

Anarchism and Evolution

(1956-59)

I

Assessment and Outlooks

I. — TO WORK IN THE PRESENT WITHOUT DELUDING OURSELVES WITH MYTHS

Throughout the second half of the 19th century, plans for the Future City were drawn up. The men of my generation dreamed, at the age of twenty, of being its builders. And here they are, living in the chaos of a world that, although it is in revolution, is not, for all that, the image of a radiant society.

However, if the world has not exactly obeyed those builders of abstractions, it has, on the other hand, evolved along the lines drawn by the rise of the positive sciences as claimed by our teachers. Their mistake, that of our youth, was to have wanted to soothe the destitute with the songs of a golden age, to have extrapolated beyond what the content of their acquired knowledge allowed. We have confused forecasting with prophecy.

PERMANENCE OF ANARCHISM

We bear the natural consequences of this inconsistency. Our opponents, on the left as well as on the right, relegate anarchism to the ranks of the ideologies, without knowing us well and blinding themselves too easily to the toll of the bloody bankruptcies of their pseudo-realism, a realism ignoring the essentials of thought reality. The elaboration of anarchism has never presented its views as immutable certainties. Our opponents should realize that its fundamental anti-dogmatism protects it from this nonsense. The mistake of the libertarians was, sometimes, not to constrain their generosity to the rigor of the facts. This generosity was nonetheless fruitful. So let's leave the business man and the sordid politician to their sneers.

Anarchism is revolt and liberty. Its steadfast pursuits exonerate it from its temporary mistakes. It is endlessly made and unmade. It always desires to be unfinished so that it may always be alive. In this sense, the future belongs to it, if it does not stray from its path. This must be for us a reason to refrain from believing that we will see the end of the road. The evolving society has time at its disposal, but not the individual. This is why the anarchist individual refuses to be only a functional element of this society where his life is fulfilled in a strictly closed time. So it is this immediate time that should be our priority.

IT IS TODAY THAT WE LIVE

Most sociologists and moralists reason differently. In the West, they are either Christians or Marxists. They think of man "for and by society," with what that implies in terms of limitations, falsifications and reasons of State. The anarchist thinks of man "for

himself, by society," with what that requires in terms of permanent opposition and, at the same time, lucid consent to the necessity of things. A chasm separates these two conceptions, although many terms are common to various avant-garde movements. This parallelism of terminologies is a cause of confusion for us, which alters our behavior. In not wanting to appear less bold than the demagogues, we allow ourselves to go to dead ends. In not wanting to appear less intelligent than the Byzantines and the snobs of metaphysics and literature, we give ourselves over to complexes of eccentric non-conformism. This is our personal weakness and, by corollary, our weakness as a movement.

Our fundamental concepts, which it is not excessive to say are confirmed by history and science, have every chance of not deviating from the general lines of evolution. But how, in the present, can we adapt them to real social relations, to the relationships of man with man, of man with his learned machines, of man with his growing needs and with the universal interdependence of their satisfaction, if our hypotheses of a future do not flow strictly from the lessons of the concrete?

The problems of future societies will probably be similar to ours, if it is true that man does not change. However, they will arise differently, with other materials, other techniques. Speculating on an era that escapes our apprehension is not forbidden to philosophy. On the other hand, it is futile to draw up plans for a society from which we will be absent, of which we do not know what its needs and means will be.

These constructions in the abstract are absurd by nature. Attachment to solutions ventured into an imaginary world distracts us uselessly from the complex problems to be solved, come what may, in everyday life. Certainly, the future is not indifferent. Each present gesture is already of the future, a condition of the future. But it is one thing to act for the present according to the future, and quite another to sacrifice the living man to problematic tomorrows.

ALL NATURE IS RELATIVISM

We have good reason to believe that our doctrines are constructive, in that they help revolutions. However, we must not ignore the fact that the fission of the atom is a thousand times more revolutionary than all the cries of revolt. Finally, revolutions are an adaptation of the relations of society with an environment modified by the achievements of intelligence and their technical implications. In this perspective, a scientific philosophy is something quite different from a speculation of abstract thought or even an attempt at rational knowledge. It has a real hold on nature and, singularly, on man. It imposes itself through facts. We can therefore only better direct its holds by knowing it well enough not to act in the wrong direction, not to rush thoughtlessly, not to disqualify ourselves by an excessive ignorance of its implications.

