent contact. Our personalities were very different.

I had an exclusively scientific upbringing. My parents wanted me to enter the Ecole Central and until I was nineteen years old, I was devoted to mathematics. Even when I quit this path to enter Medical School and later on pursued my studies in biology, I retained from this base in mathematics a taste for exact sciences: order, method, the need to treat all problems as theories which use precise facts to arrive at an undebatable conclusion.

In his ideas, Armand erred on the side of his imagination. He declared he felt himself independent of all rules, of all formulas, of all doctrines; he even denied the value of science, which he considered as a simple hypothesis.

Our friend had another related contradiction. He was a juggler of ideas, a dilettante, he was careless about what he had written formerly and what he would write tomorrow. For a precise and scientific mind such as myself, it was a little disconcerting. It was necessary to recognize that with his analytical abilities, his vast erudition, which allowed him to comment on nearly all subjects, Armand's articles, even when they were contradictory, each contained threads of reflection and meditation. They caused you to think and it is in this sense that they are nearly always interesting.

But what especially differentiated myself from Armand were our temperaments. I am a man who acts with passion. I have a passion for science, a passion for propaganda, a passion for love.

I only commit to one thing at a time. But I commit myself completely to anything I undertake, Armand was a cerebral, a dialectician. I never knew himself as someone who went out of himself, who could show spite in front of dangers, sometimes illogically.

I will recall now the Liabeuf affair,

Liabeuf was a cobbler who had an unhappy childhood and a criminal record. Now settled, he had drawn from the pavements a young streetwalker, led astray in her youth as he had been. But the girl had a pimp who was at the same time a police informer. They alerted his companions of the morals police and one day, Liabeuf was arrested and charged with “special vagabondage” and condemned to three months in prison and five years ban.

At the end of his prison term, Liabeuf had only one idea: revenge.

Working day and night in his trade as a cobbler to save enough money to purchase a revolver, he fashioned a strange-looking breastplate made out of leather and spiked with iron points. Thus armed, he hunted the two police who had arrested him. He encountered them on the rue Aubry-le-Boucher but they were not alone. There was a terrible fight between the rebel and the police. The morals agent Duray was killed and Liabeuf received a saber blow to the chest.

This affair aroused a considerable emotion throughout the country; the newspapers headlines screamed with details of the affair. Gustave Hervé wrote a courageous article in LA GUERRE SOCIALE (The Social War) in which he stigmatized the ignominy of the morals police, accusing the judges of lacking a conscience and viciously condemning an innocent man on the basis of the testimony of an “jackass.” Hervé incited all the victims of a rotten judicial system and all the workers beaten by the Cossacks of the Paris police force to imitate the energy and courage of Liabeuf.

Hauled into court, Hervé received four years imprisonment, after having told the judges: “I am proud to have saved Liabeuf from the gallows! Because I now challenge anyone to condemn this honest worker to death and execute him; an honest worker whom the morals police forced into murdering.”

Nevertheless, Liabeuf was condemned to death. But Gustave Hervé’s courageous stance was joined unanimously by the anarchists in an ardent press campaign and rounds of protest meetings. This campaign created a movement of passionate support in all the press, regardless of political distinction, demanding a pardon for Liabeuf, a pardon which appeared to everyone beyond debate.

A little while later, I organized a meeting where É. Armand was to lecture on the topic of THE SECOND LANGUAGE and especially speak out against Esperanto. The question interested many different groups and the street where the meeting was to be held was teeming with people. I had just finished introducing Armand when the comrade Dolié entered the room. He handed me a letter from Almereyda saying in substance—because I cannot remember the exact wording after all these years—“Liabeuf will be executed tonight. We must march to the jail and free him. I count on you and all your friends to meet us on boulevard Arago.”

I was gripped by an intense emotion. I jumped on the podium and in a voice shaking with all my disgust with this legal infamy, against the crime that Society was committing, I read the letter out to the audience and exhorted everyone gathered to follow me out in our fight against this injustice.

Armand was at my side. I looked at him: he was as calm as cucumber. He held his notes in his hand, showed them to me and said in a desolate voice: “And my meeting?” He did not understand that the audience was streaming out of the meeting, excited and rebellious.

This is not to say that Armand was completely devoid of feeling; he loved art, nature, and poetry. In personal letters that he gave to me to read, Armand demonstrated a certain sentimentality, but the brain always intervened. Armand reasoned with his own feelings and wished that these feelings would always be in accord with his logic.

He was not athletic, he had no physical courage, he detested the promiscuity of crowds, he detested violence. He couldn't understand heroic gestures, considering reckless bravery as "tilting at windmills."

Nevertheless, Armand made certain gestures which could appear courageous. For example, when Le Retif and Rirette Maitrejean were arrested in 1912, he took over *L'Anarchie* at the height of the Bonnot affair. During World War I, he published an anti-war journal, *La Mêlée*. But it is possible Armand did not take account of the dangers he ran into; he always had an astonishing streak of naïveté, a naïveté which condemned him in the Laxenaire affair (and much later in the Bouchard affair, where he was caught with deserters' letters that he hadn't taken precautions to hide.)

Armand was not a man of the present; he was outside of time. Above all he loved philosophical speculation and the discussion of ideas. It must be recognized that these ideas were original but at the same time it was of little importance to him if they were viable.

Armand read enormously and drew many of his ideas from his readings. But these ideas always passed through the prism of his thought; they were imprinted with his distinct personality. This is why he almost never cited other authors, even Stirner, who nevertheless furnished the bedrock of his individualism. "Descartes wrote—'I think therefore I am, but I am not only because I think but because I AM, I AM the one who is.'" (*L'unique et sa propriété*) And many of Armand's theses, for example, the association of egoists, are of Stirnerian origin. Nietzsche, whom Armand read in 1907 filled a gap in Armand's theories. I don't think Armand liked the lyricism of the author of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* nor his hierarchy, his asceticism, and his contempt for women but nevertheless, there were common points. "The Gods are dead and now it is necessary that the Superman live." I think that the term "Superman" annoyed Armand but when he spoke of the New Man, of a new psychological type (determined by the individual's negation of the necessity of authority), wasn't this the same thing? Nietzsche's Superman and Armand's Future Man equally turned over the tables on the received values.

*I don't have the desire to be a leader of hesitating men, wrote Armand, I don't live my life as an example for the multitudes. I value my friends so that they can live their life by themselves and without me...The true libertarian education doesn't consist of leading another to think as you do but to make another capable of thinking and living for THEMSELVES.*

Is this not the sharp address of Zarathustra: "Ye will only be dignified to be my disciples by disowning me.?" Armand didn't go that far, but it was all the same an integral part of his teachings.

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Armand wrote an article in which he said the writer must be amorous; it is only when he or she is amorous that the writer expresses fantasy and imagination; if the writer is not amorous, they are drab and infertile.

The terms Armand used are very genteel but the idea is precise. In my book, *Outrage to Morals*, I have demonstrated over-abundantly how intellectual genius is intimately linked with sexual expression. All the great artists, eminent thinkers, powerful writers have been sensualists and all the great epochs of history have been erotic epochs.

Obviously, I don't know Armand's sexual behavior but I do not think he was a sensualist, a lusty male in the example of Victor Hugo or a Rodin. He lacked erotic force in his writing as he did in his conduct. His eroticism is similar to his work, purely cerebral. His merit—and it is great— is having written on sexuality without concerning himself with what others thought or said.

In the first article that he wrote for *L'Anarchie* (November 1905), he said: "I don't consider as evil the sexual explorations of children of 10,11, 12 years" and in his circular, MES AMIS, he spoke of the pleasure of witnessing other's love-making before his eyes. Moreover, he spoke with kindness about homosexuality.

When he was accused of sexual perversion, he replied he couldn't care less, that he was "outside", that was his motto and reason for living. Nevertheless, even if he wrote beautifully, "I am indifferent to the social question", he is obligated to take account of it. It is only by pure illusion that he could think to abstain from it. But this illusion, which he cultivated and valued is not that of an ambitious person. He sought satisfaction within himself and thus arrived like Buddha in the Transfiguration, placing himself, at least in spirit, outside and above all contingencies.

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Despite the critique I have made in all objectivity and sincerity of Armand's work, this work remains a moment in the history of anarchy. Its originality, its diversity, the multiple ideas that it contained, will always be wellsprings where people who think and seek can quench their thirst.

And the personality of Armand remained vitally linked by his intellectual integrity, by the consistency of his activity and despite the many diverse roads that he traveled, by his fidelity to the beautiful formula that Libertad printed in the first issue of *L'Anarchie*, which I will cite one last time: "This journal desires to be the point of contact between all those, across the world, who live as anarchists under the sole control of experiences and free examination."

—From *E.Armand, Son Vie, Son Ouevre*, La Ruche Ouvrier, 1964



# A Picture of the Situation

## The Social Ambiance

A chaos of beings, acts and ideas; a disorderly struggle, rough, bitter, and without any center, a perpetual lie; a continual succession of events that occur blindly, raising some up today only to crush them pitilessly tomorrow.

An informal and anonymous mass, rich and poor, slaves of secular and hereditary prejudice—some because they draw advantage from those prejudices and others still because they are submerged in the most crass ignorance and lack the will to escape. A money-worshipping mass, that has for its supreme ideal the rich man; a people made brutish by prejudices, by authoritarian teaching-methods, by an artificial existence, by alcohol-abuse, by adulterated and cheaply produced foods, a plague of degenerates from above and below, without any profound aspirations, with no other goal besides “making it” or living tranquilly.

That which is only provisional constantly threatens to become definitive, while the definite never stops threatening to become more than just provisional. Lives which do injustice to the convictions held by those who live them; convictions which serve as springboards for dishonest ambitions. Freethinkers that end up more clerical than the priests themselves, devotees that reveal themselves to be nothing but vulgar materialists. Superficialities that pass for profundities, profundities that don't get taken seriously.

This is the living picture of our society, and it is still quite inferior to reality. Why? Because from each face a mask leaps forth, because no one worries about being and everyone worries about appearing. Appearances! Seeming! Yes, this is the supreme ideal of this society, and if anyone so avidly desires well-being and wealth, it is only in order to have the possibility of appearing to possess such things. Because, as we fly along with time, money is the one thing that holds us down.

## Racing up the Ladder of Appearances

This mania, this passion, this race after appearances and after what improves them devours the rich as well as the vagabond, the cultured as well as the illiterate. Workers that resent the boss, while they dream of becoming bosses themselves; businessmen who make such a fuss about their commercial “honor” but don't stop themselves from participating in dishonorable business; whether small merchant or corporate capitalist, member of however many patriotic and nationalist committees, he goes as fast as he can to employ foreign labor because it's cheaper and he can increase his profit; the socialist “representative,” lawful defender of the poor proletariat whose numbers pile up in the dirtiest parts of the city, himself resides in a privileged part of town, in the lordly neighborhoods where air is abundant and pure; the revolutionary, who denounces the state's persecutions and puts forth great effort to move sensible hearts to action while the

bourgeoisie—rudder of the ship of state—persecutes him without respite, puts him in jail, denies him the freedom to speak and write; once this revolutionary has acquired power, he becomes even more domineering, even more intolerant and cruel than those he replaced. The freethinker marries in the church and almost always has his children baptized. Only when the government tolerates it does the religious man dare to express his ideas, and he keeps quiet where religion is made to look as ridiculous as it really is.

Where can we find sincerity, then? On all sides and everywhere the gangrene spreads. It is in the heart of the family, where quite often father, mother, and children hate each other and deceive each other even while they say they love one another. We see it in marriage, where husband and wife, not really listening to each other, are unfaithful to one another but do not break the bond that enchains them, or, at least, lack the courage to speak frankly. Sincerity shows itself in every grouping where one graces his neighbor with the same esteem as the group's members would generally show to the president, secretary, or treasurer of the group, when they're trying to get some promotion, or while they're waiting to take over their post when they reach their term limit. It is often lacking in the various acts of self-abnegation we see in the world—in illustrious acts, in private conversations, in official declarations.

Appearances, appearances, appearances! Pure, disinterested, and generous semblances—when purity, disinterest and generosity are no more than vain lies—to appear honest, moral, virtuous—when integrity, virtue and morality are the least of the professions they profess.

Where can we find someone who has escaped this contagion?

## **The complexity of the human problem**

It will be objected that we are treating the problem from a metaphysical point of view, that it is necessary to come down to the solid earth of reality, and that this reality is the only one: that our present society is the result of a long historical process whose beginnings are perhaps not so far in the past; that humanity or the various humanities are seeking out their path, but occasionally mistake it, find it again, go forward and take steps backwards. That certain crises shake its very foundations, that they are dragged along, thrown upon the road of destiny only in order to later give up the march, or, on the contrary, to mark the rhythm. That, scratching a little bit at the fool's gold, the varnish, the general idea, the surface of contemporary civilizations, the babblings, infantilisms, and superstitions of prehistorical or pre-prehistorical civilizations, could be laid bare.

From a purely objective standpoint we will be told that “actual” society embraces all beings, all aspirations, all activities, and all pains and sufferings as well. That it is comprised of producers and greedy people, of the disinherited and the privileged, the healthy and the sick, the sober and the drunken, the believers and the incredulous, the worst reactionaries and the followers of the most unlikely doctrines. Society evolves; it modifies itself, transforms itself. It carries within it the seeds of dissolution and rebirth—at certain times it destroys itself and at other times it regenerates itself. Here it is chaotic, there it is ordered, and somewhere else it is ordered and chaotic at the same time. It glorifies abnegation, but it extols interest. It is in favor of peace, but it suffers war. It is against disorder, but accepts revolutions. It holds to the known facts, but acquires new knowledge without end. It hates everything that disturbs its tranquility, but it follows astutely those of its children who know to dispel their lack of confidence, or awaken

its curiosity with promises of a different kind, or calm their fear with the attraction of a mirage. It declaims against the powerful, but in the end it follows their model, adopting their customs and regulating its aspirations according to those of those in power. Shaken by terrible crises and pulled towards the worst excesses, it naturally finds itself a servant and vassal as soon as the smoke from the fire dissipates. It is impulsive like a youngster, sentimental like a young girl, unsteady like an old man. It obeys its most primitive instinct, the instincts that guided the birds when no society existed, but it gives in to the most rigorous discipline, to the most severe regimentation. It demands that its leaders sacrifice themselves for it, but rebels when exploited by them. It is generous and greedily eager. The rigidity of its habits ends up unbearable for it, but it flaunts its decadence. It is a partisan of the least necessary effort, but it adapts itself to the most exhausting work. It flees from fatigue, but dances upon the volcanoes. It is majoritarian but makes concessions to the minority. It reveres dictators but erects monuments honoring the fallen. A melancholy melody makes it cry, but the drum rolls awaken something in its memory from many generations ago—the desire to massacre, to destroy, to sack. It is cruel and tender, wasteful and miserly, vile and heroic. It is an immense, enormous crucible in which the most disparate elements, the most dissimilar characters, the most contradictory energies are melted down, in an oven that consumes the intellectual and manual activities of its members only for the pleasure of their destruction, a field constantly fertilized by the conquests and experiences of past generations. It appears as a woman in a constant state of pregnancy who doesn't seem to care who or what comes out of her womb. It is Society.

It will be conceded, then, that not everything is perfect in society, and it will be said that that is a part of every imperfect being. It is by means of authority that it maintains the bonds of solidarity that unite people—relatively weak bonds these—but it still has not been declared nor shown that human societies could exist without authority. Hypocrisy dominates in peoples' social relations, in every ambiance and amongst every people; but still it has not been proven that it does not constitute in reality a necessity whose origin stems from the multiplicity of temperaments, that it might not be perhaps an instinctive expedient, destined to attenuate shocks and crashes and to take a little of the roughness out of the struggle for life.

The conditions of production and of the distribution of products favor the privileged and perpetuate the exploitation of those who are not privileged, but it remains for us to determine: 1) whether in the present circumstances of industrial production it would be possible to obtain, without that exploitation, the necessary production to maintain the economic functioning of human societies; 2) if every worker is not potentially privileged, that is, one who aspires to supplant that economic functioning to enjoy his own privileges.

It will be said, further, that it is insane to try to discover and establish the individual's responsibility, that he or she is suffocated, absorbed by everyone around, that the individual's thoughts and gestures reflect those of the others, that it cannot be any other way, and that if, in all the extensions of the social scales, the aspiration is to appear and not to be, the cause should be sought out in the present state of the general evolution of humanity, and not in the minimum component of the social ambiance, the miniscule, lost atom, squandered in a formidable aggregation.

We do not intend to speak to those who think that there is no other way besides letting the "inevitable evolution of society" proceed along its slow course. We are addressing those who are dissatisfied, those who doubt. To those who are even discontented with themselves, to those who feel the weight of hundreds and hundreds of years of convention and prejudice. To those who thirst for a real, true life, for freedom of movement, for real activity, and who find nothing but

makeup, conformity, and servility around them. To those who want to know themselves more intimately. To those who are restless, tormented, to those who seek new sensations, to those who experiment with unheard of forms of individual happiness. To those who believe nothing shown them in this society. Let Society occupy itself with the rest—those who this world appreciates and speaks well of: they are the “satisfied.”

# The Workers, The Unions, and the Anarchists

Translated by vincent stone

## I

Many times, anarchists have been reproached not only for mistaking the importance of the economic question, of willfully ignoring how it is posed, but also for showing a scornful disdain for workers and for work itself. Whereas among the anarchists' detractors there are many whose interest lies in them being slandered and misunderstood—and such adversaries don't deserve any response—on the other hand, there are a number of people who, in good faith, are content to believe the hearsay that accrues on the anarchists' account, without verifying the truth of it for themselves. Instead of wasting our time reproaching the regrettable negligence of these people, let's make an effort to clear up the ambiguity on this matter, as it reigns in many poorly—or uninformed minds.

Anarchists know very well that there is no life without movement, or rather that movement is the undeniable sign of the presence of a living organism. As this movement becomes less and less instinctive, the more the organism develops.

At a certain stage of development, movement becomes activity. The more activity becomes thoughtful and reasoned, and the more the living organism realizes the range and use of the functions of his being. Where there is no movement or activity, life stops; indeed, common sense indicates that, at the risk of perishing, all living organisms are forced to expend a certain amount of energy. Demanding an expenditure of activity, for example, are the functioning of organs necessary to nutrition, to breathing, to mobility, to vocalization, etc. Human beings, living organisms, superior as a result of the extension of their cerebral faculties, have been led, as a consequence of their particular development, to expend a special activity with an eye not only to subsistence, the condition of all life, but also to certain necessary "utilities" for their clothing, habitation, their intellectual growth. It is this activity, unique to the human species, that we call *work*.

Of course, work is nothing other than movement or activity with regard to or considered from the viewpoint of human intelligence; it is a function of individual life. Anarchists know quite well that the individual who *doesn't work*, that is to say who doesn't use his muscles or his brain to the benefit of his material and intellectual needs *is not alive* in reality. He is an idler or a parasite.

The work of man considered as the effort carried out in order to answer his needs is called *production* and is divided into *manual production*, which all muscular work comprises; and *intellectual production*, which can be taken as cerebral effort. Human beings have created multiple and complex needs for themselves. As omnivores, some of the substances that they consume undergo transformations; they cultivate cereal grains, obtaining unique products by special practices, they raise domestic animals who, when they cross species, furnish them with different types of food. Wearing clothing, they weave, spin, prepare certain substances, some plant-based, others animal,

in several fashions. Living in special dwellings, they extract earth, transform and manufacture certain mineral substances when plant sources aren't enough. Moving around, they fabricate, construct, and operate different means of transport. As human beings learning and maintaining an incessant intellectual growth, they compose, print and spread all kinds of works dealing with diverse branches of human knowledge.

The satisfaction of these primordial needs and of many others still is known by the name *consumption*. The development of consumption having attained a very high degree of intensity, it is materially impossible for the worker, *the producer*, to produce for himself that which he needs for his own consumption. A producer currently produces but a "utility" among those that the general consumption demands, sometimes even a subdivision of this "utility" (part of a piece of clothing, a shoe, a food item, a machine). Farmers are among the few who can still produce to assure their own subsistence—on the other hand, the farmer produces less and less of the utilities necessary for his clothing, his dwelling, and even certain parts of his own subsistence (flour, sugar, salt, oil, spices, beverages), as they come to him or come back to him, transformed by other producers. The producer who works "in the shop," "in the factory," "on the construction site," what we more specifically call *the worker*, almost never produces what he himself will directly consume.

To make myself better understood I will choose a logical example. I read a book whose preparation has demanded a multitude of workers. The paper is of wood pulp, the pine tree which furnished the wood was cut down in Norway, it was in the environs of Angouleme that it was transformed into paper appropriate for printing. The frame which holds the printing characters is an alloy of metals extracted in Sicily, Spain, and the Sunda Islands; the characters were cast in a factory in the North of France, the material for them came from the United States. This work was printed in a central city, on a press manufactured in Westphalia operated by a steam engine that came from a factory in Winterhur (Switzerland). It was offered for sale in Paris, where I bought it. I only note in passing a whole host of details not incidental in the least, for example: places of resource extraction that served to construct factories where these various tasks were completed; places of extraction of combustibles essential to the functioning of the machines, places of production of transport vehicles, etc., etc.

So, in assessing the nature of the volume I am skimming through, there is all reason to believe that not one of those who have contributed to its creation will buy one or even know of its existence. There are some, amongst its producers, who don't know the language in which it is written, who perhaps cannot read. Take any product you consume on a daily basis and you will end up with the same result. The producer of the cotton for your pants, dear reader, might dress himself only in linen or wool. She who makes your woolen stockings, madame reader, might only wear cotton stockings. Your rosewood bookcase maker, dear professor, has humble pinewood shelves. The man who cut the stones supporting your house, my kind friend from the bourgeois quarter, lives in a brick hovel. And so on. One can conclude that most of the time, not only that the producer produces objects that he will never consume, but also that he does not know the destination of what he produces.

Anarchists know very well that in exchange for his blind labor, the producer is supposed to receive a wage that should, theoretically, furnish him with the ability to procure the utilities necessary to his own consumption. The reality is that the producer does not receive the wages of his work. The current economic state of things makes it so that a part of a normal wage—the greater part—stays in the hands of others: sometimes of those who lease the worker's muscular or

intellectual effort (for the tools of large—and medium-scale production are possessed by a certain number of “capitalists,” named thusly because they have at their disposal the capital-cash needed for the acquisition or construction of factories, works, workshops, stores, machines, engines of all sorts)—sometimes of intermediaries, transporters, retailers, commissioners—who, each and every one, take a certain profit for their intervention, a profit that, naturally, comes from deductions of the worker’s wages.

In addition, a certain number of humans are “idlers” who don’t contribute to the general production in any way and simply consume luxurious products. Holders of capital comprised of loans to the State or to large financial, commercial or industrial corporations; or land holdings; or even, and very rarely, in cash; they are living as “parasites”. Since the State pays its creditors by withdrawing from tax revenue and the large corporations pay their own by reducing the earnings of their direct or indirect employees, it’s yet another deduction to make on the worker’s wages.

Finally, the governments have a whole host of functionaries in their service, purely administrative, judiciary or military, entrusted to ensure the conservation of the current state of things. These functionaries being payed with tax revenue, there’s another deduction from the worker’s wages.

Anarchists know too that the capitalists and middlemen don’t worry at all about real needs when it comes to consumption. They have *speculation* as their only guide, meaning the desire to make the most interest on the capital that they invest in the corporations they manage or in which they have a financial interest. They accelerate or restrain production not more or less according to the fluctuation of consumption, but according to what they foresee as an opportunity to acquire more or less considerable profits.<sup>1</sup> As for the quality of production, that completely depends on the buying power of the consumers and not on their needs: to the comfortable consumer, products of superior quality; to the poor consumer, products of inferior quality.

The worker contributes to the fabrication or the manufacture of products that are destined to maintain his condition of wage-laborer or are in open contradiction to his own opinions. We see him employed in the construction of churches, barracks, prisons, war machines, etc; in the production of jewelry, deluxe fabrics and furniture, luxurious drinks or other rare items that are absolutely superfluous when they are produced for anyone but the consumer.

You see a free-thinking typographer composing a religious work, an anti-military tailor putting together officer’s uniforms, a communist cultivator working in the fields for someone else’s money. There’s no need to press the point.

So anarchists know perfectly well: that the producer, the worker is quite often unaware of the destination of his product: that the wage he is supposed to receive in no way corresponds to his effort in the production and that the difference serves the maintenance of a large number of parasites, idlers, capitalists and functionaries of all kinds, that very frequently, when it is a given to assume the destination of his products—when he more or less knows that it is destined for his comrades in misery in some other part of the world,—his employers force him to produce inferior products; that he assists in the manufacture of products of all sorts whose aim is obviously to perpetuate his condition as wage-laborer. Anarchists also know that the majority of laborers, producers, workers in the factories, in the workshops, in the fields, as well as retail,

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<sup>1</sup> Without speaking of the “monopolizing” of yore, one sees “trusts” across the Atlantic, “cartels” across the Rhine, the french “unions,” vast capitalist associations, monopolizing an entire branch of production, fixing the price of products and regulating consumption.

office, and administration employees accept their state and make no real effort to liberate themselves. Satisfied with current prejudices giving consideration to wealth, giving the respect due to any *arriviste*, imbued with reactionary conceptions of property, management, etc., slave to moral and intellectual prejudices whose aim is to maintain the establishment and who form the basis for elementary education, frightened by the threat of unemployment, the poor produce, produce, produce, having no other point in life but the get the best they can out of it, quite lucky when burnout or disgust doesn't bring them to alcoholism or any other form of degradation.

## II

So anarchists know that, currently, work happens without method, chaotically. Producers produce, making their way in the dark, consumers consume, the poor: short of their real needs; the rich; short of their true necessities. This economic state of things has for a long time gotten the attention of plenty of enlightened or noble minds who wondered if it wasn't possible that work be brought back to its *raison d'être*: a collective production intended to assure the normal consumption of all human beings. They have formulated plans for the reorganization or the renewing of the conditions of labor and addressed themselves to those primarily interested: the workers.

They have been met with hostility by governments, the individuals who depend on them, and the privileged classes, those who have never had and will never have the least interest in putting a just conception of labor into place, the practice of which would eliminate their jobs, dry up their sources of revenue, or put them amongst simple producers. It is true when one examines the text or application of so-called labor laws, one sees that they aim, these very superficial concessions which are subject to numerous reservations, to purely and simply maintain their situation as masters of all sorts. Poorly informed, indifferent, slaves to the prejudices and the teaching provided in government schools, the majority of workers are content with or will not go beyond the granting of a few concessionary improvements to their lot: shortening of the workday, increase of wages, retirement, mediocre income following workplace accidents. All improvements that leave governments, property, capital, and partisanism intact.

To shake the workers' indifference (which, thereafter, a relatively large number rallied behind their conception) most of those who advocate bringing work back to its natural *raison d'être* have tried to create the sense that they belong to a special class—the producing class—and that the equilibrium between consumption and production will not be established until the day when, becoming conscious of itself, this class will seize capital and the means of production by appropriating it. On the one hand, the parliamentary or reformist socialists, led by bourgeoisie from liberal professions—lawyers, engineers, doctors, teachers—advocate the legal approach. On the other, the revolutionary socialists, and most of all the unionists, led by old manual laborers, advocate for speedier means, even including insurrection.

Legalists or anti-parliamentarians, they all take the workers as they are, enroll them into electoral committees, political groups or professional associations. Whether the majority of the workers rally around their plan, or a gradual or sudden economic transformation takes place, they plan that a very strong administration, with a large number of functionaries, will suffice to reorganize work.



The anarchists know all of that. They point out the major fault of this tactic: once the economic transformation is complete, the “day after the revolution rises up”, the workers will not worry themselves with the destination of their products any more than they did the day before. As on the the day before, they will be uninterested in the utility or the lack thereof of the products that leave their hands or their brains. As on than the day before they will have no say in the matter. In exchange for support, they will abdicate, willingly or by force, to the hands of the administrators appointed by the their own majority, to those who will enjoin them to protect the balance of production and consumption. Since the workers, the day after the administrative transformation will once again find themselves, morally and intellectually in the same state as the day before, they will then create droves of administrative assistants, supervisor-police and statistician-detectives of all kinds who, the new privileged, will live on the products of others’ labor.

In spite of the efforts and the propaganda of legalist or revolutionary socialists, the coming of a socialist society rests in the future. For that matter its realization is subordinate to a whole host of circumstances resulting from multiple factors of production and of intense development of consumption, which makes it so that different countries can hardly do without one another, rendering the economic question international. Currently socialism plays a more or less oppositional role and as for revolutionary socialism, it restricts itself to workplace agitation.

Showing no sympathy for reformist or parliamentary socialism, anarchists have paid special attention to the work of unions who practice the tactic we alluded to a few lines above. They were forced to notice about it: 1—that no side has formed a superior or moral conception of work, 2—that those who adhere to it are in no way prepared, for the most part, to live with an economic conception whose materialization demands very well-informed and conscious agents; 3—that the civil-servantism and administration plays a big role, which in some countries degenerates into veritable tyranny.

You be the judge! Unionism states as its goal the suppression of management and the coming of a more or less collectivist or communist society, which cannot be established without the overturning of the state or the governmental institutions, or without a preliminary education of future collectivist or communist futures! How are the unions preparing themselves? By calling on, haphazardly, workers of all sorts—even those who, in the arsenals, make machines that the government will use to put the unionists into place when they dare to provoke an insurrection;—even those who help bring about the fabrication or the fashioning, in deplorable conditions, of utilities destined for the proletarians themselves, shoes with cardboard soles, clothes that rot after one day of rain, furniture that isn’t solid, sometimes even rotten food, etc, etc;—even those who, in some way or another help bring about the construction of buildings where speculation can go on (the exchanges), where they put away anyone who rebels against the current economic state of things (prisons), where they prepare the repression of protestors (barracks);—even those who produce absolutely superfluous luxury items whose mere production attests to the existence of the privileged and of parasites,—that, let’s say, one finds among the unionists, the workers who compose, print and sometimes spread journals and works that are manifestly anti-worker.

That’s not all. For being the communists or collectivists they say they are, the unions don’t even bother to distribute equally, or to pool the earnings of its members, for reasons of the responsibilities of each individual. The unions accept that artist workers earn 10 to 15fr. per day, next to unskilled laborers or handymen whose average wage varies between 3fr. to 3fr.50; that some of their members live relatively easily, whilst others miserably vegetate.

We don't see, as it were, the unions working to create workshops, fields, factories of any communist or collectivist enterprise where work will be accomplished in the most rational way possible, where, in waiting for something better, we escape the manager's deductions, where we finally try to live a normal life!

No more than they bother to create a moral conception of labor, the unions don't even worry about preparing union members for a new economic state of things! At the end of all this analysis, they prove to be a goad pushing parliamentary socialism forward, like a disruptive element hastening the direct acquisition of reforms incited by their legislative promulgations. The unions see themselves then as the "second best," as organs of resistance and labor improvements fighting to obtain an increase in well-being in the conditions of life of certain sections of the workforce,— sometimes to the detriment of others. The unions can assure the functioning of their well-organized placement offices, unemployment funds, and powerful mutual aid funds, all of that for the exclusive use of the workers. But between this and the embryo or the nucleus of some collectivist or communist workers' organization, there is a yawning abyss.

### III

This being exposed, before assessing the supposed attitude of the anarchists regarding the workers, it would be good to know what work it is they are pursuing and to what propaganda they are committed. Anarchists place *individual reality* at the base of their ideas; their œuvre consists in developing the sentiment of freedom and personal responsibility in everyone with whom they come into contact, their propaganda is a propaganda made up entirely of individual education and selection. Anarchists cannot present any plan for an economically organized society, since, for them, the economic functioning of a milieu is dependent on the mentality of those who comprise it. Their critique of all types of prejudice—religious, secular, moral or intellectual prejudices attempts to provoke, awaken, and produce in everyone the need, the desire, and the effort to be "oneself", meaning a being consciously deciding his actions by his own understanding, his unique reasoning, and not by common ideas and the opinions of the majority. Anarchists are anti-authoritarians: their goal is to live immediately without any exterior authority of any sort, whether this authority is called God, Law, or Administration; at the same time they don't feel that one can go without authority if he isn't able to govern his own self. The work of anarchists, finally, in all milieus, consists in the work of intellectual liberation—destruction of preconceived opinions; and a work of moral education—the creation and development of the willful feeling of conscious individuality.

So, they find themselves in the presence of two kinds of workers: on the one hand those ending up as partisans maintaining the current economic conditions and manifestly opposed to the autonomy of the individual—or quite indifferent ones. The anarchists cannot see them as anything but adversaries. The other producers prove to be wanting a transformation of the economic state of things but worry little about individual development, to such a point that they put themselves under the domination of an administration that obviously seeks to restrain or eliminate actions of personal initiative. Vis a vis the latter, the work of anarchists consists in reminding: 1—that individual education is a logical precondition to any collective revolution; 2—that intelligently and consciously determined individuals correspond to intelligently and consciously applied work; 3—that the feeling of classes is inevitably a destroyer of the feeling of one's own individuality.

It's worth mentioning too that the pioneering work that anarchists do is never complete. The socialists, the unionists seek to create an imposed organization of social life with their efforts, whether or not it be understood by those who participate. Anarchists conceive only of a conscious social life, in other words as a life of individuals uniting with complete awareness to attempt an experiment together, whether this experiment is carried out in the economic domain or in others. The arrival of a collectivist, unionist, or communist society will not suspend the work of an anarchist critique. Everywhere where anarchists perceive the threat of the subordination of individuals, whether in a tyrannical collectivity, or in administrative rules, they intervene.

*In a word, so long as they resort to coercion of one sort or another to assure the functioning of social life, the work of anarchists will have its raison d'être.*

Anarchists, we have seen, know very well the chaotic conditions under which work occurs today. They are not wrong in denouncing it, for to understand already constitutes a sign of waking up. Simultaneously, they urge the workers to learn for themselves, scientifically, the methods of production,—to distinguish between useful work and useless or harmful work; to realize that, under normal conditions, the different sectors of human labor would be directed to wherever their tastes and aptitudes brought them. Above all, anarchists are on guard against any theory that reduces individual action and initiative. In sum, they would like to see every worker morally and intellectually developed enough to not feel any need whatsoever to be guided, directed, or managed, whether it be by a capitalist boss, a union functionary, or a collectivist administrator, to be able to discern what should be avoided or accomplished, so that with a minimum of individual dependence, production will naturally and freely balance consumption.

Anarchists do not in any case advise against unions. No more that they discourage a person to be a part of an association that seeks to improve his well-being. As we have already said, they recall that it is simply second-bests and transitional palliatives in operation in which he takes no part. The establishment of a union regime interests them no more that the triumph of workerism or the victory of an organized proletariat. What interests them are individual attempts made at escaping from the grips of the employers; communal efforts made at living an independent existence. Each time he meets serious individuals who are successfully running economic enterprises where the absence of authority, meaning the idea of value, the taste for work, the ignorance of cash, is united with a healthy, free, abundant, happy life, the anarchist will support them.

By concentrating their energy on perfecting the unions (from our standpoint, whose constitution and tendencies deny perfectibility) anarchists sign their own certificate of worthlessness. Whatever those who can only envision social life in economic terms say, there are many interesting questions among those raised, for example the moral relations between individuals, which are as current as the economic question. From the anarchist standpoint, a purely economic critique is an incomplete one.

While bourgeoisie of all stripes make efforts to maintain their privileges, while the socialists of all schools focus on planting the idea of a transformation in the conditions of work; while the proletariat try to wrest some improvement to their lot from the privileged, the anarchists, without indenturing themselves to any party, critique and undermine acts and methods of authority, root out prejudices of all kinds, awaken the desire for freedom and the will to a free life, conceived and lived individually, developing in the balance of living together. Some among them fall along the way, those beaten by society, those at the end of their ropes, others replace them. There is

no end. While democracies change their labels and the leaders their badges, the irreducible anarchists advance on the great path of individual development and collective evolution, situating themselves over and above those already-achieved goals, knowing that all those who linger are moving backwards and that anything threatening to stop is already in the process of perishing.

—from *L'En dehors*

**Section Eleven: Pierre Chardon  
(1892–1920)**

No discussion of Emile Armand would be complete without introducing his close friend, collaborator, printer, and typesetter Pierre Chardon. Pierre Chardon was the *nom de plume* of Maurice Charron, who was born in Chateauroux. Chardon rose to prominence in the French anarcho-individualist milieu during the post-war period, beginning with the publication of his anti-war tract *Les Anarchistes et La Guerre: Deux Attitudes*, a beautiful, treasonous retort to the tides of military madness which engulfed Europe in 1915, that was reprinted in anarchist newspapers worldwide. Chardon remains a stray figure in the English-speaking world, but considerable biographical material on him is contained in French anarchist historical overviews, where he's generally regarded as a fierce, articulate theorist who gave intelligent form to a heritage of radical individualism dating back to Zo d'Axa.

Anarchist individualism experienced an unprecedented florescence in France during the years 1910–1920, and the milieu it nourished became a refuge for a fascinating mosaic of intellectuals, crackpots, solitary malcontents and subversive dreamers drifting on the fringes of law and conventional morality. What bound together the ideas and activities of such a diverse assortment of thinkers into a unified blast was their affirmative discussion of the **individual** as the beginning and end of every political question. It was this belief in the innate powers and possibilities of every living individual that attracted Chardon to the select company of these “comrades of ideas” and motivated him to learn the skills of printing and typographic composition.

Chardon (which means “thistle”) became a proficient printer who was capable of setting six hundred letters an hour on a bicycle-powered machine that could only work with the combined efforts of three people: one pushing the bike pedals, another turning the wheel, and the third making the margin. Chardon also evolved into a highly respected writer whose essays were warmly received in several foreign anarchist journals, most notably the almanac *Tierra y Libertad*, *Freedom* in London, and *Mother Earth* in New York. Chardon's theoretical writings cut all ties with the muddled mystique of “proletarian revolution” which had dominated the anarchist and socialist movements for so long—along with the morality of self-sacrifice that went with it. Instead, Chardon selected, for his individualistic goals, other weapons: **his own** indomitable desires and dreams, and the strength, joy and magic of life.

Ever alert to the authoritarianism lurking in **all** revolutionary programs (from Marxism to Syndicalism to anarcho-communism), Chardon argued that all political and cultural systems (regardless of rhetoric) compromised the uniqueness of the individual. In an article titled “Anarchisme et Marxisme” (*La Melee*, October 1, 1918) Chardon didn't hesitate to critique even the revered anarcho-communist Jean Grave, whose newspaper *Les Temps Nouveaux* became biased towards Marxism when it resumed publication in 1916. Chardon then actually went on to formulate some early anarchist critiques of civilization and the hard shell of customs, habits, and compulsions that constitute its daily economic rituals. Chardon was far more of a critic than an expounder of any fixed position, however, and the function of his writing was primarily to move people to thought and reexamination of their ideas.

From 1916–1918, Emile Armand (with Chardon as his principal collaborator) published a periodical called *para dela de la melee*, until he was imprisoned for circulating anti-statist and anti-militarist tracts and for allegedly “harboring a deserter.” After Armand's sentencing to five years in prison by the War Council in Grenoble on January 4, 1918, Chardon revived *para dela de la melee* and published it consistently from 1918–1920 under the shortened title *la melee*, often delivering copies to anarchist distribution nodes on his own bicycle. During this period Chardon also published *La Guerre* (a series of clandestine draft-dodging brochures) and one issue of *Le Se-*

*meur*, another anti-war journal. Chardon's last contribution to the anarchist press was the article "Stockholm et les Anarchists," which appeared in the October 1917 issue of *What Must Be Said*.

In 1920, following Chardon's death, the editorship of *la melee* was assumed by Chardon's colleague Marcel Sauvage. Sauvage changed the name of *la melee* to the new, Nietzschean *L'UN*, which reflected a shift towards a more "aristocratic" interpretation of individualism and which drew in the participation and support of many avant-garde artists and writers who later became associated with Dada and Surrealism; that same year Sauvage joined forces with Florent Fels to launch *Action*, which was a literary counterpoint to the anarcho-individualist journal.

Aside from the tributes to Chardon which appeared in various issues of *l'en dehors*, numerous other biographical studies of him have appeared in France, including: "Pierre Chardon" by G. (*Journal du Peuple*, in one of its issues from May 1919); "Pierre Chardon" by Maurice Wullens (*Les Humbles*, June 1919); "Pierre Chardon" by Paul Meyer (issue of *l'action d'art*, 12 March 1920); "Pierre Chardon" by Albin (in the June 1923 issue of *Vagabonds*); "Souvenirs" by Paul Meyer (*Le Libertaire*, May 5, 1924) and "Ideas and Conceptions of Pierre Chardon," a 40-page mimeographed brochure, with a forward by Albin, that came out in 1924.

# Pierre Chardon

## Émile Armand

In the eyes of biologists, death is quite simply a change of conditions—the inevitable result of vital wear and tear. Everything born is destined to perish. Sooner or later, according to the degree of resistance the organism puts up against the deteriorating actions of his surroundings. A day comes when the sum of assaults pushing toward the disintegration of a being overcomes the totality of its defenses. On that day, it is done, vital phenomena cease; this is death, collapse, decomposition, the “return to dust”.

However rigorously exact this explication of death may be, it simply cannot prevent us from deploring or regretting the loss of those whose acquaintance or frequenting gave us occasion to develop as individuals, to make us reflect, to augment our experiential knowledge. And I’m not talking about a sentiment of friendship, I’m sticking simply to the camaraderie of ideas, the fraternity of opinions. And this regret, we feel it all the more deeply since we feel that the being whose departure saddens us was torn away from life before having given his all, died “before his time” as the quaint popular saying goes.

Such is the thought which came to me when a letter, carrier of the painful news, came to me one beautiful May morning, to a house in the center of Nîmes, where I was vacationing, guided there by the denunciation of a wretched liar who, in order to win over the favor of military judges, accused me of encouraging his desertion. Yes, Pierre Chardon was cut down too soon, at the dawn of his intellectual labors.

In writing these lines, it seems just yesterday that I met Pierre Chardon for the first time, in Châteauroux, a very young and evolving comrade, sincerely seeking his way.

Others knew him at the time, but they have forgotten the path he took and the character of diverse activities which he pursued. He spared nothing to contribute—not his time, not the little influence he had at his disposal, not the few resources he could call his own.

I know something about that. Not only did Pierre Chardon take interest, becoming a distributor at *hors du troupeau*, at *anarchie*, while I took on that publication, and at *Réfractaires*, but when I thought, in 1915, the moment had come to make heard, within the fury of the sacred unions, the chimes of the individualist anarchist, he was my main collaborator at *par delà la mêlée*. We didn’t always agree, we fought over small points, we would get carried away, we’d get to the point of bursting, but a word would suffice to bring us back into agreement, to make us see that we had never ceased being so. I have never met a comrade with whom I felt more at ease, more myself, freer in intimacy.

There was a point on which we never differed, for instance: a distrust and a disgust that inspired us, that which we called, between us, the “fucking reformed”—the old bohemians who became steady and respectable—the ex-free-lovers who went up the ranks to the support of honor and the virtues of conjugal life—the one-time illegalists posing as honest merchants—councillors of desertion who became anarcho-patriots—these vermin who, to make up for having changed



tactics, drooled and still drool with admiration over those whose heart is strong enough to still be today what it was yesterday: outcasts of bourgeois society.

Pierre Chardon grew up in a severe and difficult school. Born into a poor working class family, he soon had to struggle with the familial milieu, then did not feel at ease in the social milieu where everything also conspired to prevent his development. Early on, he felt the injustices upon which this stifling society is based.

An unending dawn of curiosity aided him in gaining a rare intellect: nothing left him indifferent. Still very young, he frequented the labor council in Châteauroux, slipped in among the workers, assisted with their meetings and discussions. No book, no publication he could get his hands on seemed void of interest. Pierre Chardon was an autodidact in every sense of the word.

He couldn't help attracting the attention of his school teachers. His weak health led him to a *colonie scolaire*<sup>1</sup> for three consecutive years. That is where he met she who would, some years later, become his companion. He earned his primary school certificate; the obligation to earn a living forbade him from pursuing further studies.

Pierre Chardon did not want to just maintain relations with the libertarian milieu simply to research it; his temperament pushed him to give himself to it. Aided by a comrade who since has traveled the world, he became a peddler, visiting small towns and villages, distributing subversive tracts and brochures, sometimes holding meetings, confronting the contradiction; this is when he must have held his meetings on the "tragic religions". 1914 happens. One still remembers, in the *Département* of Indre, the series of conferences he then held to expose the hoax of universal suffrage. He anticipated the world war, and didn't hesitate to denounce it. He was known from the north to the south of the *Département* and even beyond. From then on he was an outcast.

That same year, he went back to the girl that he knew as a child. Daughter of diehard bourgeoisie, her parents wanted to win her back, whence a mute and internal struggle, implacably stuck between two influences, that of progenitors and that of a companion who wants to keep the companion in whom he awakened the ideas that he held dear.

Economically, these were the best days for Pierre Chardon. His companion was in teaching. He worked as an accountant in a worker's restaurant. The idea came to him to begin a press. He saw therein a means of liberating himself from wage labor. Little by little, by great effort, by prodigious ingenuity, he succeeded in acquiring the essential materials. I still see his little workshop, in the back of a little garden, in Déols, on the side of the road from Châteauroux to Issoudun.

But then, suddenly, the war broke out and we'll see moreover that it was this which occupied his time during that fatal period. Thanks to his weak constitution he escaped conscription, but as he did not present himself before a discharge commission, they issued him a compulsory enlistment. He was sent to Poitiers, then to Parthenay. They held him. Happily, it was only for twenty days. Pierre Chardon did not want to live wearing a military uniform, even if it led to the detriment of his health, and he got his way.

It was at this time that I was arrested. Pierre Chardon did not want to abandon the work begun by *par delà la mêlée*; nor did he want it to hurt my defense. That winter, he went to Grenoble, assisted in my trial, returned indignant, literally furious at the judicial apparatus, having contracted a bronchitis that nothing would cure, against which his overworked body could do nothing, despite his iron will.

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<sup>1</sup> Tr—A charity school created to help underprivileged and sick youth in school.

In vain, he spent the summer of 1918 in the country. Crushed by a labor above his abilities, his health did not recover. To complete the misery, his companion, Jeanne, was taken in 1918, by the plague that then ran rampant under the name Spanish flu. It was an overwhelming blow, but Pierre Chardon didn't let go. Those who took interest hoped that a winter vacation on the Côte d'Azur could extend his life a few months, maybe for two or three years. So he left for Nice, from where he edited *la mêlée*—which was followed by *par delà la mêlée*—with the same regularity as when he lived in Déols.

The climate seemed beneficial when, following a moment of imprudence, he found himself suddenly attacked by the flu. All hope of recovery vanished. In April 1919, he went home, nearly incapable of heaving himself onto the coach. He didn't miss, for all of that, the publication of *la mêlée*; if he no longer had any illusions about his fate, he didn't want that to disappear with him. I have now a letter dictated on April 30<sup>th</sup> (he was confined to his bed and incapable of writing) concerning my liberation. May 2<sup>nd</sup>, he expired, following awful death throes, staying conscious to the end, struggling against death to the end. He would have reached his twenty-seventh spring, and it hasn't yet been ten years since that day.

It is true that Pierre Chardon suffered much from police harassment. Naturally, that doubled with the war and the advent of censorship. There came a time when the searches of his house occurred with such frequency that they would have discouraged the most tempered of hearts. They believed that he was involved with a whole host of offenses that he had nothing to do with, for that matter. Whatever the case may be, the police bloodhounds always left empty handed. It isn't an exaggeration to assert that the persecutions of which he was the target were not unrelated to the agitation of his sickness.

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Although he was no “ferocious” individualist, as the cliché goes—despite his associationism, his mutualism, his contractualism—Pierre Chardon kept himself far from the classical conception of communist anarchism. He did not believe in a catastrophic transformation, en masse, of societies; he thought that it was with the friendly unity, chosen individuals or associations, that one must begin. Without a doubt he kept relations with the syndicalist opposition, with numerous communist anarchists, but those who knew him know that the type of communism that attracted him was that of practical relations, those of “common enterprises”, on condition that a duly established and honestly discussed contract determined the relations of those desiring to participate in advance. That didn't prevent him from being a partisan of the vulgarization of ideas that he held dear, of propaganda with a great scope.

Pierre Chardon was not free of faults. Like all of us. But they were the faults of youth. He never hesitated to go back on a hasty assessment, or a rapid judgement, as soon as someone demonstrated that he was wrong. All of these defects appear minor compared to one of the qualities that dominated his character: his disinterest when it came to personal finances. He was among those who don't see propaganda as a means of turning a profit. Those to whom he rendered services— real services—won't soon forget his way of doing things on certain occasions that are useless to detail here. Precisely because of his disinterest, he wouldn't allow propaganda to languish for lack of resources.

I am forced to furnish in this edition an exacting presentation of the “mind of Pierre Chardon”, understanding that he found his way through trial and error. I believe I have succeeded in giving

his point of view on various subjects which preoccupied and still preoccupy the anarchist milieu in general.

The signatories of the biographical articles contained herein personally and intimately knew Pierre Chardon. I have kept to what anyone who knew him would have written about him. Perhaps the quality of this pamphlet is suffering from a literary perspective, but I have the impression that in proceeding this way I am conforming to the desires of this comrade who, right or wrong, hardly held “intellectuals” in esteem.

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A few “purists” among the purists could reproach us for having published these pages. We aren’t undertakers, of course. We readily rise up against the cult of death. Our efforts are devoted to life and the living: the current and the immediate are the goals of our preoccupations. However, when one of our own disappears, having completed his course too early or having been prematurely relieved of his efforts, we are lacking in none of our convictions in expressing the pain caused by his loss. Moreover, we are not smug enough to close our eyes to the emptiness that certain deaths bring us. We know how to hate, but we also know how to love. We know how to preserve the memory of those who in traversing our existence, leave a trace. It is because this trace, as far as I am concerned, has remained so vivid that I wanted to dedicate at the very least a 32-page brochure to the memory of Pierre Chardon.

Moreover, I maintain as absolutely unjustifiable the oblivion into which the humble diffuser of ideas, this obscure organizer, has fallen, dying on the job. It’s true, Pierre Chardon did not achieve world fame; he was little appreciated outside of a small, much too small circle; he had to fight against the small-minded defiance of parvenus, the jealous animosity of the ambitious, the guardians of formulas, the supporters of orthodoxy. He frequented no literary salons; he knew that in those milieux, one is either tolerated or considered a curious specimen. No inner circle offered him a seat; the proposition itself would have cracked him up. He avoided every League, every Guild, every Association like the plague—anywhere he may have been forced to meet the stalwarts of the society whose institutions he combatted. The letters of his that I have prove all of this and also that he was rather hard on certain courtesans of the Renowned.

If Pierre Chardon overflowed with ardor, enthusiasm, activity, he was intransigent. Verbosity inspired pity in him; the verbosity of rhetoricians as that of revolutionaries. He wanted to “practice” in the field without waiting for the day after the Big Night or a problematic and chimeric New Dawn. He was neither an eminent philosopher, nor a famous author, nor even an industrious playwright, nor a libertarian *gen de lettre* for snobs and snobettes. Pierre Chardon was quite simply an artisan of action, an achiever who wanted to plough his furrow, and plow it well. Because he was not a “dear master” but a loyal propagandist believing in the efficacy of propaganda, does he deserve to be scratched so soon from the tablets of anarchists, of “comrades” for whom he gave his life?

This article appeared in *Pierre Chardon: Sa vie, Son action, Sa pensée*, a tribute to Pierre Chardon that was published by *L’En dehors*.

## Intellectuals Such as They Are

... And yet we admire them too much, and close our eyes to elementary truths which are capable of making clear to us their true value. Two “intellectuals” in forty years have refused decorations from the State: Elisee Reclus and Curie. That’s it. Lovers of baubles, they whose daily commerce with eternal truths should incite disdain for puerile distinctions and brief favors avidly search for each and every one—in order to win them they act like uncultured brutes. Even better, they envy one another. O, these “intellectual” hatreds, these writer’s jealousies, these savants’ realities where the absence of scruples comes with the merciless desire to detract the adversary, and to crush him, what Balzac will describe *them* to us?

Never has a constituted power, an arbitrary authority lacked “intellectuals” for justifying its existence and its excess. The philosophers of antiquity justified slavery, with a few exceptions, and the most illustrious “intellectuals” of the great century groveled before the Sun King. Renan saw with a very sharp eye the mandarinat of “intellectuals” and a social caste system, where the *vulgum pecus* struggled for the benefit of these Sirs. And what to say about the hypocrisy of Kant, demolishing dogmas in the name of pure reason, counseling obedience to these same dogmas in the name of practical reason.

All, or almost—the exception proves the rule—despise manual labor, and proclaim themselves to be the executors of the “noble task,” believe themselves to be infinitely superior to those whom they serve, to those who feed them, clothe them, and house them. It’s hardly surprising that they so easily forget their verbal revolts when the social edifice collapses and the organized lie needs them to maintain the permanence of all that they live on.

Dilettantes, snobs, they amuse themselves with ideas, juggle them without taking them seriously. They preach stoicism, living simply, and then live in opulent villas, own several personal servants, when they can; they surround themselves with sumptuous luxury. Economists—they hypocritically bemoan the horrors of war and laud the frenzied competition it produces. Literati—far from the trenches, they cash in on the “heroism” of others with grotesque and pitiful books. Men of good company—they don’t want to host a man capable of taking what he needs when hunger gnaws away at him and destitution maddens him; but he likes frequenting select salons where you can meet all of the financial pirates... and elsewhere...

Since we have had a good look at them, let’s not venerate the “intellectuals” to excess anymore. Let us stop looking to them as Messiahs, and quit addressing them with calls for humanity, good sense, reason... Always looking to them would be to consecrate their power, to recognize their moral authority. We now know what we can expect from them. To dwell on this would be weakness.

Additionally, to glorify those who haven’t followed the crowd, to transfer our thoughtful and absolute admiration for those who have shown a bit more dignity and courage would be clumsy. For, even in his revolts, the “intellectual”—aside from the Irish poets who were shot down during the war, and other rare exceptions—remains the dilettante, and not the man who devotes body

and soul without requite! Almost always, he knows how to follow the rules, and doesn't burn bridges.

Our deep admiration goes to those who write their revolt with their blood, and not with ink, to those who live *their* truth and not to those who proclaim it in volumes upon volumes.

This article originally appeared in *par delà la mêlée*, n° 23 and was later reprinted by *l'en dehors* in a tribute to Pierre Chardon titled *Pierre Chardon: Sa vie, Son action, Sa pensée*.

# The Democratic Illusion

Translated by vincent stone

The democratic State does not, any more than the monarchic State, represent a contractual association. The randomness of birth inducts the individual into one or the other, and though democracies pretend to be based upon a social contract, they never put it up for discussion, while logically it should be reexamined by each generation called to bear the responsibilities that it implies. In law, the individual is considered an adult, since he is able to vote, but in fact he is treated like a child, incapable of being in charge of himself—since he must seek permission for anything the state regulates. It is true that the masses are content to believe in the superiority of its institutions without ever examining them deeply. Who then, even among anarchists, knew that before the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, 1914, the President of the Republic, by decree, and quite in accord with the constitution, could proclaim a general state of emergency?

A detailed critique of parliamentary government would be suitable here, as would a description of well-known means with which quite small and well-organized coteries “make” opinion and direct the destiny of a country.

The republican constitution is not opposed to the exercise of despotic power. We saw this clearly under the Convention, and many historians have described to us what tyranny weighed on the shoulders of the citizens of republican cities of antiquity. National unity obtained by the suppression of local life, administrative centralization, the quashing of separatist tendencies, and the institution of a State religion, which for being secular is nonetheless profoundly mystical—all of this is quite in accordance with this ideal of the One, Indivisible Republic which animated the Jacobins and by which their successors remain haunted.

If one considers that military obligations take long years from the individual, the impartial observer is obliged to note that in practice, the democratic state is as hierarchic, centralized, dominating and tyrannical as any other political form.

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If democracies proclaim political equality, they take care not to let anyone establish economic equality as a starting point. They will not call material acquisition into discussion, nor share it, and proclaim all property to be “an inviolable and sacred right”, property, which in our societies, cannot be obtained but by exploitation or legal theft.

Also it is not paradoxical to claim that profoundly democratic countries, where the routine and laziness of aristocrats no longer conflicts with the brazenness of *businessmen*<sup>1</sup>, create different castes and ways of life as accentuated as those of ancient oriental civilizations. The United States constitutes a striking example of this. There isn't a more democratic country. Here no secular traditions, no vanquished caste whose influence endures. Democracy right away, at the base. No

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<sup>1</sup> *Tr*—in English in the original.

aristocracy by birth, but an aristocracy by money: numerous, insatiable, no longer knowing how to spend their billions, while its pariahs—the immigrants—cram into slums.

All the revolutions from which democracies came were incited, led, and monopolized by the middle class, industrious, avid for money, desiring to see the barriers of a too-narrow traditionalism, opposed to the development of their riches, shatter. One cannot understand history without recognizing this fact. Republican capitalism, as Mirbeau described so well in *Les affaires sont les affaires!* [*Business is business!*] With the Marquis and Isodore Lechat, the two forces of exploitation collide:

That of yesterday, distant from realities, hungry for peace, a decadent class, to say it plainly, worn out by power and pleasure: and that of today, burning with activity, cynical, implacable in the struggle, with appetites all the more ferocious for being more recent.

But since they made us assist in the degeneration of the sovereigns and their courtesans, and since they reminded us of a few of these instances of historical sycophancy which disarmed baseness by force, it is time to wonder if our democracies don't offer corresponding weaknesses.

Our modern military merchants, building fortunes upon cadavers, are they not dignified heirs of the *fermiers généraux*<sup>2</sup>, traitors and sub-traitors, of the old regime? Were kings really the only ones to know the influence of megalomania paired with madness? A minister desiring his name to go down in history, and in whose case it is not at all necessary to more clearly identify, has given us, in France, an example; solely concluding important treaties without notifying his colleagues, and very surprised to then see them refuse to accept when these dealings would have taken effect.

"That's the work of aristocracies," you make me laugh! But you have never waited at the desk of a functionary, or, shortlisted, been subjected to the reprimand of a noncommissioned officer, or never even dealt with "specialists" of order for ignoring some incensed pride, some imbecilic brutality that the exercise of authority engenders in all who command...democratically. And you have never seen them flock, backs bent, rampant, with flattery in their mouths, before their superiors, arrogant before the weak, servile before their bosses?

Men of politics, they act like directors of the ship of State without special expertise. You speak to me of irresponsibility. But at least the king exists; you know the way to his palace, to his chest—you can go bang on the door, unsettle him perhaps. Go on then and unsettle and bang on the door of this bureaucratic machine—it will send you from one desk to another, from an ignorance to an incompetence, and it will be impossible for you to grab the responsible one by the collar, the true, the unique, the only, for there are too many of them!!

The kings live for the show, but they too maintain a façade. Among the initiated, they dress down, but among the electorate, the mask never falls, they must always bluff, lie, in a never-ending stream.

The followers too suffer specialized habits of the trade. Sovereigns of cheap junk, knowing quite well that everything is gained by baseness or sycophancy, they fill the antechambers of their elected officials as the others will line up to the ministers. Favoritism triumphs, and as under the reign of Louis XV, it is often thanks to a recommendation slipped under the pillow that certain ultra-fast political ascensions are made. No pride, no dignity, each hopes to obtain that which he desires by abjectly panhandling. And the recommendations come pouring in...

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<sup>2</sup> *Tr*—The *fermiers généraux* was a private customs and excise organization in France; they became excessively rich during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

When the representatives of this democratic authority parade in public: judges in red robes, dashing generals, ministers bearing various sashes—before the stripes, the multicolored plumes, the multicolored uniforms, the crosses, the medals, all apparel of the middle ages, which authority loves to adorn itself with, go then and see if it doesn't have the same effect on the assembled masses as the great mystical thrill of religious fear and blissful admiration that the king of France once aroused when he returned to his good town of Paris. Those who scoff or mock are the exception, and if you want to get yourself lynched, go then and make a bold shout among these ecstatic sheep before their herders!

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This is how we know that democracies are as capitalist, as imperialist, as the other institutions of the State, that their leaders and their led suffer from serious deformities. In getting to the bottom of the problem, we note that they do not accord guarantees to minorities. As for the rest—the struggle of parties, transformations of the facade, superficial concessions—it no longer deludes us.

At base, control remains intangible, just as resignation and religion do, upon which its power rests. It adapts to circumstances like an agile Proteus—it concedes, when it must, to the necessities of the hour, but it always knows how to keep its privileges intact. We play its game in adopting the tenacious illusions it maintains.

Disrespectful, unbelieving, blasphemous, critical, we will not be duped by the democratic illusion. The master remains the master, the State remains the State, and we remain, we, their relentless enemies, whatever their protocols, up until the day where they leave us as we please, to experience the anarchist life, a tolerance they cannot accord us without abdicating.

First published as a pamphlet, *Le Mirage Patriotique* (1913), which quickly sold out. Reissued in part by *les éditions l'en dehors* in 1925. This particular version was taken from *par delà la mêlée* n°30.



# Expansive Individualism

Translated by vincent stone

*To live is to affirm. Life, like fire, only exists on condition of expansion.*

—anonymous

Since it rests on a principle of individualization, anarchism draws from a profoundly subjectivist philosophy. Indeed, only the inner life allows a being to know itself, to reveal to itself the fundamental tendencies which its activity must satisfy if it wants to avoid suffering and to conquer wellbeing. Only interior effort allows the individual to liberate himself from the illusions and mirages with which the milieu saturates him from the moment of his birth, to “realize himself,” which is to say a unique being possessing his own life, his originality, determined to react against the encroachments of the collective, as a resolute supporter of individual autonomy.

We know what we owe to the inner life, to the initiators who taught us how to read into the mysterious depths where all underlying forces churn, and where at first we can only make out chaos and darkness. But we certainly don’t want to put up arbitrary barriers between the Me and the Not-Me, to isolate the “Ego” from all that surrounds it and influences it, to claim that only moral liberty should be enough for it, that the only thing that matters is interior liberty.

Some have done that. Their error is not new. Thought, like vice, intoxicates its lovers, and creates for them a mental world different from palpable and tangible realities. Already, infatuated with metaphysics, people in lands of the Orient where the climate, the sky, and nature predispose them to profound reveries and prolonged meditations have, in their sacred songs, glorified the inner life as being the source of all science and all perfection.

See how they council the *Yogi* (ascetic), the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

— “He should make a seat in a pure place... and there the spirit should strive for unity, master thought in himself, doing this, he achieves mental unity, in preparation for perfection...

In this way *the yogi* whose mind is tamed, always is in a continuous state of ecstasy, achieves bliss, whose completion is in oblivion, and which lives in me”.

In this extinction, this absorption of the being into the great All, this union with the universal spirit: *Nirvana*, here you have what philosophers and religions have presented as the ultimate wisdom and supreme happiness.

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Without a doubt, modern western philosophers who have made themselves champions of the inner life do not dare to preach systematic abstention and pure contemplation to us. But by the same fact that they accord an exaggerated importance to the inner life, they tend to disrupt the equilibrium between the inner life and the outer life that develops in every healthy organism.

Apart from those ardent individuals with a too-outgoing temperament, it is not good for a human being to hear too often: *Abstain is one of the first words of wisdom*, and to claim too often that he can have no effect on the outside and that *the only worthwhile efforts are inner and subjective*.

For some individualities of exceptional merit that such an ethic has been able to produce, how many abstentions, how much cowardice, how much resignation has it been able to justify and even cause, in shattering the spirit of action! Whether one admits it or not, it conducts one towards a practical resignation. Without a doubt Epictetus announcing in a calm voice to his master that he would break his leg in continuing his brutalities, attests to his moral superiority, but one might wonder if this attitude was not determined more than anything by his physical powerlessness. In any case, if all slaves adopt such an ethic, even if they possess a rich and profound inner nature, their masters can sleep soundly!

This is how a vapid and accommodating individualism is born, a martyrless neo-stoicism, which disdains exterior reactions. Maeterlinck made it accessible to the people of the world, in mystical and obscure pages, and Han Ryner formulated it in this typical phrase: *I can illuminate my own soul alone*.

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So, we would very much like to “illuminate our soul”, but not to place it tranquilly under shelter from the wind, the external shadows, the tempest of life, and the violence of wind gusts. *The Yogi*, the ascetic, who resolutely cuts all contact with the milieu, without a family, without friends, without passions, without desires, who *banishes the affections born of contacts* as *The Bhagavad-Gita* puts it, in no way resembles the *ubermensch* in our eyes, but a mutilated, incomplete man, an atrophied being.

Reflection, meditation, that’s for a life that stores itself up, an effort that accumulates, energy which knows itself. It must burst into the outside so that it has a vital equilibrium, a healthy and normal life. Incubation precedes hatching; germination, blossoming, and once the seed of his inner thoughts have grown, in man just as in plants, it cannot help but flower without trouble.

Without a doubt, we know the effects of unreflective action: if man gives himself completely to action, to words that are thrown into the wind like so many seeds, without consideration or restraint, he empties himself of inner knowledge, and will soon become morally exhausted, powerless, annihilated. But it is possible to establish a rational equilibrium between mental assimilation and de-assimilation, as he establishes it in the analogous functions of physical nutrition.

The inner life is not the enemy of action, but exteriority prolonged for a long time calls for meditation. Similarly, when electrical accumulation expends its potential, it is time to recharge.

This Me that you recommend I “sculpt”, is it not but a vapid and perfected statue, if the sculptor did not submit to the proof of experience, to laborious trials and error, failures; if he was not looking outside to fill his eyes with images, sounds, colors, to exercising his hands with hard labors and patient tasks?

The thought conceives, the act realizes. The gesture completes the conception, fertilizes it; it achieves it, verifies it, collaborates with or refutes it. It is in walking that one proves movement. Experience, in all domains, brings you an ebb and flow of sensations, of thoughts capable of enriching the inner life. Similarly the tides, with its powerful rhythm, brings new shells and seaweed to the beach. Water from a closed source stagnates, idle air becomes polluted. If my

vision is personal and relative to my subjective being, it doesn't mean that light does not come from outside.

And before all that exploits and dominates, were I to content myself with some sort of moral liberty—sister of resignation and renouncement—were I to refrain, cautiously, from fighting against the organized tyranny of all under the pretext that I am alone, weak, powerless and “that there is nothing to be done!”

Let these idiots, those tired of life, the dilettantes, those who dare not admit their laziness and their cowardice satisfy themselves with a shrunken, atrophied, vapid, and shriveled individuality. Life calls to healthy beings—to those who cannot and will not resign themselves or conform.

The struggle, the joy of effort identify with life, and are its most intense manifestations.

Inner life and outer life, you are the two poles of human activity, the limits of the swinging pendulum, the forever-united forces, through which the being germinates, grows, and blossoms.

—from *par delà la mêlée* n°32

# “Our” Subjectivism

translated by vincent stone

We will repeat it without growing tired: that which differentiates anarchism from all intellectual syntheses, from all social systems, and constitutes a character all its own, is *individualism*. Only anarchism offers individual liberation and denies the value of so-called collective liberations, bought at the price of a thousand disavowals affecting the independence of the Me. It alone shows the dupery and the fraud of so-called social contracts vis-à-vis those the individual finds himself disarmed and without guarantees. Anarchism loses all reason for existence if it no longer continues the protest of the *Ego* smashed by the social Molochs, the individual affirmation of the right and the will to live outside of exploitation and tyranny.

For all of these reasons—and for others still—we are “subjectivists”. We attach considerable importance to subjectivity, to inner activity, to the formation and evolution of the thinking personality. The famous “I think, therefore I am” remains for us the expression of a primordial truth. A life without thinking isn’t worth living. We know that the general absence of free thought alone permits tyrants to reign without contest over the human herds, and that inner liberation seems to us an indispensable step that must inevitably precede any attempt at social liberation.

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But the human mind, eager for absolutes, loving sharp formulas and definitive, although arbitrary, classifications, is content to widen the abyss between the Me and the Non-Me, between the Subjective and the Objective, between the Object and the Subject! Come from the most diverse philosophical horizons, men have exalted to excess the inner Me and brought the World down to the narrow limits of the thinking subject.

Under the pretext that all we know of the outside world is but the representation that we form of it, and that this representation varies from individual to individual, they have denied the existence of general truths and of a rational domain that is common, or could become so, to all men. Confusing the feeling Me with the reasoning Me, they have claimed that there are only individual truths, noting the multitude of outside interpretations furnished by different sensibilities. Some, pushing their reasoning to the end, deny the existence of all objective reality. A host of interpretations and conclusions followed from these conceptions.

Some of them preached detachment from outside objects, becoming apostles of an artificial freedom, which one achieves only after having abolished desire and broken with all connections attaching the individual to the earth. The exaggerated practice of pure contemplation leading them to the most profound mysticism, they taught detachment and humility without realizing that the latter was but an exalted pride.

The others preached pride, a haughty toughness and isolation, forgetting that the individual cannot satisfy his needs and use his faculties without the aid of others. Many repudiated the

efficacious means with which man is provided for the exploration of the world: observation and experiment, and claimed to replace them with metaphysical Intuition—sister of religious revelation. In brief, in the name of subjectivism, certain philosophers and moralists expounded often quite contradictory ideas, but all effectively result in the practice of the maxim: “Abstain and sustain”, offering the individual the serene joys of thought withdrawn into itself for its own refinement and purification as compensation.

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Faced with these various interpretations, it is not useless to clarify again Why and How—as anarchists—we are subjectivists.

Excessively respectful of individual nuances, and desiring to see the birth and growth of strong personalities, courageous and tenacious souls, proponents of the most perfect tolerance: that which strives to make the realization of different conceptions of life in these various settings possible; so we don't at all renounce subjectivism. Individual consciousness always seems to us to be the *sine qua non* of all liberation.

But we are realists. Our subjective life begins when the sensation comes to bring the necessary food to the brain.

The outside world is not irrelevant to me, since it provides my thought with the materials it uses. Without a doubt I relate to everything that exists through myself, I cannot feel for my neighbor. But in addition to the purely subjective domain: that of sentimental nuances, does there not exist a more impersonal domain, constituted by a common intellectual knowledge? There are general truths against which no healthy brain can rise up against. This is how, in addition to purely personal learning, a collective domain of knowledge comes to be, a domain that I cannot abstain from without depriving myself of an excellent means of realization.

As for those who, in the name of subjectivism, consider desire to be a weakness, their ideal appears to us as barely reasonable as the ideal of those who want to banish us from reason in the name of the relativity of truth.

We want the mastery of self as much as anybody—the individual as slave to the passions cannot aspire to liberation. But let us not forget, “he who plays the angel acts like a beast”, a mystic—and a great one at that—has already proclaimed this.

Why would I destroy my desires, my passions, in lieu of helping myself to them, without serving them as a slave? Can I tear all of my vital aspirations from my being without mutilating it? The ideal of the *Yogi* does not suit us. Epictetus advising us to coldly welcome the death of a precious being makes us indignant!

We want to live body and soul, through the senses, the heart, the brain, step by step and simultaneously. Every division of being proves itself to us to be an obstacle to true happiness.

Our subjectivism in no way distances us from the objective world which it seems to us infantile to deny the importance and role.

No isolation, no systematic abstention seems reasonable to us.

Obligated to bridge the gap between subject and object, this is how we learn to harmonize the alleged opposites and to appreciate the danger of absolutes. And the necessity of outer life, the field of action for the reflective will, of effort with the risks it brings, leads us to search for the necessary conciliation between two fundamental tendencies of our being: the tendency to individuality, to isolation—and the tendency to sociability and association.

—from *par delà la mêlée*, n°34

# Portrait

translated by vincent stone

Going back over the course of my memories from childhood, I see you again, barely an adolescent, already pretentious and a poser. On the promenades of your administrative city, a big cigar in your trap, you tried to show off, you “acted like a man” barely even a kid yet.

Then, I lost sight of you. I only knew that you led the sanctimonious life, exempt of efforts, of a young bourgeois spared by paternal inheritance from the rigors of life. You followed vague studies at some school...

Years have passed, and here I find you again frequenting anarchist milieus, participating in our journals.

You acted like a comrade and, in the beginning, I considered you as such, despite the instinctive mistrust you have always inspired in me. I find again in you the youth of before, poser to the extreme, and my simplicity hardly accommodates those who resemble you: too done-up and detailed, with the vague allures of a made-up girl!

Little by little this wariness grew, and I doubted more than ever the seriousness of your character, knowing that you bragged—in the town of your birth—of leading the life of an *irregular* in Paris, taking credit for imaginary exploits to scandalize and “impress the bourgeois” !

I understood quickly that as a snob and a dilettante, you amused yourself at our expense: the freedom of our milieus, the ease with which one comes in and creates relationships to play a role there.

I knew you as a revolutionary died in the wool, patiently copying all of the articles from the Larousse concerning the materials whose usage brought Vaillant to “the widow,”<sup>1</sup> soliciting powerful and novel chemical formulas from nearby comrades with serious scientific knowledge; always carrying a loaded Browning on you. Then—before you know it—here you are a partisan of non-resistance to evil, Tolstoyan, stoic in the manner of Han Ryner. Goodbye bombs, browning, plans to blow everything “through the sewers” (sic).

But this new pose could not modify your inner nature, and me, I know you well—chance has made us compatriots—I know that you have nothing like evangelic gentleness in you. Two hillbillies from your town who committed the crime of mocking your poser attitudes learned that at their own expense. You easily beat them, without danger or glory, with your fists and feet! Nice gesture for the so-called disciple of those whose wisdom is made of gentleness and “discretion,” “disdain for the unexpected” and fraternity!

It’s true that you have a gift for to abusing those who don’t know you, and how to “fool” people. When you read an article, a brochure, a book, you chose an ambiguous, equivocal phrase, one permitting the splitting of hairs, a passage detached from its context, and you bombard the author with half-critical, half-flattering letters that let you enter into relations with him. Then you oppose his ideological adversaries with his literary rivals with whom you have also entered

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<sup>1</sup> *Translator*—Euphemism for the guillotine.

into relations. You give the metaphysician knowledge of the physician's epistle, to the latter you communicate your mildly flattering dreamer's appreciations; you stir up divergences; you enjoy the useless and furious tournament provoked by your cunning and your sense of intrigue; and all of that allows you to say negligently at the café: "Look here at what this biologist wrote about this philosopher"!

It's that your victims, sometimes illustrious, have no idea that they are readily mystified by a schemer incapable of grasping or understanding the integrity of their works, but who is apt at puerile little discussions, dialectic artifice.

And the pretentious youth of old reappears in you when you spread out the letters thusly obtained—like you once did with arrogance in public places, spreading out cash gained from maternal generosity.

Oh, you know so well how to modify your appearances according to the milieus where you want to be accepted, you slip in everywhere like an eel! To create personal relations among the "notabilities"—of what are you capable?

Thusly have you been able to fool people who would be disgusted with you if you showed them your true face: snobbish, dilettantish, brutal, cynical, animated by a ferocious egoism, of a vanity without limits, void of any scruple.

I gladly would have let you pursue your career as an arriviste and schemer if you did not aspire to play a public role. Here you are today "director" of a journal, "man of letters," "publicist." As you know how to sound the alarm of leading intellectuals of all clans, one finds among your collaborators of this *sacred union*, dear to our leaders, everything from an ultra-patriot war correspondent for a *big evening journal* to the main representative of philosophical pacifism.

And now here you are, daring to speak of the "cause" and of "Ideas" in the name of which and for which you invite those who really know you—and whose severe opinion you fear—to forgive your foulness. Indeed I say "your foulness," for if I cannot say everything here, it must nonetheless be known that tattling, brutality, and seedy business—such as the exploitation of female prostitution—does not disgust you and that on occasion you have resorted to each one of these. According to your favorite line: "*Isn't everything prostitution?*"

We've had enough of these propaganda adventurers who—without deep conviction, without moral propriety, without dignity—come along without lining up to sow their wild oats in our milieus.

Bourgeois, stay with the bourgeois; fund journals for the bourgeois if the journalistic ambition spurs you and if the desire to succeed possesses you. But no more of this pretension of making use of us to achieve your own goals!

No more subtle distinctions between the subjective and the objective. The outside cannot be good if the interior is spoiled. He who accumulates inconsistencies cannot speak in the name of an idea. A purification is needed. We need honest propagandists in the interest of our convictions.

—from *par delà la mêlée* n°33

## Two Attitudes

At the moment of the outbreak of the great conflict of nations, each State mobilized its intellectuals, men of science, journalists, and teachers, for the preaching of falsehood and hatred, obedience and sacrifice. The attitude of these persons was no surprise to us. We knew them to be self-interested worshippers of the Golden Calf, puppets and flunkeys of the commercial class, slavish of the State. Similarly we expected to see the Socialist tribunes following in their steps, for the patriotic declarations, those of Jaures and of Bebel alike, had taught us that the real guiding principle of their sham International could be formulated as follows: Workers of all countries, slaughter each other at the command of your masters!

But we should never have thought that unchangeable opponents of the State, fierce despisers of authority, would also begin to howl with the wolves; that they would invite us, voluntarily and without reserve, to assist in "National Defence." In spite of that, let no one imagine that the majority of Anarchists have followed the propagandist vedettes who have made common cause with their rulers. On the contrary, many have remained anti-patriots and anti-militarists. If the military power has seized and crushed them, they have not sought to justify, to legitimize that power which they formerly hated, which they hate still more now that the facts have confirmed their anticipations; now that they have seen actually at work this formidable grinding machine constituted by the militarism of every State.

That is clear. For years we have awaited the advent of the plague that is now devastating the world. The severity of the nations' struggle for "a place in the sun"—the modern form of conquest and expansion—was inevitably bound to bring about a conflict between the various Fatherlands; seeing that they are nothing but so many associations of social criminals, whose sole aim is exploitation and domination. The conflict was inevitably bound to end in warfare, since two groups of nations found themselves face to face: those who had divided between them the colonial territories of the world, and those who desired to drive out the conquerors in order to set themselves up in their place. Moreover, the crisis of intensive militarism that has existed in Europe for twenty years had placed the rulers in the alternative position of ending in positive bankruptcy; each nation hoping that the vanquished would be crushed to such an extent as to allow of reduction of armaments without fear of retaliation.

Since all these things were known to us, and since we are aware of the fact that the struggle between nations is only the enlargement of that social and individual struggle which forms the basis of capital society, our opinions could not suddenly be modified, at the outbreak of war, by the forms under which it presented itself—the methods that it adopted. When a man has seriously considered the social problem and can discern its causes; when he understands that private property produces nearly all the conflicts of mankind; when he is not a humbug, a dabbler, or a creature of impulse; he cannot modify his convictions according to circumstance, nor can he throw upon one caste alone the responsibility of the war. We are revolted by the horrors of war, but we know that the only way of putting an end to them is to attack the real causes of armed conflicts, and not to lend willing aid to any nationality, whichever it be.



Declamations concerning “the horrors of invasion” cannot induce us to become “good soldiers and good Frenchmen,” for we are aware that in every war each side seeks to carry the conflict into the enemy’s country. When two or more Empires clash together, dragging after them as many large and small allies as possible, in turn purchasing or violating neutrality, we know that we are witnessing the encounter of two opposing Wills to Greed and Domination—not the struggle of Law against Barbarism. Above all, what most disinclines us towards official justifications and patriotic solidarity is that these things are thrust upon us. Which of the Fatherlands can claim to be defending Liberty, when all of them seize upon the individual like ghouls greedy for human flesh, entrain him like an animal, without his being able to consider or discuss the matter, and send him to the slaughter, regardless of his choice.

We know that some feeble-spirited persons would delude themselves into the belief that they are acting in accordance with their own wills when they adapt themselves to the public opinion which proclaims that “war is a necessary evil,” and affirms the necessity of “fighting to a finish,” in order that the workers may thereby derive some supposed advantages, direct or indirect. But we prefer to keep our ideal unsullied. Militarism may seize our bodies: our minds it can never subdue. Though we cannot elude authority, though we recognize our powerlessness and numerical inferiority, we do not voluntarily co-operate or acquiesce in the deadly work. An idea that is impotent because it cannot yet enlist a sufficient number of supporters to make it a social force, is not necessarily a false one. It may represent the future, as the unextinguished embers on the primitive hearth represented the possibility of procuring fresh fire.

We know “that if we were to admit to-day the necessity for “National Defence,” we must tomorrow admit the usefulness of the Militarism that prepares and ensures it. If we were to join the Holy Alliance, we could not afterwards speak seriously of the spirit of revolt or the class-struggle. So we prefer to keep silence, gagged as we are by Democratic martial law and censorship. Between our activities of yesterday and tomorrow we are unwilling to raise the barrier of a positive contradiction. As for those who have joined the war party, their tongues will be tied by their utterances of today. As they have admitted that a man ought—being propertyless—to engross himself in his “National Inheritance,” to the degree of voluntarily sacrificing his life to preserve it intact—they will be compelled to bow down before the frightful political and economic Nationalism whose reign after the war can be foreseen. To the boldest and most combative it will be given to resist “the renascent hydra of Clericalism.” While they are wasting their time in cleaving “the Sacred Heart,” the traffickers of the sacristy and the cloister will consolidate their economic power by taking advantage of the distress which will be prevalent after the war, when Capital will, at the expense of the workers, recoup to itself the milliards that have been squandered in fighting.

For our part, we shall use these terrible economic results in our work of social criticism, and we shall point out that men have suffered this abominable butchery because they have not adopted our position; because they have preserved that institution of Private Property which we condemn, have respected and considered necessary that Masterdom, that Authority, against which we struggle. There will be greater need than ever for an earnest propaganda, unhampered by professionals and pseudo-intellectuals. Ceasing to fasten our gaze upon Paris and upon distinguished writers; applying rational decentralization, localism, federalism; seeking to create in every district one or more autonomous centers of active, systematic, and unflagging propaganda; we shall resume our task of criticism, undermining, and education.

For now (the proof of this is not lacking), in our militarized, priest-ridden communities, misery, suffering, and death do not produce lasting and fruitful activities on the part of the people unless there is previously a firmly-rooted ideal of resistance to the rapacious and tyrannical Master; an ideal that may be worked out by reason and not merely by the driving force of sentiment; a slowly-matured ideal, a definite and clear objective founded upon real Liberty, secured by true Equality of conditions; only realizable by the suppression of authoritarian Masterdom. When we resume the work of propaganda, if we are asked what we were doing during the war, we shall reply:—some of us, being unwilling to champion a cause which they deemed was not theirs, evaded their patriotic obligations, others would not or could not follow their example. But, whether fighters or defaulters, we have remained true to ourselves in all circumstances: for what constitutes the superiority of the Free Man—the Anarchist—over his environment, is that he knows how to uphold the integrity of his thought and his dignity, and to defy to the end the blind force that crushes him. Being without illusions, we shall not sink into whining pessimism. We depend only on time, and on effort guided by reason, for the struggle against illusion, against clerical or lay Religionism, that bulwark of malevolent Authority.

—From *Freedom*, London, October, 1915

This piece was also published as the brochure *Deux Attitudes* in Paris; it went through two editions, one of which—according to our research—amounted to 10,000 copies.

# Letters to E. Armand (excerpts)

## Translated by vincent stone

... I am an individualist because I feel as an individual as a starting point, before thinking and feeling as a social being, because I believe that any society that doesn't offer me normal satisfaction of my needs in exchange for reasonable labor is to be destroyed... I am for individual culture because I am not ignorant to the fact that the ensemble only values what its constituents value, in some cases it's worse than that, because I don't acknowledge the right of any social ensemble to destroy me to assure its own security or existence. I place my independence before my well-being, and my freedom before my security. I would prefer losing my life in defending my freedom to buying my life in slavery.

October 24, 1914

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... In place of frequently squabbling over words, of discussing Ikarian futures and their layout, in place of ranting or writing to figure out which is the most logical label—"anarchist individualist" or "individualist anarchist" how much of our time could be better spent destroying, at least undermining the illusion of respect: ideas of superiority of the master, the adoration of force and money—of honor, morality, national solidarity, necessary obedience, etc... The individual should benefit from the mitigating circumstances, for the fallacy envelopes him from the moment of his birth. Plunged into an ocean of darkness, it is quite excusable that he fall in step with bad shepherds. But those who claim to be "outside of the flock" have they done everything they can to seriously react against social conservatism? I don't think so. Do they think it better to do it later? The future will tell.

October 29, 1914

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*Society would have done better to have invented nothing but that with which to aid in murder?* Okay. You know Han Ryner's parable of the Spring: the freshness and the purity depends on the spring, it has no control over what anyone does with it. Under the pretext that the dregs of society have poisoned the spring, do I refuse to go upstream to drink it fresh and pure? Just like you, I have no idea whether humanity will one day stop tearing up its own insides. What I do know is, that my physical and psychic constitution prevents me from returning to a primitive state. I need clothing, lodging, shoes, food (grains, vegetables, meat). Also, I don't get the idea to emphatically cry out: let all this material acquisition perish, rather than individual autonomy... what a poor autonomy is that of a bear and reindeer hunter, endlessly trembling in fear of encountering an

enemy more powerful than he, sometimes coming back to his empty cave or the smoking remains of his family at the entrance of his dwelling, ravaged by some wild animal, reduced to clenching his stomach if fishing and hunting were unfruitful, ignorant of the plow, culture, weaving, curing leather, etc.: separated from the exterior world by swamps, forests, and mountains that no road, no tunnel opens for him. The most absolute dependence, one experiences it in nature. This ancestor did not know the softness of civilization, nor did he know about, following your reasoning, the fatal consequences thereof, for he had absolutely no fear of one-ton pieces of shrapnel. That did not stop him from offing himself very cleanly and very savagely with flint axes and sharp rocks...

Though individualist, I do not deny *the social question*, I claim it to be an aggregate of questions, of individual causes, that harmony agglomerates and affinity brings near... If I am the Unique, I never forget (and no *anarchist* can forget) that other *uniques* are around me, for the glorification of the Me drives toward everything but anarchy...

... I suffer more in fighting *alone* against the natural environment than if I associate with others, at the cost of a few concessions. Absolute autonomy in the economic domain is not of this world, that's that! Why always mix the intellectual or emotional domain with the economic domain? To rejoice or to study, I frequent only those who please me. But if I knit sweaters or knead bread, let's hope that I receive in exchange for my products other products necessary to me, I hardly concern myself if those who wear my sweaters or eat my bread are interesting, if they have a nice "mug" or not.

November 24, 1914

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I only know individuals, not collectivities. Among those whose life is hardly privileged, not to mention those who Moloch crushes and who can never blossom, we do not find delicate and refined sensibilities, marvelous intelligences. Among those to whom life has been gracious—servility, baseness, bestial authority, do they not reign as much as in the "proletariat"?