Referring to absolutes of doctrine in order to oppose refusals to the relativism of immediate possibilities can be, if the doctrine is valid, the vain assurance that our descendants will value our premonitions. I think that in order to foresee and work according to the predictions, it is not necessary to doom or spoil the present.

Let us beware of building castles in the air. Theories are certainly indispensable to the understanding of problems; they are a useful marker, but one that is lost on the horizon. Active life is situated around two or three markers, which are those of two or three intertwined generations. Action is located there in the midst of permanent difficulties and the difficulties specific to an era. The solution that is brought to them in the present serves the future all the better since, in given conditions, it satisfies the needs of a transitional time, according to what can normally be obtained from the men of that time.

This is an old formula of libertarian objectivity. Too contingent to inspire punchy slogans, too reasonable to seem original, demanding from everyone an effort of information and cultural tension, its audience was and remains limited.

Nevertheless, it is in this minority spirit, animating a harassing propaganda and opposition, that libertarian ideas are effective, act on the environment, excite its evolutions. Without this clearing, revolutions stumble on bad ground and we know what happens. It is the thankless, but so exciting role of anarchism to be a pioneer. It has the vocation, in conditions that are specific to it, because it escapes the contradictions imposed by social ambitions. Free and imprinting on every libertarian a will of lucidity, it has this originality of embracing total reality and, rejecting nothing of it, of finding, by the balance of opposites, the very laws of life.

This is why it is unbearable to the torchbearers with oriented reflectors as much as to the pragmatists, cheaters and doers, who only retain from reality what they can exploit.

II. — ANARCHISM BEFORE THE REVOLUTIONS

Nothing living lasts except through renewal. That the principles of anarchism are held to be an intangible truth — this is what we want. They have been well thought out and tested at length. But we should not forget the evolutionary formula that completes them: “in the present state of our knowledge.”

Knowledge has been significantly enriched over the past half-century and the environment has been turned upside down. Our principles are in great danger of becoming nothing more than empty dreams if we do not adapt the action that results from them, anarchist praxis, to the new social context on which we are as dependent as anyone else. We would risk getting bogged down if we persisted in a desire for total intransigence, in a dogmatic conviction foreign to our doctrine and not taking into account the changes that have occurred. On the contrary, we must seek new ways of taking hold of a new environment.

DIAGNOSIS OF SCLEROSIS

In this perspective, the libertarian movement does not escape contradictions or internal crises. If many agree on the formula that I have just defined — or on a formula of the same order — divergences break out as soon as solutions are proposed. Oppositions sometimes go, in a disconcerting “ostrichism,” as far as denying the existence of dead ends. I know this from long experience, and I know that only a series of failures will lead

to a revision, if not of doctrines, at least of the use that can be made of them. What I am writing here, I said twenty-five years ago. I did not write it because no libertarian newspaper would have included it. It was because it was still possible to believe in a failure of militancy rather than an internal deficiency.

One fact was nevertheless significant: the growing shortage of activists was due to the disaffection of young people. After a few months, at best a few years, the most dynamic were absorbed by the parties, the others were diluted in the mass. A comrade — Louis Louvet, I believe — said of anarchism that it was a sieve.

There must be reasons for this that do not depend on individuals. Those before the First World War knew how to last and they were not made of another substance. But in 1914, the world was transformed, while the doctrines remained what the 19th century had made them. Most of our theoreticians were themselves men from before 1914 and their students were not mature enough to master the new conditions of the revolution.

As well, we have tried to discourage them. Of the comrades devoted to militant anarchism, of those of my generation and of the following generation, how many remain in the fight? There is something more serious. Among these tenacious ones, myself first and foremost, how many would have lasted without a parallel activity of which anarchism was only the support? Most are or have been syndicalist militants, pacifists, free-thinkers or writers more or less outside the movement, who simply remained faithful to themselves.

Some young people rebelled after 1945 and wanted to model their reorganization on party discipline. We know what resulted: a denial of essential anarchism to the point that these young people rejected the term and wanted to be nothing more than a party of libertarian communists. This palinode led nowhere.

Should we therefore give up? No, of course not, and less now than ever. We find ourselves faced with the paradox that it is at the moment of its least vitality that the libertarian movement meets with the most favorable audience. I am often given the opportunity to observe this in the various circles of my activity. Libertarian thought is as alive as its standing is nil. Why? We must try to see clearly in ideas and in things. We must open up a path that includes an outcome free of what was original at the 1900 Exhibition.

Young people are no longer taking over. I mean young people who have left adolescence. To find them and keep them, wouldn't it be best to remember what drove our enthusiasm, what the aspirations of our own youth were, rather than the dead letter of the lessons we received?

There is a psychology of adolescence that one must know. Studies, apprenticeship, morality and family disciplines repress, more or less, young people, in a spirit which is that of the previous generation. Even a very open education does not entirely escape this condition. There is therefore, against this, a reaction of the young, a tendency to take positions other than those that were suggested to them. None can seduce them better than that of an anarchist philosophy, but it must determine a coherent activity.

BEFORE THE DIVISION OF TWO WORLDS

When, around 1911, my family radicalism disintegrated through contact with Parisian leaders and socialism was already embarking on the path of political careerism, I encountered nothing worthwhile except trade unionism. But a man's whole life does not consist of his profession. It should only be the smallest part of it. It was then that Pierre Martin revealed libertarian horizons to me.

At that time, the horizons were wide and opened on a revolution that was foreseen, inevitable. The only question was whether the workers, through trade unionism, would tear it away from the Marxist mystification, from the charlatanism of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and accomplish it in the freedom of federalism. In short, it was the opposition of Proudhon and Bakunin to Marx that was approaching its solution. The federalist idea was the libertarian idea. Its means was trade unionism, also of libertarian origin.

Anarchism remained alive because it had a reason to exist according to its principle. But already — and I remember very well my impressions and the discussions of the time — it was already letting itself be devoured by its children. Trade unionism was becoming a thing in itself. Aimed at efficiency and concerned with recruitment, the reformism of its new leaders was opposed to anarcho-syndicalism. External to the political parties in theory, its action was in fact synchronous with that of the extreme left parties and often the two were confused. The anarchists, accustomed to thinking of themselves as spokespersons for the workers, no longer assumed their proper task, which is to instruct and guide the people and not to cheat contributors. The individualists did not fail to remind them of this brutally, but they themselves, given over to the opposite excess, easily contemptuous, indirectly justified the exploitation of this people who, according to them, were not worth worrying about.

We know how this period ended; Jouhaux and Gustave Hervé joining the Sacred Union where they joined Guesde, Marxism triumphing with the Russian Revolution, the break-up of trade union unity and, practically, the integration into the State system of the trade union centres of employers and workers. *Nolens volens*, the masses were regimented by collective contracts, the various branches of Social Security, useful certainly but with restrictive consequences.

A second war has precipitated the multiple revolution of the 20th century and men are running out of steam trying to organize it. If Marxism died from Stalinism, no new doctrine that was dynamic and commensurate with the problems of our time has appeared — here or there — that can currently tear us away from between these two terribly armed jaws, which are the state capitalism of the USSR and the capitalism of the trusts of the West. Sociology, having become a science, is misused. Economic and social policy is more than ever an empiricism.

It is from these data that our doctrines must be rethought (from these data and from some others referred to the human sciences, which have no place here.) It is by starting from our accepted weakness in numbers and means, which isolates us from the masses

keen on enlistment, but also by starting from our explosive potential forces, which are contained in our will for freedom, that we can and must assert ourselves. Making a strength of what we consider to be our weakness. This is not a paradox. I have been studying this algebra for a long time. I propose a framework on which solutions — and not a solution — will be coordinated, the essential thing being to act in order to exist, and to exist in diversity, without which there would be no more anarchism.