Also, I reiterate to you, I am not the advocate of a class, but I feel I have something in common with all of those "dispossessed" deprived of material "heritage," and who feel and understand that they must try to conquer it. In reality, I am sympathetic to every individual who struggles against Supremacy, whatever their social situation may be, but I am quite forced to note that the rebels, the enemies of constraint, are rarely found among the beneficiaries of this supremacy. That is why we often address the "dispossessed" rather than the others, because we know that the bourgeois cannot come to us for good reason.

Since I belong to no chapel, it does not follow that I go hot and cold in turns. I do not hide my opinions and I don't modify them according to company. People know everywhere where I am going and where I am allowed and that I am an enemy of the State, an unremitting anti-patriot, contemptuous of property, partisan of individual and consequently collective revolt, since at the base of all numbers there is the singular. There is no equivocation. I do not deceive those around me. I am neither friend nor enemy of the people, considered as a class, but I feel camaraderie for every INDIVIDUAL who fights against domination, be it moral or material.

November 9, 1915

# Pierre Chardon

M.P.

Translated by vincent stone

May 2, 1919! On this day Pierre Chardon, he who animated and enlightened our milieu for too short a time, disappeared, alas! He was barely 27 years old and would have been without contest one of the most ardent defenders of our ideals, had a brutal death not taken him too soon from our friendship. For already he was able to make his presence felt with his vast intellect, his spirit of revolt, his distrust of opinion, continuously giving a pounding to bourgeois prejudice and oppressive society.

It is not without emotion that I evoke his almost childlike *silhouette* which was topped by a striking face that could not disappear from the memory of those who encountered it: a face upon which the clutches of evil who must have brought him here had made their mark. A vast forehead surpassed by a lion-like head of hair that covered inquisitive eyes, eyes that shined on occasion with a malicious glow—all accompanied by a sarcastic smile, a smile which knew how to soften for the friends he welcomed with fraternity.

Like Remy de Gourmont, whose philosophy he admired, he would have preferred that people didn't know him and often his manner puzzled and arrested one's trust, for he bristled with irony and sarcasm like defensive weapons. However, nothing but affectionate comprehension, nothing but tenderness under the surly armor, and how he let his spirit show with confidence when someone guessed it!

An autodidact, he possessed all of the qualities of an organizer. For, with an intellect undaunted by any human problem, he achieved an invincible will that neither physical suffering nor the moral ordeals he went through could shake. The inner griefs that tortured him never diminished the surprising activity he demonstrated. The philosophy of effort, struggle, hope, and constant response which were his helped him to get through the painful stages of a precarious life, dully worn down. "Never has sadness led to despondency in me," he wrote to me from Nice a few weeks before his death, while he knew he was irremediably condemned, he continued to work until he exhausted all of his energies.

Until his last breath, he thought of the work he had set out to do: the publishing of *la mêlée*, while he no longer could get up, while every effort meant suffering, in the last days of his life, I can say the last hours, he worried about the publishing of this journal which had become the focus of his activity, the main goal of his efforts. He wanted to hand off the torch, not diminished, but reanimated with a new clarity.

"So long as there is a drop of invigorating blood circulating in its veins, I believe a being should fight and react." That, he accomplished. For he loved life, multiple and varied life which his delicate and tender soul could taste in its diversity and beauty. "You must not run away from life, he wrote me, but pull from it the maximum happiness; to 'return from the dead,' to open our

eyes on ourselves and others, to be able to taste and appreciate the beauty everywhere it resides. In the simplest of material forms there is a beauty, a harmony. Only he who can see and feel the relations hidden between beings and things, he whose eyes of flesh are completed with eyes of spirit, knows how to live the intense life, not this artificial intensity of modern life, but the complete life, filled with numerous experiences, slowly savored, in their time, without haste...”

And it is because he had this sort of understanding that revealed the secret harmonies between beings and things, that in him we find this curious mix of realism and poetry that led him to a smiling skepticism, to that subtle irony with which he sprinkled his conversation, sometimes grave, sometimes light-hearted, never indifferent.

The social and economic question interested him to the highest degree, he was a disciple of Proudhon and he harbored a special project which he often spoke about with friends and which he would have no doubt realized were it not for the difficulties he encountered. The project? That of forming a fraternal community based on a work association. He closely studied the American colonies which, in the last century, blossomed out of the soils of what was then the land of liberty: *Shakers; Economists; Zoarites; Perfectionists; Fourieristes*, etc. He carefully studied the weaknesses of all of these undertakings, the most of which were ephemeral—weaknesses that doomed them to certain and premature failure.

But already the foundations of this community that he wanted to establish were in place, and so were its essential elements, as much at the material level as at the spiritual, and here’s how he understood how to organize the future community from the point of view of intersexual relations: “We will not recognize the *couple—legal or illegal*, it matters little—but only the individual-associate, every individual—man or woman—will have their own share, so as to have guarantees against authority and the constraint of his/her spouse. For established households, the share of a woman will be the equal to that of the man, the share of a couple being shared in halves. Each individual will have a room. They are each free to live alone or with a spouse, with the possibility for them to isolate themselves when they please and to end sexual relations at will, singular or plural, that s/he keeps. Absolute freedom with these principles: *neither venality, nor constraint*. Children are raised at the cost of the community, he belongs to the mother who carried and nursed him. In the case of sexual competitions, it is the will of the woman which determines all. In the case of spousal abuse, the community will intervene to protect the weaker party and his/her free will.”

This project haunted him to the end. He had already gathered comrades who were capable of making a successful farm work, which would be the basis of this association, but with him gone, the project went too, for none of the others could give it the love, the intelligence he did. This exemplary being who had a magnificent future before him left to those who knew him intimately an unforgettable memory and the regret for his death remains forever in their hearts.

This recently translated essay was first published in 1906 as “Les Theories Individualistes dans La Philosophie Chinoise: Yang-Chou” by Alexandra David-Neel in *Mercure de France*. In 1909 it was reprinted in pamphlet form by a small anarchist press under the title “Un ‘Stirner’ Chinois” and credited to “Mitra”, a pen name David-Neel sometimes used.

Individualist, anarchist, occultist and traveler, Alexandra David-Neel was born in Paris, on October 24, 1868 and is certainly one of the most singular and iconoclastic figures in anarchist history. As a child her favorite books were the science fiction fantasies of Jules Verne, and, perhaps as a form of rebelliousness against her severe upbringing, she promised herself to one day outdo the heroes of these stories—and made good on that promise by living a life of such passion

and adventure that it put even the most epic novels and movies to shame. As an indicator: at five years old she ran away, just before her strict and repressive family moved to Brussels. Only after a widespread search was she caught and marched to the police station by a gendarme, whom she bit and scratched during his attempts to apprehend her. Coupled with young Alexandra's desire for personal sovereignty was an intense interest in various spiritual practices (such as yoga and meditation) as techniques conducive to self-knowledge and individual emancipation—and a tenacious curiosity regarding the grand mysteries of the universe.

In her early twenties Alexandra studied Sanskrit at the Sorbonne in Paris and became a political radical, keeping a pistol and ammunition in her Paris room (unlike the vast majority of women of her day, Alexandra not only owned a gun but knew how to use it, which she proved later in Tibet). A heady aroma of revolution wafted in the air of Paris in the 1890s, where black more than red was still the color of rebellion—as though in mourning for the crushed Commune—and it was here that Alexandra met anarchist exiles from every industrial slum in Europe, as well as emaciated poets, painters, and other merchants of dreams. Not surprising, considering her attitudes towards personal freedom, Alexandra grew into a committed anarchist, and in 1892 composed the lengthy essay *Pour la vie*—which she called an “anarchist hymn to life”—in which she disparaged the society of her day as being the “enforcer of constraint and death.” The essay included a preface by the renowned French geographer and anarchist Elisee Reclus (1820–1905). Publishers were too terrified to publish the book, though her friend Jean Haustont printed copies himself and it was eventually translated into five languages, including Russian.

“This is a proud book,” Reclus stated in the preface, “written by a woman prouder still.” Many of the ideas set forth in *Pour la vie* originated in Alexandra's study of two Chinese philosophers who flourished in the fourth century B.C.: Mo-Ti and Yang Chou, both of whom challenged the accepted bases of social order. Mo-Ti suggested that people be cooperative towards one another when possible out of *self-interest*, but that they ignore abstract ideals, since human beings hadn't the capacity to carry them out anyway. Yang-Chou was a real fire-breather who went much further and blasted **all** laws, particularly those that confined human instinct, regarding institutions and customs as impediments to happiness and castigating those cowards who went towards death like “chained animals never having lived”.

Another major influence on Alexandra's thought was the German individualist Max Stirner, whose *The Ego and His Own* converted Alexandra from a libertarian in spirit to one in print and practice. She was one of the first anarchists to point out parallels between Stirner and radically individualist Eastern thinkers like Yang-Chou. Stirner anticipated Nietzsche's assertion that “god is dead” and mocked the law-abiding citizen as “a dog dragging his chain.” Stirner instead celebrated the conscious egoist brave enough to heed their own desires. This resonated with the young Alexandra who held, like Stirner, that the individual must emancipate themselves first, and learn **rebellion** rather than revolution. During this period, Alexandra engaged in an extended anarchist literary outburst and became well known to the police in Brussels and France, who retained dossiers on her that they passed on to British Intelligence nearly twenty years later. But Alexandra was not cut out to become a heroine of the Left—another Louise Michel—and was both too thoughtful and too self-absorbed to accept a role, even a leading one, in a mass movement.

Concurrent with her involvement in absinthe-drinking Parisian anarchist circles, Alexandra also pursued her studies in Buddhism, Vedanta, and eastern philosophy, and at 23, briefly joined an esoteric cult led by Sri Ananda Saraswati, who used hashish to obtain visions. By 1912 Alexandra was living in Calcutta, India where she took part in Tantric rites, including on one occasion

the ritual of the so-called “five forbidden substances”: meat, fish, grain, wine, and sexual union. She also made the acquaintance of Madame Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society, but retained an anarchistic skepticism towards Blavatsky’s theories, which she referred to as “spiritual fascism... elitist and hierarchical.” Her two years in India studying yoga convinced David-Neel that liberation was an entirely individual affair and she began to withdraw from anarchist milieus and plan a trip to Tibet, writing in her diary “I profoundly despise everything connected with politics and I avoid mixing in such matters. Don’t bother yourself except to accomplish well the mission assigned to you, without worrying about the missions of others.”

In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Tibet was still a region mostly sealed off from the outside world, and if westerners were an odd sight in Tibet, then western women were exceedingly rare. In order to gain entry to this remote kingdom, Alexandra decided to disguise herself as a male Tibetan pilgrim and to enter the country under this pretense. She travelled from Japan to China, into Mongolia, across the Gobi desert, and finally crept across the Tibetan border. The trip to the “forbidden city” of Lhasa took four months and in 1924, at 56, she made it to the capital, exhausted and spent. Neel and her companion spent four months living in the capital, interacting and learning from the monks there, and it was here that she became the first European woman to meet and interview the thirteenth Dalai Lama, at the time in exile. She eventually wrote a bestselling book about her journey, entitled *My Journey To Lhasa*, in which she claimed that along the way, she had made use of *tumo* breathing, the Tibetan art of generating body heat to keep warm in freezing conditions.

David-Neel spent the next fourteen years travelling the length and breadth of Asia, before settling in Digne, France, where she built a retreat where she could concentrate on penning memoirs of her adventures in Asia, and authoring numerous studies on Eastern philosophy and mysticism. Quite a wild character, but if there’s no place within anarchism for a certain freewheeling zani-ness then how useful is it, really? And although David-Neel’s youthful commitment to anarchism stemmed from sources other than political dogmatism (most notably an inherent free thinking) she never turned her back completely on it, and when in 1968 (when she was a hundred years old) insurrection broke out in Paris and eventually across all of France, she spoke approvingly of it. She died the following year, at 101.



## **Section Twelve: The Critique of Collectivism**

*I am an anarchist, a political and social Huguenot; I deny everything and affirm naught but myself: because the sole truth of which I have material and moral proof and tangible, comprehensible and intelligible evidence, the only real, startling, non-arbitrary truth not susceptible to interpretation, is myself I am. There I have a positive fact. Everything else is abstraction and, in mathematics, would be designated as  $x$ , an unknown quantity; and I need not trouble myself with it. In essence, society consists of a vast combination of material and personal interests. The collective or State interest -by virtue of which dogma, philosophy and politics together have thus far demanded wholesale or partial forswearing of individuals and their assets -is a sheer figment which, in its priestly garb, has furnished the basis for the fortunes of all the clergy, from Aaron right up to Monsieur Bonaparte. This imagined interest has no existence outside of legislation. It has assuredly never been the case, never will be the case and cannot be the case that upon this earth there exists an interest higher than mine, an interest to which I am obliged to make even a partial sacrifice of my interest. On which grounds I am correct in saying that the only social fact is the natural fact, the individual, the self.*

—Anselme Bellegarrigue, 1850

The manifest tendency in political and social thought is in the direction of collectivism: that is, the divination of society and the authority of the social body, unified under some homogeneous ideological banner or administrative absolutism. The essence of Collectivism is quantitative agglomeration and the term is most useful when it's applied to a social-political aggregate embodying all, or at least the majority, in an interdependent network of social roles (voluntarily embraced or otherwise), a network that suggests an illusionary unanimity and singleness of purpose. Collectivists are social planners who fasten a transcendental importance to the word "everyone" and who strive to apply a standard of political design and framed symmetry to organized society through the imposition of their preferred uniform system—for "everyone"! Every collectivist thinker, whether Marxist, Socialist, Muslim or Syndicalist, views society as a totality—as a political unit—that needs to be constituted in a strictly organized, coordinated and regularized fashion, and only disagree on what definite shape and form their fancied systems will assume (invariably, they all propose conditions where society and the State, for all intents and purposes, become one and the same). These amateur social scientists are like amateur physicians: They always begin with the question of remedies, and prescribe broad and general theories of wide application without any clear conception of the anatomy and physiology of their central obsession: "society". Civilization's pestilential supply of reformers, sociologists, humanitarians, utopian moralists and would-be managers-in-general of society never have any doubt regarding the efficacy of their remedies and it never troubles them that their Grand Plan to cure all the ills of the human race with one master equation necessitates a complete reconstruction of other peoples worlds—and even a remodeling of human nature! For once the socializers have settled all questions a priori in a thorough-going blueprint, they start plotting, blundering, and murdering their way towards their ideal social order—which, needless to say, will allow of no secession, no splits, and no independent or semi-independent existence to function within its territorial jurisdiction.

The fallacies of collectivist thinking are endless, but the largest problem, which collectivists always abstain from directly addressing, is the very largeness of their schemes (the emphasis on size and the reverence for quantity are typical collectivist traits). For example, though Commu-

nism or Socialism might be possible (and even enjoyable) as an intentional communal experiment, it becomes quite another question when it's a case of forcibly applying it to millions and millions of people, who share neither the same "internationalist" vision (programmed towards ultimate merging and globality), nor the same interests or desires, nor the same ideas on life. Collectivism on that scale implies coerced egalitarianism, as an ideal mass is homogenous and consists therefore of "equal" atoms, but such a purely theoretical, contrived equality also presupposes imposition on account of its extreme unnaturalness (brutal force is not only necessary for the "leveling" process in the initial stage—it becomes mandatory as a permanent feature in order to maintain the abstract and inorganic "symmetrical order"). More to the point, the establishment of such all-embracing "equality" requires a complicated technocratic police-state infrastructure and demands an endless number of laws, regulations, restrictions, and controls which in turn comprise a pagoda of slavery, of quasi-military rule, of constant social supervision and peremptory institutional regimentation that feeds, nourishes, and allegedly "protects" the subject population. Collectivist ideology finds fertile ground in the minds of those who lack in self-assertion and are deficient in ego-consciousness, i.e., those who feel a need for personal anchorage to some system of group identity and who view other humans as primarily members of one herd or another (a nation, a class, a society, etc.), believing that individuals are only complete when coupled to a huge organized structure where the particular is defined by the whole. These mass-minded weaklings know that their real strength doesn't lie in their own personalities but in their numbers, for numbers indicate social authority and certitude. The collectivist's insatiable need for company, for fraternity, for brotherhood, is reflective of agonizing personal insecurities, but is positively degrading and undignified to an anarchist, whose outlook starts with the "I" and not the "We", and who understands that there is no common denominator for all individuals (the fiction on which all collectivists rest their case). In fact, this is one of the main characteristics which sets anarchism apart from politics in general, but more specifically, from Leftism, and from the leftist rackets and organizations which are at the service of today's or tomorrow's rulers. Of course, there's always been branches of anarchist thought that have stressed the utterly erroneous notion of social solidarity and that have assumed to speak for some vast, vaguely-defined constituency called "The People" (the typical representatives being the anemic writings of Kropotkin and Jean Grave), but these sentimental, wish-fulfilling fantasies are really only faltering steps towards the end goal of complete personal liberty, whereas the most radical demands put forth by individualist-anarchists imply the destruction of the very foundations of every possible "social" position, and are absolutely incapable of being used by collectivist planners.

The anarchist critique of collectivism inevitably morphs into a piercing critique of capital R revolution, predicated as such events are on collective, unified participation and end goals. From the French Revolution on, anarchists in France have witnessed all successful upheavals result in the creation of new despotisms with new privileged classes at the helm. This is because the breakdown of one particular governmental structure isn't normally accompanied by a collective mad dash for freedom, but by a panicked search for security through the re-imposition of hierarchy and leadership—a process which enables the most ruthless and the most cunning among the underprivileged to rise to the top as either partners or successors of the old elites, thus perpetuating the immemorial master-and-servant pattern of civilized society. French history is chock-full of old-time revolutionaries who tasted the poisonous fruit of government and disgracefully turned into either common politicians or totalitarian tyrants. It's very popular to pose as a "friend of humanity," or a "friend of the working classes," but the chief difference between self-styled revo-

lutionaries and overt Empire-builders like Napoleon seems to consist mainly in the verbiage with which they clothe their similar ambitions (the revolutionaries generally take a leaf from Judeo-Christian faux humanitarianism and pretend that their aim is the liberation of all humanity). After a revolutionary victory is won and the former ruling class ousted, the new class positions are fortified and a new master class, as a matter of course, will be restored; only now they'll be based on new foundations and more solidly and unshakably entrenched, differently explained and justified by new reasons—even sanctified by the same individuals who condemned these arrangements in their old shape. Thus the rebels of one age become the reactionaries of the next and the **obsequious** masses go along with the program—little suspecting that a yoke is being kept ready for them by their new masters who appear now (as do all master-classes in the beginning) in the shape of comrades, friends, rescuers, altruists, fighters for justice, but who will inevitably unmask, strip themselves of shammed benevolence, feigned care, simulated humanness, and reveal their true face and genuine character of ruthlessly exacting masters. And the poor saps who put their lives on the line to install this new regime—sincerely believing that meaningful change was taking place—are left to fume and fret over having been deceived. They were promised comforts, an easy life, a super-abundance, an over-flowing of goods and luxuries, and now all they're offered are crumbs shaken spitefully from the over-laden table at which the new lords are feasting. The first period of the "revolution" consisted of the organizers enlisting the jacquerie with hot-air pledges in order to forge them into the crew of wreckers whose task it was to smash up the existing social order—for the profit of the organizers. The second phase, following upon the first, is a time of hierarchical reconstruction, a time of erecting palaces and slums, temples and shacks, a time of harnessing the masses with new collars placed upon their unwieldy necks—for they're no longer of any use, but are now rather a hindrance, a disruption to the new governing structure.

Here we're discussing the position that the idealists of the revolutionary cause (the true believers) always find themselves in. But what of the beloved People themselves? History has shown clearly that the poor are just as vicious, reactionary in outlook, and contemptible as the rich; that they gleefully embrace the most xenophobic, freedom-negating slogans of their masters, or of their masters' power-hungry rivals, and that, as a rule, they're more prone to pounce upon their equally poor or even poorer "fellow-workers" who are of a different skin color, language or belief than upon the commanding class. The emotionally-suggestible masses have all been marked (as children, and over the course of centuries) by the official stamp of authoritarian society: Consequently, they reason like sheep, the feeling of liberty has been effectively obliterated in them and they're ripe for all kinds of subservience—doomed to serve as a pedestal for the ever renascent privileged elite of either powerseeking upstarts or long-term beneficiaries of inherited wealth and position. Dumbly they obey the dictates of their tyrannous lords, generally without rebellion or protest, filled with a vague, illimitable weariness such as the dead must know, their "thinking" always just staggering along—and any short-lived revolt that they might engage in is usually followed by a gray, ceaseless longing to return to their interrupted slumber. The "people" are not easily stirred and their congenital incompetence throughout the domains of political life is almost universal (and furnishes their rulers with a practical, managerial justification for rulership). The "people" are that vast, inert majority of human beings in all ages and all countries who follow the patterns in which they were born and carefully avoid acting or thinking originally, in order not to destroy the terrifying mediocrity to which they're so instinctively devoted—their incentive and enthusiasm snuffed out at an early age and replaced with a kind of deadening tor-

por and dull-witted cowardice (making their lives as artificial and as useless as civilization). Like true herd animals they comply scrupulously with the written and unwritten commands of the group and move cautiously in the broad stream of the mediocre masses, avoiding all extremes except those in a frenzied mass hysteria (in those moments, citizen lambda not only rejoices in marching amongst fifty thousand uniformly clad soldiers, all stepping rhythmically in one direction, but finds an almost equal gratification in contemplating the show from a couch). The exploited outnumber their exploiters in our own times, and the same outnumbering has existed in every historical epoch, but for some baffling reason the “people” have never gained the upper hand for any considerable length of time. If everyone is so freedom-loving and “really” wants an anarchist society, then why haven’t we got one by now? Why do we have politicians and a State apparatus after well over a century of anarchist propaganda? If everyone’s real interest is in free, cooperative living (as social anarchists like to claim), then who are all these people that staff institutions like prisons, collection agencies, courts and congresses? Might there, instead, be some unpleasant truths contained in Etienne De La Boetie’s Discourse on Voluntary Servitude? If contemporary anarchists insist on continuing to use phrases like “social revolution”, then it should at least be admitted that such an event will not be a class or proletarian phenomenon, but will be brought about by groups of determined individuals, who will invariably be drawn from different classes and social contexts.

Collectivist-anarchist visions, such as those preached by Kropotkin, Jean Grave and Sébastien Fuare—and accepted by their unsophisticated following—express an ideal of a perfect, harmonious social system that will do away with compulsion and domination, but this ideal (like all others) is a mirage. All the sermonizing and high-sounding oratorical exercises of these evangelical crusaders obscure the fact that new and larger possibilities for exploitation and control open up with greater social collectivization, which would only result in the magnification and colossalization of the global administrative machine that’s already crushing us under its wheels. In its most extreme form, as statist communism, every collectivist utopia on record has been ushered in by the secret police in conjunction with the firing squad—and to believe that the “anarcho”-communists could pull it off differently through a campaign of “educating” the masses is to babble nonsense. Empty phrases about “voluntary federations of perpetual barricades” and “democratic councils of the revolutionary commune” have dominated opinion in anarchist circles since the word was coined, yet in essence convey nothing but an ultra-humane form of leftism which should be recognized as such (if emancipation consists of no rule, rule by councils is not emancipatory; anarchy is not democracy insofar as it disallows any form of government). These collectivist fictions have been the dead tissue on living anarchist thought and praxis since Proudhon and it would seem wise to abandon this sentimental reverence for The People and other make-believe stupidities, and arrive instead at a consciousness of your own individuality. The People is just one more half-baked, hollow entity, like God, Society, the State, Vice, Morality—and though this last idol will probably take longer and be harder to break for anarchists than the others, it is still only an idol and needs to be smashed.

*Once and for all, my friend, understand that I am the irreconcilable enemy of all government, whatever it may be. I’ve spent my whole life thinking about this problem, and I feel that there are no circumstances which justify one in sacrificing his liberty to his fellows. Any law, whether it commands or forbids, proclaimed with a view to the so-called interest of the group, to the detriment of the individual, is a fraud.*

Mercifully, France also generated plenty of anarchists who opposed all herd-ethics, herd-concepts, and herd-murder sprees (like World War One), and who preferred dynamic chaos to the standardized stagnation and sterile conformity of bee-hive Socialism, Communism, and Capitalism (three systems that are one at bottom: three systems that aim at the absorption of the body, blood and life of the individual). The misleading collectivist adage “safety in numbers” is more intelligently translated as danger in numbers by the free spirits and unallied minds who rejoice in the grandeur of the individual against the Mass (be it Public Opinion, Society, or State)—and the periodic murderous rampages of the Mass. While social anarchists narcotize themselves with fatuous dreams of the impossible, individualist anarchists live remote from the practice of politics (with all its contagious allurements) and, consequently, have a more objective perspective on the hierarchical and authoritarian defects of party organization, large-scale social planning, and “majority rule”, i.e., democracy. French anarchists like Zo d’Axa, Libertad, Émile Armand and Pierre Chardon continually argued that a majority has no more right than a king to control the acts of any individual, and that the only real right in either case is that of might. Therefore, all laws (whether common or statute) arise out of force alone—and the power that a group might have to enforce their definitions and their penalties. Influenced by Stirner’s union of egoists, French individualist anarchists rejected forced collectivism and posited interindividual cooperation between self-determined beings that enter at their own risk, and of their own free accord, into voluntary combination with other equally self-willed, deliberately acting, individuals. This is no community or society in the usual sense of the words, but will more closely resemble ad hoc alliances formed for mutual advantage by resolute, intelligent rebels. Such voluntary alliances are not universally social and do not seek to encompass all and everybody; they are limited regarding their size and magnitude and the individuals cooperating within these loose unions don’t thereby form an organic whole (in other words, they don’t constitute a unit that absorbs its constituent parts to the complete annihilation of their separate existences in the given purpose or process). These alliances are an open-ended concept and not a projection of a future social organization; they can and do exist now on a smaller scale, whenever individuals gather to accomplish something that requires their combined efforts. And as they are always temporary, they don’t demand the eternal loyalty or allegiance of the individuals involved, nor do they attempt to impose an abstract ideal of equality upon human beings who are unique, ever-changing and outside all formulas and patterns.

Of course, the guardians of the anarchist status quo scented a menace in these ideas (which were skeptical towards Kropotkin-esque schemes of social amelioration and the equalitarian virtues they’re based on) and tried, in one way or another, and by the usual insidious methods, to block the propagation and general discussion of them, leading to one of the major bifurcations in the movement—one which became only more pronounced with the outbreak of World War One. The First World War spawned the disgraceful phenomenon of pro-war former radicals supporting the government when it’s at its most repressive and vicious (during wartime!), and rationalizing this departure from principle, at least to their own satisfaction, on the grounds that the working class, and particularly the organized workers, had accepted the war with great docility, and therefore, the “historical conditions” were not yet right for revolution (once the danger of a German-dominated world had been averted, they maintained, it would be safe for radicals to return to their traditional opposition to the status quo). That socialists, communists

and other statist would take this position is not so shocking, but amazingly, the more prominent components of the French anarchist movement also spoke of going to war for the profit of the bourgeois state! Kropotkin, his aide de camp Jean Grave, and Tcherkesoff were among the most eager defenders of France: *“Don’t let these heinous conquerors wipe out the Latin civilization and the French people again... Don’t let them impose on Europe a century of militarism”* (Letter of Kropotkin to J.Grave, September 2, 1914). It was in the name of the defense of democracy against Prussian militarism that they supported the Sacred Union: *“German aggression was a threat—executed—not only against our hopes for emancipation but against all human evolution. That’s why we, anarchists, we, anti-militarists, we enemies of war, we passionate partisans for peace and fraternity between peoples, we line up on the side of the resistance and we have not thought of separating our fate from that of the rest of the population”* (Manifesto of the Sixteen, February 1916). In France, the anarcho-syndicalist CGT also threw into the bin its own resolutions that called on it organize the general strike in case of war, transforming itself into a hysterical purveyor of cannon fodder for imperialist butchery: *“against the force of arms, against Germanic militarism, we must save the democratic and revolutionary tradition of France,” “go without regret comrade workers when you are called to the frontiers to defend French soil.”* (*La Bataille Syndicaliste*, organ of the CNT, August 1914). Overnight, the mass-oriented anarchists (who viewed anarchism as a means of directing society) became part of what Albert Libertad contemptuously referred to as the “patriotic herd”, while the individualist anarchists managed to retain their sanity and resist absorption by the war machine (the record of American radicals during that war was, on the whole, far more principled and courageous than that of their European counterparts; the actions of the IWW and the American anarchists, notably Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, stood in sharp contrast to the spineless capitulation and geriatric confusion of Kropotkin and Benjamin Tucker).

The writings in this next section challenge the collectivist psychosis and put the spotlight on anarchist pathfinders who scrutinized collectivism as an instrument for the subjection and taming of the sovereign individual—and of liberty itself. We kick off the fireworks with André Lorulot’s superb “Individualism and The Social Question”, a fluid, tentative investigation into an anarchist position on Society. Next, Manual *Devaldès* subjects collectivism (and its attendant power relationships) to a rigorous appraisal in his lengthy “Reflections on Individualism”. In another essay, E. Bertran lays to rest the collectivist fables of the French Revolution, while Paraf-Javal deconstructs democracy (as a form of collectivism) with a theoretical intensity in “The Absurdity of Politics”. And finally, we end this section with André Lorulot’s biting, misanthropic diatribe “Men Disgust Me”. Anarchist theory has manifested an inertia and loss of energy in recent years and could use some fresh stimuli to reanimate the faltering pulse of its activities; we’re making these older social musings available again to a new readership because we feel that it’s these dynamic negations of retrograde Mass-ideals that have the potential, in the end, to move the anarchist “movement”—or at least that part of it worth moving— and that preserve the remaining vitality of anarchist thought and herald the beginning of its rebirth, released from the shackles of global and collectivist chicanery. Enjoy and evolve!

# Individualism and the Social Question

## André Lorulot (1885–1963)

Are individualists revolutionaries or can they be disinterested in the Social Problem? Do they enter into struggle with the milieu, go forth attempting to modify institutions and turning principles upside down? Or do they seek to adapt as best as possible to conditions of capitalist life?

We have said that the individualist is the individual who wants to live at any price, who wants to realize their happiness and not be bruised, a person who wants to be neither stifled by absurd customs nor barbaric constraints. In this situation, and in order to reach our goal, do we have an interest in rebelling—or would it be much wiser, as certain people whisper to us, to quiet down and resign ourselves to the given reality?

Does the individualist lick the boots of power only in order to reap some scraps? Will they practice deceit and arrivisme their entire lives in order to dominate and exploit their fellow human beings? Do they abandon all propaganda, all struggle, all activity and become peaceful and respectable, satisfied with some comfortable pay-offs, contented gnawing at a bone? Could they sink even further and justify the most vile actions by becoming a cop or a pimp?

In brief, can individualist theories provide a cover for such despicable and dubious acts? Certainly, some people pretend individualist theories provide such a cover. It is useful to describe here, in greater depth and with more precision, our conceptions of individualism.

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When we rebel and affirm our thirst to live, it is certain that we do so not only to resolve the “question of the stomach”. Without denying the significance of this issue, which in capitalist society pursues and haunts those who own nothing, we can be sure that this desire is not essential for us and doesn’t hold the primary place in our aspirations.

Certainly, to eat to satisfy our hunger, to drink to quench our thirst, to rationally satisfy all our needs is an ideal by standards of the innumerable miseries presently imposed on us by an absurd arrangement which grinds at us every day.

But all anarchism is not like that. Our conceptions are not restricted to economic questions. And we have criticized, moreover, the socialists who only consider men and women by their stomachs!

Anarchists feel other aspirations. We experience not only material needs, but also moral needs, pressing on each individual who thinks. And our love of liberty cannot be quenched in face of the satisfactions provided by nutrition...

If hunger is an atrocious suffering, is not slavery another? Not to think freely, not to say what one believes, to lead an existence of continual hypocrisy and cowardly shiftiness, consenting to all villainies, to all renunciations for a crust of bread—could such a state of existence satisfy an anarchist?

Hardly. Individualists want to flower completely, they pursue the blossoming of all the qualities and all the values they hold dear. I want to be myself and to enjoy life in every way. I do



not want to be alienated mentally or emotionally in order to placidly swallow the meager scraps stingily dispensed by the exploiters!

The individualist is like a wolf who prefers the dangers of liberty to the routine of domestication. Individualists compare themselves to the bird who would prefer to suffer and struggle on its branch than to die a slow death in the servitude of a gilded cage.

To live completely—yes!; to fill up the stomach—yes! But to free the “heart” and develop the “mind” as well.

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There is my point of view, the individualist conception of life. It does not let itself be restricted but to the contrary pursues the full development of the human personality. That is my only interest.

For the majority of comrades, it is evident that rebellion could be detrimental to their immediate interests. Many of us are excluded by our views from advantageous situations and reap only the scorn of their families and surrounding circles. Comrades sometimes end up poverty-stricken by the constraints of performing jobs unfamiliar to them; they are hunted and pursued. Defiant in every respect, they suffer at length ...but remain content. To be a little more free, to hold one's head up high from time to time, to spit out contempt to those who merit it—for the rebellious, these pleasures compensate for the spite the crowd of good citizens inflict upon them ... Some, left to struggle, become discouraged and return to the niche. Of course, people are weak and the efforts that must be put forth to oppose their will to that of a formidable milieu designed to crush them are incredible ...

Only true individualists will not knowingly put up with servitude. For them, servitude is a temporary stop gap, an imposed obligation. But what can be said is that our ideal manages to extricate us at any price since, to the contrary, we have always voluntarily sacrificed something by engaging in this battle for an anarchism that we so intensely love.

The foreman on the job, arrogant towards the proles and deferential in front of the boss, this brutalized guard-dog would not know how to be an individualist. No more so than the bureaucrat on high who takes seriously his grimaces, his bowing and scraping, his violence. And the cop and pimp, all those who are violent, who foam at the mouth, who defer, they all repulse me!

Forced by constraint to become a worker, a wage-earner, I will produce chomping at the bit, trying to cheat the boss as much as possible, fighting him, evading his exploitation. But nothing obliges me to become a boss, to become one who flays or who deprives. Nothing is more foreign to individualism than tyranny and usurpation. Can we not see that camaraderie and friendship are necessary? Or see that the millionaire, adulated by millions but alone as well, doesn't have one genuine friend; that the leader, the boss, the master are wary and fearful of everyone. The only joys that they can experience are the pathological instincts of domination and ambition. What is there in common between these gestures of neurotic potentates and our fine and logical individualist theory?

Individualists are anarchists. We rise up against everything that blocks life. We want to be free and thus we become enemies of a society that obstructs our most basic rights.

Capitalism crushes us directly. We must witness hunger before the squandering and the debaucheries of the gold-holders. The individualist cannot taste the innumerable riches built by the collectivity, the individualist owns nothing.

Deprived in the name of property, poverty inevitably makes the individualist a slave, a serf. If they want to eat, it is necessary to work ...for another: he who owns. And this exacts a heavy cost.

Individualists therefore combat the property that limits their lives, they fight the thievery which subjugates them. Individualists become anti-capitalist, they struggle against an authority in all its forms that has its goal to maintain the inequality from which they suffer. An authority which leads individualists into battle against the army, religion, magistrates and parliaments. This is why we make propaganda by “interests” and not by “oughts”. It is in our interests to bring the most number of individuals around to think as we do, to rid themselves of external prejudices. The more numerous the rebellious, the stronger their reactions and the less likely that they will be suppressed.

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Thus individualism is not the theory as presented to the easily conned.

Our detractors say that individualism is the most ferocious egoism, the continual struggle of all against all. We have shown that only individualists are capable of understanding solidarity and of instituting genuine brotherhood; a brotherhood based not on words, sentiments or false illusions but on INTERESTS; interests at the same time particular to each and common to all.

Some add still that individualism is a theory of adaptation, of resignation, when it is the only doctrine of revolt.

Yes, we have rebelled because we are “egotists”, because we want to live the free and good life and because present-day society torments and disgusts us.

And if it not this individualist instinct which drives our rebellion, on what do we base ourselves? Do we base ourselves on more or less idealist speculations or humanitarian considerations? On my part, I am an anarchist because I suffer from authority. I want neither to be ruler nor ruled. I am an anarchist because society treads on me, while I want to live freely.

It seems to me that individualism is the most solid point of departure since it leads to rational solidarity and conscious revolt.

As anarchists, we know that the fight to change society is the fight to transform people. We know that is the slave who makes the tyrants and it is necessary to change minds for a freer life to arise.

To make the revolution around the self, it is first necessary to be capable of making it within oneself. Anarchists try to improve themselves, to educate themselves, to harness their passions, to free themselves from routines and flaws, to reject violence and brutality, biases, pride. Anarchists must have the utmost value for reason, free examination and discussion.

And they uproot everything that they can. They don't wait for a distant and paradise-like future society before they affirm themselves. Each time anarchists want to infringe upon the code and step over the bounds of legality, it is out of satisfaction at the results obtained for themselves and their friends and there are no misgivings or guilt which prevents them from doing so.

Certainly the job is difficult and thankless. But aren't there truly men and women who in their everyday actions are differentiated from the brutalized who surround them? Aren't there comrades who escape life in the barracks, who desert the workplaces, who reject servitude?

Individual action—on himself / herself and on the milieu. Education and revolt, such are the factors of transformation and social regeneration that individualists propose and practice. What

work could be better than work consisting of making individualists, that is conscious and free men and women?

And in the face of the political party spirit, in the face of the incoherence of various tactics and the feebleness of the results obtained by such tactics, we are conscious that our method is good and our work profitable.

From the *L'Anarchie* pamphlet, "L'Individualisme; Doctrine de révolte et de solidarité" (No date, probably circa 1912)

André Lorulot (aka André Georges Roulot) was a French free-thinker, individualist anarchist, lecturer, and propagandist who came to anarchism as a young man and was influenced in particular by the charismatic, crippled revolutionary Albert Libertad. Lorulot began his highly eccentric writing career in 1905, by steadily contributing articles to Libertad's journal, *L'Anarchie*. The following year, along with his lover Emilie Lamotte, Lorulot joined an experimental anarchist colony (of the type proposed by E. Bertran) at Saint Germain en Laye, which lasted for two years. While living there he continued lecturing and composed his pamphlet, *L'idole, patrie et conséquence*, which landed him in prison for 15 months for "inciting to disobey the military." When he emerged from his prison sentence, the St. Germain en Laye commune had folded and Libertad was dead. Lorulot then assumed directorship of *L'Anarchie*, which he edited until June of 1910, at which point the torch was passed to Victor Serge (Le Retif) and future members of the Bonnot Gang like Octave Garnier and Raymond La Science. The transition wasn't entirely amicable and seems to have involved a generational rift, with Lorulot being viewed as a moderate by the younger egoists for his more tempered position on illegalism (Lorulot never regretted his time with *L'Anarchie*, however, and in 1917 he published a fascinating memoir of Albert Libertad entitled *Albert Libertad: Son Temperament, Ses Idées, Son Oeuvre*).

Following this ideological and strategic break, Lorulot then began issuing, on December 1, 1911, his own heterodox review *L'idée libre* (The Free Idea). His desire was to create an "independent and anti-dogmatic review that would be subservient to no party, clan, or chapel" and that "wouldn't reflect any particular doctrine or system". And indeed, the subjects addressed in Lorulot's eclectic new journal were quite varied (hygiene, nutrition, sociology, literature, anti-clericalism, Nietzsche, repeal of torture and the death penalty, abortion, feminism, the income tax, conscientious objection...and even telepathy!) and its collaborators included "The Prince of Storytellers" Han Ryner (who contributed imaginative fiction), Gérard de Lacaze-Duthiers (the primary theorist of the "anarcho-aristocracy" movement, whose ideal was an anti-elitist aestheticism), the Swiss sexologist Auguste Forel, the expriest and Freethought writer Joseph Turmel (who continued to affect priestly vestments long after his excommunication, in defiance of the pope), and various pacifist intellectuals like Jean Souvenance. Lorulot spent much of World War I in prison as a pacifist himself and during his imprisonment wrote lengthy memoirs, among which appeared the cynical observation: "Man: a species of ape who believes in the gods and who imitates them without ceasing to be an animal." This long stint in prison caused Lorulot to stop publishing *L'Idee Libre* in 1913, but he revived it in 1919 and remained its director and manager until his death in 1963 (after Lorulot's passing, *L'Idee Libre* became the organ of the National Federation of Freethinkers and still exists today—with a circulation of 11,000 copies per issue—but in a form far removed from its anarchist roots).

Lorulot was highly critical of revolution as it was spoken of and of all traditionally political forms of activity, feeling that authority had to be overcome through a radical transformation of

human consciousness at the level of the individual intellect. He articulated this theory in his 1925 tract *L'idole Patrie et La Guerre*, where he writes:

*All evil can only disappear by an interior action of the individual. Exterior intervention can only give ephemeral and insufficient results. True reform must come from the depths and must be the work of the individual himself, of his will, of his reflections, of his studies and of his prolonged efforts. All the rest is chimera—or politics.*

To call Lorulot a prolific writer would be a serious understatement: Based on our research he seems to have published at least thirty nine books and eight plays under his *L'Idée Libre* imprint, with titles like *The Catechism of the Perfect Sheep*, *The Electoral Falsehood* (1908), *Anarchist Theories* (1911), *Meditations and Memories of a Prisoner* (1921), and his most famous book *Why I Am An Atheist*, published in 1933 with a preface by the semi-mythical Han Ryner. Lorulot was also a major proponent of atheism and published and edited several atheist newspapers including *L'Action Antireligieuse* (antireligious action), *La Libre Pensee* (Freethought), and the satirical monthly *La Calotte* (double meaning: the clergy/the slap), which began as pamphlets printed clandestinely under Nazi occupation; additionally, he contributed many of the anti-religious essays in Sebastien Faure's *Anarchist Encyclopaedia*.

In fact, Lorulot all but abandoned anarchism after 1923 and began to identify more completely with the "Freethought" movement, whose philosophic base was the questioning of received opinion and traditional custom, especially in religious and superstitious matters( in France, freethought is often viewed as synonymous with unbelief, irreligious, or atheist). Lorulot's own version of freethought was peppered with a strong anticlerical bias, and for the last two decades of his life he appears to have developed a paranoid obsession with the power and pretensions of the Roman Catholic Church, along with the "menace" of Freemasonry. The most comprehensive collection of both his anarchist and atheist writings is the volume *My life, My Ideas* (published in 1973 by the Friends of André Lorulot).

# Reflections on Individualism (1910)

Manuel Devaldes

Translated and abridged by vincent stone

## I. Anarchist<sup>1</sup> Individualism and Authoritarian Individualism

There are few words that are more widely interpreted than the word “individualism.” As a result, there are few more poorly defined ideas than those represented by this term. The most widespread opinion and the one that working class textbooks are sure to reinforce, is that individualism is a “system of isolation in the works and efforts of man, a system whose opposite is association.”

One must recognize this as the vulgar conception of individualism. It is false and, moreover, absurd. Certainly, the individualist is the “lone” man, and one cannot understand him as anything else. “The strongest man in the world is he who stands alone,” said Ibsen. In other words, the individualist, the individual who is most conscious of his uniqueness, who could best realize his autonomy, is the strongest man. But he can be “alone” in the middle of the crowd, in the heart of society, in the group, the association, etc., because he is “alone” from the moral standpoint, and here this word is quite synonymous to unique and autonomous. Thus the individualist is a unit, instead of being, like the non-individualist, a fragment of a unit.