OUR FATHERS WERE OF THEIR OWN TIME

A lesson can be drawn from the libertarian situation during the years preceding the war of 14-18. The anarchists had a fairly large audience among the public at that time and their influence was real. Mixed in with propaganda that was both educational and subversive, in countries that were lagging behind a revolution (in the east and south of Europe), they were everywhere at the forefront of the fight, whose object was not in doubt. People believed in the revolution. If they knew that the fight would be tough, they did not foresee that the counter-revolution would camouflage itself as a fascist revolution and, even less, that Marxism itself would become totalitarian to the point that Stalin pushed it to.

In this situation, anarchism could only be attractive to young people. Its dynamism found nourishment in trade unionism, in libertarian concepts of insubordination and in a somewhat iconoclastic nonconformism.

So anarchism existed. Anarchists counted. Their interventions did not go unnoticed, although they were a small minority in the face of the parties. They also became a minority within the unions, but their influence remained decisive. Why, if not because they were free from all ties and saw further than their adversaries, because their fight, based on their own philosophy, was the fight of their time, because they were the awakeners of the people and drew them into this common struggle.

Let us not disguise the truth. An active minority, because their social doctrine corresponded to the needs and hopes of the people, the anarchists of that time did not behave as a minority deliberately. They were convinced that the revolution would ultimately be accomplished according to their conceptions. It was this error, evident today, that dissociated the movement, less because of the failure than because of the obstinacy in not learning from it.

Before drawing the consequences of this lesson, it is necessary to link the libertarian communist experience to the experience of anarchist individualism. Whether we like it or not, the synthesis of all anarchisms has become inevitable. It will be fruitful if we admit that a synthesis does not exclude the singularity of the components.

III. — OUR PROBLEMS ARE THOSE OF OUR CENTURY

For public opinion, anarchism is synonymous with violence and terrorism. The reputation for violence is due to the anarcho-sindicalist theory of direct action. It does not have, among the people in general, such a pejorative meaning. Perhaps it is even

ultimately the reason for a certain fearful deference devoted to anarchists, whose spontaneous, unpredictable gestures are feared. This unforeseen nature of anarchist reflexes has always hampered the political combinations of the local bigwigs of the electorate and the bigwigs of integrated unionism. This is one of the aspects of a minority force that must neither be neglected nor minimized.

THE INDIVIDUAL ACT

Depending on our personal positions, we accept or reject direct action. We participate in it or we do not participate in it. The fact remains that it is one of the means of anarchism and that, at the very least, it is part of the views of many as an extreme recourse when the supporters of the State become intransigent, dictatorial and police. It is then what resistances of the maquisard type are.

The individual attack, a consequence of the notion of individual recovery, struck public opinion more and, this time, aroused general disapproval. Often misunderstood and misused by boys of approximate philosophy, this questionable notion was only a moment of individualist anarchism. Today outdated, there is no need to dwell on it.

Let us come then to the very philosophy of individualism, which, in my opinion, was a mistake to situate in opposition to anarchist communism. This distinction, in any case, no longer corresponds to any reality. Let me explain.

COMMUNISM AND INDIVIDUALISM

First Godwin, then Proudhon, used the term “anarchy” only in its political and social meaning: a society without government.

When, after the break-up of the First International, the Marxists called the Bakuninists anarchists, it was somewhat out of defiance that the latter took up the epithet that federalist socialism could accommodate. It was still a form of social organization.

However, from that moment on, philosophical anarchism was born. The anarchist socialists proclaimed that the object of the revolution was not only the establishment of a more just society, an egalitarian society, but also and above all the free development of all the faculties of the individual. The social revolution was not, as for the Marxists, a thing in itself, a transformation having a certain society as its end. Its anarchist end was man. This attitude posed all the problems of man. Libertarian theorists were concerned with it and their biology outclassed Marxism. Individualist theorists were particularly attached to it and pushed the concept of the autonomy of people to its extremes, sometimes to the point of absurdity. No doubt this was necessary, so that nothing would remain in the shadows. It was doubtless necessary, in the face of the disappointments that come to us from the masses, that we try the experience of detachment, of absolute individualism. We have left behind a documentation, a philosophy of human behavior of great richness. This is part of the achievements of global anarchism.