But in their crudeness, those unsympathetic to individualism could not see the particular significance of this solitude, what it means exclusively concerning the conscience of the individual, the thought of man; they have transposed its meaning and, in the typical dogmatic and absolutist fashion, attributed it to economic acts of the individual in the social milieu, making him antisocial, a hermit,—from this comes the lie and the absurdity of the definition cited above. Whether one says “alone” with Ibsen, or “unique” with Stirner, to characterize the individualist, the philistines will adopt the letter and not the spirit of these words. Their inability to correctly interpret the word engendered the error, which, along with the truth, needs to be brought to light.

If this vulgar conception of individualism is false, it is not because the men who, at present, claim to be individualists live like everyone else in society, for current societies impose a circumscribed association upon the individual: the individual submits to this association, but his participation, in no way voluntary, stops there. From which we might infer that individualism isn't, consequently, the opposite of association, it is for this reason that a large number of communist anarchists, finally giving a less religious, less christian sense to the word “communism,”

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<sup>1</sup> *Tr*—Devaldès uses the term “libertaire” throughout this essay, a word most accurately rendered in English not as “libertarian”, but as “anarchist.” This term, coined by Joseph Déjacque, is generally an adjective describing something or someone committed to absolute liberty. In France today, “libertaire” has distinctly anarchist connotations. “Anarchist(e)” and variations thereof will appear in italics when used in the French.

also claim to be individualists. Max Stirner himself, one of the luminaries of individualist philosophy, advocated in his book: *The Unique and his Property*, “the association of egoists.” Finally, here is something that is especially compelling, examining this question more deeply—after having done which one sees that given the character of individualism, this conception of life in no way demands the practice of physical or economic isolation of individuals and, as a result, is not opposed to association.

Most of the opinions and convictions of the “compact majority” are based on these kinds of definitions which, achieving the prestige of clichés, create prejudices that are difficult to uproot, that the pretentious ignorance of certain “intellectuals” and also the vested interest of some of the more enlightened pass on to the humble ignorance of the flock. Being an intellectual, one is nonetheless a man, which is to say subject to natural laws. And, it is part of the natural order that the strong absorb the weak. This is how, to the common people, certain intellectuals can appear as demi-scholars, self-emancipated and passionate for truth. But they know what it is that they have managed to learn and hijack; they just don’t say it, because they have, each in his own way, an interest in what the current state of things, whence their bourgeois privileges are born, perpetuates; and since it only lasts by grace of the demi-science, or, to put it more accurately, by grace of the lie, given to the masses, they quiet themselves and reveal only incomplete truths.

Observe the difference in education between the proletariat and the privileged in current societies. There you have the very secret of the method. A common person, upon leaving primary school, ignores, as he must, what individualism really is and especially what it is based on, he will thus never find inspiration in it to lead his existence; he is destined for absorption by the strong; it’s perfect—from the point of view of the State, or rather, for those who can say with some accuracy: “We are the State.” On the other hand, a man of the “elite,” with a secondary or higher education, has an exact idea of individualism and its scientific basis. For him it is truth itself, but the truth that one keeps to oneself. Here’s an excellent struggler<sup>2</sup> for you! He can prevail: he is armed and the others are disarmed. For he will always remember it’s in his own best interest, and he will continue the habits of his predecessors with regards to the herd. Some truths are best left unsaid...

From an individualism that, in its essence, is anarchist, he makes a bastard and two-faced philosophy (activity up high, fatalism at the base of society), justifying all of the misdeeds of the ruling class. That explains the relatively just distinction that one is forced to make, to be understood by a poorly informed public, between anarchist individualism and bourgeois or authoritarian individualism. But, definitively, there is but one individualism, which is essentially anarchist, fundamentally anarchistic.

While anarchist individualism, real individualism, gives weapons to the weak, not so that once they become strong they can oppress those individuals who are still weaker than they are, but in a way that stops them from being absorbed by the stronger—only the so-called bourgeois or authoritarian individualism strives to legitimate triumphant violence and cunning through ingenious sophisms and a false interpretation of natural laws.

Lamarck, Malthus, Darwin, and their successors certainly didn’t suppose that one day someone might use their discoveries, from which the individualist philosophy directly flows, toward such a jesuitic chore; however it was inevitable that force would monopolize them right from the beginning and profit from them like anything else. But every truth carries in it the seed

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<sup>2</sup> *Tr.* —English in the original.

for a future good. The goodness of their œuvre and its implications seem to be having an effect. Presently the common man teaches himself, alone or in cooperation, he familiarizes himself with analysis, reasoning, and critique; he attempts to know his own nature, the motives behind human behavior, the mechanism and the forces of the machine that oppresses the weak, the natural laws and the social realities. The herd is on track to individualization. The individual strives for a fulfillment according to his own definition: unique and autonomous.

It's because he gradually convinces himself of these primordial truths:

Strength is to know.

Weakness is to believe.

## II. The Individual

As the individualist philosopher understands it, the individual, the potential for uniqueness and autonomy, is not a metaphysical entity, a formula: it's a living reality. This is not at all as Fichte saw it, Stirner claims—as a mystical, abstract Me, whose ridiculous and ill-fated cult leads to the negation of sociability, which is nevertheless an innate quality in man and engenders moral needs that must be satisfied at the risk of suffering.

With this rather particular religious character, individualism would be tantamount to a stupid and systematic isolation, and to a barbaric and incessant struggle where man would lose all ancestral gain and all possibility of progressing. The cult of this abstract Me engenders slavery, in the same way that the cult of the Citizen,—The Man<sup>3</sup> of positivism—is born into modern servitude, characterized by the associationist and solidarist constraint of today's society which imposes the State on individuals.

Certainly, the individualist me is not an abstraction, a spiritual principal, an idea: it is the physical me with all of its attributes: appetites, needs, passions, interests, strengths, thoughts, etc. It is not the ideal Me—it's me, you, him,—precise realities. In this way the individualist philosopher bends to all individual variations, since the individual's own interest in various things motivate him and his own strengths serve as limits. He establishes by this even a natural harmony, truer and more sustainable than the fake and quite superficial harmony offered by religions, dogmatic morals and laws, powers of deception, armies, police, penal colonies and scaffolds, and the violent forces which authoritarians utilize.

Individualism only comes about in the domain of the real. It rejects all metaphysics, all dogmas, all religions, all faith. The individualist's means are observation, analysis, reasoning, critique, but it's in referring to a criteria issued from himself, and not from one drawn from collective reason, so favored in the milieu, that he establishes his judgement. Individualism repudiates the absolute, its only concern is the relative. Finally, it places the individual, the only living and unique reality, capable of autonomy, at the center of any moral, social or natural system.

—Certainly, my good professor of morals, we think the world revolves around us, as you say when, mistakenly, you wander into the realm of irony. The world revolves around each of us, as individualists, as much as it does you, my good slave, or rather slaveryist; only, we say it loudly, while you carefully hide it in solemnly teaching the contrary.

I am for me, you are for you, he is for him, the center of the world!

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<sup>3</sup> We express, over the course of this text, by capitalizing the article and the noun, the *sanctity* of ideas, according to the spirit of mystical or positivist religions.

Don't laugh. In each of us God loses the long-held place in the center of the world, the purpose of our actions, the usurping motive of our activity,—as each seizes this prerogative for himself. But, in order for that, all metaphysical absolutes, which are simply divine avatars, must first join God, ridiculous nebula of a spook, in his flight. Then our reason will proclaim the permanence of the relative,—the relative to our me, naturally.

—Where do you yourself place the center of the world, my christian contradictor?

—In God.

—And you, Mr. Positivist, Mr. “atheist”, who doesn't believe in believing in God, as you wolf down the anticlerical sausage of holy Friday?

—You don't even know anymore which of the monstrances<sup>4</sup> offered to your devout eyes to choose. You have an excess of centers of the world. In the realm of the sacred, you've got dozens of choices; you can gravitate around any center, according to the occasion. That's why you are the same poor soul, if not worse, than your neighbor the theist, who at least knows that he only has his one God. In the world you inhabit, you put the center everywhere, except where you should see it, in you. You aren't, by your own will, -do you at least have a will?—you aren't, by your own unconscious will, but a poor satellite continuously orbiting around illusory centers, which seem to your eyes more or less divine. All the while, clerical and lay preachers of all cults carry out their duties as cutthroats and cutpurses.

Me, the individualist, I am the center of all that surrounds me. So, my expense of activity, all of my actions, reasoned as well as passionate, premeditated as well as spontaneous, all have a goal which is always my personal satisfaction. When my activity is directed towards another, I am certain that when all is said and done that its material or moral product will come back to me. It's up to others to have it their way as well.

I have a personal morality, and I rebel against Morality; I practice a personal justice and I refuse the cult of Justice, etc.

I am the wise man and you are the madman, I am the free man and you are the slave, I am the man of joy and you are the man of sorrow...

The first signification of individualism can be summed up in this, that it opposes entities, abstractions that are supposedly superior to man and in the name of which they govern—the only reality that exists for him: the individual, the man,—not The Man of positivists, “essence of man,” the citizenized, electorized, mechanized, annihilated individual—the man that I am, that you are, that he is: the self.

Against the interest of imaginary divinities, I place my interest in opposition. Against every so-called Superior Cause, I place my cause in opposition.

So this is how, in any religious philosophy and consequently in any religious social system, anything that came from the individual—the inferior, vile matter, the contemptible atom, the single unit—only end up and remain in the hands of these entities, these deified abstractions—this is how the individual is dispossessed. Were all of that to remain in the hands of the individual, these abstractions regarding interindividual interactions that have occurred in man's way of thinking would from that point on be robbed of their false superiority, of their sanctity, reduced to a purely utilitarian role; they would be, from that point on, devoid of the noxiousness with which they have been endowed.

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<sup>4</sup> *Tr*—A vessel used to display the eucharistic host during certain Catholic ceremonies.



So, no more sacrifice of the individual to Society and its priests, to The Homeland and its priests, to Law and its priests, to God or to Gods and their priests. Man finally becomes the sole beneficiary of his work, the owner of anything whose conquest motivates his efforts and his works.

What is society, if not the result of a collection of individuals? How can society have an interest (why not appetites, sentiments, etc.)? And were it able to have an interest, how could this be something superior and antagonistic to the interest of the individuals who compose it, if those individuals are free? What nonsense or what criminal hypocrisy is it not, then, to fashion individuals for society instead of making society for individuals?

Can we not, we individuals, replace the State with our free associations?

Instead of general, collective law, can we not substitute our mutual agreements, revocable as soon as they are an obstacle to our well-being?

Do we need the fragmented homelands made by our masters, while we have one that is more vast: the Earth?

And so on. So many questions that the free examination of an individualist rightly decides in favor of the individual.

Without a doubt, those who live on lies, who reign through hypocrisy, the masters and their servants, the priests and politicians, can have a different opinion because their interest, their quite petty interest, bids it of them. But me, as an individualist and a man of labor, whose interest and will is not to steal from others, nor to be stolen from by others—I cannot think like them and I rise up.

They avenge themselves of this insurrection by discrediting me. So be it. The individualist abhors masters, lackeys and the ovine masses. That's quite understandable. And it will be the norm so long as ignorance rules the world. If he wants justice done on his words and on his acts, the individualist thinker must wait for a distant age of reason—under the evolutionist elm... But the justice of others means little to him. His own will satisfy him for now.

Individualism being widespread, the individual is not at all dispossessed or enslaved: he owns the product of his labor and he is independent. As for the parasites who only live by the grace of this belief in illusory Superior Causes, demanding holocaust on inferior beings, they are obligated to become producers like the others—or to vanish.

Following what we've just put forward here, the words of the aristocrat Voltaire, who held the people,—the rabble, to use his language,—to be a flock for the fleecing, become quite clear: "If God didn't exist, it would be necessary to invent him". You need a God so that the pretext of his mysterious wills, of his religion, of his cult, can serve to maintain the mass of individuals in a servitude favorable to the profits and privileges of the priests of all sorts—and above all the masters.

But also how ingenious was Bakunin's proud joke: "If God existed, we would have to abolish him!" If God were to exist, he would bring the servitude of a true Superior Cause, he would dispossess man of his worldly goods; he cannot exist at all if there is to be liberty and happiness for man.

Laplace said: "The hypothesis of God is useless." Since his time, science has advanced; the result of its investigations in the domain of man and of human societies leads us to say: the lie of God is deadly, that which in other terms Proudhon proclaimed with his famous aphorism: "God is evil." For God's cause is the Superior Cause par excellence, whence follows all other superiorized,

deified causes, with their paraphernalia of laws and duties, recompenses and punishments, based on the stupidity of free will.

What good does it do to kill God if we give birth to the divine. So long as man will be persuaded to the existence of causes superior to his own, he will be fatally, and for that matter legitimately, deprived of his real autonomy; his uniqueness will be but a word: the phantom God, in his diverse and coexistent avatars, will rob him of his joy.

### III. Egoism and Altruism

As we have said and as we will see below, individualism does not lead to an apriorist isolation, nor to obligatory association: it adopts a regime of liberty. The individualist is not a hermit, nor a beast of the flock; he is a sociable man, like all other men, for that matter; he differentiates himself on this point, in judging that his instinct of sociability should not bring him unhappiness and slavery, but on the contrary it should be a source of joy originating in freedom.

The nietzschean “master,” fanatic of “hardness,” the “*übermensch*,” that is taken too easily to be a simple individualist, is perhaps that, but is certainly also a ferocious beast against which men who limit themselves to a human character should be on their guard, even if this so-called *übermensch* could exist in an anarchist world.

Our individualist on the other hand, he is a being of reason, and if an instinct pushes him to ferociousness, which is unlikely, or at least would be exceptional, his reason would quickly lead him to realize that it is in his interest to not be a beast of prey as exalted by the genius and insane bard of Zarathustra. The situation of a beast of prey is not far from the prey’s own situation.

Let’s distinguish this nuance: it is not because the acts born out of the fury of this instinct are qualified as “evil” by whatever dogmatic morality that will prevent him from perpetuating them, no more than he will carry out others because they are labeled “good,” but because it will be in his own interest to not perpetrate some or carry out others, because this will be the way that he satisfies, to the extent allowed by his naturally given freedom—meaning his capacity, his strength—his egoism, whose primordial interest clamors for life.

Living is, in effect, the sole point of life. But to live, that is to be happy. And yet happiness is not found in a murderous struggle, in primitive savagery. So individuals have an interest in harmony, in agreement, in peace, but they will not be apt to conquer these goods until they know how.

To know, to know why and how they act, to know the true motive and the naturally legitimate point of their actions, that is how men will free themselves from the causes of discord and give a peaceful nature to the inevitable struggle for life. Thusly life will attain a sincerity and a facility that the practice of dogmatic morals cannot give.

The realist view on existence resides in individualism, since this conception has its philosophical roots in the observation of nature, experimental science, acquired and demonstrated truths—truths whose consequences it pushes to the extreme limits of human reason, understanding that this reason—which is that of each person and not Reason, the goddess Reason—does not exclude passion, which on the contrary is its auxiliary. Man’s relative well-being is found at this limit, evolving in a liberty whose regulator is the very interest of the individual.

Which is to say that individualism is also a rational conception—not rational in the liberal regard, which is much too “reasonable,” but in the anarchist<sup>5</sup> fashion, infinitely less “reasonable”...

One of these definitively attained truths is at the base of individualist philosophy, that egoism is the sole motive of human action.

Egoism! what a despised word, hypocritically despised! What a shameful sentiment, vilified by our professors of morality and the obedient masses! Tartuffe is vigilant...Yet, egoism controls all of our actions in relation with others and there isn't one among those who show a holy loathing for it who doesn't have it in himself or feel it in some way, never ceasing to obey it. Even when it seems that a man doesn't give in to egoism, he gives into it absolutely.

The moralists, naturally, assure us that egoism is a “vice”, the “vice of a man who keeps everything for himself.” What a wretch, what a revolting being he is who sinks to the level of keeping everything for himself! Evidently he who gives everything away is more agreeable to the masters, he who gives openly if not to others, then at least to the Idea. The sacred Idea. Behind the Idea, “others” is insinuated. This way, nothing is lost... for the government, the wealthy man, the priest, the servant, the whole pack of bosses and their pack of dogs.

We say that egoism is a virtue, not in the religious sense that dogmatic morality attributes to the word “virtue,” but in the sense that a scientist gives it: it's a strength, a vital virtue that asserts itself in man from the moment he is born, and one that takes shape and fortifies as his self-awareness grows in him. The more he is held back, the less a man has a combative force, a will to live, the more he is apt to sacrifice himself to the strong who seek to subjugate him. The more it is brought out, the more potential for life the man has, the more he has the will to live.

Nietzsche was talking about egoism when, quite rightly, in remaking the table of moral values, he put the “will to power” at the forefront, and it was to keep this vital force in man that he condemned the “morality of slaves” stemming from christianity. His error came when he took on the power of domination and opposed the morality of slaves with that of the “morality of masters.” Why did he not simply oppose it with the morality of free men? Could his conception of existence not have led to savagery, tyranny, and slavery, a social idea that, if realized, would perhaps be worth less than the current state of things?

Recompense in the beyond, imagined by theists and spiritualists, and promised to believers of all religions by their priests, is the proof that the founders and their heirs of these cults knew human nature well and knew that man always acts according to self-interest.

So while making men practice artificial altruism, which is to say the sacrifice of self, during his life, for their own gain, at the same time the priests made them work for the illusory satisfaction of an egoism whose interest would be paid out in the ultra-terrestrial. That is, one will admit, a supremely far-sighted egoism: indeed one can sacrifice time to eternity.

What buffoonery! But also what an admirably planned shell game, and how it nicely explains the theists' and spiritualists' loathing for the materialism that will overturn it all. It's a whole industry threatened with ruin, expropriated churches without indemnity, divine bankruptcy. It's true that the priests just have to switch cults. From the heavenly they can leap into the earthly. The divine will step down to allow the civic to ascend. The churches of social religions beat their battle drums for the renegade theist churches. That's exactly what the shrewdest are doing, but that job market is already saturated! They had to make it so that God changed his skin one more time. It's easy to say, but not everybody can do it.

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<sup>5</sup> *Tr*—i.e., *libertaire* and not *libéral*!

As soon as one has come to see the similarity between egoism and vital energy, of this close relationship between egoism and life, one sees that anyone living as a parasite, by virtue of the existence of a necessarily ignorant proletariat, has an interest in persuading their slaves that they have a spirit of sacrifice, abnegation, devotion, and, well, altruism,—they then do their best to realize the artificial birth of this altruism in said slaves. It's to this effect that they present egoism to man from the moment of his birth as a shameful sentiment, of which everyone should rid themselves to achieve a supposed state of moral dignity, a purity of feelings, a greatness of the soul, which is nothing but an idiotic state of weakness. With the theist priest, you must be A Man, A Citizen. It comes down to the same thing: you should not, in any situation, be yourself.

But fortunately, even though they have achieved significant results through this work at enslavement, as old as civilization, our moralists have not been able to completely defeat human nature. We have said that no living being escapes its laws. "A leopard won't change its spots." To every pressing need, egoism demands priority over any artificial feeling, thus creating interior conflicts that jeopardize modern man, saturated with prejudices and respects, marked with religiosity, broken of his natural, free, passionate will, and in whom nature is locked in a permanent struggle with dogmatic and anti-natural morality.

Would anyone like a typical example of this reconquest of egoism over the spirit of sacrifice?

The cult of the Fatherland demands an intensive birth rate, so that the territory dedicated to this divinity can be defended against the faithful of another patriotic church. And yet, in France, for example, if one looks into the current trend of depopulation outside of its quasi-mechanical determinism, which is to say that if one considers it from the individual standpoint, as a phenomenon that is consciously desired by individuals for their own part, one notes that the priests of the Fatherland have fought hard to get both the male and female patriots who listen to them to create the cannon fodder necessary to the cult of their idol; the patriots, who have a slightly more powerful physical and economic interest to not reproduce, voluntarily abstain from doing their "duty," which would be to immolate this interest on the altar of the Fatherland in creating a large family. To their duty, in their fictional religious interest, they prefer, with reason, their own real interest, their personal interest,—which does not exempt them, as they themselves see it, these puppets,—from their nationalistic tirades.

Is it necessary to add that the priests of the Fatherland themselves are the first to guard themselves from procreating? That goes without saying...

Egoism affirmed is altruism denied.

Altruism is, broadly,—since it can take many forms and different names in the minds of the moralists—the "virtue" that is placed in opposition to it.

So altruism is a myth. Its greatest value in our eyes is its nonexistence. It doesn't exist in man in his natural state, which is, on the contrary, the reality of egoism.

I've taken a hard look and analyzed the history of human actions, I cannot find a single one that was not inspired by egoism, in other words, one that did not have as its motivation the happiness of he who acted, and I cannot imagine an individual who, short of being sick or demented, gives himself to another, without having, as a precondition, assured the satisfaction of his me, at least within the bounds of the most imperious need.

That, given the circumstances, the act of an individual, completely satisfying himself, could also please the egoism of the other to whom the act is directed; that is not only possible, but frequently happens and it is necessary that it be so that the free association of egoists that we

anticipate can live. But that is nothing like what might be called altruism, or even selflessness, since the individual's only motive is his will to satisfy his own passion.

Directly and naturally, we repeat, altruism does not exist. It can only exist indirectly or artificially, by the religious intervention of sacrifice. It is no longer a question of so-called spontaneously practiced altruism: it is duty.

Let's take as examples two manifestations of an individual's activity that might result in the satisfaction of others involved.

When an individual gives himself to others in any form, freely, by affective passion, he only gives way to a natural need, his own: that is a simple way of expressing mutually satisfying egoism.

But when the individual gives himself to another, under the constraint of dogmatic morality, by duty—in a word, that is sacrifice. Altruism can only exist in this way, by trickery and constraint. However, it should be said, at base the act is still in the mode of egoism, for the individual believes he is satisfied and acting in his better interest, in accomplishing the duty.

In the first case, we had a free act—and not in the second.

This brings us to say that altruism is artificial and has no currency but as a duty, under the influence of moral constraint,—and that any act freely carried out is an egoist act.

It being established that altruism or sacrifice of self only occurs indirectly and artificially, under the constraint of persuasive authority, by dint of deceit, by the religion of an idea foreign to the self, it follows that what, on the contrary, is done out of passion, freely, by the unique impulse of my own idea, or by an idea I got from somewhere under the emancipatory influence of free examination, it follows that that is of the egoist variety.

Knowing this, the individual puts himself on guard against attempts of theft and assassination by the band of "altruists," "philanthropists," and "humanitarians" who take an interest in his fate... to assure their own.

In sum:

The egoist—natural being—satisfies himself with passion. The individualist, the irreligious.

The altruist—artificial being—sacrifices himself to duty. The sacrificed, the religious.

The will to sacrifice does not exist in man in his natural state, the need to create it is born among individuals who want to live as parasites, living on the work of others. This was the work of all priests, clerical and lay, of all cults, of all theist or social religions, from the most mystical to the most positive.

At the same time that they theoretically annihilate the individual, considering him unworthy in their systems,—they accomplished this annihilation practically with education, moralization, by shackling the individual to all sorts of abstractions and authoritarian institutions.

They accomplished this tour de force of obscuring man's egoist sentiments and of making him sacrifice himself to ideas,—and then hid behind them, they being the priests and their masters, partners in profiteering. In his mind, man was armed: with ideas. The priests came and exteriorized the ideas; dressed them up as real beings, superior to man, and then peopled his "heaven" with them. From that point on, man was a machine working for Ideas, subordinating his real interest to them and only taking home enough to continue his slavish work.

It's absurd, it's insane, and yet it is. The most intelligent among those crippled minds who are religious have lost their natural conception of things to such a point that they really believe that this is what working for themselves, for their own well-being, means. The priests certainly are; but the believers, no.

## IV. The Anarchist Morality of Individualism

Having noted that egoism is the unique force driving human actions, individualist philosophy establishes an anarchist morality based on egoism; but, acknowledging that it would satisfy itself differently according to the individual's degree of evolution, it recommends that man intensively study science with an aim to an ever-expanding and ever more precise understanding of real interest. To the scienced man it would seem quite logical that he has no personal interest in altruism, religion, but in egoist satisfaction, in irreligion.

Moreover, having observed not only the natural inequality among men, the existence of the strong and the weak, but also that the strength of the former has no effective value but by virtue of the pressure put upon the subjugated weak by the religious means of duty, it sheds light on the lie of "law" and denies that authority originates from anything but force and, consequently, denies all legitimacy as well. Therefore, it repudiates voluntary submission to this authority, whether it be in accepting to be a leader or accepting to be led.

Let us not forget it, human egoism—which will only disappear with the species—is the obstacle to the possibility of the "good authority" and the existence of the "good shepherds." You can only have bad authorities and all shepherds are always "bad shepherds."

Experience attests to this. The catholic priest succeeds in governing men: he naturally begins by using the authority he holds to satisfy all of his needs; for that he despoils all of the producers herded into the catholic church. But then you have the positivist priest supplant him in the government... and proceed in much the same way against the workers dragooned into his church. Yet, in the gradations of moral values, those of positivism are, by supposedly advanced minds, considered more noble than those of catholicism. These two churches equally contain masters and slaves, parasites and proletarians.

The qualifier changes, man remains.

So long as each and every individual isn't nourished by individualist philosophy and cannot consequently oppose his egoism—conscious and scienced—to the invading egoism, there will be masters and slaves, infallibly.

Dogmatic morality is necessarily a morality that stems from religious philosophy; it's the religious morality of law and duty.

The anarchist morality of individualism is the true scientific morality; it's the irreligious morality of pleasure, of interest and of power.

And so it is man's nature to draw on these three motives, before he acts, three motives that could, in the final analysis, be reduced to one: interest. So we are quite in line with nature.

To these subversive observations, our solemn morality clerks will cry scandal, but no matter. It is proper, for those who aren't interested in the "upper crust" of society, to bring out the truth as much as possible, to loudly proclaim what these hypocrites secretly think, and to overtly do what they, in the stupid shame of their own nature, only do behind closed doors, unless they are lying or deceiving.

That is accelerated evolution, full speed even. It is true that the task of a verist will not earn him a large sum and that he is at a great risk to ending up a hired martyr, like so many good apostles. That's why so few men get down to it. But each conceives of joy according to his own temperament. Too bad for those who situate it solely in the stomach—and below the stomach; they are incomplete. Others place it rather in the brain. This is how we can still do egoist deeds,

in overturning idols in order to show the naïve—the “poires” in parisian language<sup>6</sup>—what the idols have in their blood: the same desires and interests as the idolaters.

The prejudice often attached to egoism makes it seem as though this sentiment is the opposite of kindness. We have already said that this conception is erroneous and explained to which priest it owes its birth. Certainly man’s real interest cannot be in the pain of others. On the contrary, the observation shows us that as he rids himself of the chains that fetter the free movement of his activity, the free play of his egoism, man would rather wish to see joy in others as he does in himself. Additionally, only the insane, the sick and the degenerate could have the abnormal desire to do harm for the pleasure of doing harm: de Sade is not generally considered to be a paragon of health...

But still, there are two forces that can constrain a man, if he does not have a refined sensibility to hold him back, to do harm to another: economic necessity—and religious or fanatic sectarianism.

There is reason to think, if one does not have the gnarled brain of a moralist, that were these constraints to disappear, man would no longer do harm since nothing would obligate him to do so anymore. But, in the improbable event that, in an environment of freedom where forces find an equilibrium, an individual would like to do harm for pleasure, the consideration of his own interest would stop him, for it could end up being done onto him in return, all the more so since no law would exist to protect or grant him privilege, as it exists today. Suffice it to say that with laws, authoritarian institutions and slaves, supported by a governmental order,—the possibilities for bad actions would be abolished.

So it is not necessary to dogmatically moralize man in order to avoid evil. There is no need to work him in the direction of a dogmatic kindness which, as soon as he assimilates it, will transform into hatred and weakness. The sure life, economic well-being, which is to say physical liberty, on the one hand, and science in all brains, otherwise known as intellectual and moral freedom, on the other,—in sum, strength, universalized power, that is the fertile soil in which kindness will blossom.

May no man expect his happiness to come from the other. May he craft it on his own. But for that man must be both strong and free. Only science can give him strength and freedom. What must be grafted onto nature, in him, is science and not morality. Morality would then come on its own, such as one should normally conceive of it: as an outcome—and unique to the individual.

Thus, we don’t repudiate kindness. Far from it, we would like it to become an egoist necessity, that it inspire songs of praise in the satisfied and joyful egoist. But we cannot combine the practice of free and natural kindness, egoist satisfaction, with the accomplishment of duty, with sacrifice to artificial altruism.

At best it could be useful to bring love into the individual’s consciousness through education, so that life (with joy, provider of an ever-longer and ever-higher existence, as what is good,—and pain, shortening and narrowing, as evil) is the measure of goodness meant to guide retrograde minds in the chaos of human acts, which are all equivalent in nature. The moral and social value of an act could be measured this way—by the quantity of life it creates and supports or by the amount it destroys, meaning by the joy or the pain that stems from it. And it would be with the help of this measure, interpreted moreover according to his opinion, that the individual

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<sup>6</sup> *Tr— Poire*, meaning pear, is Parisian slang for sucker or dupe.

determines the nature of his relations with others, considered as associates, neutral parties, or adversaries.

It will be very important to keep the natural character of this criterion, purely realist and egoist, as we have indicated here. It is necessary to not impart it with an absolute character and to not consecrate its object, otherwise we will end up creating a new series of duties for ourselves.

But, even if life is not sacred, I can still love it in a completely relative sense, in a person who is useful or dear to me. I can protect the life of my friend if I derive an affective interest from her, the life of my associate if I find in her an economic interest, etc. So, in a more general sense, I can determine the subjective value of the acts of any individual and conform my attitude toward him according to my own judgement, without however establishing this attitude on law or duty. And so the reason of my attitude will remain an egoist one; I can, for example, judge the acts of some large-scale slaughterer as a continuing threat in my life and consequently comport myself in opposition to him—and the reverse with regard to the scientist who improves my life with all that I can benefit from his discoveries.

That is a way to understand the attitude of the individual against the other in the individualist morality. Freed from religious deformities and social chains, he will be fine, and be so without weakness.

You don't have to be christian to apply the maxim: "One should not treat others as one would not like to be treated" For that, it would suffice to be a wise and prudent egoist. But you must complete this negative formula with the following positive one: Do onto others as you would have others do onto you.

And that is the keystone of the anarchist morality of individualism, morality of reciprocity and realist solidarity, morality of egoist justice.

## V. Egoist Justice—The Strength of the Individual

We believe that we have demonstrated that no duty is inherently imposed on man, that upon birth he is the object of no vocation, that he has no mission to carry out and that in the end there is only one natural reality that dominates him: the instinct to live, which will be all the more useful to him the more passionately he seizes its object—life.

These ideas have already been expressed, we are not the first to formulate them; yet the slaves today, for the most part, seem to cherish their chains as they did in the past. It is they, together with their masters, whose force has reduced them to slavery, who claim that the attitude that opens the way for individualist concepts—an attitude which, if generalized, would in reality lead to the individual having sovereignty over himself—favors the "reign of ignoble force," to the detriment of the man, noble no doubt, of "law."<sup>7</sup>

What a great deal for Demos!<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Tr*—It's important to note here that *droit* means both rights in the sense of civil rights and law in the sense of the study of law, while *loi* refers to specific laws, either abstract (natural law) or specific (the law of gravity), as well as regulations imposed by governments. Discussing "law," Devaldes uses *droit* much more frequently than *loi* here, and many times, the double edge of this (s)word should be clear—people embrace the rule of law in order to guarantee rights.

<sup>8</sup> *Tr*— Slight alteration of an expression, taken from a short story, which means to make an insincere promise. Demos (the ruling masses) has accepted law, foolishly thinking that this will provide rights.



After having demonstrated the mechanism of duty, and demonstrated to what end the machine was put into operation, and for what work, it is important to demolish then the fallacious fiction of “law” which works to the same ends.

Law! Let us laugh. We have faculties of law, professors of law, doctors and students of law. It’s funny!

But here’s the distinction, these institutions and these superior men are devoted to the cult of “positive law.” Because there are laws and then there are laws!

Positive law is imagined by the powers of deceit to justify their attacks on weakness. Dispossessing the worker is no act of triumphant force: it’s an act of law in its purest form... The science of positive law teaches how to achieve this. And it’s for the culture of this precious science that faculties are created and professors and aforesaid doctors and students are kept.

A big factory owner collects almost the totality of the profits generated by his workers every day, tossing them a derisory salary, which only allows them to slowly die of hunger, fatigue, alcoholism, and tuberculosis; the factory owner is neither an assassin nor a thief; he’s an honest man, he is within his rights...

A wretch, one of the workers who the factory owner used, takes back a morsel of ... a legal withdrawal that he makes from the product of his own labor: he’s a thief, he’s outside of the law...

Positive rights are expressed in laws. Laws, like the rest of the social system, are elaborated with an eye to one goal: assure the maintenance of the force in power, which is to say, currently, protect property, private wealth, capitalist theft, even to the detriment of life. For property found its origins in force, it’s by force that it maintains itself and it reproduces this force for the benefit of the landowner.

Listen to Proudhon: “Property is theft.”

Listen to Sismondi: “The biggest portion of costs of the social establishment goes to defend the rich against the poor, because, if we left them to their respective powers, the former would quickly be dispossessed.”

Think about it, remembering that the State’s mission is to protect weakness from force and to dispense justice. Think about it, and you will see that its real mission is not so virtuous.

Let us not forget that the proletariat is the majority through whom the State could not be. The State having the supposed goal to establish law in society, one sees then what importance there is for us to make known to the proletariat the lie upon which the fiction of law rests, while in reality it’s force that presides over actions, as much natural as social, of man.

Law, at this time, is in the service of property. But property is but one of the current forms of authority and can, as under the collectivist regime, make room for a single form of authority: representative authority (which, often, is not so far from purely managerial authority) such as that, for example, exercised today by the head of the military, the judge, etc. Positivist law will be in the service of the masters of tomorrow, as it is of the masters of today, if the slaves of today allow it tomorrow; and it will go on like this so long as the slaves allow the existence of law, and consequently, consent to their slavery.

To positivist law, we would oppose “natural law.”

So what is natural law?

According to the word of its priests, it is The Law—and it’s a metaphysical fiction whose facts, at every instant, denounce unreality.

Law is a word that is void of meaning, since there is no example of it in nature or in the society in which the conventionally invoked law would never have been respected, would never have

triumphed, if it weren't for power and force. So law only has value as a virtuality whose active fulfillment is subject to circumstance, to contingency; consequently it does not exist in an absolute form, as "Law," as we have been trained since childhood to understand this misconception.

In the people's struggle, what was Gaullic law to the Roman forces, the Arab law and the law of the people of Madagascar against French forces, the law of the Cafres to the Boers, the Boer law to the English forces, Chinese law to the European, American and Japanese coalition?

What are the rights of the minority in the face of the power of the majority, the rights of the soldier in the face of the leader, the rights of the poor before the strength of the rich?

The "rights of the poor" is an empty phrase!

And let us not forget that Pottier, author of *The International*, with a sincere and verist proletarian mindset, who had experienced life,—a painful life—preceded these words with these other ones:

No duty is imposed on the rich.

What, in short, is the law of the weak against the power of the strong?

Nothing.

And note that the strong never resorts to the use of force, but, he too invokes the law. The strong, knowing that the weak,—weak for now—would not voluntarily accept the effects of force, admitted by today's powerful, have always coated their bitter "pill" with sweet law.

It is by means of the law they invoke that the tyrants and the blind masses who work for their masters have managed to conquer by force. Individuals taken separately will proceed in kind.

As the Bismarckian formula goes: "Force rules over law". This would be true and excellent in these terms, as an observation, if law resided elsewhere than in vague and metaphysical religions. It's a product of human imagination that cannot be reasonably juxtaposed with the reality of force.

If we want to consider the right to act, the power to do in terms of laws, then one is forced to acknowledge that law is constituted purely by force.

So really, what's the use in talking about law?

Thus law, too, is a spook which vanishes in the light of reason.

It's time for us to banish law from our mindsets, since we've already expelled duty. And let's strive to substitute my freedom, your freedom, his freedom, -or, something more comprehensible, given the current state of the human mindset, my will, your will, his will.

Individualism—realist, verist conception—is ignorant of law and duty and only conceives of interests and wills served by forces. "Make yourself strong to be free" is what it says to man.

Thusly the proletariat,—the current weak ones, by virtue of the ignorance that grips them,—in acknowledging the existence of law, partake in the same dupery as when they proclaim life to be sacred.

They can expect nothing from the masters of property-owning authority nor from those of representative authority. Quibbling about law is a waste of time, which is to say a waste of life. They will never have law on their side so long as they show that they are weak. If they want to emancipate and satisfy themselves, it is in making themselves strong and putting their strength into action in the service of their own interest—of their common interests—that they will succeed.

Law and duty, in a regime of liberty, of anarchy, would give way to agreements between individuals or associations. The individuals will perhaps recognize duties and laws, if one wants to use such words, but how far—taken in our strictly utilitarian, relative, and variable sense, out

of voluntary obligation and remuneration—this vocabulary is from the signification of those with a religious mindset!

This free justice, essentially contractual, varying with individuals and groups, according to their interests and affinities, has its starting point firmly in the individual, in every me, and it is subordinate to this alone. Individuals who practice this relative justice will not be religious for Justice, they will be free men founding the ever-changeable egoist justice.

It's one of the first acts of egoist collective justice that will result in the overturning of capitalist society, when the proletariat will have finally understood and applied this idea that Max Stirner suggests in his book, vast with human truth, *The Unique and His Property*: "The workers possess a formidable power; were they to manage to realize this and decide to use it, nothing could resist them: it would be enough for them to stop all work and appropriate all the products, these products of their labor that they perceive to be theirs since they have made them."<sup>9</sup>

Rebelling against the constraint of duty and freed from the deceptive faith in law, here's the individual capable of freedom, for he has gained awareness of his strength. He can evolve without fear in the midst of associate or adverse forces. But there is nothing suggesting that in a milieu where this wisdom is conceived and lived there will be enemies, since antagonism is born from two causes that will have disappeared with authority: fanaticism and economic malaise. With the interest of every egoist accounted for, there will only be associated forces left. Competition will harmonize. Men have become fit for individualist association.

## VI. The Individualist Association

The object of the present study is to give an outline of the still imperfectly formulated doctrine of anarchist individualism and most of all to demonstrate that, contrary to the prejudice that describes the individualist as against all harmony with others, against all association, the practical consequence of individualist philosophy is association, but a form of association that is rare today, in which one associate will have neither the temptation, nor the possibility of "rolling" over the others. We've already been able to understand, in the analysis we've made of the individual and his relations with others, that the association of men freed from laws and duty is conceivable, and to recognize that this type of association must logically be the goal of intelligent men's efforts. What is left for us is to give as precise a theoretical idea as possible of what this association would be.

The capitalist society to which we are currently subjected is an authoritarian form of association, anti-individualist, where solidarity is obligatory (which explains why J.H. Mackay calls it communist) as evidenced by all social institutions: legislative, judiciary, proprietary, military, patriotic, etc. By grace of this semantic argument in which the political parties revel, the collectivists call it individualist in the false sense of the word "individualism," discussed at the beginning of this study, and they carefully avoid adding the qualification "authoritarian" or "bourgeois," be-

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<sup>9</sup> This is a translation of the 1899 French translation that Devaldes read. A translation of this passage from the German reads: "The workers have the most enormous power in their hands, and if they one day became truly aware of it and used it, then nothing could resist them; they would only have to stop work and look upon the product of the work as their own and enjoy it." Importantly, the workers in this translation do not look upon the product of their labor *because they made it*, which would imply another, perhaps subtler, form of sacred property. Unfortunately for Devaldes, the 1899 French edition of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* mistranslated this passage. New English translation provided by Wolfi Landstreicher (Landstreicher's edition of *The Unique* forthcoming).

cause that would consecrate a complementary distinction where they have an interest in creating confusion.

In this society, one gets stuck—or rather somebody sticks you—mostly with empty words: the citizens are free here, equal, sacred, voting, eligible, fraternal by order, need I go on! All of that notwithstanding, a large portion of said citizens vegetate in an ignoble slavery and a great many of them suffer starvation to the great profit of the idle privileged to whom the State (distributor of justice!) guarantees the property (property is theft) of capital and the interest of capital, whose origins however are in the work of the capitalist usurper's wage-earners.

Such a society is destined for death, which it will receive from the proletariat as soon as it has the strength for it.

The collectivist society is another form of authoritarian society, equally anti-individualist, and though its solidarist constraint will present itself in another form, obviously, it will be no less authoritarian. Its yoke might try to pass as less ferocious: doubtless, you'll have to put up with fewer empty words and will have more support, but you're still supporting, to be sure, parasites.

Might we avoid the collectivist period to pass directly onto the individualist association? Or are we quite destined by the very nature of our evolution to know the decadent yoke of collectivism? That is tomorrow's secret. This latter hypothesis, however, seems more likely. In that case, our interest manifests in the hope for its coming arrival,—moreover prepared, it seems, by capitalism itself in its natural processes—for this society will be ripe for individuals aspiring toward autonomy, may its authoritarian executives and cogs be relatively easy to break and may it stand ready for the moment of true liberation of the organizations of production, exchange, and consumption necessary to the existence of the individualist association.

The victory of collectivism over capitalism will attest simply to the desire of emancipation that will imperfectly prompt the proletariat to action. In this sense, and even though it will allow the parasites to continue to exist, realized collectivism marks one step—that one willingly burns—in the march toward the single idea capable of being subordinate to the individual, precisely representing his social cause and to which he can never become subject: the individualist association, the “association of egoists.”

We have seen that individualism is clearly opposed to the obligatory association that the current State imposes as well as that which will be imposed by the State of tomorrow— but, how else can I put it, individualism accepts that its own is the association freely contracted among individuals. To the obligatory association, it opposes free association. The individualist wants to serve no association considered as an end, to sacrifice any portion of his individuality to the illusory interest of the association,—a socialist and authoritarian principle. Rather he wants the association to serve him, he himself considered as the end; he would like to use it according to his real interest—an individualist and anarchist principal. In sum, the association is for him a means to his life, and not the point of his life.

With socialism, religion of Society (capitalist socialism of today, the cynical expression of the controlling egoism of the current bourgeoisie, of bourgeois property owners—or socialist collectivism of tomorrow, veiled expression of the same controlling egoism of the new bourgeois, the representatives becoming rulers), the individual is sacrificed, in the name of a so-called general or collective interest, absolutely illusory, to the benefit of the property owners or the rulers, the masters, the strong, in a word, the powerful.

It's up to him to make himself as strong and powerful as them, it would be enough to have a sufficiently active will to become so; then he will be his own master, master of self, and moreover, with the generalization of such an attitude, harmony would result accordingly.

Under the socialist regime (capitalist or collectivist), advocated by the priests of the religious idea of Society, the prosperity of the association is the point of the individual's life, the life of the individual is the means of the association. The profiteers are waiting in the wings.

With anarchist individualism, the individual, finally irreligious, no longer has to immolate himself for the association, since he only participates within the limits of his will and according to his needs. The prosperity of his life is the goal of his association, his association is the means to his life. The profiteers disappear.

The sacrifice of the individual to the spook of Society is reached by one of these bluffs that necessitates an absolute "poirisme": it lies in the "subordination of individual interest to the general interest."

The general interest — abstraction — should never be at variance with individual interests, when it should be the exact expression of them, in a well-organized world; but in this case it would be useless to appeal to it. The general interest is thus a lie: there exist only individual interests. Let's admit for a moment, however, that it does exist. Currently there is a significant divergence between the so-called general interest invoked to obtain the sacrifice of the individual and the interest of the individual. The proof of this truth rests on this fact, that the moralists teach men to "see higher than their little personality" and that they say squarely that "the good citizen must let the general interest come before his personal interest" (and also the interest of Society, The Fatherland, etc.). But look at what this "general interest" dissimulates: the individual interests of the masters, of their priests and other associated servants of the State. The State is but a ridiculous church where they give masses on "collective reason," the State is still a "criminal association"...

Each time that your personal interest is at variance with the general interest that they offer you and to which they want you to sacrifice, proletarians, it's up to you to find out which parasites will benefit from the difference: translated into cash, it goes into their coffers.

Finally, there's no point in insisting on something nobody would dare to contest, to know; that man is a naturally sociable animal, not only out of moral and sentimental need, but even physical, economic and intellectual need. It is useless to repeat something everybody knows: that association multiplies man's joy while at the same time diminishing his pains.

As much by reflective interest as by instinctive tendency, association appears then to the individual as a means of living a broader and higher life.

Individualist wisdom, despite being distorted under the pretext, used to this day, that it will lead man to repudiate the principle of association, will do no such thing, but on the contrary, it will incite him to organize his association in such a way that it belongs to him and that he cannot be sacrificed to it in the name of others.

Ernest Lohy (1875–1956) was a French individualist anarchist better known by his pen name, Manuel Devaldes. His first published work was *Howls of Hate and Love* in 1897, a collection of anarchistic free verse poetry by a young *Devaldes* that directly led to his meeting with the esteemed anarchist "sage" Han Ryner and the Neo-Malthusian Paul Robin and to his life being re-oriented towards anarchist activity. Vehemently anti-militarist, Devaldes' reputation today largely rests on his unique attempts at amalgamating the population theories of Thomas Malthus with anarchism; Devaldes viewed overpopulation as the root cause of war and in 1925 wrote *The Biological*

*Cause and Prevention of War*, in which he argued that “to abolish war, global limitation of births is necessary”. This thirty page booklet was followed by the much more scholarly “*War in the Sexual Act*” in 1937, where he attempted to systematize a wide array of references and statistics to demonstrate that most anti-militarist analysis is superficial and ignores the phenomenon of excess population (towards the end of the book Devaldes attacks the “mystical conceptions” of sentimental pacifists and purports to have discovered a more “scientific” formula for the prevention of war).

In 1909 Devaldes published a widely-praised study of the strange, anarcho-mystic Han Ryner, co-edited a journal with André Lorulot from 1920–1925 titled *The Awakening Slave*, and contributed to É. Armand’s *l’endhors*. Devaldès himself was later the subject of a lengthy biography by the anarcho-pacifist Hem Day (*Manuel Devaldès and The Science of Pacifism*) and a comprehensive collection of Devaldès’ own writings was published in 1957 in Paris under the title *Un En-Dehors: Manuel Devaldès 1875–1956*.

# **“A La Bastille!...”: An Individualist Looks at the French Revolution**

**E. Bertran**

In 1789, in France, there was a proper “crisis.” Things were not going on to the satisfaction of the people for many reasons, and the rulers of that particular time and country had to face a problem: How to keep the people quiet and law abiding! ... How to prevent an always impending uprising! A similar case now (1930) exists in India and the same failure is bound to start the conflagration.

Of the French Revolution we know that besides the economic crisis, new rights had been discovered, the Rights of Man, and this was handy as new reasons to give, but how tricky were those rights we may realize when we see that they were just used to enslave men again in a new constitutional way. Again we witness a similar case in our own time when the socialistic schools propose us new slogans: The Rule of the Workers...Workers of the World Unite...One For All and All For One, and a host of others.

“Bastille” means Stronghold, or Fortress, and the historic Bastille was used as a State prison from the time of Louis XIV to the time of Louis XVI, a fact that explains the hatred of the people for the Feudal building, and why they thought at once of destroying it. Of course, removing the Bastille was not suppressing the abuses and injustices, but men are so, they like to smash the furniture when they are tyrannized at home.

On the 14 of July, 1789, the people grew suddenly excited, and one of the crowd started shouting “A la Bastille!” Something like one shouting in a New York crowd, “to the Tombs!” when excitement in New York may reach the pitch it did in the Paris of 1789.

And the good people of Paris, looking for some new way of smashing furniture to express their discontent with their masters, went as a single man to the Bastille.

But it was a big job, and it proved to be no ordinary smashing.

Now this particular uprising, or riot, was almost fortuitous, although determined beforehand by the political state and many attending circumstances. Let us consider a moment the nature of the political and revolutionary agitation at that time.

In Versailles, where the king of France resided, there was a general convention or congress discussing the various matters connected with the new needs of the country. The Third Estate, which was representing what they claimed to be the “People,” was struggling against the other two Estates, the Nobility and the Clergy. We remember the claim of the Third Estate which was condensed in a short pamphlet: What is the Third Estate? The People! What have they been so far? Nothing! What do they want to be? Everything!

These slogans, no doubt, were effective, just as our new slogans about the workers and their future ruling. That is the way to make the people stir. As a rule it is always the people who undertake the genuine fighting, although the result has always degenerated into a new form of

oppression. And it seems that it will always be the same as long as there is a misguided sense of solidarity in the people's mind, or so long as there is the "soul of the crowd."

Thus, to return to our description of that curious agitation! The Third Estate was being double-crossed in Versailles and bullied by the king and his supporters; and the people of Paris, only a few miles away, resented it.

We complain of unemployment in our own time. We ought to consider the past history of our race and see the terrible state our forefathers were in. It seems that there was, indeed, very little to do in the capital of France in that particular year and day, and very little to eat. So, no wonder that when those discussions were going on in Versailles between the three classes or estates on the 12, 13 and 14 of July, the people were congregated in the streets and busy discussing too.

An agitator yelled, "A la Bastille" and the people readily responded—they had nothing better to do. Another agitator became practical and gave the advice that there were guns and cannons to be had at "the Invalides." They went there, and little resistance being offered to such a big crowd, they were soon armed after the manner of the time. Forks, spears, guns, swords, crowbars, and many kinds of improvised weapons.

We spoke of the Bastille as a state prison and if we dig carefully in history we will soon discover that it was far from being a frightful dungeon as it is currently believed. It was not an ordinary jail and the prisoners were almost exclusively aristocrats of the best blood, or persons of good standing: writers, financiers, rebellious priests, politicians, and so on. There were, at the time, very few inmates and it was not for their sake that the Bastille was destroyed.

The destruction of the Bastille was on the program of the politicians just as in this city they may ask the demolition of the 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue Elevated or the modification of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, or of some other nuisance. Abuses had been committed with the "lettres de cachet" when they used to arrest a man secretly and keep him in the Bastille as long as they chose. A certain half-wit was kept 35 years in that manner, he was still living at the time of the Revolution and they gave him a pension. In 1789 the Bastille's time was over. Torture had been recently abolished, the king had freed his serfs, the "lettre de cachet" privilege had been broken, but the name remained, the Bastille fell too late!

To tell the truth, the best reason that was given to the people to stimulate them to run to the Bastille was that cannons were fixed on the top of the fortress and were pointed towards the city. The people wanted to make sure that they were not going to go off and shoot them: for this purpose they sent a deputy to enquire from the governor. The deputy went in, was received, but did not come out quick enough. An unknown voice yelled that they were torturing the deputy and then things began to happen.

Never would the people have been able to take the Bastille under other circumstances. But then the government was weakened, the army was parading somewhere else, and the police were otherwise engaged.

We know what happened: The people murdered the soldiers because they were all foreigners, but chiefly because they defended themselves, and the Bastille was a heap of ruins after a few hours of madness. Just the starting event of a big revolution! A turn of history when man was given an opportunity to show his violence and believe in his strength. This happens to horses sometimes, to camels, even to sheep when they have had enough suffering and ill treatment, they go mad and bite.

In the Bastille Day we find a terrible lesson beside a great joke. The joke is on us when we take the trouble to consider how the bourgeois class selected this particular day of all days as their



independence day! But the lesson is greater still if we happen to realize all that is contained in the word “people,” the people! The rage of the oppressed together with the ignorance of the slave... The terrible strength of a great power and the uselessness of mob action, yet full of meaning and consequences.

Now we may contemplate the future “prise de la Bastille,” the future taking of the modern Bastilles...No doubt similar events will take place, and with similar results. The mass is just a social force to be used by its leaders as any other natural force, and really there is little difference between the disgusting crowd who lately destroyed a court house in Texas to burn a poor black fellow, and the crowd who pulled down the Bastille on the fourteenth of July, 1789, in Paris. The people may have a “soul,” as our psychologists say, but it is not by the manifestation of such a soul that we will be saved.

The people cannot be right, the people have never been right, neither a Fascist crowd nor a Soviet herd will help us in our work of emancipation. The people will never understand the individual and will always be ready to crush him, to lynch him, as it was before and since Socrates and Galileo. And we may here repeat with one who was not of the crowd: “The liberty of the people is not my liberty.”

—Published in *The Road to Freedom*, New York, July, 1930

E.Bertran was a Stirner-influenced anarchist who did multiple prison stints for counterfeiting and his links to the Bonnot Gang. He spent much of his life on the lam, while still managing to contribute essays to a plethora of anarchist papers. Bertran was a major advocate of anarchists forming secessionist colonies and also left behind a 208-page manuscript regarding the Bonnot Gang titled *E.Bertran, Memories et Confessions: Revelations d'un Anarchiste Authentique*, which was published in 1962 under his legal name, L.A. Rodriguez.

# The Absurdity of Politics (1919)

Paraf-Javal

## I. So-called Universal Suffrage is Not and Cannot be Universal

By “universal suffrage” they mean the suffrage to “everyone.” In reality this is the suffrage to “no one.”

Indeed, one must first of all observe that:

- In some parts of the world the women have no vote;
- That people under 21 don’t have the right to vote;
- Also in certain places soldiers, sailors and police don’t have the right to vote.

And then:

- Those who for some reason or other (sickness, work, etc.) can’t go to the polling booth on the day of the election, don’t vote.
- Those who don’t find a candidate suitable to their taste don’t vote, vote zero or give expression to an inexact suffrage.
- Voluntary or indifferent abstentionists don’t vote.
- Those who find “a posteriori” the action of voting too disgusting, absurd and stupid, don’t even trouble themselves about it.

The remainder are the voters. But a great part of the suffrage of these latter doesn’t count because:

- Those who’ve voted for candidates not elected must be considered as having voted zero;
- Those who’ve voted for representatives who are the minority in the assemblies must also be considered as having voted zero.

Finally, there remain the voters, whose representatives vote for the laws.

These voters, we will observe, will certainly find themselves in a difficulty to adopt a uniform opinion if their representative consults them each time it has to vote in their name.

But there is something better.

The majority in any assembly can’t fall into agreement on any text of law without “arbitration.” “To arbitrate,” each one must abandon some of her ideas. No one can expect his ideas to be accepted in totality.

What is the use of expressing one’s suffrage if the result of this expression is:

- Neither the desire of the voter;
- Nor the truth which is intransigent and incompatible with any old broken thing.

What then is the result of the so-called “universal” suffrage?

The suppression of minorities by majorities, without any guarantee that these majorities are right for them, and even (as we’ll show later) with the certainty that these majorities cannot be right for them.

After all, so-called “universal” suffrage is not the suffrage of the whole world. That’s a trick which can be used by certain human beings (intriguers) to suppress other human beings.  
That’s not all.

## **II. So-called “Universal” Suffrage is a Powerful Means for Keeping Human Activity Asleep**

Indeed, from twenty-one years of age and upwards, every four years (that is, once in 1460 or 1461 days) the voters vote (i.e., they try to suppress those who think differently to themselves). But authority functions every day, at all times.

Universal suffrage therefore means: 1 day of the right to intrigue, 1460 or 1461 days of abdication.

So one sees that universal suffrage is a powerful means for keeping human activity asleep. It has nothing in common with popular sovereignty, with the right to be, in every moment, as sovereign as others. It has nothing in common with equality.

## **III. The Political System Is Absurd**

In countries where the parliamentary system exists, people determine the actions ordered, permitted and prohibited, that is to say, the law, in the following way:

1<sup>st</sup>: The appointment of representatives (members of the National Assembly, senators, councillors, etc.). This appointment is the equivalent of the total abdication of individual activity into the hands of politicians.

2<sup>nd</sup>: Assemblies of politicians issue some assessments and establish some texts by voting on these assessments.

3<sup>rd</sup>: Imposition of these votes by force.

This system is absurd.

If there truly are actions that people must order, permit and prohibit, it would be advantageous to determine those actions logically. If there are none, politicians are no more qualified than other people to determine this.

How is truth established? How is science determined?

Are representatives appointed for this purpose?—No. The one who brings out the truth wasn’t delegated by anyone. Often she has neither diploma nor poise.—Does one vote on scientific matters?—No. The vote proves nothing. Galileo alone said the earth revolves. A minority, but he was right against the majority.—Does one impose science by force?—No. It tells people: “Here it is. Here’s the evidence. Lay upon yourselves what you have recognized as correct.”

Human reason is perfected in the scientific point of view. No one rises up against science, not even the ignorant, because they know that it is verified by those who are capable of doing so, and they themselves, if they made themselves capable, could also verify it.

Human unreason is perfected in the legal point of view. The law determined in an absurd way is foolish and vexatious. It is nonetheless THE LAW from the moment that it was passed and enacted in accordance with admittedly absurd rules.

This is the political system. Foreign to reason, it cannot give reasonable results. Politics, an illogical method, can’t be used in establishing logical rules of conduct.

It is the action of lunatics to want, if these rules exist, to ascertain them and impose them on sensible people in other than a rational way.

#### **IV. Law is the Right of the Strongest**

All individuals, when they reach the age of reason, find themselves in the presence of innumerable laws. If any of them say, "These laws made without me, against me, do not please me," he'll be answered: "Respect them first; then, when the opportunity arises, you can use your rights as citizens to change the social order." If he remarks: "I'm in a hurry," the answer is: "You shouldn't be in a hurry. Those who make the laws are charged by you or your opponents to act instead of you and in your place. To make politics."

But politics results in the making of the law, and the law is nothing other than the acceptance by some people (the majority) of an assessment that other people (the minority) challenge.

Imposing assessments by force is tyranny. Law is the highest oppression, legal oppression, the right of the strongest.

The rights of one human being can't depend on the more or less disinterested assessments of other human beings. These rights exist or they don't exist. If they exist, then it's a good idea to determine them logically and to exercise them as needed, despite the law.

#### **V. Law is a Bonus for Cheats**

Since politics results in the making of the law, it is good to show that the law is useless.

In truth there is no law, there cannot be a law, the law counts for nothing, or rather, there is only one law inscribed implicitly in every legal code: "Don't get caught."

Indeed, society doesn't punish those who violate the law, it punishes those who are caught violating the law, which is not the same thing. It isn't possible for one who violates the law without getting caught to be punished.

One is therefore correct in saying that the law is bonus for cheats, since it tells people: "It's useless to be honest, be shrewd. All to the wily, nothing to the weak, nothing to the simple-minded who have neither the intelligence nor the deviousness necessary to use the law to their profit."

This is so true that there are people (lawyers and judges) whose official job it to either get around or enforce the law, as the case requires.

#### **VI. All Voters are Conservative**

People are unanimous in recognizing that the present society is badly organized.

How does such a society, which everyone recognizes as defective, continue?

It continues:

1<sup>st</sup>: Because there are people for whom it is tolerable: the "privileged."

2<sup>nd</sup>: Because the "non-privileged," for whom it is not tolerable, are resigned and do not revolt.

There's worse.

The proletariat not only don't revolt, but still accept, recognize, conserve and consolidate the oppressive regime. They accept, recognize, conserve and consolidate this regime, not because

they are forced to do so, but because they are stupid enough to accept, recognize, conserve and consolidate their own oppression.

Indeed, whenever people are called to vote, this call can be seen as a demand for a signature for the extension of the so-called social contract. The voter is a person who comes only on the day that he is summoned like a lackey, to one who whistles for him like a dog trained to obey, who comes on the said day only and not on any other day. She is the person who comes when authority says: "The time has come once again to sanction and keep running a system established by others and for others than yourself. The time has come to choose those who will be part of this system with or without the intention of modifying it; to choose those who, for contributing to the functioning of the machine that crushes the weak, will be paid in silver, in influence, in privileges, in honors. The moment has come once again to set aside the idea of revolt against the organization that exploits you and to obey its authority. The time has come to vote, that is to say, to carry out an act which means: "I RECOGNIZE YOUR LAWS."

Isn't it clear that the first meaning of abstention from elections is this:

"I DO NOT RECOGNIZE YOUR LAWS. I do not want the regime that imposes them and that wants to continue to impose them on me."

It follows from this that every voter (whether rightly called monarchist, or wrongly called socialist-revolutionary) is a conservative, since the result of his vote is to help make the system function vigorously.

## **VII. Every Conscious Abstentionist is a Revolutionary**

We have shown that politics is a powerful tool of the privileged for keeping the activity of the unprivileged sleeping. People are told: "Put your brain in your pocket, you'll bring it out again from time to time to vote, which is to say, to consolidate authority. As long as you abdicate, authority will function non-stop."

And they're surprised that the revolution hasn't been made! It would be far more surprising if the revolution was made with such a system, with an anti-revolutionary system, with a conservative system.

The revolution will be made when people stop abdicating their activity.

The revolution will be made when people stop delegating their powers, when they stop nominating masters, when they stop allowing people like themselves to say: "You have given me the right to act for you."

Authority will fall on the day that people stop imposing it on themselves, on the day that they stop creating categories of privileged, governors, oppressors.

The revolution will start at the exact moment when people abandon politics.

All revolutions have been times when people abandoned politics, when they concerned themselves with their destiny.

Every person who abandons politics starts revolution, because she takes back her activity, previously abdicated.

## **VIII. What Would be the Consequences of the Voters Strike?**

The consequences would be as follows:

Declaration of war against the established system and the commencement of hostilities with the certainty of success in overthrowing the regime.

Indeed, refusing to vote on the conditions indicated above, is not an act of inertia, but an act of revolt. The governors would understand that the conscious abstentionist is not someone who's indifferent, but is a mutineer and that this mutineer cannot refrain from acting since the voters strike has as its counterpart individual activity aimed at demolishing this arbitrary absurdity.

Furthermore, generalized abstention would make the exercise of government difficult.

What authority would an individual elected by a small portion of voters have? What authority would assemblies of individuals delegated by minorities have? What authority would the executive power elected by these assemblies have?

As long as authority feels the need to be justified by the vote in order to function, one can conclude that there is a limit to the number of votes below which AUTHORITY IS DISQUALIFIED.

And, as authority is disqualified, the mass would become conscious of its strength. The voters strike is a marvelous way to count the number of conscious revolutionaries. By conscious revolutionaries we mean the people capable of overthrowing the current state of things, who prove this by refusing to submit to it. With these people, that is to say with the "anti-politicians," there goes an "anti-political geometric progression," knowing that any of these progressions come with an undetermined and undeterminable "reason" like those from which all popular movements came. One need only recall the Crowellian, Chartist, anti-semitic, and anti-militarist movements.

You can ask those who know where geometrical progressions lead, and you will see that they can move quickly, that they are inevitable and what can be predicted when one comes into view. (Examples: all biological progressions, and particularly bacteriological progressions).

Now, you have to think well on this: A person can't use a force that she doesn't know. People weren't able to use electricity, which surrounded them, until they knew it. On the other hand, there is no example of a force that people don't use, once it is observed.

Therefore, the task at hand is to explain and demonstrate to the so-called "Workers of the World"—ridiculous and unconscious individuals—the fact that they are not the weakest, but the strongest, and that they obey, yield to, and support slavery, only because they are the most ignorant and greatest idiots.

Proletarians are actually not conscious individuals.

The voters strike will make them so. This abstention is easy because abstentionists don't risk being punished.

The political prejudice is deeply rooted, it's true; but like all prejudices it can be combatted with logical arguments, as there is nothing that can resist logic.

Let's return to our starting point. If it's true that the current society endures because the unprivileged, the proletarians, are resigned, what matters is that they cease to be resigned, what matters is that they are in revolt, what matters is that each one of them who wants to overthrow society goes into revolt for himself, and since proletarians are by far the most numerous, generalize revolt would make the overthrow certain.

I believe the above shows the importance of the voters strike, the possible prelude to a revolution whose modern form seems to be a general strike.

General strike or, if you will, generalized strike appears to be such a powerful weapon that in our view certain partial strikes, extended further (for example, taxpayers and renters strikes), would be enough to bring about social upheaval.

A movement of this kind will not only be foreign to politics, but will also aim against politics, that is to say, against the system that results in the authoritarian organization that cancels our freedom.

Add that the social upheaval can only be the movement that precedes the establishment of a reasonable society. It is easy to show that this can be established when enough people have understood that it depends only on the replacement of competition by camaraderie.

## **IX. Objection: If Revolutionaries Don't Vote, They Abandon Power to Non-Revolutionaries**

Note that this objection cannot be made by a conscious revolutionary; any individual who is in power, no matter how temporarily, cannot be a revolutionary.

Indeed, the aim of the conscious revolutionary is—not the conquest—but the destruction of power.

Can one expect to destroy power by continuing to make it function, by acting as a conservative?

The voter, we have said, is conservative, because he produces a part of authority, the essential part without which there is no authority.

The elected person, who is this part, is necessarily conservative, being an active part of authority.

Even supposing voters and those elected desire to destroy power, the fact that one is elected contributes—not to destroying power—but to justifying it.

Furthermore, wanting to impose liberty through authority seems odd. Liberty and authority, we have often said, are incompatible to the point that one increases to the extent that the other decreases, and vice versa.

Up to the present time all societies have been established on the principle of authority. Even what is wrongly called socialism is a form of this principle. Delegating these powers to someone else charged with better distributing everything to the group (collectivism) is equivalent to giving up one's rights. The distributing comrades will be the privileged, the governors, the oppressors. The others will be the governed, the exploited, the oppressed.

One who cannot accept being oppressed, cannot authorize herself to oppress others. The logical individual necessarily arrives at the conception of libertarian communism, which could also be called complete camaraderie.

Since the vote leads to authority, it is necessary to fight against the vote, not participate in it.

# Men Disgust Me

André Lorulot

Translated by vincent stone

## The Tricolored Warriors

They disgust me, these trembling and senile old fogies with their dried up sexes and tri-colored hearts. I hate them for the easy cruelty with which they send thousands upon thousands of innocent victims to mass graves.

“It’s for the homeland” they say, excusing themselves. But no! it’s for their egos. So that their antiquated ways can go on undisturbed.

During the war, they multiplied the infamies, the military tribunals. Thousands of sorry jerks condemned and shot, haphazardly and without thought. For dirty clothes, for an irritated reply to the provocations of a bastard in uniform, for a suspicion ... to the tourniquet<sup>1</sup>. You’ve got to make examples if you want to keep up morale. The generals die in their beds... Perfect : Hidenbour, Foch, Lyautey, Joffre, Weygand, Ludendorff... At eighty years old. Slobbery and diarrhetic; congested prostate or failing liver; atrophied brain, like Castelnau; or with a hemorrhoid-eaten ass, like the Pope (yet another who never ended up on the field of battle and who was happy watching... from afar, with his accomplices, the marshals!)

The simple solder exposes his life, on the front line, knowing neither for what reason nor for whom... The general plays with his survey maps. “Should I write off the 23<sup>rd</sup> division today—or the fourteenth? Shall I unleash the killings upon the sector of Amiens or that of Soissons?”

How can men, worthy of the name, consent to enlist, to march in the ranks?

To put on a uniform is to give up one’s personality (It is true that this word has little signification for the better part of humanity).

Become like your neighbor. Resemble everybody else. That’s the ideal of banality and mediocrity. It’s the triumph of laziness and spinelessness. Think like the others, that saves you from thinking for yourself; relieves you from having to make an effort, the ideal of nitwits. I also loathe the uniform as it is the sign of servility, the symbol of obedience and discipline.

## Preachers of Resignation

Religion is an old rag; these days it harbors little more than the turmoil of the chronically weak, the drivel of hopeless morons, or the cunning calculations of hideous charlatans, cold, hard tyrants, repugnant imposters. They disgust me, they who teach the lie, deliberately, voluntarily, to get their allowances, and to maintain a peaceful, even privileged, situation.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tr*—Military tribunal.



“To deserve paradise, my brothers, you must accept suffering down here. Patience! Docility! Resignation! Life is a test of hardship. But our good God, in proportion to the tears you shed, will surely compensate you.” Having so spoken, the imposter goes to sit at his table, in gallant and joyous company. Fine wines and succulent partridge. Savory fruits. Refined ratatouilles. Incendiary liqueurs. While the believers look to the sky and whimper. While the worms of the church murmur their illusory rosary prayers. While servitude and misery force the sorry dupes to kneel under the whip of the wealthy masters.

They drape themselves in their cassocks and in the dogmas of the Vatican to frighten the children with ridiculous legends, invoking hell and its tormentors, a Devil who would like to be scary, and an idiotic purgatory.

They disgust me, those who, knowing that religion is false, continue, out of self-interest, to teach it. As for sincere believers, I can only pity them.

I will gladly lose it on someone who tells me that religion soothes the savage beast. Religion, it’s fanaticism—the most contrary thing to the spirit of fraternity. Religion, it’s intolerance, hatred to the point of fervor. In the name of God, they’ve made rivers of blood flow. Nothing but massacres, crusades, persecutions! And the wars of religion? The curé gang doesn’t care so much for when we remind them of the ferocious “glories” of the Church... And it continues. In the Indies, Muslims and Buddhists slaughter each other at any opportunity. In Palestine, the Arabs and the Jews are a spectacle of furious hatred.

## Suckers

*Shall I be a christian, since I live in London or Madras? Shall I be Muslim, since I was born in Turkey? I should only think for myself, in my own interest, the choice of religion is for me my biggest concern. You love a God a la Mohammed; and you one by the Dalai Lama; and you one by the Pope. Wow! Pitiful... loving a god for your own reasons. A man who accepts his religion, without scrutiny, differs little from a yoked oxen.*

—Voltaire

This is not a chapter, it’s an entire volume, and a large volume, that I must write, if I am to enumerate the different categories of faults and fools that evolve on this planet, to the great profit of astrologers, bishops, fortune-tellers, sorcerers, priests and swindlers of all sort.

It will suffice for me to just open a few Catholic parish bulletins in order to give our readers a glimpse of the superstition of the masses. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there are still millions of suckers who adhere and contribute to the multitude of guignolesque organizations, to save their soul, escape Satan, pull their mothers-in-law from purgatory or to kiss<sup>2</sup> (morally) the Virgin Mary in eternal paradise.

There is even an arch-brotherhood of Saint Barbara, to prevent sudden death.

*Let us give thanks to Saint Barbara, for having converted M.A., who does not practice his religion.*

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<sup>2</sup> Tr—The verb “baiser” can mean both “kiss” with innocent connotations and also “fuck.” Context determines which, and Lorulot plays on this here and elsewhere.

*Five Francs to Saint Barbara, for having healed many people and secured the passing of a test.*

It's truly a river of cash that these superstitious suckers pour into the pockets and the bellies of these cassocked wolves.

*II—One may also ask to request the burning of candles or lamps before the relics, the statue and on the altar of Saint Barbara*

*Lamps: one day, 0 fr. 75; nine days, 5 fr.; one month 15 fr.*

*Candles: One franc or more.*

*III.—Saint Barbara medallion, Virgin and Martyr, struck especially for members, at the following prices: Aluminum: 0 fr. 20 each or a dozen for 2 fr.—Silver: 1 fr. 75 each or a dozen for 13 fr.*

*IV.—Small colored images (very pretty) with the Member prayer printed on the back, postage paid : 0 fr. 50 each or a dozen for 5 fr.*

Have a look at the the Holy Childhood:

*Come to the aid of your little pagan brothers.*

*Redeem a moribund infant, who will be baptized in your name (5 francs).*

*Redeem an abandoned child (15 francs) who, thanks to you, will be baptized and raised in the Catholic religion.*

*Become a member of the Legion of Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus: offering of 52 francs*

Ah! those little Chinese children! With this they have made millions for the Vatican, before it favored the massacre of the Chinese by Japan, just to menace the Soviets...

*For all donations of 1000 fr., a very large reproduction of a marvelous rose petal in which an image of a Holy face appears.*

And in the annals of the Association of the Holy Childhood (April 1938), I read: "Did you know that you can help our missions by giving us old jewelry, pendants, medallions, watches, etc. which lie in the bottoms of your dresser drawers? The salvation of many souls might depend on your gifts! Send your old jewelry to: 44, rue du Cherche-Midi, Paris."

Clearly, you've got to work at keeping the poor saps in their credulity. The charlatans do their best, by any means necessary, to dupe the clientele. Religions rest purely on false relics, imagined miracles, rigged miracles, and completely fabricated idiotic legends. The flock is systematically stultified, plunged into deception and lies. One simple example: June 23, 1938, two hundred fifty people in Jaules (Charente) were intoxicated as a result of having eaten "holy bread" the day of the first communion. The next day, the Cross coldly announced that these people were poisoned by cakes purchased at a stall during a local fair. Yet it was not the stall vendors, but a pâtissier in Angoulême who made the holy bread (and not the cakes) and the bystanders swallowed this diarrhetic stuff not on the fairgrounds, but in the church, after the curate blessed it.

The example of the Cross shows that these gentlemen [the journalists] are completely capable of lying so as to conserve the prestige religion once had—which is falling apart more and more each day. Because, well, holy bread shouldn't spread colic and make you sick!

When an automobile bearing a "Saint Christopher" medallion rolls into a ravine, when a church burns, do we not have proof that divine protection is a vast joke? These holy gangs practice the most shameful swindling in robbing these silly fools, who someone took the time to so deeply brainwash when they were young.

## **The Dirty Totalitarian Bastards**

What self-righteous monsters! What hypocrites, what Tartuffes, what egoists! To protect their cash, they're ready to commit the worst atrocities—on the condition, of course, that they don't expose their soft, limpid flesh. They fight by proxy and their determination is no weaker for it, on the contrary.

[a propos the bourgeois who lynched the Communards]

And our good friends in America, get their kicks lynching negroes, torturing them, skinning them alive, burning them after dousing them with petrol... They then go off to the temple or the church, plunging themselves with devotion into the holy Bible.

## **The weathervanes**

A lovely weathervane: the Pope! Very rare are the people who would dare attack the old sorcerer of the Vatican. To save the privileges of the Holy gang, the Pope is ready for any volte-face, any retraction, for somersaults. He blessed Hitler, hoping that he, who is Catholic, would favor him. Then he fought him with all he could, when he saw that the Führer refused to reap the benefits. He organized a global crusade against the Soviets, because they pushed around popes and curates. He did the same against Mexico. But tomorrow he will lick the boots of Stalin and the Mexicans, if he can find some benefit therein. In 1934, he asked the Spanish Catholics to support the legitimate government against the rebels. Because that cockroach Gil Roblès was in power and the rebels were a threat! But three years later, the same Pope sent an official ambassador to the rebel Franco—because the legitimate government was secular (the fascist coup d'état moreover was conspired by the Vatican).

He blesses Mussolini, advises Dollfuss and Salazar, plots with Poincaré, Daladier and their consorts. He who speaks of peace—and blesses the canons! He's a representation of the destitute Jesus—and lives in a wonderful palace! He sings of Fraternity—and collaborates with all of the tyrants! In 1895, Pope Leon XIII supported the Ethiopians against Italy to menace Minister Crispi, who was a Freemason. Forty years later, Pie XI blessed the Italian assassins, on their way to exterminate the Ethiopians.

But the little idiotic weathervanes are innumerable in quantity. They change their opinions knowing neither why nor how, because someone tells them to change. The brains of these people are sponges; they absorb whatever is around them.

## Prostitutes of the Pen

The most despicable of tyrants has always found a multitude of courtesans. The greater his cruelty, the more enormous the cowardice of his admirers. They will rival their conspicuous gallantry to praise his genius, his grandeur, and his courage. They shower him with compliments and compare him to the most illustrious men...

Who is more repugnant? Is it the cruel tyrant, who manages men with a whip and who has anyone interfering with his ambitions tortured or assassinated? Is it not, rather, he who prostrates himself before him, who licks the blood from his boots, who fawns on and glorifies the Assassin? The shallowness of the slave disgusts me at least as much as the sadistic and ambitious madness of the master.

## The reign of “gaudiness” and over actors

*It's with such trifles that one leads men. It's with an elixir of pompous nonsense and symbolic charms that one leads men, as you want them, where you want them, to the ends of the earth... Respect for ceremony... striking uniforms, with which to shock the imagination of the idiotic crowds.*

—Napoleon I

The idols you gaze upon ascend by mere shams, stagings.

Me, I close my eyes. And I picture him (the performer) seated on his pot the next morning. Goodbye to your halo, Oh my empress!

Dazzle the others! Male or Female, that's all they think about; all they live for. Amaze your friends, ladies above all, with a new dress and the latest hat. When they go to visit their friends, it's not out of friendship, it's to make their friends jealous by flaunting a coat “that they haven't seen yet,” boots, and a brand new handbag. And the others are obliged to admire, or to act like it, sick at heart. They'll make up for it after you leave, with relish, the showoff!

What pleasure can you get impressing these idiots? Superficial people, whose opinion or judgement has absolutely no importance and no value? The truth is it's to dominate them, to make them believe you've got a lot of dough and that no one will refuse you anything, to get drunk on contrived—and often nonexistent—superiority. You don't live for yourselves, but for others.

## Bystanders, Followers, and Sheep

Among the daily activities of man how many are truly free, spontaneous, sincere? Not many. One obeys routine, habits, fashion. Slavery to fashion, today, weighs mostly on women. But the men of today, most of all the youth, show themselves to be just as stupid, just as sheep-like. Doubtless this is due to their mental mediocrity, the desolate emptiness of their brains; their absolute lack of personality. Our contemporaries are completely deprived of originality: Humanity looks like a great flock. Mass-produced thought. Mass-produced behavior.

## Parakeets

The sheep mind shows up in language as it does in all other domains. Listen in on a few conversations, in any social setting, and you will be struck at the following fact: people use a sort of slang, they repeat fashionable expressions. Their thought is mass-produced—and they speak like parakeets.

Be like a parakeet, that's a lot less tiring! No need to search, to reflect, to ask yourself. All you have to do is go on repeating like a phonograph.

## Tyrants from Below

People, beware of demagogues! They are your worst enemies. They caress you, but only so they can fleece you. At heart, they despise you and mock you, but they need your shoulders to win the jackpot (which will not be for you). They hate you and if they could really put the screws on you in one good blow, it would be done quickly. Later, perhaps. For the moment, they need your voices, your votes, and your contribution. Thus they will tell you that you are big, noble, and beautiful, and that you have all the rights and at the same time, all of the virtues. If you believe this, you are in idiot—and you are lost.

Speaking the truth to the worker, the whole truth, even when it is painful to hear, it is perhaps the best means of serving their cause and working toward their true liberation. They disgust me, those who tell the People that total and universal wellness is coming and that there's no need to make an effort or to perfect oneself. They lie—willingly. For that matter it is in their interest, the masters, or the aspiring masters, to prevent the masses from learning. Is it not in correcting themselves that the masses become capable of progressing and taking charge of their own destiny? When that day arrives, the bosses and leaders, having grown useless, will have nothing left to do but disappear.

Once we said: the People. Today we say: the Masses. Once we said: your leaders. Is that to say that the taxpayers and voters are all ... irresponsible?<sup>3</sup> Which is to say foolhardy?

What a disdain for the individual! More and more, conformism triumphs. Human personality is not well known. What am I saying?: it's disappearing. If it existed, it would show itself, it would react, it would growl. All it can do now is bay, applaud and spinelessly follow its leaders who are taking it to the slaughterhouse... In the grand leveling of the social herd, MAN is becoming more and more rare. And they're making life harder and harder for him...

## Human Ingratitude

He who is skeptical is never naïve; he's never really tricked when he knows, and when he's conscious of it. It's not so much blindness as voluntarily closing one's eyes. The ingrate is a crawling egoist, without a moral drive, without courage... If he ever was courageous, previously, would he have begged, pleaded? Before ending up this way, he would have exhausted all means of action, if he has put his dignity to rest in asking you, it's already a bad sign. I really don't like friends who reach out to me. I also don't like those who go off telling everybody that they did

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<sup>3</sup> *Tr*—"Leaders" in the previous sentence, rendered from "*responsables*," is a general word referring to leaders, masters, administrators, etc.

this or that for Durand or Dupont, showering them in their generosity, spreading their goodwill out to all quarters and who are taking heaven and earth as witness to the magnificence of their sentiments.

The ingrate thought he robbed you? It's he who is robbed. He will lose five times more than he would have gained otherwise. Idiot! He will lose your heart, your strength of love and goodwill... For one hundred francs, he will abandon the spontaneity of your whims, the softness of your look, the comforts of your familiar conversations...

## **Athletes**

Soccer, boxing, or bikes, it makes little difference the genre of hobby. But the athlete almost always has an atrophied or deformed brain. He'll go two hundred kilometers to kick around a ball, but he won't go twenty meters to hear a philosophy or science lecture, from which he might learn something. The "performance" of a hock or bicep enthuse him. Considered as a rational exercise of the physical culture, sports can be beneficial, even very beneficial, in our ultra-civilized clusters. But when the championships come; when the guys from Sochaux go five hundred kilometers to match up with those from another godforsaken place, then we verge into cretinism. This rabble thinks of nothing but crushing its adversaries. Its warrior instincts, more or less barbaric, awaken. They get drunk on an idiotic vainglory. The true human values are completely unknown. The athlete is an empty-headed puppet. Ripe for fascism, the church, gruesome spectacles and all types of exploitation.

## **Moralists**

"Let he who is without sin cast the first stone". Among the innumerable banalities that the Church attributes to the kindly ghost who was named Jesus Christ, this is certainly one of the least flat and least empty. Consequently, entire generations went into ecstasies before these words, which pretend to bear the highest lesson of wisdom and humanity.

Obviously, he who has sinned is unqualified to throw a stone at another. But he who has not sinned, is he any more qualified? That's the whole question.

Very few men have had the courage to pose it cleanly and frankly. First you would have to come to an understanding of the word "sinned." What is that exactly?

If you consider an act which seems natural and normal to me shameful and call it sinning, how can we come to an agreement? When Jesus delivered (supposedly) the words mentioned above, it was in regards to a woman adulteress, who they wanted to stone to death, as per the soft Jewish custom. "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." And nobody dared to come forward. They slipped away one after the other. Jesus remained alone with the sinner and gave her forgiveness (and nothing else?).

All of the gluttons left. Because they had all cheated on their wives. Under these conditions, they could say nothing... How can you reproach your neighbor for something you yourself have done?

I could epilogue on this subject: is cheating on your wife really a sin? Does the real crime not consist in, to put it precisely, wanting to lock Love up into a network of stifling constraints and severe and tyrannical regulations? He who commits adultery is simply a man (or woman) who

lacks satisfaction, moral or physiological, and who is dominated by amorous aspirations. He may be making a mistake, and that isn't rare, but that's simply none of our business, he is obeying the great universal push of beings towards pleasure. That's an egoist, surely (and the others, too!). But so long as he respects the personality of his neighbor and he doesn't use deception or brutality to get his satisfaction, why would we have the right to give an opinion—and above all to intervene?

That being said, let's examine now the case of the gentleman or lady who has never sinned—and who will have, by virtue of this fact, the right to through stones at me. One of two things: either they've had the desire to sin; or they have not.

If they never have, they don't know what it is. By what right could they, under these conditions, criticize those who are made differently than they?

Have they felt, on the contrary, the desire to commit a sin? In this case, they must have fought to not follow an impulse they consider to be dangerous (or that was presented to them as such).

This struggle was more or less pitiful and they managed to put on the breaks. This "victory," would it truly be beneficial, either for them or the other? We might allow ourselves to doubt it, but isn't that the question there? Let us rather ask if the fact of achieving mastery over one's own temperament confers the right upon them to demand that their neighbor do the same. Such a reasoning could take us a long way. If they could defeat their urges, it's because they have the strength to do it. So much the better for them (or so much the worse, maybe?). I don't understand how they can get the slightest vainglory from it. And that they can act so arrogantly as to appraise the activities of others. Everyone eats to their own appetite. I won't force anyone to wolf down a meal identical to mine, and I can't allow the ascetic to prevent me from eating or to spit in my plate.

Were this the case, it would be the shrunken, the slow, and the frozen governing the world. Or the hypocrites: those who preach abstinence, chastity, renouncement, and who... stuff their faces in secret. In public they fake disgust. But when they let their instincts take over, they stuff themselves silly!

Yet it would be so simple to let everyone be free. Eat, drink, smoke, sing, play, kiss<sup>4</sup> ... as you wish. Simply avoid bothering others. I will do it as much as I please. I don't want anyone to oblige or to prevent. I will freely choose my time, my diet, my partner. If I go on a diet and I suffer, too bad for me—and I won't go complaining about it to the morose or uptight people I know.

...Not only do they disgust me, moralistic autocrats, but they give me the furious desire, in order to acquire peace and protect my liberty, to send them my foot...somewhere (to warm it up a bit).

Everybody is a hypocrite. The atmosphere forces us to be. Myself just as much as the others. It is nearly impossible to be sincere in every circumstance and with all individuals. You can't always speak the truth, say precisely what you think. You're afraid to displease or to ruffle. So you make it seem like you approve of things that you find repugnant. Such an attitude isn't very dignified. For want of anything better, let's force ourselves to at least be quiet when we can't speak proudly and frankly! Let us loathe the lie. Let us never consent to morally demean ourselves, to reduce ourselves, or to make ourselves clowns. Let's politely avoid that. It will be cleaner.

Elevate man. Always aim higher. Always see something bigger and more beautiful... You giggle? Do you bask in mental mediocrity? Touching mud no longer revolts you? Then you deserve my pity. But allow me, my friend, to disregard your objections. Since when did the blind show the

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<sup>4</sup> *Translator*—See above note on "baiser."

way to those who see clearly? Is he with a plugged nose qualified to say the stink doesn't exist? And will he with a dull brain come to rise up against the big words that he doesn't understand and the noble ideas that are beyond him?

That would be ridiculous—and yet it is apparent every day.

Regismanset was correct to write: “There are people who don't smell bad odors. Likewise, there are those who see no evil”.

And these half-wits have the pretension to regulate healthy, sensitive, virile, normal people...

Braggarts. Seeking to dazzle your fellow man, that's to take him for an imbecile—while devaluing yourself. You've got to have quite a mediocre brain to brag about your professional competence, the size of your biceps, the cut of your pants, the number of your decorations, your successes in sports or your university diplomas. A philosopher knows that the idea of personal merit is contrary to reason, to fraternity: for a philosopher is a determinist before all else.

If I am less intelligent, weaker, not as good-looking as my fellow man, is it my fault? Why does he seek to lower me down further by expressing his superiority in an ostentatious and pretentious way?

Indeed, if the people who only think of making love from morning to night offend me, those who act, sincerely or not, like they despise pleasures of the flesh offend me even more. It's often the Tartuffes, surrendering to the most vile depravities, all the while proclaiming that coitus is filthy. Others are truly chaste. They are the virtue-ass ones, the ass-tere, as I said above. They feel nothing, they desire nothing, and are surprised that other people aren't like them. Never being hungry, they want to prevent me from eating. This pretension strikes me as abusive. If their heart is dried up and their sex is shriveled, too bad or so much the better for them, but may they leave those of their contemporaries who are apt in fornication in peace. These hypocrites are cumbersome bores. They expurgate literature and censor the cinema and the music hall. They ceaselessly rail against the easing of social norms and are continuously occupied with sniffing the rear ends of their contemporaries (women included) to find a place for their... muzzles! Far from saving morality, they make people detest it, by making it hideous, against nature, filthy.

## **Cult of the dead**

I really don't like going into cemeteries. But on the first of November, I never step foot in one, never. It is quite natural to think of those we have lost, but why do it on a fixed date?

You will again find me to be original, not “like everyone else”! My sentiments are not regulated by custom. I do not need to look at the calendar to know if I have to think about the dead today rather than in a week.

I watch them with pity, lugging their pots of chrysanthemums, thousands of automatons moving towards the gloomy places where the dead peacefully rot.

Placing a few flowers on a tombstone is a puerile gesture, but not exempt of a certain poetry—on condition that it's done freely and spontaneously. If the gesture is dictated by routine, it loses, in my eyes, all value.

Think of the living instead! Do your duty to them! Don't wait until they've left this life to express your attachment, patience, kindness... Don't try to acquit yourselves with a few flowers and an annual visit to the mass grave. Your conscience clearly demands little!

How many hypocrites, moreover, in these frivolous masses?



Those who have committed the worst of infamies against the dead—and who would then shed false tears, when he is no longer there...

The flowers that you bring to them, they will simply not see them. In reality, it's not for them that you take them, it's for you—and for the gallery.

Public opinion, that old and tyrannical whore. "I can't have them believing that I don't think of my dead." Always the fear of what will they say.

Let's go less frequently to the necropolises. Let's spend less money on wreaths and other funeral nonsense. Give toys to children instead of building tombs. Learn to live, oh you whose tears well up and who tremble before death, because you are incapable of understanding true grandeur.

## **Life itself**

At times life itself disgusts me. I find it so grey, monotonous, daily... And with no way out. What's the point in fighting so, suffering so, grieving so, since you will have to, soon perhaps (and very quickly, anyway) renounce everything and succumb to death—yet another beautiful repugnance.

Always repeating the same words, and endlessly repeating the identical movements, it's tiring... And some days, the despondency is so great that you fall to bitterness. To the point of surrendering and renouncing everything.

One should not ask too much of life. One shouldn't reflect too much, think too much, dream too much. The demands of the heart and the mind, when they are too big, end up depressing you.

At the base, why do men cling so much to life? I understand it less and less.

They're bored. They suffer. They never stop railing and moaning.

They dream up the most varied and comical amusements and the day after another distasteful binge, they'll say to you "I laughed so hard!"

But they're not fooling anybody. If they manage to dizzy themselves for a moment, sadness and boredom will return shortly...

They hardly enjoy themselves, but they make it seem as if they are interested in many things that are popular, to be like the others, so as not to seem behind.

Okay. I'm a determinist. I know that individuals are the product of a milieu in which they live and after which they are fashioned. It's for this reason that I bear no hatred for them. Disgust, yes. Hatred, no. Because it's not their fault that they are ridiculous, egoistic, jealous and cruel.

The serpent isn't responsible either. It isn't his fault if he was born a serpent and that he possesses mortal venom. They smash him all the same, the serpent.

As for me I don't want to smash or assault anybody. I simply distance myself. I go away to find slightly less polluted air...

## **That which I admire**

An Ignoramus can be as noble as a Savant. A poverty-stricken person can have more pride than a bourgeois. A millionaire can have the mentality of a stooge. That which makes the grandeur of man is his power to say: No! To refuse to do something wrong, any filthy act—no matter how lucrative.

If someone were to give you a million, ten million, a hundred million...would you assassinate your mother? Is it necessary to respond No? Better to say: rather die a hundred times myself that to spill the blood of a human being, to oppress him or to deprive him.

Poverty over shame in my old age! If I deceive my ideal and my friends, I disgust myself.

Those are the men I admire. Those who are incapable of sacrificing their interest in an Idea, in Love, in a noble Goal. If the idea is false, too bad. If the loved one is vile; if the Goal is unattainable; if man abnegates himself for an Error; too bad. Obeying only the sincerity of his reason and his heart; I would consider him, if he is capable of remaining unselfish and poor, among the heroes of our flat world.

March towards the Light... Harm nobody, work for Justice and Reason... Never grovel to a master; refuse all degradations, trafficking and prostitution where the grimacing larva with whom we rub elbows every day wallow... This is the Ideal towards which we must strive, above the Parties and the Sects. Achieve and clean our Conscience. Resist influences from a corrupt environment. Repel all lies and all hypocrisies. What a giant effort to undertake! Arduous effort—and always starting over... Tiresome and disappointing, it's true! But... find me another intelligent reason for continuing to live!!

## To Conclude

*You yourselves cause the evils about which you complain. It is you who encourage tyranny by a cowardly adulation of its power, by an imprudent infatuation of false kindness, by the self-abasement in obedience, by the license in liberty, by the credulous welcoming of every deception. Who will you punish for the faults of your own ignorance and greed?*

—Volney

I've searched. I've tried everything. I've tasted all the fruits. My disappointments were numerous. Money? That trash, for which so many villainies are committed... Glory? notoriety? Reveries of clowns, who think they dazzle the other clowns. Ambition? a puff of smoke. Self-seeking? base-ness. Religion? Pitiful expression of the heebie-jeebies.

I've found only three sources of comfort.

First, Action. Any action, as high and as aesthetic as possible. Put a lot into it. Work. Fight. Are the results paltry? No matter! Action is the savior because it helps us get outside of ourselves.

Science. Study. Enrich your brain. Strive to get to know this mysterious and indifferent world a little better.

Love. Find yourself a beloved. With no other hope but to catch a little sunlight in her eyes and to see her smile. Forget, in a kiss, the darkness of the world and the dullness of life.

No, it isn't true: life does not disgust me. I've always loved it, passionately. Even without illusions, even without hope. I will continue, to my last breath, cherishing, singing praises to ... Life! It is friendship, faithful and disinterested, the rarest flower, but also the most precious. It's the kiss of a beloved woman, the gentle pressure of her pretty fingers, a glance from her clear eyes... To embrace her superb flesh... Forget all the misery in the world in plunging myself into her perfumed hair... Next, take a good book... oh books, those too, I have passionately loved them, much more than men. Old, dusty books, who will never deceive and who comfort with their

wisdom... A good book... a beloved woman... And up there, in the blue sky, an all-white cloud floats by. Thusly, life can be beautiful, if humans were a little less egoistic, a little less mean...

*Abridged from a pamphlet published in 1939*

## **Section Thirteen: Free Sexuality and Naturism**

*For having wanted to give back to civilized man the force of his primitive instincts, for having wanted to free the amorous imagination, the Marquis de Sade was shut up in the Bastille, in Vincennes, and in Charenton for almost all of his life.*

—Paul Eluard, *La Revolution Surrealiste*, December 1926

*Idealists and reformers all become executioners in their turn. The road to Utopia ends with the steps of the scaffold, the endless moment of the guillotine...*

*I spent sixteen years in prison, with only a wooden pole to shove up my ass for a little fun. That and my pen and paper and my imagination. I wanted revenge! I wanted to wreck the world and shit in the ruins! I built a door made of words, escaped through it. I wished blackness and annihilation on my captors, my family, God and humanity. I went into the pit. I showed the rotten face of corruption behind the painted mask of the State. Alone in my cell, I unmade civilization.*

*I let the beast out of the cage to devour a “moral universe” conceived by liars and dissemblers. I exposed the monsters who govern us and make pretty speeches while dining on the entrails of children! And then the Revolution came and I saw the weak become the strong and do in their turn what the strong have always done to the weak. I was sickened. I’m a libertine, yes, but I am neither a tyrant or a murderer.*

—The Marquis de Sade

Since anarchists are focused on self-determination most of the intelligent ones seek to develop themselves as individuals to the highest possible point, freely, in every conceivable direction; to get rid of all dogmas, preconceptions, and prejudices that stand in the way of autonomy and self-rule; to make sure they aren’t bound by false fears or vague culturally-implanted terrors; critically examining all faiths, all beliefs, all shibboleths—political, religious, social, and moral. They strive to make themselves acquainted, so far as they can, with the universe around them, and every known part of it; to grasp what is known of sun, moon, and stars, planet, comet, and nebula; of animal, bird, and fish, tree, herb, and fungus; of ideas and consciousness, and of their own minds and their own bodies. The French anarchists highlighted in this next section didn’t hesitate to probe into any of these subjects—taking nothing for granted, accepting nothing on authority, testing all they’d been told by teacher and preacher, by priests and moralists, and arriving at self-theory that can only be described as hedonistic or libertine. Spurning the unwanted advances of political authority was just intellectual foreplay to many anarchists of this period, who felt an urge for total release from all constraints on the transformation of life. As far as some of them were concerned literature, poetry, painting, sculpture, the beautifying of life by sound and form and word and color, the pursuit of here-and-now pleasure and the liberation of human sexuality were among the most marvelous and enjoyable games of an anarchist, and every bit as relevant as the base-level rejection of the State. Emphasizing the life-affirming, celebratory aspects of Anarchy—the lust for explosive exhilaration—these anarcho-libertines championed the anti-politics of eroticism, not as escapism or disengagement, but as an adjunct to the other spiraling tendrils of an anarchist existence—Anarchy as an ecstatic Saturnalian rite as opposed to a bloodletting battlefield of corpses.

If the period of the attentats could be described as a firestorm of belligerence, then desire, passion, beauty and non-repression were the watchwords of the erotic ethos French anarchists

develop in the coming climax of this collection. Less concerned with the dream of an anarchist future than with the living dream of anarchy, the anarcho-hedonists of the interwar period (1914–1930) saw reflected in the sex-instinct the origin and basis of all that is most graceful, joyful and elevating within the human animal—often referring to the aesthetic sense as a secondary sexual attribute, around which all beautiful art, music and literature perpetually circle as their center. Sometimes their theoretical explorations involved sloppy, amateur forays into mysticism, arcane cosmology and dietary extremism, but in other cases they gave birth to relentlessly, ruthlessly intelligent critiques of authority’s genesis: the ancient despotism of civilization—that great armored deflection that blocks and contorts the life-energy of Eros. Some blossomings—such as Naturism—coalesced into a subculture that operated in parallel to the organizational and syndicalist (i.e., leftist) branches that had come to dominate the “public face” of anarchism; other tenacious pollens like free love came to permeate anarchist circles ubiquitously, at every level and category—both leftist and libertarian—forcing selfproclaimed anarchists to examine the micro-fascism of their own relationships, whether this was a comfortable deconstruction or not. Emphasizing sexuality and primal pleasure to a degree that was appalling to the more frigid, rigid, shriveled and impotent variations on anarchism, these theoretical seedlings broke taboo ground and sprouted shoots that intersected spontaneously with both Dada and Surrealism. Like flowers ready for fertilization, the writings of the camaraderie amoureuse era still exude a powerful and seductive odor. *Joie de vivre!*

# The Naturists: Precursors of Ecology

## Dominique Petit

Political ecology's drift into politicking is currently leading part of the libertarian movement to reinterpret the history of ecology and to discover in it, as if by accident, an unavowable origin in Pétain, indeed, in the Nazis (eco-fascism). This mystification obviously has only one goal: to discredit this entire current. It calls into question many lifestyles and behavior patterns; some libertarians hardly seem ready to leave the reign of "the commodity" behind. This political will to rewrite the history of a movement, the better to fight it, meets with the approval of the politicking majority of the ecology movement, which is hardly going in search of its roots; ecology did not arise in the 1970s, any more than it was invented by Pétain. It came from the libertarian movement, from the anti-scientific current that appeared at the end of the last century among the anarchists. Naturally, this descendance does not suit the politicians of the Green Party, but neither is it to the liking of ecology's detractors in the libertarian movement. According to them,<sup>1</sup> it aims at nothing less than promoting a natural order, legitimizing the idea of a global and totalitarian order, which is supposedly necessary to save the planet.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, right in the middle of the development of the capitalist system, the naturists denounced deforestation, mechanization, civilization and the city. Emerging from anarchism, they dissociated themselves from it by condemning science, which was idolized by most of the revolutionary movement.

## Toward the State of Nature

The naturists were already witnessing the ravages of industrial pollution: "The air is poisoned by chemical effluents and factory smoke... The water is poisoned by the refuse of the cities and the runoff from the fields carries along the stench."<sup>2</sup> For them, "As long as the Artificiality established during the centuries of slavery is considered the basis of the system of life, there will be despoilment, not to mention the continued and worsening degradation of Nature."<sup>3</sup>

Artificiality is the product of "Progress and Science, of which the first decapitates, while the other poisons slowly or brutally; [they] have never aided humanity as much as they have harmed it, since Progress gave rise more and more to new calamities and new murderous engines, either in the form of mechanization or of war materiel: they add Science to it to aid it and we have to fight the two together."<sup>4</sup> What the Naturists call for are the natural conditions of Earth, conditions that ensured the shelter of people and things from the elements and gave food to all by indigenous production, abundant and varied in each region, and which have been destroyed

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<sup>1</sup> See in particular "L'ordre naturel revient au galop" by Philippe Pelletier in the pamphlet *Ordre moral* (Editions du Monde Libertaire).

<sup>2</sup> Émile Gravelle, "L'État Naturel," février 1898 (reprinted in *Invariance*).

<sup>3</sup> Émile Gravelle, "Le Naturien," 1/6/1898 (*Invariance*).

<sup>4</sup> Honoré Bigot, "La Nouvelle Humanité," octobre 1895 (*Invariance*).

or at least severely damaged in the name of purely formal Progress, and with Civilization for an excuse.”<sup>5</sup> “The Naturists want the Earth to return to the state of Nature, namely, natural life without cultivation, total nature.” Agriculture is the source of erosion: “The deforested plain was turned into cultivated fields... Cultivation requires labor, namely the breaking up of the surface soil. When the rains come or the snow melts, the wet earth liquifies, and, because all growing fields are sloped, it runs into the creek, to the river and thence to the river’s mouth, which pours it into the sea... Today, the soil stripped of its covering of foliage is in direct contact with the great Hearth, with rain which falls everywhere on the stripped areas running off quickly; the moistened areas evaporate immediately and the parched vegetation withers and languishes miserably.” Agriculture has also played another harmful role: “In turning the soil with the plow, the network of roots which forms a felt-like covering is torn, and the earth, a crumbly substance, is laid bare.”

Thus, all the slow work involved in development of the humus is undone: “What richness and thickness in this layer of soil, full of phosphate and nitrogen, formed by the falling of leaves over millions of years. And since its surface was covered with plants of all kinds whose roots intermingled and formed a dense network, and with this network keeping the nourishing earth in place, the summer rains, the downpours of storms and the snow melt could run over the soil without removing a smidgen of it.”<sup>6</sup> “In the state of nature, the earth provided in all regions an abundant and varied enough production for anyone and everyone to freely satisfy their needs.”<sup>7</sup> But man could not be content with gathering indigenous plants; he contrived to acclimatize, conserve and propagate non-indigenous plants. “This was the beginning of cultivation. Man had to take special care of this foreign plant which, weakened, would have succumbed if left to itself, under the powerful pressure of the indigenous vegetation. He had to prepare a special patch for it, shelter it, protect it in every way; in a word, he devoted to it a part of his time, that is, his independence... [he had to] turn to the hunter to eat meat, and gave part of his harvest in exchange. Evil appeared with transaction, the principle of commerce.”<sup>8</sup>

*By obliging the individual to work in order to eat, civilization commits an abuse of power. For every person has the right to live without producing, as long as he is content with natural products... In nature, all men are free and independent; property does not exist, because people use things as they are, without making them undergo any preparation or transformation... Only a return to the state of nature will lead to the suppression of property.*<sup>9</sup>

The naturists appeared in Paris in 1894, in the neighborhood of Montmartre. In those days the Butte, with its windmills, its scrub and its fields constituted a veritable village on the outskirts of the capital. But the urban expansion caused by the completely unrestrained development of capitalism did its destructive work on these small islands of nature on the outskirts of the towns. So it is not surprising that the naturists emerged in the context of the resistance of the countryside and nature to urbanization.

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<sup>5</sup> Émile Gravelle, “Le Naturien,” 1/5/1898 (*Invariance*).

<sup>6</sup> Henri Zisly, “La conception du naturisme libertaire,” novembre 1918 (*Invariance*).

<sup>7</sup> Émile Gravelle, “L’État Naturel,” février 1898 (*Invariance*).

<sup>8</sup> Émile Gravelle, “La Nouvelle Humanité,” mars-avril 1897 (*Invariance*).

<sup>9</sup> Henri Zisly, “La conception du naturisme libertaire,” novembre 1918 (*Invariance*).



The movement was launched on the initiative of Émile Gravelle, an anarchist painter and drawer who, starting in 1894, published the paper *L'État Naturel*.

A plan was developed with a view to making a practical demonstration of the naturist idea, by founding a colony in the Cantal, but the plan failed for want of land and money to get it. The paper *L'État Naturel* created a movement of sympathy and curiosity. For two or three years the naturists organized meetings and family evenings to popularize their ideas. Along with the Montmartre group, which held its meeting in the cafés in the rue Blanche or the rue Lepic, a second group formed in the rue St-Antoine at la Bastille. Émile Gravelle, who had published *L'État Naturel*, managed, not without difficulty, to put out four issues of his paper, between 1894 and 1898 and two issues of a satirical broadsheet entitled *Le Sauvage*, in late 1898.

In the course of the same year there appeared *Le Naturien*, an agitational broadsheet, founded by Honoré Bigot, a worker. Only four issues of *Le Naturien* were published. In the meantime, between 1895 and 1898, Zisly and Beaulieu published *La Nouvelle Humanité* (twenty issues).

Due to the propaganda of these various publications, the naturist idea spread throughout France, especially in Bordeaux, Dijon, Le Havre, Limoges, Marseille, Montpellier, Roubaix, St-Nazaire, Toulon, and Tours. In late 1898, the propaganda slowed a little, with some supporters having been separated from each other due to their individual circumstances, but also out of weariness in some cases.

Disputes arose; Alfred Marné, a naturist, dissented and formed a new movement: Sauvagism. The Sauvagists organized a few meetings of a friendly and private nature to spread their new conception. They launched a paper, *L'Age D'Or*, of which only one issue was published. This dissension seems to have spelled the end of the naturist movement, which only continued to exist thanks to tireless and energetic Henri Zisly.<sup>10</sup> In November of 1905, he published the sole issue of *L'Ordre Naturel*, and starting in April 1907 published the magazine *La Vie Naturelle*, which lasted until May 1921. Objective conditions for the lasting appearance of a naturist movement undoubtedly failed to materialize at the time; the damage caused by the capitalist system was not yet irreversible enough. The movement arrived at an impasse: at the theoretical level the naturists always repeated the same ideas without enriching their conception with new discoveries. The militants then tried to realize their aspirations in everyday life. A few tried to live in the wild as savages. For example, Eugène Dufour, who was 23 years old in 1901, moved to live in the woods by the seaside. In 1902, he was in New Caledonia, and in 1912, in Tahiti where he founded the Natura colony. Tahiti was also the place where there lived a remarkable person, Ernest Darling, the "nature man" to whom Jack London devoted a chapter of *The Cruise of the Snark*.

"During his stay in Paris in 1901, he (Eugène Dufour) was present at the naturist meetings and participated in their publications: he spoke there of his experience of natural life and the long periods he spent in the forests, naked, eating only fruit and drinking only water."<sup>11</sup>

From the origins of the movement, the naturists had hoped to create a colony, but the plan never materialized. In February 1898, *L'État Naturel* published a call for a plan for a naturist colony in France. This call, which went unanswered in appearance, actually led to a slow maturation in the minds of the militants. The idea of creating anarchist colonies, free milieus, was part of the spirit of the times. The movement in favor of creating these milieus extended far beyond the naturists, to include in large part the individualist anarchists and even certain communist

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<sup>10</sup> He evolved toward a more eclectic conception which he called neo-naturism.

<sup>11</sup> Tanguy l'Aminot, "Le Naturien" (*A l'Ecart*).

anarchists. In 1902, the plan took shape; the free milieu of Vaux (in the Aisne district) was created by eight colonists, one of whom was the naturist Beylie. He wasn't really able to imbue this colony with a naturist orientation; it had only a distant connection to the ideas contained in the plan of a naturist colony.

### ... To the Naturist Colony

Paradoxically, a militant who did not belong to the naturist movement but who had certainly been strongly influenced by that current was behind the birth of a naturist colony.

On June 14, 1903, Fortuné Henry settled in the woods of Aiglemont in the Ardennes. Fortuné was a longstanding anarchist militant and the brother of Émile Henry who was guillotined during the time of the attentats. After serving a prison term, Fortuné returned to his mother's house in Bévannes, where he spent his time growing medicinal plants. His brother's death left a deep mark on him; for him it signified the failure of the attentats, but he did not renounce propaganda of the deed for all that. One just had to change the means that one employed—the “free milieus” were to be the bearers of this new vision of propaganda by the deed. Fortuné Henry never referred to the naturists, but the care he took to adhere to the broad lines of the plan for a naturist colony that was published in February 1898 is striking. The plan made provisions as follows: *Therefore, to carry out this experiment we need a wooded lot, preferably on rocky ground and with a source of water... Fenced in by us, this lot would be restocked with as many kinds of animals, cattles and other livestock, game animals, various kinds of poultry, as it can support. Artificial shelters would be built for them... We also intend to devote ourselves to beekeeping on a large scale to provide ourselves, abundantly and at no cost, with a precious natural product. If the water at our disposal provides us with the means to do it, we will engage in as many forms as possible of pisciculture [the raising of fish and crayfish, etc.]... Temporary shelters will be set up quickly for them [the animals] and for us; and then, having seen to our most urgent needs, we will be able to begin to build and furnish more comfortable lodgings before winter.*

Fortuné Henry grew attached to the idea of putting this program into practice: the L'Essai colony was situated in a clearing right in the middle of the Ardennes forest on a promontory of schist overlooking the Meuse valley. A stream ran through the plot, full of water. As soon as they could the colonists surrounded the plot with fencing to protect themselves from the incursions of wild animals. In 1904 the colony numbered 90 hens, 50 ducks, 50 rabbits, a cow, a horse, 6 goats, 50 pigeons and beehives. The stables were well ventilated, the concrete floor showed the importance they attached to hygiene; the animals lived comfortably in it. A pond was dug and filled with water with the aim of using it for pisciculture, a breeding project that in the end was never completed. Fortuné built himself a shelter with materials available on the plot: grass, earth and branches, in accordance with techniques used by woodcutters and charcoal-burners. To protect himself from stormy weather, Fortuné Henry wore a tanned animal hide.

With the aid of many colonists, he then built a more comfortable lodging to spend the winter in. This house, with its walls of cob and roof of chépois (a local grass), corresponded perfectly to the dwellings imagined by the naturists. However, Fortuné Henry did not apply naturist theory in matters of cultivation to its full extent: he cleared part of the forest to engage in cultivation and gardening, and though he used natural manure to improve the soil, he did not sow local plants but vegetables instead, and he tilled the soil.

After having thought from the start “that the colony should be built slowly, as and when it is able to provide for its members’ needs,” the Aiglemont colonists adopted a new orientation starting in July 1904. Fortuné Henry launched an appeal for loans in the libertarian press and, with funds received, began the construction of a house of fibrocement and bought a plough. A hectare was put under cultivation (turnips and potatoes). The naturist idea was dispensed with. A new arrival at the colony began to make his mark: André Mounier, nicknamed “the Agronomist,” who was experienced with land and had solid training in modern, that is, industrial agriculture. With his arrival, the colony became a modern farm, if not a model one.

A century ago the naturists had already understood the danger of the destruction of ecosystems, the causes and the consequences of erosion and the central role of humus. For them, the destruction of nature did not begin with industrialization or capitalism, but with the introduction of agriculture in the neolithic era.

The society they aspired to, the state of Nature, corresponded to a return to the time of the hunter-gatherers. This aspiration appears completely fanciful today, but it must be set in its proper context. At the time myth occupied an important place in the social imaginary; it was a time when militants believed in the arrival of the “Great Night” that would clear the way to the ideal society, the communist or anarchist one. In this context, the state of nature was only one of the various utopias used to lend support to everyday life and incite a ferment in militant activity.

*Let us live in, love, experience and protect Nature, but let’s not deify it, or idolize it or raise temples to it or found a new religion based on dogmas suppressed by free minds; let’s struggle for the existence of natural laws, the only laws we accept! And we will be happy, men and women both, for life will be Joy and Happiness and the Earth may be a Paradise and the present-day social Hell will have disappeared with the Civilization—useless, vile and disgusting—that created it. Down with Civilization! Long live Nature!*<sup>12</sup>

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# A Polemic: On Naturalism and the Sexual Question

Pierre Chardon

Translated by vincent stone

*In the first issue of La Mêleé, Pierre Chardon inserted an article by G. Butaud, the well-known vegan, titled "Man Causes Suffering," where this comrade outlines his views on diet and sexualism. Pierre Chardon responded, in the same issue, as follows:*

Our comrade, who has always been a convicted partisan of the simple life, is now evolving towards a more and more absolute naturalism. Yet, I am wary of all absolutes. Man—a living and complex reality—does not let himself be restricted by such rigid principles, without a little arbitrariness and deceit.

I wouldn't dream of denying the utility of a study of truly natural needs. The study of needs is, as our friend says so well, at the base of the economic question.

Just as he, I am persuaded that man will not know his own happiness until he is no longer a slave to a whole host of useless needs, which, more efficaciously than any chains, fix him to his collar of misery.

But I repeat, I am wary of absolutes and systematic generalizations.

Today, all of a sudden Butaud considers the domestication of animals as equivalent to wage labor.

Without a doubt, animals are sentient beings, but man can make use of them without mistreatment. To justify your claims, paroxysmic naturians, you draw examples from nature, in time and space. But who are you to say that beginning at such and such a time man ceased to live naturally. The study of human remains from prehistoric epochs prove that primitive man had already domesticated certain animals, notably the reindeer. This man of the quaternary epoch, was he thus no longer a natural man? Would you address the insult "civilized!" to him?

Personally, I am convinced of the excellence of vegetarianism for many men, but since it is the moral problem that Butaud claims to fully connect to the question of alimentary regime, can he demonstrate for us that vegetarians are morally superior to others? Certain almost exclusively vegetarian races are very cruel, and the Japanese, not to cite only them, have strong warrior traditions.

That meat be an expensive food, and much less nourishing than some claim, that I believe. But it seems excessive to me that he describe it as an immoral and unnatural food.

The vegetarians of the bourgeois class are many. One can follow a very rational dietary regime, drink water, bathe in the fresh air and sunlight, follow very rigorous hygienic routines, and be a perfect exploiter, a tyrant of industry, a merciless judge, a hard and arrogant military leader.

Man today has no teeth or claws, but primitive man could pursue prey. And then when his industriousness put weapons in his hands, his attack organs atrophied, as his once-strong musculature atrophied. There is always a bit of arbitrariness in the interpretation of phenomena that could have taken place in the beginnings. It is probable that primitive man liked to pursue prey, to dig his strong canines into pulsating flesh, to whiff the odor of blood, to drink it, to suck out the brains of his slain enemy, to suck the marrow from the bones of his victim; very much like certain animals, even some which are typically herbivores, like to do, if by chance. It is probable that primitive man—very natural, to be sure—was a bloodthirsty brute, like all brutes, and not an idyllic fruit-eater!

I also believe that Butaud exaggerates much in presenting milk and eggs as unnatural and immoral foods. These foods have the advantage of being complete, to offer our digestive tube—which is not designed to handle the laborious digestion of true herbivores—very nutritious and easily assimilated nutrients in a small volume.

Who would make you believe that it is immoral to eat chicken eggs, to think of letting them be laid for whoever comes along, and to see their eggs swallowed up by all the wild animals who love them... and there are many who do!

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I come now to the sexual question that Butaud treats like an ascetic. Debauchery, like asceticism—I repeat, like all absolutes—are for me equally morbid extremes.

It is no surprise that the sexual act has a great importance in the life of man, for little by little as he progresses, man in his getting close to one of a different sex, does not see in it a simple matter of skin contact—the banal satisfaction of a pressing need—but also a more complete, deeper union in which all of the emotional and sensory forces of a being participate.

Moreover, the definition of debauchery given by Butaud seems to me to be quite narrow. What, is he who changes sexual partners debauched? But, again, in nature, among animals, the family does not exist, so to speak—does nature not then offer us endless spectacles of “immorality!” What must Butaud think when he sees male rabbits from the last litter grown up and mating with their mother, and the father rabbit knock up his female children?

If one must search for guidelines in nature and primitives, it is obvious that the former would hardly incite sexual fidelity and that the latter had all practiced amorous promiscuity.

And why declare carnal or sexual sensations that others feel nonexistent? The domain of reason is impersonal. The domain of sensation is purely personal—subjective.—If Butaud has a cold temperament, what right does he have to establish a rule of living for those whose temperament is opposed to his!

In reality, that which has made art and love rotten is that sordid interest, money! If men create works of art with their personal efforts, alone or in association—without exploiting anybody—would you reproach them for so enriching their lives, and those of others; of augmenting the beauty, the charm of a milieu where their life is happening?

If two human creatures love one another and prove their love, even in having other emotional bonds for that matter, if they claim to possess a sufficient power of love to feed two passions, whose right is it to insult their feelings; if these creatures freely give themselves to one another without the economic constraint?

Economic dependence, modern slavery, which hands over a woman to he who can maintain her, feed her, here is that which poisons love, and all other manifestations of life; but everywhere

where it is conveyed without constraint, spontaneously, you cannot speak of immorality, nor of anti-natural acts.

Clean, natural, is all that does not imply domination, exploitation, constraint. All that is accomplished joyously, freely, through love, is moral.

Despite these critical observations, I am in agreement with Butaud in principal when he claims that the human problem is most of all a moral problem. But we differ on the means. Without a doubt, man must rationally feed himself, flee from artificial stimulation, the causes of degeneration; but this moral problem that preoccupies us is not exclusively and problem of diet. It is a problem of reason, a problem of education.

# The Utopians and the Sexual Question

Émile Armand and Hugo Treni

Translated by vincent stone

A “utopia” (from the greek *ou*, not, and *topos*, place—meaning something that doesn’t exist in any place) is an imaginary land where everything is perfectly organized for the happiness of each person; the utopian is the creator of a utopia, or a supporter of creations of this genre.

In his *Philosophy of Prehistory* (p 101), Gérard de Lacaze-Duthiers maintains that it is “in the sexual realm that morality is the most immoral. Here, most of all, it reveals its bad humor, for if it loathes life, the source of life is unbearable. It peremptorily decrees that what is natural is immoral. And so it leads to countless inconsistencies. It has to make excuses, speak in round-about ways and make compromises so as to appear logical. This only exposes its illogicality with regards to sexual morality. Humanity is slow. It doesn’t know what it wants, it debates in a web of contradictions, it endlessly denies itself. It doesn’t seem to suspect that the sexual question exists, which is the most important of all the questions that preoccupy it. The happiness of individuals, indeed, depends on it. Under no circumstances does it want it to be spoken of: that would mean the end of everything. It resists even more to consider it aesthetically: to look at the work of flesh<sup>1</sup> as a work of art. Oh eternal stupidity, you are the sovereign ruler of this realm. Some minds will never choose to look truth in the face. Humanity is no different from animality. Both have sex organs. They are subject to the same laws. A man is not an abstraction: he has a body. It’s hypocrisy to deny it. So it is necessary that we allow ourselves to permit certain functions, certain acts, though they may not please proper minds, poor minds and poor souls, who only speak of sexual organs in veiled terms, as unspeakable things (...) A sexual ethic is hardly possible in a society that’s only interested in boxing matches and the feats of aviators.”<sup>2</sup>

The utopians—minds who have set down their dreams of societies in writing that, if not perfect, are at least improved or somehow different from the social environments from which they came—wouldn’t dare silently pass over the sexual question, which we also consider one of the most important problems confronting humanity. There is no utopia which, in some way or another, doesn’t offer a solution to the difficulties brought about by love and its fruit, child-bearing.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tr*—*œuvre de chair* is a euphemism for sex.

<sup>2</sup> *Tr*—Armand and Treni quote several texts throughout this article; unless otherwise noted, quotations have been translated from the versions provided in their article in order to allow the reader to clearly understand Armand and Treni’s arguments. In some cases, existing English translations of the texts have been bowdlerized, edited due to the sensibilities of the time, and so do not contain the passages quoted here or contain them in a corrupted form. If one reads the available English edition of *Children of the Sun*, for example, some of the detailed regulations on sex and reproduction have been carefully omitted. Likewise, texts written in English may differ from the original version here to reflect Armand and Treni’s understanding (though originals have been consulted). Curious readers are encouraged to consult original versions when possible.

As the question of sexual relations between a man and a woman have preoccupied all types of thinkers of every epoch: sociologists, artists, moralists, hygienists—each brings a solution which, while being generally applicable, satisfied the temperament of the author.

Thusly this question has been and continues to be a cause for prolonged debates. It is capable of no less than attracting the interest of all thinkers preoccupied with preparing a path toward a better future, who seek a solution that is harmonious with the freedom, well-being and bliss of all. The question preoccupied utopians, inventors of future societies, as did all the other problems of social life, and interested them to a very high degree: its resolution constitutes one of the principle bases of the *raison d'être* of a new life.

...But the solutions are profoundly different, not only with regards to their own epoch, but also, and in particular, when it comes to the preoccupations and the determinism of each author.

All the utopians of the past agree on the abolition of private property; they all even agree on giving work an obligatory character, but when it comes to sexual relations, unanimity on the necessary measures cease.

In his *Republic*, Plato (429–347 before the vulgar era) does not describe the communal sharing of women, but of marriages that are renewed at random every year, such that each woman can have 15–20 different husbands, and every man 15–20 wives. The goal is to obtain, by these crossings, products of superior quality. But it only seems that chance determines these relations; the magistrates, utilizing a patriotic trick, match up the couples so as to obtain the best conditions of reproduction. Additionally, sexual fidelity is mandatory in these temporary marriages.

Children do not know their parents: placed at birth in communal houses, they will be breast fed by mothers who have been turned into public wet nurses; they are given a public education. Knowing neither their mothers nor their fathers, they will consequently be obligated to regard one another as brothers, to have the same filial respect for all men and all women, while all men and all women will have the same paternal or maternal tenderness for all children. The idea is to eradicate, *by these means*, privileged birth, family ambitions, etc.

In his *Laws*, Plato made concessions to the social organization of his times, but he did not take anything away from what he set out in *The Republic*: because the abolition of the family is the necessary condition, the inevitable next step beyond an estate-based community. So, far from disavowing, he wrote: “Whether it already exists today, or should it exist sometime in the future, that women are shared, children are shared, goods of all kinds are shared, and that all measures are taken to remove commerce from life all the way to property itself; such that even things that nature provides to each man become communal to the greatest possible extent... in a word, everywhere that laws aim to render the State perfectly one, one can ensure that it’s to the height to public virtue.” (*Laws*, chapter V).

Diodorus Siculus, in the era of Augustus, spoke of an island on the Indian Ocean that one named Jambol and his friend discovered on a long business trip. They go further than Plato. Marriage was unknown. The communal sharing of women ruled and the children were raised as if they were everyone’s and were loved by all. While they were young, it often happened that the wet nurses traded nurslings, so that women didn’t even know who their own children were. They lacked ambition and lived in peace and harmony.

Diodorus Siculus was not as “utopian” as he appeared. It seems, in effect, that sexual communism was practiced in the Greek colony of Lipara (in 590 before the vulgar era), established on an island north of Sicily. The idea, not only of the communal sharing of women but of sexual promiscuity, was known to antiquity. The Roman government did all it could to stop the mys-



terious series of Bacchanales (186 before JC). The severity of the Senate towards them—the sect comprised of 7,000 members in Rome alone; it carried ramifications in Etruria and in Campania and in all of Italy—shows that outside of the cult of life and death, these sectarians had to, using violence, pursue a social goal, even more so when the Bacchanals were later reestablished.

Writing several centuries after Plato, Thomas More (1420–1481) came out as an uncompromising adversary of bigamy, the organization of his Utopia [sic] being based on the family, and the absolute negation of all sharing of women. In Utopia, the adulterer is seen with the same horror as lepers are today, for example, and if it is discovered, the guilty are subject to the cruelest servitude; in *The City of the Sun*, appearing at the same time as Thomas More's *Utopia*, Plato's thesis is taken up and adopted in part; love is much freer there, and only vices and abnormalities are condemned. For example, in *The City of the Sun*, those who are deprived of the responsibility and the Honor of procreation, such as sterile and hysteric women, have complete freedom to satisfy their senses: women, once they've become sterile, are immediately transformed into women at the disposition "of all;" except, they are only given to the most passionate men, whenever it best pleases them.

Campanella, who for that matter is more utopian and authoritarian than Thomas More, shows himself to be much less intransigent and more understanding of certain anomalies of the human being than More in sexual matters: he thus concedes ample liberty to them. According to the laws in effect in *The City of the Sun*, a man should begin to have relations with women at the age of 21. But "this date is slowed by lymphatic temperaments and it is permitted for some individuals to have sexual relations with women before that age, but only with those who are pregnant or sterile, in order to prevent them from giving into the practice of 'anti-natural vices.'" Which indicates in Campanella a profound knowledge of man. His conception of sexual relations is far more advanced than the customs of his times and even of our own. The question of procreation plays a big role in *The City of the Sun*; it goes into the most intimate of details with an extremely rigorous care. More than in other utopias, it pays attention to the inevitable differences in temperament between individuals; there are exceptions to common laws, conceding more liberty to the most ardent. "Old women and matrons will provide for the needs of the more passionate and the most inclined to the pleasure of love. They will receive the secret confidences of young men whose ardent temperaments they have seen during the olympic games. Notwithstanding this, the opinion of the magistrate appointed to the care of procreation is always required."

As for another utopian, Morelly, monogamy is the law in his ideal city, as governed by *The Code of Nature* (1755), everyone being obligated to marry.

His conjugal laws prescribe that once one has reached the age to marry, the residents of the city will marry and that none shall be excluded from this law unless nature or health opposes it. The celibate shall not be allowed to anyone under the age of forty, for after this age progeny are of poor quality. This idea is not new. It can be found as far back as Plato. In his Republic, abortion is prescribed to women who conceive after the age of forty, as children coming into the world thusly do not promise to be of vigorous health. This particular preoccupation of procreation, of mothers giving birth to beautiful and strong children is quite understandable in utopians; they are seeking high-quality, robust, intelligent citizens for their imaginary cities, something completely different from that which surrounds them. Since the majority of utopians are authoritarians, they turn to laws, so that everything be done according to prescribed rules, rules which, according to them, will guarantee the desired results.

But among all of the utopians discussed up to this point, it is still Campanella who spent the most time on and amply studied this question. He feels very much like a poet and son from the country of the sun.

One can compare him to William Godwin (1756–1836), a cold and reasoning mind, who has an austere conception of love, deprived of all the fantasies with which poets are wont to adorn their hypotheses. In the ideal city William Godwin dreamt up, love is and should be deprived of all useless sentimentalism. As with other questions, reason must play the biggest role. Its rites are not celebrated, as in Campanella, with flowers and song, but according to a reasoned and positivist formula. It isn't like walking in a funeral procession, certainly, but rather in an austere service. The law states that love should have the most liberty, without suffering, forced unions or fixed cohabitation. The lover must be able to respect the silence of her partner ... Two people, in one lodging, forever, that is an idea that appalled Godwin and filled him with horror. Moreover, in his city, there are neither locking doors, nor padlocks, and yet dwellings are inviolable.

In his social conceptions, such as they are developed in *Political Justice (The Enquiry concerning Political Justice and its influence upon general virtue and happiness*, London, 1793), Godwin demonstrates his resolute opposition to centralized and caserne communism<sup>3</sup> conceived by the likes of Thomas More, Campanella, Morelly, and many others. He fights tyranny, sketches the plans for a new society, economically governed with more justice than we have today, but he enters this arena first and foremost in order to attain maximum freedom. In love, he is for plurality. According to him, in the environment he foresees, love will take the place of friendship between men and women; men will love women for their virtues and the quality of their intelligence. No form of jealousy can arise among different "friends" of a woman when sexual relations are seen as void of intelligence. The idea was very harshly fought by several of the critics of his ideas and social conceptions of life, but especially by Malthus in his famous *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, in which he remarked that were love thought of and practiced in this manner, the earth would promptly be populated by in numbers whose needs would quickly outstrip its means of existence. Godwin responds to these critiques in a book: *Of Population*, which was very poorly received by certain reactionary clans, precisely because of the deep critiques it makes of malthusian theories. These discussions had nothing to do with, for that matter, the subject at hand. Godwin claimed that the extreme perversion of mores which are seen in sexual relations between men and women are a result of their not being bonded by the purest of affections. In reality, in the future society, in the same way that men eat and drink, not for love of the table, but because eating and drinking are necessary for health, they will propagate, not for the pleasure that is granted by the sexual act, but because it is necessary that humanity perpetuate itself. The work of procreation will be governed by reason and duty. Men will not create more than the desired number of children; if fewer children are necessary, they will thusly adjust procreation. Because one day, men could achieve immortality...

After this brief account of the various ideas that certain thinkers have expressed with regards to love and its regenerative function, let us consider in more detail how these utopias apply the rules regarding love and procreation.

Thomas More does not dwell so much on the forms of marriage in effect in Utopia. He said: "Young women will be able to marry at age 18 and young men after having reached age 20." The

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<sup>3</sup> *Tr—Communisme casernier* is a term that appears in individualist texts that characterizes communist societies/ utopias as quasi-militaristic—society is enclosed in casernes or barracks.

marriage will be held under well-established rules. To choose a woman, for example, the young men present themselves to their prospective spouses through an honest and solemn woman: "The future fiancée, single or widowed, is presented naked and, reciprocally, a man of proven integrity presents the future fiancé, completely unclothed, to the young girl."

These precautions are taken because, in Utopia, marriage is taken very seriously. "When you purchase a horse, even one of little value, you take infinite precautions. The animal is almost naked, which doesn't prevent you from lifting the saddle and other harnesses, as they may prevent you from seeing an ulcer. And when it's a matter of choosing a woman, a choice that will influence the rest of your life, which can make your happiness or misery, you show the greatest indifference! How can you make an indissoluble union to a body covered by clothing that hides it; You would judge a woman by a space of one foot in dimension, since the face is the only uncovered spot? Are you not worried you'll discover some secret deformity, which will make you curse this unhappy union for the rest of your days?"

Adultery is severely punished and even, in the case of repeat offenses, punishable by death. A pure and simple divorce is excessively difficult to obtain. "It may happen from time to time in Utopia that husband and wife cannot live together, resulting from the incompatibility of their characters, and seek union with others who could offer them a more sweet and easy life. The request for separation must be presented to members of the Senate who, after having carefully examined the request (assisted by their wives) reject or authorize the divorce." In truth, marriage is almost always terminated by death. The Utopians know that to entertain the hope of easily re-marrying is not a good way to strengthen the bonds of conjugal love.

Anyway, they are strictly forbidden from letting themselves get carried away by their feelings. "Individuals of the two sexes guilty of having given into pleasure, before marriage, will be subject to severe censure; they will be absolutely prohibited from marrying; and their parents, also, will be punished, because they did not sufficiently watch over the conduct of their children." This severity should not surprise us in the least if we reflect on the form of the society governing the whole island: an extremely austere patriarchy, where all life revolves around the central core, the family unit. To maintain that, social relations must be restricted to such a degree that the form of government remains intact; otherwise, it would be destroyed, and quite quickly. All of the restrictions cited here aim to achieve this.

The City of the Sun has a completely different point of view.

The sole preoccupation that reigns in sexual relations is, as in Sparta, the procreation of beautiful and strong children. "The required age for the union of the two sexes for procreating is 19 for females and 21 for men." As we have seen above, there are conceptions that favor the most vigorous, sexually speaking; all of those who have managed to abstain from cohabiting with women until the age of 21 and if possible until 27 "are publicly celebrated, they are sung hymns in the large assemblies and public celebrations are dedicated to them..." The youth of the two sexes is dedicated to gymnastic exercise, completely naked, after the Lacedaemonians. The magistrate can then take account of the respective vigor of each individual and will be able to determine who is suited to one another with regard to the proportion of sex organs. One is only allowed to give oneself over to the pleasures of love once every three nights, and only after having bathed. There is one rule, and that is to unite women who are noteworthy in temperament or beauty with big and vigorous men—and the corpulent are matched with the thin, so as to, by grace of this crossing, improve the race.

It is surprising to see how Campanella is preoccupied, even in the most intimate of details, with mating. “Individuals designated to fulfill the duty of procreation cannot give themselves over until having properly digested their meal. One will take care to place him in a habitation where there are beautiful statues of great men around the bed, so that the women can contemplate them, turning their eyes to to sky, asking God to give them such sons. The mother and father will sleep in separate habitations, until the designated hour of cohabitation; and, at precisely this moment, a matron will come and open the doors of communication.” The three days of abstinence only applies when it’s a matter of procreation; otherwise, this period is unnecessary. “If after the first intercourse, a woman does not conceive, she will pass successively into the arms of other males; if after several attempts, it is found that she is infertile, she is declared a shared woman; but she is then deprived of the honors accorded to housewives at the Reproduction Council, at the temple and at the public table.” All this to prevent the pleasures of love from pushing women to become deliberately infertile.

Among the utopians of the renaissance, Campanella is the only one who had the greatest conception of love, but he only considered union between the two sexes for reasons of procreation—everything was subordinate to that: physical constitution, temperament, etc... No one can deny that Campanella and similar utopians were precursors of eugenicists. Eugenics is not a new idea. Greek antiquity, in particular, was preoccupied with the question of the quality of human products; beyond developing peak physical fitness, it seems that they believed that the spectacle of the naked body, be it au naturel or represented, influenced the creation of beings. Without a doubt numerous statues edified in the cities, in gardens, woods, on roads, were intended to create a state of mind favorable to the procreation of beautiful children. Christianity, with its disdain for the human body, its exaltation of chastity and virginity, its debasing of the sex act, is responsible for the fact that people now focus on clothing in the way they once did on the naked body. Our current eugenics, despite its scientific exterior, is not as liberated as it seems from the prejudice of Christian “purity.” We repeat, some of the preoccupations of the author of *City of the Sun* are not original, as the Lacedaemonians also employed means developed to obtain strong and vigorous human products, but Campanella was not able to incorporate their love of freedom—no more than the Carpocratians’ point of view which seems to have inspired him—to imagine his utopia. Among the Carpocratians, a sect founded at the beginning of the second century of the vulgar era by Carpocrates and his son Epiphanes, Christian teachings were taken to such an extreme that an absolute communism reigned. They practiced the sharing of goods and of the sexes. It was customary among them, when they had a guest, that their partner offered herself to him. But in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, even though the mores were free enough, especially among the rich classes, one never would have allowed, even in works of fancy, the propagation of ideas such as those of the Carpocratians. That is why the authors of those times were very meager with regards to the sexual question. And it is also due to the fact that they accepted the religious idea that considers marriage to be indissoluble and as the only form of union permitted between a man and a woman.

As for Morelly, who in many other subjects, was one of the most audacious innovators, a demolisher incarnate of conventional lies, he only repeated what his predecessors had already said on the topic.

In his *The Code of Nature*, we find a set of conjugal laws intended, according to the author, to prevent all excesses. Here is what they prescribe, among other things:

*At the beginning of each year celebrations of marriage are held. The young people of both sexes will gather together and, in the presence of the City Senate, each young man will choose the young woman who pleases him the most and, after having obtained her consent, will take her for his wife.*

*The first marriage will be indissoluble for a period of ten years; at the end of the time, divorce will be permitted, either at the request of both parties, or at the request of one.*

*The reasons for divorce will be presented in the presence of the heads of family of the united clans, which will seek reconciliation by every means possible.*

*Once divorce is declared, the separated persons cannot remarry for a period of ten months. Before this time, it will not be permitted that they see or speak to one another; the husband will remain in his family clan and the woman will return to hers. They cannot negotiate a reconciliation except with shared friends as intermediaries.*

*Divorced persons cannot remarry with someone other than their ex-spouses for a period of one year after the pronouncement of the divorce, after which time they will not be permitted to re-marry one another.*

*Divorced persons cannot remarry with persons younger than themselves, or of an age below that of the person from whom they have separated. Only widows and widowers will enjoy this freedom.*

*Persons who have already been married cannot remarry with young people who have never been.*

(We quote these excerpts from a Spanish text, not having a French one at hand.)

Morelly's "Code" constitutes a little progress on the utopians who came before him, especially on More. It concedes a certain freedom of choice to men. To find a more sensible, more spontaneous, less codified conception of love, one must turn to William Morris—and to his work, *News from Nowhere*.

In truth, one must skip two centuries to get from Morelly to William Morris, and we are neglecting a large number of thinkers who, in this interim, helped to evolve these ideas. With William Morris, we are in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The social movement is born, asserting itself more each day, the utopia of yesterday is about to become, tomorrow, a reality. Women, whom no one took into consideration, or were considered as an incidental object, are considered not only in theory, but even in practice, as an equal to man. With man, and as much as him, she participates in the development of social life. This fact must have influenced the ideas of thinkers and artists of the time.

Morris thus imagined future life as a poetic harmony of independent but complementary human faculties, where the freedom of each found its full blossoming in the freedom of all.

*So if—explains Morris's mouthpiece—a greatgrandfather—we have ceased to be commercial in our matters of love, we have also ceased to be artificially foolish. Folly coming from nature, man's imprudence resulting from immaturity, or the older man caught in a trap, we put up with that and we aren't ashamed of it; but as for being conventionally sensitive or sentimental... I believe that we have rejected some of the follies from the old world... At least if we suffer tyranny or inconsistency resulting from our nature or our*

*own lack of experience, that will not make us grimace, or lie. If there should be a separation between those who thought they would never separate, let them separate; but there must not be any pretext for union, when the reality of it has vanished; no more than we force those who know that they are incapable of professing an undying sentiment that they cannot truly feel; this is how the monstrosity of venal pleasure is no longer possible, so it too is no longer needed...*

Another writer, Joseph Dejacque, published an Anarchist Utopia in 1858 in which the question of love plays a very important role in the formation of his paradisiacal society. The men who live there are completely content because the most complete liberty reigns. Man and woman, in loving one another, obey no law, can love when they like, as they like and whoever they like. Complete freedom everywhere. No convention or legal contract binds them. Attraction is their only chain, pleasure their only rule. Yet love is stronger and is shrouded in more decency than among the civilized. People savor the mystery surrounding free alliances, which gives them an ever renewing charm. It is considered an offense to the chastity of mores and a provocation to jealousy to enjoy the intimacy of sexual love in public. Everyone, in public, would exchange tender regards, the regards of brother and sister, shining with the most vivid love. The glimmer of passion would only shine in secret, like the stars, those chaste glimmers, in the somber blue of night.

Monogamy isn't obligatory either, although loving only one, the perpetual love between two hearts based on a reciprocal attraction may be the supreme bliss of lovers, the pinnacle of sexual evolution; that is the radiating fire toward which tend all peregrinations, the apotheosis of the human couple, happiness at its zenith. But, according to Dejacque, every man, like every woman, can have several lovers and vice-versa, and there would be no harm done, since each would follow his or her own instinct, as no one shares the same temperament, and, consequently, no one feels the same needs. A man could love a woman for one reason, and another for some other motive, and vice-versa. In a society where such broad freedom and tolerance reigned, all forms of jealousy would be unknown, as would be the villainies that have reduced love to a base mercantilism and which reign in contemporary society. People buy and sell love; people buy and sell kisses, like they buy and sell bodies, depriving love of all its enchantment and beauty, reducing it to a vile and repugnant thing.

Any society, as any tree, can only produce the fruit that the soil feeding it allows. A society, whose roots dig deeply into boggy earth, can only produce bitter and rotten fruit, and this goes for love and all the rest.

So, to end this quick account of solutions regarding the sexual question offered by the most well-known Utopians, here is a review of those proposed by other writers or novelists who have guided their readers through the countries of their imaginations:

In *History of the Sevarites* by Denis Vairasse d'Allais (1677), a utopia unfolds in the Terra Australis in which monogamy reigns, though it is tempered by all sorts of dispositions favorable to polygamy and polyandry. People are free to choose their spouses, but marriage is obligatory. It's up to the young girls to propose conjugal union, but the young man has the right to refuse. If a young woman is repeatedly refused, she has the right, as a counter-measure, to demand to be the wife of one of the high functionaries of the State, who are polygamous and according to their rank can have anywhere from two to twelve wives. Finally, the Sevarites permit, after mutual consent, the exchange of spouses.

Fourier (1830) demands absolute sexual freedom for both sexes, which is to say the elimination of marriage and its replacement not only by free unions, but also by a veritable promiscuity of the sexes... In the future society “All women can simultaneously have, if she wishes and public opinion has no issues with it: 1—a spouse; 2—a genitor for bearing children; 3—a favorite with whom she will live; 4—simple lovers.” Of these four categories, the first three will have a legal character, the fourth will not be officially recognized.

Cabet (1848), in his *The Voyage to Icaria*, knows the importance of the question. “The young Icarians, considering marriage to be the paradise or the hell of this life, only accept a spouse when they perfectly know someone, and in order to achieve this, they will see one another for at least six months, and often, beginning at birth and for a long time, since the young woman will not marry before the age of eighteen, and the man not before twenty,”—Cabet permits divorce, but he sees marriage and conjugal fidelity as the bases of order in the family and the nation, as the Republic guarantees everyone an excellent education, a sure existence, and ease of marriage. It stigmatizes celibacy, and declares that (unmarried) cohabitation and adultery to be inexcusable crimes.

In his *Freiland*, Herzka writes this: “The bond of marriage legally rests on the free and exclusive consent of the two spouses, since in the Free Land, no one can be forced into anything that falls into the sphere of rights of another. And since here, no law is held against anybody under any circumstance, marriage would be a free contract which can only be formed with the consent of the two parties, but which can also be broken by the will of one alone. There will be no exceptions to this rule, even in the case of children: the children will always belong to the mother, should she consent to another arrangement.”

The two following excerpts will allow us to understand the point of view of Paul Adam, when he wrote *Letters from Malaysia* (1898):

*Here, a woman will no more refuse her body to a man any more than where you're from would she refuse a greeting. It's a gesture of courtesy that we grant very graciously and to which we attach no more importance... People reproduce when they feel like it and with whomever asks them to, just like you eat across from a stranger on the train, or share a cab with a stranger. The free sharing of erotic sensations destroys the desire for ownership of the lover*

In *In the Land of Harmony*, Georges Delbruck adopts the system of obligatory reproduction. The people of this country—the Deoniens—refer to themselves as “gods” and “goddesses” in honor of the founder of their nation, of whom they are all descendents. There

*one can love without procreating, just as one can procreate without loving. Love is a state of the soul, procreating is a duty of the State... We never impose on a person's will and a young woman's rejection must be respected, but the goddesses are too patriotic to consider for a moment to dispute the choice of the Faculty, knowing that this choice has been long and carefully studied. For that matter, the procreation of the goddess with a god implies no bond, no chain. The population shall not exceed the given and stable number of inhabitants and the daily hygiene practices will render the goddesses infertile. To become mothers, they must renounce this.*

In Han Ryner's *Pacifists*, a sage named Makima speaks:

*Love is not a flat and uniform land. Many get attached to the first body that draws them toward happiness and who teaches them the pleasures of the flesh. The causes of discord that tear apart your relationships simply do not exist here. But how many men and women love change! How many constantly think they see a greater joy on the other side! Many Atlantians... quench almost all of their thirsts in the same stream. Others spend the better part of their lives flying in all directions, landing on all branches, tasting all of the fruits, drinking all the waters, sleeping curled up on every lawn. Love also knows the sedentary and the travelers”.*

Masson, in his *Utopie des Iles Bienheureuses* (Utopia of Blissful Islands) gives his account as if he were informing a traveler—

*Our young women want to be mothers as soon as their organs are fit for it. Their children belong to them. They feed them with their milk: or even, if she wishes, another woman may offer to nurse and raise their children. As for jealousy... our humanity is not exempt of any truly human evil. But here there are accidents which diminish in number and gravity day by day. Should two young men fall for the same girl, or two young girls have the same lover! It's quite simple! The young girl gives herself to the two boys if that's what she wants, or they want; the two young girls to the boy if that pleases them and pleases him.*

Wells, in *Men Like Gods* (1926) resolves the problem this way:

*In Utopia, no one will constrain men and women to live in indissoluble couples. Most Utopians will see these as inconvenient. Very often men and women whose work brought them close together, were lovers and kept very much together. [...] But they were not obliged to do that.<sup>4</sup>*

In her communist Utopia *Une Nouvelle Vie* (A New Life) (1933), Madeleine Pelletier explains that the word “cheat” had lost its sense long ago.

*Sexuality has ceased to be the forbidden fruit that is eaten in secrecy. Everyone admitted that love was a natural need, less fundamental than hunger, but that there was no reason to condemn it. They acknowledged that prudence, however, was indispensable to public discipline: the public manifestations of love were forbidden. Enclosed in their home, everyone could have the sex life that pleased them, even pederasty and sapphism were permitted, only rape and the seduction of children below the age of fifteen were forbidden.*

We cite, for the record, the novel by Fernand Kolney: *L'amour dans cinq mille ans* (Love in 5000 years) (1910). He imagines a society in which passions, desire, and love have been eliminated. Child rearing takes place scientifically. Unfortunately, there was a mistake in the embryos, such that there is a return of sensual pleasure, etc. and the experiment fails. This novel and others in this genre differ from the others we've dealt with here.

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<sup>4</sup> Tr—From original version of *Men Like Gods* published in 1923.



From everything discussed here, can we deduce a general theory of future sexual relations? We see that the evolution of the answers offered by these Utopians are oriented toward the disappearance of sexual proprieties and it is likely that this will be one of the principle characteristics of free societies of the future. Really, it's of little importance. The members of societies to come will resolve the sentiment-sexual question relative to the mentality of their time and it does not seem as if the problem will be resolved so long as amorous romanticism and sexual exclusivity persist. To avoid being a hindrance or an obstacle to the liberation of human freedom, the erotic question cannot occupy a special place, superior in relation to other necessities of the physical organism, nor other quests for pleasure.

Our solution—which wants all emotional relationships, sentimental or sexual, to transform the search for erotic joys into relations of pure camaraderie, that their aim be of lasting or temporary associations or pacts—puts aside all fears of the dangers posed by this issue. Integrating sexuality into the normal framework of relations of good camaraderie frees it of its unanalyzable and mystical character, eliminates jealousy and prevents monopolization, to the benefit of the wholeness of a being's body which, otherwise, could know the variety of sensations and refinement of amorous pluralism. We feel that practiced according to the situation, our solution would strengthen the bonds of emotional camaraderie wherever it be adopted and that it will procure more happiness in the societies where it is realized. It is, for that matter, of all times and all places.

# de Sade Introduction

E. Armand

Translated by vincent stone

## Before we set out

With this journal begins the second series of six supplements of *The Unique* which ended with issues 120–121. I would like to thank—and I can't thank them enough—those who have taken an interest in this project and have allowed me to see it through. I regret however the silence of certain ex-believers who subscribed to *The Unique* and who have received these Supplements, kept them from the beginning, without giving us the slightest sign of life.

Addressing the “affinitied members” I don't have to remind them of the difficulties we've had to overcome: age, mediocre health, capabilities reduced due to work and having to move—the same goes for my partner, without the help of whom it would have been impossible for me to devote myself to any task demanding some degree of continuity. These details will be of use to those affinitied who understand my obstinacy in refusing myself to fully retire—and not to those who are indifferent, few of whom give us any sign of their opinions.

Our goals stay the same: being satisfied with limited and semi-regular releases, offered to those who liked *l'en dehors* and “l'Unique,” of sixteen or twenty-four page journals (and in a format permitting cardstock) containing texts that are newly translated, excerpts from authors that have been forgotten or aren't well known, reprints of lectures given at our meetings, or finally reprints of past publications that, according to us, are worth looking back on by my current fellow travelers.

We don't claim perfection... We do not even know how much longer we can hold on... Finally—and alas—there is the question of necessary funds to publish these Supplements. So, if our effort doesn't interest a certain number of those who will be receiving these journals, they should let us know directly and save us the trouble. Thank you in advance.

15 October 1957

# The Real De Sade<sup>1</sup>

*Lecture at the "Friends of É. Armand" Center, July 7, 1957*

If, akin to the fabled phoenix, the deceased Marquis de Sade were to be reborn from the ashes, borrowing an ironic smile from Voltaire, who he admired, he could sit and contemplate the most perfect justification for his pessimistic views upon examining our wise and depraved humanity.

Never has the critical mind been more lucid, more clairvoyant in revealing the true depths of human nature, and it is that de Sade that one should know, the real de Sade, the realist writer who dared, in the face of a social class terrified by his verist truths, to depict his brothers as he saw them and in spite of the hypocritical ethics with which they masked their behavior.

Minds of this quality horrify reactionary souls as well as those who, studying his writings, sought to discover something other than his own thought in them, though he strove to make himself clear throughout his most striking writings.

For some interpreters of his genius, it was absolutely necessary that the divine marquis be a reckless monster, a roguish writer, a sex maniac; or that, even despite his writing, or contrary to his writing, a sort of thinly veiled moralist in his real life, distilling some subtle ethics that must be known with the aid of an erudite and penetrating interpretation.

And yet, de Sade, such as his thought has appeared to me in the works that established his shining reputation, is nothing of the sort and never so much as sketched an ethic of any nature. He was a Voltairean pamphleteer, a man who decided to say what he thought about his contemporaries.

Few commentators, except Georges Bataille, have explained the mystery of this long and interminable justification for cruelty. They slip over this aspect of his argument, as if it were totally natural to garnish a dozen books with such terrifying invention, sprinkled with philosophical reflections, many of which are contradicted a few pages later. They have argued that his long incarceration was the determinant cause of this rather rare literature, while many other prisoners have been subjected to one more painful than his and produced nothing of the sort. And for that matter this still does not explain why his eroticism is so deliberately repellent.

It also doesn't explain why he passes, without transition, from one idea to its complete opposite—and through the mouths of his puppets, mixes the wisest, the most penetrating, and the most logical philosophical dissertations with the most extravagant psychological theories, closely brushing past truth all the while.

Where is the Marquis' real idea in these grand-guignolesque accounts?

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<sup>1</sup> Donatien Alphonse François, Marquis de Sade was born in Avignon on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1740. Among his ancestors was Laure de Sade, the woman Petrarch illustrated in his sonnets (14<sup>th</sup> century). He belonged to a family of true gentlemen, military and ecclesiastic for the most part, of whom most were scholars; he studied at Lycée Louis-le-Grand, where he left, according to J. Janin, the same year that Maximilien Robespierre entered. François de Sade spent 27 years of his life in prison, in particularly at Vincennes, at the Bastille, and at Bicêtre. Finally interned at the insane asylum in Charenton, he died on December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1814 at age 72. We have no authentic portrait of the "divine marquis."

In my opinion, nowhere in his more or less reprehensible erotic descriptions. His detractors have dwelled on this part of his writing, and, only able to see the atrocities, they distorted an understanding of his theory of evil, which was a veritable accusation against the celebrated universal order whose destructive mechanism he demonstrated.

It was easy, and quite comfortable, to draw attention to the erotic antics of his accounts and to evade the terrible truths of this pitiless critic. Thusly he can be condemned for affronting public decency, but can he be condemned for affronting truth, he who depicts nature and man—and the product of his imagination, which is to say the phantom God—in their indisputably genuine aspect of ferocity and evil?

De Sade is an accuser, and a formidable one.

But he is no moralist; there is deliberately no ethic in his stories, for an ethic can only aim for optimistic ends and orient man to harmonious realizations. Which is not the case with him. He's a destroyer, an outlaw, an exception.

I will attempt to demonstrate that the core of de Sade's thought hinges on the problem of evil; that his erotic cruelties are nothing but antics without any significance, easily comparable to the exploits of Rabelais' Brother Jean of Entomeures; that the horrors are simply de Sade's explosive reaction against social hypocrisy, a reaction determined solely by his incarceration; that this combative literature reflects the angst he felt and that he charged headlong into ideas and acts without regard to unity or coordination; which indisputably demonstrates that he cared not for any moral aim, but that this extravagant looting, these excursions into the psychology of beings, his judicious observations led him to discover many truths, banal today, but prophetic in his time.

He can be credited for the rather exact description of conditioned reflexes that transform, by association, pain into pleasure—the ravaging effects of overpopulation, or the necessity to balance all populations with available food resources—the diverse influences of sexual passions on individual behavior—the prominent role of egoism, making each living thing a unique being, alone against all. And all this well before the Darwins, the Pavlovs, the Malthuses, the Freuds, the Le Dantecs. What an ardent genius this marquis was to have surreptitiously strewn, in these monotonous abominations, these grains of truth, unacknowledged in his time! Whether he was inspired by Plato's Republic, the Man-Machine of Le Mettrie, Holbach's System of Nature, the Voltaires, the Rousseaus, the Diderots, the Encyclopedists—that they all contributed to the formation of his materialist and atheist philosophy, that much is certain: but how to explain this sudden virulence, the aggressiveness, this charge that at base was against everything his contemporaries, with a certain reserve, still respected?

That his detention made the powder keg explode, that much is obvious, but still, that powder keg had to exist beforehand, the prison didn't create it. Long before his arrest, De Sade's ideas ripened, he noted the ferocity of the struggle for life and came to understand the double determination of the individual—hereditary determination and learned determination—he also understood the isolation of each individual enclosed in its subjectivity, in its incommunicable consciousness, making each person an exception, a unique, a conqueror, a being who is naturally, and at its origins, without faith and without law.

Thus Sadist thought begins with a solid foundation: the existence of evil, the destruction of all things, the struggle of all against all. No doubt he would have continued with this were it not for his arbitrary imprisonment. But picture this man as accustomed to freely expressing himself, surrounded by epicureans, believing neither in God nor the Devil, a skeptic, a man of reason, a

bon vivant, suddenly deprived of his freedom, of his friends, his sexual fantasies, of everything that made him who he was and already biased him against human malice and the perversity of all existence. That's when his rage burst out: he took vengeance, he vomited atrocities, he took relief in painting his peers in the blackest colors; he brutalized grace, massacred innocents, tortured virgins and the naïve, ridiculed virtue, martyred phantoms and through all of the discordant voices of his stunning characters, he put his race, and even the universe, to trial.

It's gigantic, unreal, unbelievable, monstrous, it surpasses Rabelais. It's at once tragic and caricatured. It is the drama of existence itself.

To only see erotic jokes and cruelty in this strange work is to misunderstand the nature of the divine Marquis. In reality, he was a very honest, good man; he proved this by saving his principal torturer, the president of Montreuil, from the guillotine, and he showed it again with his moderation during the Terror. And it's enough to read his criminal descriptions to understand the vengefulness, the rancor, and even a certain tendency to mystify the reader. For this good marquis recounts all of this in such a way that he makes more use of antics than pangs of horror.

These victims who get cut up in a thousand ways without ever passing away and who survive so that the narrator can stretch the scene to the extreme limits of his fantasy: these passive puppets who get cut into slabs just as in a butcher shop, these inexhaustible, stupefying, excessive, monotonous and boring erotic and scatological exploits—none of it can be taken tragically or seriously.

How could you not immediately discern the enormity of these scenes, their impossibility, the unlikelihood, for all the grotesqueness in them, the desire to stun, offend, shock, and terrorize the unknown but potential readers? Everything in this literature reveals the writer's care to overwhelm, to scandalize the day's opinion and to spit truths at it. Ideas spring up tumultuously, without unity, without order, sometimes one scene in opposition to another. His dishonest, lazy, and deceitful characters all flounder in the same horrors, cheat each other in kind, despite their fraternity in crime and, casually killing one another, never achieve justification for anything. His interminable erotic tirades, constantly beginning anew, take place between two philosophical discourses that are estranged from the action, can continue indefinitely without introducing the slightest innovation to what has already been said. Finally the care of presenting virtue, beauty, innocence, and purity constantly martyred by the cynical villains, and above his whole extraordinary theory of evil which is inevitably tied to the existence of everything that is, this all demonstrates that he flaunted all these monstrosities at his contemporaries to serve as a mirror, without ethical or moral intention.

Had he been a moralist, he avoided demonstrating law and religion in opposition to crime, which would have done a considerable favor to the two bêtes noires that he fought. And otherwise, he would not have developed his maxim: DO UNTO OTHERS WHAT YOU WOULD NOT HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU, a maxim adopted by all humans and which denotes a penetrating objectivity on the part of our author, but which doesn't lead to anything constructive and immediately clashes with the human instinct of self-preservation.

But in place of a constructive ethic he did, amidst his dissertations, demonstrate the perfidy, the imposture and the lies of social and religious conventions, the insignificance of humanity in the face of cosmic forces, and gave a sinister interpretation of human behavior that is strongly inspired by reality.

It is impossible to cite all of the really interesting passages of his works but the few following excerpts will clarify the essential points. First, here is a Voltairean aspect of his atheist flair on the subject of Christ:

*One might picture celestial skies, a cortege of angels, a scene visible to the whole universe where this sublime creature might emerge... nothing of the sort: it is in the belly of a jewish whore, in a pig shed where God heralds his arrival to save the earth! Here are the dignified origins he is leant! But will his divine mission indemnify us? Let us follow this figure for a moment. What does he say? what does he do? What sublime mission do we receive from him? What mystery will he reveal? What dogma will he prescribe for us? And finally in what acts will his grandeur burst forth?*

*First I see an clouded childhood, a few services, very libertine without a doubt, rendered by this street urchin to the preachers of the temple of Jerusalem: and then a disappearance lasting fifteen years, during which the scoundrel will poison himself with all the fantasies of the egyptian school, which he will eventually bring back to Judea. He had barely returned when his foolishness first lead him to claim that he is the son of God, equal to his father; he associates this alliance with a third fantom which he calls the Holy Spirit and these three individuals, he assures, make but one! The more this ridiculous mystery shocks reason, the more the wretch assures the merit of adopting it, the dangers of abolishing it. It's to save us all, the imbecile assures, that he has taken flesh, as God, appearing in the womb as a child of men; and the dazzling miracles that we will see him perform, will soon convince the universe! In a drunkard's feast, indeed, the swindler will change, as they say, water into wine; in a desert, he will feed a few crooks with a some hidden provisions prepared by his sectarians; one of his friends plays dead, he resuscitates him; he appears on a mountain, and there, before only two or three friends, he performs a sleight of hand that would embarrass the worst busker today.*

*Enthusiastically cursing everyone who didn't believe in him, the rogue promised the heavens to all the sots who would listen to him. He wrote nothing, pursuant to his ignorance: spoke very rarely, pursuant to his stupidity; did even less, pursuant to his weakness and, wearing down the magistrates, who were tired of his seditious speeches, if they were quite rare, the charlatan got himself up on a cross, after having assured the rascals who followed him that, each time they invoked him, he would come down to them to give them something to eat. They tortured him, and he let them. His daddy, this sublime God, from whom who he dared to say he descended, didn't give him the slightest bit of help, and so the rogue was treated like the rest of the thieves, of whom he has the dignity of being the boss...*

And now here is how he esteems the all-mightiness of God:

*What do I see in the God of this notorious cult, if not a reckless and barbaric being, creating a world today the construction of which he will regret tomorrow! What do I see?... A weak being that can never make man bow as he wishes! This creature, though it came from him, dominates man; man can then trespass against it and thereby deserve eternal torture! What a weak being this God is! How! He could create everything that we see, and yet he cannot make man in his own image! But, you will respond, if he*

*had created such a man, then that man wouldn't have been worth anything. What obsequiousness! and out of what necessity does man have to prove his worth to his God! In making him completely good, he never could have done evil, and in that case alone would the work be worthy of a God. It was in order to tempt man to give him choice. And yet God, in his infinite wisdom, knew quite well what would result. At that moment then, he willfully loses the creature he himself formed. What a terrible God this God is! what a monster! what a rogue more worthy of our hatred and implacable vengeance! And yet, not content with such a sublime task, he drowns man to convert him, burns him, he curses him...*

*Is a God so filled with wrath a being in which you can find the shadow of clemency or good will? According to standard theology, it seems clear that God created as many humans as possible just so that he could make them risk eternal tortures. Would it not have been more in line with good will, reason, and equity to only create rocks and plants than to form men whose conduct could bring them endless punishment? Such a devious God, wicked enough to create one single man, and to then leave him exposed to the peril of damning himself cannot be regarded as a perfect being: he could only be so as a monster of folly, injustice, malice and atrocity. However, God knows that man will be lost, he along with his race, if he eats this fruit, and not only does he give him the ability to give in, but he takes his malice to the point of seducing him. He gives in and is lost: he does what God has given him the power to do, what God tried to make him do and now he will be eternally miserable. Is there anything more absurd and cruel in the world?*

And here are a few of his reflections on nature:

*Without destruction, there is no food on planet earth and consequently no possibility for man to be able to reproduce. A fatal truth, without a doubt, since it invincibly proves that if war, discord, and crimes are all banished from the planet earth, then the empire of three reigns, becoming too violent, would destroy in its turn all the other laws of nature. Celestial bodies would all stop: influences would be suspended by the exceeding power of one among them: there would be no more gravitation nor movement.*

*In his first moments man receives direct laws which he cannot escape: these laws are those of selfpreservation, multiplying: laws that apply only to him, that depend on him but which are in no way necessary to nature, for he is no longer a part of nature, he is separate from it. He is entirely distinct from it, so much so that he is completely useless to its own functioning, nor necessary to its combinations, so much so that he could either quadruple his species or completely annihilate it and the universe would not feel the slightest shift. If he destroys himself, he is wrong, but still according to himself. But in the eyes of nature everything is different. If he multiplies, he is in the wrong, for he takes the honor of a new phenomenon from nature, the result of its laws necessarily being creatures. If these are commenced and do not propagate at all, it will create new beings and enjoy a faculty that it no longer has. Not that it couldn't still have it when it wanted, but it never does anything useless and just as the first beings that existed procreated on their own, nature will not propagate in this situation: our own procreation, which is but one of the laws inherent in us, decidedly harms the phenomena of which nature is*



*capable. So in this way what we look upon as virtues are seen by nature as crimes. To this you may object that if this faculty of procreation it gave us harmed it, then it would not have given it to us. But observe then how it is no master, it is restrained by laws, that it cannot change anything, that one of its laws is the élan of existing creatures and the possibility that they will to procreate. But if these creatures procreate or destroy themselves, nature will enter into its first rights which nothing will fight against, but instead in propagating or not destroying ourselves, we bind it to its secondary laws and deprive it of its active power..*

*Does it not prove this to us beyond question by scourges that it endlessly crushes us, by divisions, by the discord it sows between us? With the penchant for murder that it inspires in us at every moment: these wars, these famines, with which it overwhelms us, these plagues it sets forth on the globe from time to time in order to destroy us, these scoundrels it multiplies, these Alexanders, these Tamerlanes, these Gengis Khans, all of these heroes who devastate the earth, all that I say, does it not prove in an invincible way that all of our laws are contrary to its own and that it seeks to destroy us? The greatest rogue of the earth, the most abominable murderer, the most ferocious, the most barbaric, is thus the system of its laws.*

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*So do you believe that civilization, or morality have made the human better? Don't suppose it, restrain yourself from believing: each of them have but brought about a softening, have only caused a forgetting of nature's laws that made him free and cruel; from this moment the whole species deteriorates, ferocity becomes treachery, and the evil that man has done only becomes more dangerous to his peers.*

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*The principle of life in all beings is none other than that of death: we receive it and feed on it at the same time. At the moment that we call death, everything seems to dissolve, we believe this because of the extreme difference found then between this portion of matter that no longer appears to be animated; but this death is nothing but a fantasy, it only exists figuratively and has no reality. This matter, deprived of the subtle portion that give it motion is not destroyed for all this; it simply changes form, it begins to rot and there is already proof that it still has motion; it provides sap to the earth, fertilizing it and offering the regeneration of other reigns as well as its own. In short there is no essential difference between the first life we receive and the second one that we call death. Which allows us to see that death is as necessary as life and that all these plagues that we've spoken of, the cruelty of tyrants , the crimes of scoundrels, are just as necessary to these three reigns, as the act that invigorates them.*

*I maintain that the horror of death that nature inspires in us is simply the fruit of absurd fears that we develop in ourselves from the moment of birth, fear of total annihilation springing from religious ideas, the stupidity of which we fill our heads. Once recovered from these fears and reassured of our fate, not only should we no longer see death with repugnance, but it becomes easy to demonstrate that it is really a sensual pleasure. You*

*will first concede that no one can cast doubt on the fact that it is one of the necessities of nature, which created us for this alone; we do not begin but to end; every moment leads us to this last limit. Everything proves that this is nature's only end. And yet I wonder how it is possible to doubt, after learned experience, that death, as a need of nature, should not become then, a sensual pleasure, since we have convincing evidence before us that all of the needs of life are nothing but pleasures. Thus there is a pleasure in death; so it is possible to imagine that with reflection and philosophy we can change all of the ridiculous frights of death into very sensual ideas, that one can even think of it and expect it while exciting oneself with the pleasures of the senses.*

This does not at all prevent the marquis to say at some point:

*In a word, fear is in nature, it is born of its intimate care of self-preservation, a care that is impossible not to have, as it is engrained in us by the driving force that started us on this globe, which is to say by nature.*

He is for that matter against the risks of the duel and prefers to have he who wronged him assassinated. Here is how he justifies his viewpoint:

*Honor is a chimera, born out of human customs and conventions which are never based on anything but absurdity; it is as wrong that man is honored for having assassinated the enemy of his homeland as it is wrong to dishonor him for committing a massacre against his own; never have fair proceedings come out of unfair situations; if I do good in avenging my nation of wrongs it has received, I would do much better in avenging myself of those addressed to me. The State, which bribes four or five thousand assassins to serve its cause each year, cannot naturally, or legitimately punish me, when I, following its example, pay one or two people to take vengeance for the infinitely more real insults that I receive from my adversary; for in the end the insults made on this nation never personally affect it, while those that I have received directly reach me myself; and the difference is huge. But should a man try to say these things in the world? he is called weak, a coward, and the reputation as a man of intelligence or wisdom he has worked his whole life to develop will be taken from him in an instant by a few miserable jackanapes, as lowly as they are imbecilic, whom three or four prudes, who should be spanked in the streets, have persuaded that there is nothing greater than to go and risk one's life when one is allowed to go and take that of others...*

Elsewhere he comes back to nature, his preferred topic, and to God, his bête noire:

*Abandon man to nature, this would do him much better than our laws. Above all, destroy these vast ghettos, where these vices you subject to repressive laws accumulate. Out of what necessity does man live in society? Put him in the middle of rustic forests where he was born and let him do whatever he likes there. Then his crimes will not inconvenience anybody, isolated as he is, and your reins will become useless: the wild man knows only two needs: mate and eat: both of which come to him from nature. Nothing he does in order to achieve either of these two needs could be a crime to anybody. Any other passion born in him to do otherwise are owing solely to civilization. And yet as soon as these*

*new offenses, which are but the fruit of circumstance, become inherent ways of being for the social man, what right do you have, I ask you, to reproach him?*

*But is it not enough to cast a quick glance at our wretched human race to convince oneself that there is nothing in it that heralds immortality? What could this divine quality, let's put it more clearly, this quality that is physically impossible, have to do with this animal we call man? He who eats, drinks, perpetuates himself like a beast, who for all his good deeds has nothing but a slightly refined instinct, who can play at a fate supposedly different than that of beasts: could he accept that even for a minute? But man, they say, has come to the sublime knowledge of God: through this he declares himself worthy of the immortality he thinks he's got. And what is sublime about this knowledge of a chimera, if it's not that you want to claim that it's because man has come to raving about one object, he has to at all costs rave about them all. Ah! if the wretch has a few advantages over animals, how many do they have over him? To how many more infirmities or maladies is he subject? To how many more passions is he victim? All told, does he really have a greater advantage? And this slight advantage, does it confer enough pride on him to believe that he will outlive his brothers? Oh! wretched humanity, to what degree of extravagance has your self-love taken you? And when released from all these chimeras, won't you see yourself as but a beast, won't you see your God as the last word in human extravagance and, in the course of this life, but a passage that allowed you through the heart of all vice and all virtue?...*

This is how de Sade presents, in the words of his characters, the possibility of a God, served with sadist sauce:

*I raise my eyes upon the universe, I see the despotic reigns of evil, disorder, and crime everywhere. I lower my eyes to the most interesting being in the universe, and I see him too shaped by vices, infamous contradictions: what ideas come from this examination? That which we improperly call evil isn't really that at all, and that this mode is so necessary in the eyes of the being that created us that he would cease being master of his own work if evil didn't exist universally on the earth. Quite convinced of this system, I think: God exists: some hand must have necessarily created everything I see, but it only created it for evil: it takes pleasure only in evil: evil is its essence and all that it makes known to us is essential to its plans.*

*Let's not doubt it, evil, or at least what we call evil, is absolutely useful to the vicious organization of this sad universe. The God that formed it is a very vindictive, very barbaric, very wicked, very unjust, very cruel being, and that because vengeance, barbarism, wickedness, iniquity, roguishness, these are the necessary methods of the workings of this vast system and about which we don't complain until it harms us: to its victims, crime is bad; to its agents, good. And yet if evil, or at least what we call evil, is the essence of this God that created everything, and the individuals formed in his image, how can we know that the succession of evil is not eternal? It is in evil that he created the world, it is through evil that he supports it, it is through evil that he perpetuates it, and it is steeped in evil that each creature must exist.*

*When you have seen that everything on the earth is vicious and cruel, the Supreme God will say spitefully to virtuous creatures, why did you lose your way on the paths*

*of virtue? Did I somehow lead you to believe that this world was made to please me? And the eternal sorrows with which I shower the universe don't convince you that I like disorder alone and that you must imitate me to please me? Have I not given you an example of destruction every day? why do you not destroy? The scourges with which I crush the world in proving to you that the evil is my supreme joy, should they not convince you to begin serving my plans for evil? They will say that mankind must satisfy me and yet when have you seen me engage in acts of kindness? Was it in sending you plagues, civil wars, diseases, earthquakes, storms? In perpetually dumping serpents of discord on your heads—did this convince you that good was my essence? Imbecile, why didn't you imitate me? Why do you resist these passions I have placed in you simply to prove how necessary evil was to me?*

Finally here are a few of his thoughts on laws:

*It is much more important that government actions be effective on corrupt beings rather than on moral beings. For they reason and you will never have a sturdy governance wherever man reasons: for the government is a bridle to man and the thinking man wants no bridles.*

*And this is why the most adept legislators want to bury the men he wants to govern in ignorance; they were aware that their chains subjugate the ignorant man much more consistently than they do the man of genius. In a free government, you will respond, the legislator cannot have this desire. And what is this free government, according to you: is there a single one on earth? Is man not everywhere a slave to laws? And by the same token is he not chained up? As soon as he is, his oppressor, whoever he may be, should he not like that he be kept in the state in which he is easiest to capture? And yet this state, is it not obviously that of immorality? The type of drunkenness in which the immoral and corrupt man perpetually vegetates, is it not the state in which the legislator can pin him most easily? Why then attribute any virtues to it? It is only when man purifies himself that he can shake off his reins, that he will examine his government and that he will change it.*

*Without laws and religious, we cannot imagine the degree of glory and grandeur that human knowledge would have achieved today; it is amazing how these lowly chains have slowed progress; we don't owe it anymore gratitude than this. They dare to denounce passions; they dare to chain them in laws. But let us compare the two: let us see which, passions or laws, have brought the most good to man. Who doubts that passions are, to morality, what movement is to physics? Invention and artistic wonders come out of passion alone: they must be regarded as the productive seeds of the mind and the powerful spring of great acts. There will never be anything but great passions that can give birth to great men.*

*Let us compare the centuries of anarchy to those in which laws operated to their fullest effect, under whichever government we like, one will easily be convinced that it is only in that silence of laws that the greatest acts burst forth.*

*Returned to a state of nature, man would be happier than he can be under the absurd yoke of laws. I do not want man to renounce the slightest portion of his force and his*

*power. He has no need of laws to bring about justice; nature has given him the necessary instinct and energy to get it for himself, and that which he gets will always be more prompt and more potent than that which he can hope for from the laws of a people who are nothing but the masses and the results of the interests of the legislators who have cooperated in the erection of these laws.*

*The men who believed that out of the need to come together came the need to make laws fell into the gravest of errors: they had no more need for laws united than they did isolated. A universal sword of justice is useless; this sword is naturally in the hands of everyone.*

*It is the excess of laws that leads to despotism; the despot is he who creates the law, who makes it speak or who uses it for his own interests. Remove this means of excess from the despot, there would be no more tyrant. There isn't a single tyrant who has not propped himself up with laws to exercise his cruelties; anywhere where the rights of man are regularly rejoined so that each can take his own revenge for the insults he's received, no despot would arise, for he would be brought down by the first victim he tries to immolate. Tyrants are never born out of anarchy; you only ever see them rise up in the shadow of laws or justify themselves with them. The reign of laws, thus, is vicious; it is inferior to that of anarchy.*

I end the citations here but one will realize when he forgets his role as bogeyman, our marquis gives in to his attraction to the good, toward the moral values that are useful to his species, in a word, toward virtue. And perhaps he hides, in the depths of himself, a profound spitefulness for his path to nothingness. Surely, for him the world is essentially and definitively bad but to what point does he defend and admit evil? Certainly, his bizarre interpretation of nature's will opposed to human will and his definition of egoism shock our understanding of things but, in the end, his critique is exact insofar as it holds to the observation of facts. It is no longer so when he glorifies evil and grants ambivalence on the equivalence of good and evil.

In denouncing the barbarity of nature and its hostility to man, he had dissipated the illusions of the worshippers of universal Harmony and demonstrated the necessity of this unrelenting struggle which the human being meets with adversity, struggle against all causes of destruction that endlessly compromise his security and his existence and which, despite his efforts, end up being right. Indeed, man never ceases to oppose natural forces, disease, infirmities, death; all of these manifestations are destroyed by time, his worst enemy, and, in this unfair fight, he remains eternally defeated despite his knowledge and energy.

Finally de Sade's frank and furious maxim: "do unto others what you would not have them do unto you" is the very expression of the struggle for life, the ferocious struggle in which the eater wants to eat the others without being eaten himself. But, one will say, this maxim leads humanity to suicide and anyway he does not practice it, for man knows better. Obviously, in theory, but in practice we see that it is the only maxim in effect on the surface of our planet. No one treats his peers as equals, for in that case there would be no exploitation, no disagreements, nor wrongs of any sort; even less violence between individuals and no crime at all. And yet this is in no way the case and all of the continents offer us the spectacle of the strict application of this maxim that de Sade offered his contemporaries like a mirror to their own conduct.

I would have loved to have known this marquis, who must have been a jolly companion, and to converse with him about this famous question of good and evil. Did he really see things as he

depicted them, he who did not practice his own maxim? Did he come to accept and recognize this transformation of egoism into altruism through the development of our conditioned reflexes and this sense of imitation which places us, through imagination, in the place of our neighbor, and with which we share our sufferings and joys? Would he have admitted this concern for security, necessary to the strongest to whom mutual aid is more advantageous than struggle? Would he have granted that even among animals, in nature, this mutual aid is obvious? And would he have realized that these sexual anomalies that he defended, mainly because they were dangerously forbidden, were not at all natural needs but on the contrary products of this civilization, that he himself described as vile, perverting those who it enslaved? Would he not have recognized that these horrors, far from destroying laws and bringing ruin to religion, on the contrary created them, recognized as indispensable to avoid them? And the problem of consciousness, what would he have had to say about that? Would he have held that Archimedes being true or Archimedes turned into lies amounts to the same thing? What a rare pleasure it would have been to discuss these subjects with a man of this quality!

We need a collection, pieces chosen among his most original dissertations, to be published (in the vein of *Pages curieuses* edited by Balkis and *L'Œuvre du Marquis de Sade* written by Apollinaire, works that are impossible to find today), which could make de Sade known in his most caustic, wisest spirit, collecting prophetic and brilliant treasures, and his inexhaustible good sense.

Waiting for that, it goes without saying, a great statue, in robust bronze, showing him smiling, calm and ironic, scoffing at those he called “the imbeciles” from the height of a granite pedestal on which I’d like to see his famous maxim, carved in golden letters, thrown at passersby like a challenge and a rebuke: “do unto others what you would not have them do unto you.”

# Proudhon's Repressed Sexuality

Daniel Guérin

Translated by vincent stone

I would like to consider one of the lesser known aspects of the works of the great social reformer: his deep and peculiar interest with regard to homosexuality.<sup>1</sup> A curiosity all the more surprising as he seemed to be a man of rigid mores and, moreover, as the author of the posthumous *Pornocratie* was inclined to fulminate against indiscretions of the flesh.

It was Proudhon's belief that homosexuality, in his time, was hardly practiced by the laboring classes. Its adepts were, rather, according to him, "the refined, the artists, people of letters, magistrates, priests." Why? Because the workers were not "advanced enough in the cult of the ideal." For him, unisexual love was "an error of judgement produced by an illusion of the ideal," by the pursuit "of the beautiful and the good." What struck him about the mores of antiquity was that it was only "great poets who came to celebrate this monstrous passion, a privilege, in their words, of gods and heroes." He added that it was this "poetry" of homosexuality that it was important, above all, to 88 All of the citations to follow are passages from *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Eglise*, 1858, édition Rivière, t. IV. explain. And to excuse himself in advance of the boldness of his incursion into such a subject, he dared to write:

*I have referred to the written accounts; I consulted these ancients who could make poetry and philosophy anywhere, and who, speaking to a society used to Socratic mores, were hardly shy (...) What I am going to say (...) will have (...) the benefit of considerably reducing the crime of those for whom the first ones were the apologists and panegyrists. (...) We have spoken in favor of a few figures, the greatest ones who have given distinction to our race, in favor of poetry and of Greek philosophy, eternal honor of the human spirit, the innocence of unisexual love.*

Proudhon begins his study by deliberately rejecting the explanation of Saint Paul, "who thought he said it all when he attributed the phenomenon which presently occupies us to the cult of false gods." For him "Saint Paul's explanation explains nothing." It was too convenient for Christianity to impute the behaviors that it claimed to purge from the earth on polytheism and a society founded upon it. "But (...) Christianity did not succeed in its undertaking" and the passions denounced by the apostle "live on in the Church of Christ."

Returning to the origins of Greek love, Proudhon suggests, and he's right, that homosexuality existed in Greece long before Socrates. It was in Ionia that this love was first "celebrated and deified." Early on, for Syrians, Babylonians, and other Easterners, religion made homosexuality

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<sup>1</sup> All of the citations to follow are passages from *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Eglise*, 1858, édition Rivière, t. IV.

one of its mysteries. At the origins of humanity, an “erotic pantheism” reigned, which Charles Fourier, to whom Proudhon owed so much, called omnigamy and which Proudhon evokes in these terms.

*This supreme love, which brought order to chaos and which animates all beings, does not need the human form to sense pleasure. For it, the kingdoms, the genera, the species, the sexes, all is a jumble (.) Caeneus, changed from a girl into a boy; Hermaphrodite, at once male and female; Proteus, with his thousand metamorphoses (.) Theocritus goes further: in a lament of the death of Adonis, he claims that the boar who killed him with one stroke of the tusk was only culpable for clumsiness. The poor animal wanted to give a kiss to this handsome young man: in the transports of his passion he tore him apart!*

When humanity, out of chaos, entered civilization, this erotic pantheism changed into “erotic idealism:”

*Before all else, the ancients thought, man could not live without love; without love life is an anticipation of death. Antiquity is rife with this idea; it sung its praises and encouraged love; they endlessly debated on its nature like it debated on the sovereign Good, and more than once it ended up confusing the two. With the same power as these artists idealize the human form, these philosophers and poets idealized Love (.) Among them it was (.) a competition of who could discover and realize the perfect love (.) But this ideality of love, where can it be found? How to enjoy it, and to what extent?*

In marriage?

“Marriage,” Proudhon responds in the form of a proverb, “spells the end for love. And that was true for the Greeks (.) incomparably more than it is for us. The spouse’s function, aristocratic in principle and in form, hardly conferred anything to the woman but haughty pretensions which rendered her hardly likeable.”

The author makes allusion, although too summarily, to the social conditions (patriarchy) of which the Greek woman was victim:

*The spouse, such as she was at the end of the heroic age of civilization, had nothing for herself but pride, the triviality of her occupations and her troublesome wantonness, to barely repress the pains of pregnancy and marital rebuffs—love flew away on the morning of the wedding, and the heart remained, deserted. There is not a grain of love in the gynaeceum, Plutarch emphatically said.*

If conjugal union is “destitute of the ideal, and consequently, of love” then to whom does one turn for love? To the Hetarn, to the concubine, to the courtesan? But this sort of “paid love” amounts to a “satisfaction of the senses,” to a “secretion of the organism,” to a “cesspool,” Proudhon complains. “I love her, you say; yes, like I love wine, fish, and all that gives me pleasure.”

*In this way the hetaim and the courtesan have nothing more to offer; as for amorous delight, offering even less than the legitimate woman— love such as it is desired by the human spirit— idealized love becomes impossible between the two sexes (...) The ancients followed this analysis all too well. They masterfully understood that beauty, in*



*the physical as in the moral, is immaterial, that the love that it inspires is altogether in the soul (.) Where then, the man of antiquity wonders, where to find the love without which I cannot live, that I cannot grasp neither with my wife, nor with my mistress, nor with my slave? Where is this love, will-o'-the-wisp that appears only to trick men? I found the woman more bitter than death, Solomon exclaims; he is indicating, clearly, not the person, but the sex. Nothingness all around, love nowhere.*

And Proudhon attentively continues “the progression of this idealist seduction which, after having pushed away marriage as inherently foreign to love” ends up at the “hallucination” of homosexuality.

*It's thus by a refinement of delicacy and at the same time by a quintessential search for the beautiful and the honorable that the ancients came to despise conjugal love, and with it all physical relation with the woman. Such is the series of ideas through which the Greeks, by dint of speculating on love and of freeing it from the indignities of the flesh, reached these final excesses. That might seem prodigal, but that is the case: and all of history demonstrates it.*

Proudhon, with an extraordinary indulgence, now leaves theory for examples:

*Anacreon, following Aelien, being at Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos' court, had a strong affection for a young man named Smerdias. He cherished him, the historian says, for his soul and not his body. For his part, the adolescent had a respectful admiration for the poet.*

And Proudhon takes it further:

*This beautiful ephebus, Smerdias, was also loved by Polycrates the tyrant.*

Having overcome, finally, both prudence and inhibition, the author throws himself headlong into exaltation of Greek love:

*You have to believe that this extraordinary theory only went so far into the mores, when one sees the most virtuous and the least suspect men of antiquity speak publicly of it. Socrates, who leant his name to love before Plato gave his own, openly courted Alcibiades. He taught him philosophy, reproached him for his pride, tore him from the seductions of courtesans, trained him in chastity, and by his example and his discourse, taught the Athenians to love and respect youth. There is a good lesson from him in Plato's dialogue, *Theaetetus*. *Theaetetus* is a disgraced young man, with a pug nose, little deep-sunken eyes, very similar to Socrates, and who is presented and recommended to the philosopher by a citizen of Athens, and that his friends ironically accused, to his great displeasure, of loving this ugly boy. Socrates examines *Theaetetus*, forcing him through the questions to show his intelligence, brings out his happy nature, and says to him at the end, before everyone: Go, you are beautiful *Theaetetus*; for you possess beauty of the soul, a thousand times more precious than that of the body. Words worthy of the Gospel, which must have roundly struck the Athenians, and that Plato wouldn't dare miss.*

*Cornelius Nepos, in the life of Epaminondas, recounts that when the king of Persia planned to bribe him, Diomedon of Cyzique, who was assigned to the commission, began with a very young man named Micythus, who Epaminondas loved with all his heart. What did the Theban hero do? After having severely admonished the mediator of the great king, he said to his young friend: For you Micythus, quickly give him his money back, or I will denounce you to the magistrate! (...) Strange occupation for pederasts, to preach to their favorites, in word and in deed, modesty, study, disinterest, chastity, all types of virtue, and to threaten them if they stray!*

*In a war that the people of Chalcis waged against their neighbors, they drew out the victory with the courage of Cleomachus, one of them, who devoted himself to fight (.) on the sole condition that he receive, prior to battle and in the presence of the army, a kiss from his friend, and to die within sight of him. Plutarch recounts the event. I would like to know if chivalry produced anything more beautiful and more chaste than this deed?*

*Everyone knows that the sacred battalion of Thebes, who all perished in Chaeronea, was made up of three hundred young men, one hundred fifty pairs, for whom love as much as patriotism made up their discipline.*

Passing from Greek literature into Latin poetry, Proudhon continues in the same vein:

*Virgil, singing of Roman messianism and universal regeneration, Virgil, disciple of Plato, does not forget the purification of pederastic love. His story of Nisus and Euryalus draws its inspiration from Greek friendship, where love is fused with the warrior spirit,*

*Such a love unites them and they rush together into combat.<sup>2</sup>*

*He said of the young heroes: Euryalus, a man of splendid youth and virtuous grace, who the whole army loved as much as admired,*

*Remarkable Euryalus with his beauty and his flowering youth,<sup>3</sup>*

*This charm more seductive when it appears in a beautiful body,<sup>4</sup>*

*and Nisus, his pure and pious lover. Read the story of this love in the fifth and ninth books of the Aeneid: one might say an episode of the sacred battalion of Thebes. And it's after having recounted their death that the poet exclaims: Happy couple! If my lines have some power, your memory will last as long as the Capitol, as long as the empire of Rome rules the world!"*

And Proudhon, who is no longer surprised by anything, or held back by anything, exclaims:

*Why are we so surprised, after all this, of an attachment which has its roots in nature itself? Do we not know that there is something between the adolescent and the grown man that creates a reciprocal inclination, which is made up of a thousand diverse sentiments and whose effects go far beyond simple friendship— what was the affection that*

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<sup>2</sup> *Enéide*, IX, 188.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, V. 295.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, V. 344.

*Fénelon had for example for the duke of Bourgogne, this child of his heart and his genius, who he created, shaped, the Bible would say engendered, as he created his Telemachus? Love, in the purest and highest sense that he got from the Greeks. Fénelon instructed the duke of Bourgogne, it's Socrates revealing the beauty of Theaetetus to his listeners, it's Empaminondas reprimanding Micythus. Oh, that he would die for this fruit of his womb, the tender Fénelon!*

*I'll go further: what was this predilection so noticed by Christ for the youngest of his disciples?<sup>5</sup>*

*For me, I see it as I do the episode of Euryalus and Nisus, a Christian imitation of Greek love. And that's not the least proof in my eyes that the author of the fourth Gospel was not actually a Hebrew of Jerusalem, incapable of these sensitivities, but a Hellenist of Alexandria, who knew his public, and found nothing better, to flaunt the sanctity of Christ, than to take a Socratic lover. We denigrate the ancients, without seeing that their ideas, in moderation, have their source in the human heart, and that they have flowed all the way to our own religion.*

*The distinction of loves and the difference of their characters was so well established in Greek thought, that we see them living together, without fighting or merging into one. Achilles had a hetaíra, Briséis, the beautiful prisoner, with whom he shared a bed: and Patroclus was his soulmate, his hetaíros. Also, what differences in his remorse for them! For Briséis, he cried, he swore to no longer fight and to return to Thessaly; for Patroclus, he violated his oath, killed Hector, massacred his prisoners and decided to take Troy.*

*All of the Greek poets who praised love under its double hypostasis followed Homer's example. I want Anacreon's Bathillus to be held suspect: the poet's indiscretion, in the portrait he makes of his friend, he let an obscene shadow fall onto the purity of the original; but how much the sentiment that Bathillus inspired in him carried him to all of his fantasies of mistresses! What more ravishing than this song of the messenger bird? And what reverie in those two couplets, that the translators separate as if they were two odes:*

*Refresh, oh women, my dried throat with sweet wine; Refresh my burning head with new roses. But who will refresh my heart, incinerated by loves?*

*I will sit in the shadow of Bathillus, the young tree in the verdant tail; before him the fountain of persuasion flows and murmurs. It's there, weary traveller, that I will gain a new force.*

*Now it's no longer so much Greek love as its purity that intrigues Proudhon:*

*What surprises me in all the socratic, platonic, anacreonic, and sapphic poetry, however one wants to call it, is the extraordinary chastity of the thought as well as of language, a chastity whose only equal is the fervor of the passion. Explain it to me, if you can, this hypothetical impious love, this inconceivable mixing of the most exalted tenderness, the strictest thought, the most divine poetry, which offers penetrating features, graceful images and ineffable harmony, with the most atrocious imaginings that come out of the rage of senses; as for me, such an alliance of heaven and hell in a single heart seems to*

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<sup>5</sup> John, XIII, 23; XIX, 26, 27; XXI, 20.

*me inadmissible, and I remain convinced that, if there is some underlying horror there, it is all our own.*

Was the “unisexual” love of the ancients really pure? Proudhon, after having affirmed this, wasn’t all that certain. But their ideal, at the very least, was, according to him, pure:

*For us, without expecting more scientific knowledge in such matters than would be appropriate for honest people to have, we hold the opinion we established in the text, to know that pederastic love does not necessarily imply, for the ancient Greeks, as it implies for us today, physical relations; that quite the contrary this love had the intent to remain pure, and that it’s in this way that Socrates, Epaminondas, and a whole host of others practiced it. The passages we have cited from Plutarch, Plato, Virgil, and the Gospel according to St. John, are unimpeachable accounts of this.*

*We maintain consequently that it is of this pure love that Anacreon and Sappho sung; that it’s important, if we want to be fair, to distinguish here between the ancients’ theory of passion and what might have been their practice, and that before accusing the greatest poets of abominable mores, one should begin by understanding their sentiments and their ideas. However Anacreon and Bathillus or Sappho and her lover employed the ideal, in secret, something we will never know absolutely anything about, one thing remains positive, demonstrated, known (...): the ancients had another ideal of love than we do, an ideal of which an apology is not in order here (...); but an irreproachable ideal in their thought and in their poetry.*

Proudhon, however, informed by his personal experience, had too profound a notion of the “rage of senses” to delude himself with naïve illusions. He knew all too well that it is impossible to interpose this airtight partition between platonism and the flesh: this type of love, “as spiritualist as the principle might be” remains no less physical:

*One of Plutarch’s interlocutors, the one who defended the cause of androgynous or bisexual love, made the following objection to his adversary, who protested in the name of sectarians of the perfect love against the accusations made against them: You claim that your love is free of all mergings of the flesh, and that union exists only between souls: but how can one have love where there is no possession?<sup>6</sup> It’s as if you spoke of getting drunk in taking the libation of gods, or of relieving your hunger with the odor of sacrificial victims. To this objection: no response. Whatever arguments one wants to endlessly make about the distinction between body and soul, it still remains that the two only unite by their merging.*

And to conclude, Proudhon, like a man who had lain waste, in the depths of himself, to the struggle between the angel and the beast:

*All love, however ideal the object may be, for example as religious people have for Christ or that monks have for the virgin, even more so the love for a living and tangible being, necessarily stays in the organism and weakens sexuality. There is loving delectation*

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<sup>6</sup> Tr—i.e., pleasure.

*in the young virgin who caresses a turtledove; and what delirium, we know so well, awakens in their senses... Achieving empyrean heights, celestial love, attracted by this material beauty which contemplation pursues, falls back toward the abyss: it's Eloa, the beautiful archangel, loving Satan, at whom if she simply looks loses herself Such is (...) the antinomy to which love, like any passion, is subject: just as it cannot do without the ideal, it cannot do without possession. The former pushes invincibly to the latter.*

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Why did Proudhon have such an interest in homosexuality? What's left here is to find the key to the mystery of his life and character. Most of his numerous commentators have shied away from such an indiscrete study. At the most, one of them, Jules L. Puech, limited himself to indicating, summarily, that the source of his repressions would be "without a doubt" revealed by psycho-analysis.<sup>7</sup>

Still young, at the age of seventeen, Proudhon experienced, as he himself recounts, a "platonic love" which made him "very foolish and very sad." He became enamored with a young girl in the manner of a Christian, meaning with "faith in the absolute."<sup>8</sup>

Despite his "green youth" which demanded more concrete gratification, he made himself the "guardian" and the "participant" in the virginity of the young girl. In the end "having waited too long, the young person became distant and married another."

Why this extreme sexual behavior, which went on for five years? Proudhon attributed his "mental affect" to having read Paul and Virginia by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, a "supposedly innocent pastoral which should be on every family's blacklist." And he denounces "the peril of this platonism that a vain literature tries to set up as virtue." He suggests to us another explanation when he notes in his Carnets: "I hope, if I ever marry, to love my wife as much as I love my mother."<sup>9</sup> Maybe he was paralyzed, like so many others, by the famous Oedipus complex. Still, he had this unhappy love to thank for remaining a virgin, for ten years after his puberty:

*He, he writes, who has been seized by this ideal passion early on and long before his virility has become, through his very idealism, awkward and maladroit with sex, disdainful of gallantry, where he doesn't succeed, brusque and sarcastic toward nice people, uncompromising towards middle grounds, which he qualifies, not without reason, as immoral. In short, he grumbles, despite his appetite and his teeth, against the love which pricks him, irritates him, and makes his angry as a lion (...) He feels he is unreasonable, ridiculous (...) he takes a violent disliking for love, marriage, and women.*

For years, Proudhon, "lamentable martyr of chastity" would be "assailed by the devil who frustrated Saint Paul:"

*The devil who, for such a long time had burned around my heart, now roasts around my liver, neither work, nor reading, nor walks, nor coolants of any sort can bring me peace (.) A painful scission has opened in me between will and nature. The flesh said: I want, the conscience: I do not...*

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<sup>7</sup> Introduction to the volume of the Complete works of P.J. Proudhon containing *Du Principe de l'Art, La Pornocratie ou les femmes dans les temps modernes*, 1939, p. 304.

<sup>8</sup> Cited by Daniel Halévy, *La Jeunesse de Proudhon*, 1913, p. 36.

<sup>9</sup> *Philosophie de la Misère*, 1867, t. II, p. 384;—*Carnets*, 1960–1961, t. I, p. 320; t. II, p. 340.

It was then that Proudhon gives us a glimpse of his most intimate recesses. This “platonism” which he denounced in a roundabout way, the “peril,”<sup>10</sup> he now explains: “Oh, all of you, young men and young women, who dreamt of a perfect love, be well aware, your platonism is the road that leads straight to Sodom.”<sup>11</sup>

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If you search into the smallest crevices of Proudhon’s youth, you won’t find, apart from this chaste passion, a single feminine affair. His biographer, Daniel Halévy, admitted that “fooling around with the fair sex was not something he was fond of”<sup>12</sup> He himself avows that when he still lived in the country and he saw farm girls masturbating bulls, “he never felt anything for these lasses.”<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, we do discover a male liaison. At age twenty-two, he met a young student from Besançon at the printshop where he worked. Although from different social origins, the two young men became inseparable friends: “I have known you, I have loved you,” Gustave Fallot would write later to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.<sup>14</sup> He pressed his friend to follow him to Paris. Proudhon did not resist this call. They shared everything: room, bed, table, library, savings. Together, they “platonize.” But the terrible cholera epidemic of 1836 took Fallot. His friend would care for him day and night. He would exhaust himself to save he who he loved. But he did not succeed in fighting off death. His pain is awful:

“I felt that half of my life and my soul was taken away: I find myself alone in the world.” The memory of Fallot occupied his thoughts “like an obsession, a true monomania.” He would go to Père-Lachaise and stay at his grave for a whole hour in meditation.<sup>15</sup>

For his whole life Proudhon stayed true to male friendships. In a posthumous writing, he will observe: “Every man has secrets that he confides to a friend, and that he does not tell his wife.”<sup>16</sup>

To a friend, who took a wife from him, he writes with bitterness: “Marriage works in strange ways on you, gentlemen who have taken a wife (...) Entrenching yourselves little by little into the couple, you’ll end up forgetting that you were comrades. I believed that love and fatherhood would augment friendship among men; I now see that that was but an illusion.” And he adds this important remark for the reader who already knew the price he attached to friendships of antiquity: “If Orestes married Hermione, today, he would have forgotten Pylade.”<sup>17</sup>

Elsewhere Proudhon urged someone who was in love, for whom he wanted the best, to protect his liberty: “Remember, young man, that the kisses given to you are ties which you take on and that three days of fasting are enough to make a woman, without you noticing it, from a soft lover into a tyrant”<sup>18</sup> Proudhon wanted to protect his friends from the noxious feminine influence: “The conversation and company of women belittles the minds of men, feminizes them, dulls them.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l’Eglise*, édition Rivière, t. IV, p. 131–132.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Halévy, *La Jeunesse de Proudhon*, 1913, p. 102.

<sup>13</sup> *La Pornocratie ou les femmes dans les temps modernes*, posthumous work, 1875, p. 84.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from December 5<sup>th</sup> 1831, *Correspondance*, 1875, t. I, p. XV.

<sup>15</sup> Halévy, *op. cit.*, p. 122, 133.

<sup>16</sup> *La Pornocratie...* p. 193.

<sup>17</sup> Letter to Ackermann from October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1844, *Correspondance*, t. II p. 158, 159.

<sup>18</sup> *La Pornocratie...*, p. 264.

<sup>19</sup> *Carnets*, 1961 II, p. 12.

When he happened to write about a beautiful man, Proudhon could hardly contain his excitement. In a curious parable, he describes a man of plebeian blood, whose “passionate energy, the firmness of his muscles, the timber of his voice (.) exerted an irresistible seduction” to the point where the young widow who was one of his admirers “could not, in his presence, refrain from trembling with delight.”<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, effeminacy repulsed him: “The male favorite who affects feminine charms is disgusting.” He was horrified at the prospect of a society in which man would be “pretty, elegant, chic” and in which there would no longer be “either males or females.”<sup>21</sup>

Elsewhere Proudhon reveals his predilection for male anatomy. Compared to the man’s body, the woman’s is, in his eyes, a “diminution, a subordinate:” “The muscles are diminished; this virile build is rounded; these strong and expressive lines are softened and limp.”<sup>22</sup>

Proudhon is not kind to the “weaker” sex. He cannot find degrading enough words to stigmatize woman possessed by love. She yaps, she turns back into a beast, a madwoman, a harlot, an ape, she is taken by inextinguishable lust, she is a wellspring of wickedness. “Woman solicits, teases, provokes man; she disgusts him and annoys him: over and over and over!”<sup>23</sup>

For Proudhon, woman is an inferior, “subaltern” creature. She will never be a “strong mind.” He completely denies female genius. “A woman can no longer bear a child when her mind, her imagination, and her heart are preoccupied with politics, society, and literature.” Her true vocation is housework: “We other men, we find that a woman knows enough when she can mend our shirts and make us beefsteaks.”<sup>24</sup> According to Proudhon, the right to vote would be “to disturb the familial order” and Proudhon, who took a housekeeper for a wife, utters this ridiculous threat: “The day the legislator accords women suffrage will be the day of my divorce.”<sup>25</sup>

He goes so far as to prescribe men to rule their wives with an iron rod. She “wants to be mastered and feels more comfortable that way (...) The husband has strength; it’s to be used; without force the wife would scorn him (.) The wife doesn’t at all hate being sexually assaulted a bit, even raped.”<sup>26</sup>

Proudhon’s *bête noir* is the emancipated woman, taken by “intellectual nymphomania,” who imitates masculine mannerisms, the “shrew,” the woman of letters, of whom George Sand is, in his eyes, the detestable prototype.<sup>27</sup> But this anti-feminist frenzy would bring him bitter riposts. At age eighteen, a young [female] novelist published a spirited pamphlet against Proudhon, which was soon followed by one of her colleagues.<sup>28</sup> Enraged by these attacks, Proudhon composed

<sup>20</sup> *Contradictions Politiques*, 1864, posthumous work, édition Rivière, p. 297. One can compare this portrait to that of Hercules, athlete “with long and strong thighs” with indulgence, by Proudhon, from a latin textbook. (*War and Peace*, 1861, édition Rivière, p. 15).

<sup>21</sup> *La Pornocratie...*, p. 33, 59–63.

<sup>22</sup> *Carnets*, 1961, II, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> *La Pornocratie...*, p. 30, 92, 198, 235, 265—*Contradictions Politiques*, p. 298.

<sup>24</sup> *La Pornocratie...*, p. 33, 225, 170—*De la Justice...*, t. IV, p. 304;—*Carnets*, 1961, II, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> *La Pornocratie...*, p. 59;—*Contradictions Politiques*, p. 274.

<sup>26</sup> *La Pornocratie...*, p. 191, 194, 267.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28—*Carnets*, t. I, p. 227, 321, 342–343, 354; t. II, p.202, 363.

<sup>28</sup> Juliette La Messine (the future Madame Adam, known in literature under the name Juliette Lamber), *Idées antiproudhoniennes*, 1858—Jenny d’Héricourt, *La femme affranchie*, 1860;—cf. Jules L. Puech, Introduction to *La Pornocratie...*, édition Rivière, 1939, p. 315.

a frantic, although unfinished response, which, luckily for him, didn't come out until after his death.<sup>29</sup>

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Beyond women, it's all of modern society on the path of sexual revolution that provokes Proudhon's ire. He denounced "the amorous madness tormenting our generation," "this pornocracy which for thirty years has brought down public decency in France," "this spirit of lust and corruption" which is "the plague of democracy," "the cult of love and pleasures of the flesh (.) cancer of the French nation." Shouting at his contemporaries, he says "You want flesh! You will have your fill of flesh."<sup>30</sup> The fault lies in arts and letters, which overexcite the senses.<sup>31</sup> The reading of a romance novel, is it not infallibly followed by a visit to the house of tolerance—where one "only finds disgust, displeasure, remorse"?<sup>32</sup> And Proudhon, attacking the utopian socialists, his predecessors, who wanted to rehabilitate the flesh, like Pere Enfantin, leader of the "Saint-Simonianist religion" to whom he shouts "You are a church of pimps and perverts,"<sup>33</sup> and Charles Fourier, who preached free development of passions and claimed to put them in the service of his reborn society.<sup>34</sup>

But, even more than lust, it's homosexuality that endlessly haunted Proudhon's deranged mind. Communism, in tending "toward the confusion of the sexes" would be "from the standpoint of amorous relations, fatally pederastic."<sup>35</sup> He suspects "the priestly androgyny" of the Saint-Simonians just like the "omnigamy" of Fourier, over whom he hangs inquisitorial suspicion for having "gone far beyond the customary boundaries of amorous relations" and having "sanctified even unisexual conjunctions."<sup>36</sup> The rage of senses, according to him, leads necessarily to pleasures that are "against nature," and to "sodomy."<sup>37</sup> "We are in total promiscuity, for bawdiness has become universal ... And now we have come to unisexual love"<sup>38</sup> Any nation that gives itself over to pleasure "is a nation devoured by the sodomitic gangrene, a congregation of pederasts."<sup>39</sup> Pederasty would be "the effect of a raging lust that nothing can assuage."<sup>40</sup> And he asks, in a tone of strange delectation: "Would there be (.) in this frictus of two males, an acrid pleasure, which awakens the blasé senses, just like human flesh that, as they say, renders all other feasts bland to the cannibal?"<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *La Pornocratie...*

<sup>30</sup> *Philosophy de la Misère*, t. II, p. 376;—cf. also *Carnets*, 1960, t. I, p. 242: "Everyone's content so long as they fuck (...) they make love like dogs."

<sup>31</sup> *De la Justice...*, t. IV, p. 71;—*Philosophie de la Misère*, t. II, p. 384;—Letter from Proudhon to Joseph Garnier, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1844 cit. by Sainte-Beuve, *P.-J. Proudhon*, 1872, p. 105.

<sup>32</sup> *La Pornocratie...*, p. 250; *De la Justice...*, t. IV p. 132.

<sup>33</sup> *La Pornocratie...*, p. 166 and 23, 31, 108, 113.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>35</sup> *De la Justice...*, t. IV, p. 71.

<sup>36</sup> *Avertissement aux Propriétaires*, 1842, édition Rivière, 1939, p. 222.

<sup>37</sup> *La Pornocratie...*, p. 164, 247, 261.

<sup>38</sup> *De la Justice...*, t. IV, p. 131.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>40</sup> *De la Justice...*, t. IV, p. 54.

<sup>41</sup> *De la Justice...*, t. IV, p. 54–55.



Proudhon's last word is anti-sexual terrorism. Turned on itself, carnal passion appears to be incurable: "It was useless to the Bernards, the Jeromes, the Origènes, to want to subdue their flesh with work, fasting, vigils, solitude." Constricted, passion springs out with all the more fury. Instead of subsiding when it is satisfied, it is reborn and seeks new objects: "Enjoy, enjoy more, enjoy without end."<sup>42</sup>

So Proudhon does not hesitate to call the legislator, the gendarme, the judge to the rescue. Let's outlaw divorce, let us equate sodomy with rape and let us punish it with twenty years of imprisonment.<sup>43</sup> Even better, let's declare murder legally excusable, for anyone who catches a "sodomite" in the act.<sup>44</sup> Proudhon seriously considers addressing a denunciation to the public prosecutor in order to pursue charges against the phalansterian school for "immorality." "From now on, he triumphantly announces, we have the right to say to the Fourierists you are pederasts (.). If it is demonstrated that Fourierism is immoral, then they must be banned (.). It would not be persecution, it would be legitimate prohibition."<sup>45</sup>

Proudhon advocates, to extirpate lust, the most implacable of eugenics: "All bad natures must be exterminated, and sex must be renewed, by the elimination of wicked subjects, like the English remade a race of steers, sheep, and hogs."<sup>46</sup> Socialism, as he conceived it, would take drastic steps. The fault of Christianity is not, according to him, to have tried to condemn all sexual relations outside of legitimate marriage, but not to have known how to do it. The revolution, however, will do it.<sup>47</sup>

Now we are forewarned: "Strict mores are on the way." In the future society, "a perpetual war" will be waged "against erotic appetites;" "a war that is increasingly fortunate." We will learn to instill "the disgust of the flesh"<sup>48</sup> in ourselves.

Thusly, o paradox, to extinguish the "fire and the blood"<sup>49</sup> that consumed him and that he desperately repressed, Proudhon, an anarchist in matters of social organization, sunk to the most authoritarian of puritanisms.

Thusly he proves by contradiction that a sexual revolution is needed to liberate victims from the likes of him.

*It doesn't matter if men accuse me of madness, but I don't want them to be able to accuse me of idiocy, slavery and falsehood.*

—Ernest Coeurderoy,

from *Days of Exile*

—Rene Daumal

*Remember your accomplices and your tricks and this  
great desire to get out of the cage.*

*Arrival from always, for departure to everywhere.*

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<sup>42</sup> *Philosophie de la Misère*, édition 1867, t. II, p. 376, 385.

<sup>43</sup> *De la Justice...*, t. IV, p. 52, 298.

<sup>44</sup> *Carnets*, t. I, p. 232.

<sup>45</sup> *La justice poursuivie par l'Eglise*, 1861, éd. Rivière, 1946, p. 237;—*Carnets*, I, p. 168, 275, 288–289; II, p. 113, 128.

<sup>46</sup> *La Pornocratie...*, cit., p. 252.

<sup>47</sup> *De la Justice...*, IV, p. 155.

<sup>48</sup> *Carnets*, I, p. 135, 190.

<sup>49</sup> *Philosophie de la Misère*, p. 379.

—Arthur Rimbaud

## **Section Fourteen: Voila Tout**

*I am not what you would call a civilized man! I have broken completely with society for reasons only I have the right to appraise. I do not therefore obey any of its rules, and I suggest that you never invoke them in my presence.*

—Captain Nemo,  
*20,000 Leagues Under The Sea*

In the foregoing sections of this book, we've tried to show examples of the historical persistence of **another kind** of recipe for anarchist activity and resistance. All in all, we think the writings in this collection provide a tantalizing appetizer to the diverse banquet spread of ideational cuisine (in this case, with a distinctly French flair) available for consumption to the discerning anarchist gourmand. Although contaminated by Marxism, co-opted by liberalism, persecuted ruthlessly by governments, and reduced by anarcho-leftists to a set of exhausted and sterile shibboleths that stifle most innovative thinking, the anarchist tradition has still managed to embody in some degree an alternative vision of the possibilities of the human experience. In tracing the continuity of **consistent** anarchist thought, there's an observable decline across the board after World War II, with unshakable, persevering strains surviving in scattered pockets around the globe (anarcho-primitivism, insurrectionary anarchism, individualist anarchism, and nihilist anarchy, to cite just four examples). When peeling back the layers and layers of invented history and propaganda it becomes possible to map out a cartography of anarchism's most triumphant surges and to chart a cyclic rise and fall of voltage. The time/geographic period we focus on here was a dramatically *seismic* age for anarchism, full of tectonic shifts and vibrational aftershocks that still reverberate in applicable ways to our own complicated 21<sup>st</sup> century context. What we've attempted to deliver here is a sumptuous platter of anarchy cooked in its own juices—unseasoned with (anti-state) communism, democracy, or other unsavory pollutants—and seasoned with the spice of its own spirited vernacular. To retrieve these delectations it was necessary to plunge into some choppy, under-explored stretches of anarchist history: These turned out to be depths peopled with outrageous and madcap characters (the black sheep of the anarchist diaspora) who got away with more “impossibilities” than Reynard the Fox, against a background of large-scale colonial maneuvers, expanding statecraft, and endless wars; whether they be melancholy exiles moonlighting as dynamiting outlaws or pistol-toting Tibetan Buddhist cross-dressers, the lives of these cast-off and forgotten anarchists are full of insurrectionary intrigue, creative revolt, and utopic conspiracies ready to dare all against authority—which made our investigation feel like a stirring and adventurous journey (though one aggravated by the scarcity of texts). Writings of this zestful quality have always been present in the margins of anarchist literature, sometimes revealing themselves under less-censored conditions, but more often than not drowned in the pickling solution of cosmetically-amended representation or subject to complete disappearance by the would-be Party Officials of anarchism. Up till now readers with an interest in anarchist raconteurs like Zo d'Axa or Pierre Chardon have had to rely almost exclusively on anecdotal references and mouthwatering snippets, while the actual life-altering writings of these vitriolic scribes remained as inaccessible as chests of gold left behind on unremembered shores. The mission we undertook was to track down and expropriate these coveted jewels before they disappeared into an immemorial distance. Eventually we assembled enough ingredients to prepare this mulligan stew of odds and ends from various time-streams on the edge of revolution, dished-up for the value and usefulness that each reader can discover in his or her own singularity.

This is not alternate history (the science fiction genre known as *uchronie/ucrona* in French) or counterfactual history (which wishfully extrapolates a timeline in which pivotal historical events haven't occurred), but a *contested* history that challenges the motionless fables of leftist anarchism and threatens to dethrone their epoch of supremacy (and in the process help launch a thousand new anarchist myths). As these endangered texts (resurfaced from the abyss) began to be translated we were immediately struck by their inspired madness and menacing energy—and by their utter uselessness to movement-builders and organizers! Anarchism “without brakes” sticks in the gullet of all systems and pushes too deeply into consciousness and radical affirmations of being to serve the interests of managerial personalities and aspiring law-makers for very long; politics can't accommodate it and in the end anarchism will always be less a *movement* than an “outsiderhood” comprised of individuals who buoy each other up in their opposition to a despised society. Unlike leftists, who are in thrall to other people's ideas and require the prop of group/social identity to bolster their faith, the anarchist is a free spirit, already possessed of a certain willful and ferocious character and more than prepared to rely on their own cunning, outlaw ingenuity, taste for battle, individual genius, defiant desires, and laughing insolence in the creative struggle to evolve a new type of existence. In this sense, living as an anarchist—demanding as it does self-responsibility, selfeffort, and an unforgiving wakefulness—is by its nature **ruthless** and provides no false promises of security or safety nets of any kind; there is no holy scripture or ideology to soften the blows when things get difficult, nor are there supra-personal leftist aims (aiding society, humanity, and so on) to provide comfort and confer meaning on one's challenges. Anarchism is above all a *mode of thinking* and a manner of confronting the world; a philosophic position and frame of reference embraced by an antithetic figuration of self-creating individuals devoted to a cause which is simply their own lives, and yet which stirs parallel lives. The transmission of anarchist memes amounts to launching arrows that ignite imagination, dissolve mental domestication, and increase the probability of linking up with other rebel intelligences who refuse to enter into the System that organizes the entire world: It's a summons and a wakening call to other agents of negation to actualize and effectuate personal assaults on the tyrannical socio-cultural matrix that enmeshes life—and to lay a trail for more collaborative insurrections. For *La longue durée*, in every age and historical cycle, from ancient Sumeria to King Louis XV, from Lazarus to Robespierre to Charles de Gaulle, there has always existed concurrently an anti-authoritarian underground maintained by a significant minority of masterless men and women through whom an imperishable 10,000-year resistance is continued; anarchism is just one of the inexhaustibly-varied forms—all adapted to particular historical circumstances—taken by this resistance to civilized captivity and authoritarian systems (Taoism, Romanticism and Surrealism are three other such libertarian currents), but it's probably the phase that (at its best) epitomizes the loftiest heights of this dream of integral and unlimited freedom and which most vehemently expresses the eternal and irreconcilable conflict between liberty and authority. If anarchism as a whole represents the grandiose idealistic tendencies of late-19<sup>th</sup>/ early-20<sup>th</sup> century Europe (a veritable tsunami of idealism which, in France, produced such tidal emanations as Fourierism, black and red feminism, militant vegetarianism, and even the occultist Eliphas Levi), then the works collected here constitute not so much an *oeuvre* as an *anti-structure* within a more orthodox anarchist canon that is still thoroughly anchored in slave morality and a quasi-socialist metaphysic (an anti-structure that, paradoxically, reveals again anarchism's primary fire and founding impulse, released from the bondage of implausible moralism and universalist delusions). The anarchist revolt has its antecedents and connections in antiquity

and—in our view—is the destabilizing and regenerating force that offers the most comprehensive *reversal* of the dominant cultural myths of Control. There are, however, an infinite number of ways to escape the traps and cages of this world and it's up to **you** to find the one that suits you best—though we strongly hope you feast yourself indulgently on these once rare anarchist delicacies and draw some measure of sustenance from their curative properties. After the prolonged theoretical famine of the last nine years, the disheveled abundance of the rediscovered texts gathered here comes as a very welcome relief and provides an infusion of philosophic clarity and reflective lyricism seldom seen in the present. Whether it be the lush prose and exalted vocabulary of Joseph Dejacque, the almost classical diction of Severine, or the underworld argot of Emile Pouget, the result is a *tour de force* of seductive language and beautifully constructed argumentation that sets a high standard for effective and evocative anarchist communication.

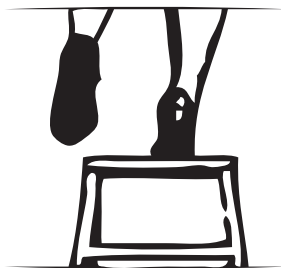
By way of contrast, in North America today, this type of unvarnished and **clear** anarchist analyses is very much out of favor with the self-appointed intelligensia of the tattered and struggling anarchist milieu, for whom only post-modern and post-structuralist *theses* are admissible for contemplation and who mandate that writers must confine themselves to themes concerning the alleged “totality” and fatalistic conundrum of capitalism. This general tendency towards obscurantism finds its most pretentious expression in the nonsensical twaddle of Tiqqun—by far one of the most asinine “intellectual” exports to come out of France in decades. Tiqqun doesn't dare to utter explicit statements in plain everyday language and prefers to use applied metaphysical formulae in addressing their highbrow adepts and to foam at the mouth over cloudy—and arguably—*non-existent* dramatic fictions (the “Theory of Bloom”? **Really?**) in order to conceal their communist agenda. When one looks past all the hype, Tiqqun serves up nothing more groundbreaking than left-communism remodeled, refurbished, and renovated, but smuggled in (this time) under the cover of deafening academic catchwords full of pseudo-defiance (which perhaps explains their appeal to the student class). The Tiqqun craze and its noxious, sepulchral drivel hasn't helped stimulate any brilliant renaissance in anarchist literature, but has instead just led wannabe rebels into a radical cul-de-sac where “between predicates” there exists only horseshit.

Tiqqun's confused devotees in the US have turned West Coast anarchism into a comfortable aquarium populated by goldfish capable of nothing more than blowing bubbles, but their triviality is just a passing show compared with the longer-running hoax of historical revisionism perpetuated by the holier-than-thou conservatives in our ranks. This suppression of anarchism's untamed, crazed, and beautifully violent past has become too glaring to ignore and it's high-time that anarchists in the English-speaking world, who are ravenous for the real thing, had access to **authentic** anarchist expression, and not just the sickly, weak-kneed, soft leftism of AK and PM presses (which is scarcely adversarial at all and has the more dubious effect of souring appetites, killing curiosity, and *disenchanted* Anarchy). The acceleration or retardation of anarchist thought bears a direct relation to the diet we nourish it with, and there's a dawning awareness within some anarchist enclaves that a regimen (or *regime*) of post-modern gibberish, liberal-collegiate prattle and communist idiocy will only stunt the growth of that which we wish to will into being. But there's no need to starve in a universe of excess: There's still a submerged storehouse of anarchist weaponry and munitions waiting to be plundered and upgraded, and if this book accomplishes anything it will be to help generate an interest in the unmanageable and disruptive rebels introduced here, as all of them—from Couerde-roy and Dejacque to Libertad and Alexandra David Neel—more than warrant their own anthologies. The goal here is to arm

anarchists with a little dangerous knowledge regarding an eclipsed historical trajectory and to furnish experimental maps that help circumnavigate the confining borders of the leftist world-view that works virulently to tame and regulate Anarchy.

The spark has been lit and the restoration of our heritage is in motion. Now let's seize the initiative and feed the fire.

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A dense compendium of old and brand-new translations of a dizzying array of names from the individualist anarchist tendency, mostly from early 20<sup>th</sup> Century France. New translations from Wolfi Landstreicher, Shawn Wilbur, and Vincent Stone. Anyone who is interested in this tendency, fans of My Own, Enemies of Society, Stirner's works, etc., will find much to enjoy and fodder for future research in this book.

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