NOBODY ESCAPES THE SOCIAL

Surrounded by the social, individualist anarchism runs up against the consequences of the scientific revolution, just as much as the communist form. No one escapes the social.

Sacred egoism can only exploit men, in one way or another, and anarchism is nothing more than a caricature. Otherwise, neither hermitage nor silence protects against totalitarian servitude. Whether in Russia or Spain or among their various counterparts, no one has the right to remain silent. One must say no and perish or say yes and humiliate oneself. Individualist or communist, the anarchist is forced into combat.

Nor does he escape the Western complexes of production, exchange, organization of labor and distribution. He is not assured, if he manages to be the owner — I mean really the owner — of a cabin on a hectare of good garden land, of living peaceful days there. He will have to sell and buy at the prices, because he will be required to pay taxes and social charges. He will have to submit to the regulations of his profession, because he will exercise a profession organized by his competitors. The time has passed when the anarchist individualist could get by on the margins and shun unionism. There are no more margins. The least craftsman is required to present a certificate of competence; his working conditions are determined, as are those of the worker, by the legalized agreements that their union chambers make. Every anarchist, moreover, feels bound as much as protected by the social and union organizations in which he is integrated, willingly or unwillingly. Anarchists of all persuasions have in common their desire for freedom, lucidity, constant self-defense, but also the confused feeling of a certain vanity in opposing, bare-handed, a mass animated with the frightening regularity of a cog by who knows what complex and hidden forces.

THE TIME OF INTEGRAL GREGARISM

Anarchism, the philosophy of human freedom, has retained all its value. It is the means of its implementation that must be revised on a scale where everything is defined in terms of gigantism, planning, integration, synchronization and cybernetics: masses, industrial combines, long-haul flights, supersonic speed, stratospheric spaces, atomic centers... Let us not forget that modern man too often has the appearance and use of a material, despite powerless international jurisdictions: death and forced labor camps, population transfers, social massacres and incessant wars that no longer speak their name.

Great nations, great parties, vast trusts, Churches more influential than one might think, lead these forces into an unstable equilibrium. Can we be surprised that a sort of mass psychology has been formed, that the individual feels as if caught by an agglomerating centripetal attraction? It seems that each person is reassured only if he belongs to a community, and the largest possible: the most powerful union, the largest party, the largest people. Small nations aspire to weld themselves into continental spaces and, in the meantime, become the clients of the Moloch States. Everything is organized and regulated, federated, confederated and, dangerously, centralizes powers.

Never has a social climate been more contrary to everything that founds anarchism. Never, consequently, has its intervention as a safeguard appeared more indispensable. It must invent the method of its intervention in this hostile environment.

IV. — THE STRENGTH OF A MINORITY IS TO ACT THROUGH INTELLIGENCE

Every activity starts from a philosophy (or a religion, which is all one, whatever the pedants say) and passes through the path of theories which adapt philosophy to the various objects of the activity. This does not mean that the active agents all know the theory and even less the philosophy. It is enough that they are driven by it.

STARTING FROM A PHILOSOPHY

In this view, anarchism is exactly and above all a philosophy of freedom, of free personal life. Since it is personal, it wants to be eclectic, in the sense of free choice, and therefore anti-gregarious by definition. Anarchism denies and destroys itself as soon as it proposes to gather and lead the masses. On the contrary, it asserts itself and makes itself invincible, because it is practically elusive, when it insinuates its militants into the heart of the masses that it dissociates, that it infiltrates and whose individuals it enlightens and seduces, setting them against the authority that leads them.

What makes the human species superior makes each individual man superior, that is, thought and the sum of knowledge that nourishes thought. Nonconformism is valid only insofar as it strives in this direction. It is therefore thought that must be, that is the basis of anarchism.

Each person acquires and gives what he can and justifies himself by acquiring more and more, by thinking of his achievements in order to broaden his field and correct his rule. Each person strives to understand himself better in order to assume himself better, to be the singular person who alone can understand the singularity of another and incline him to reciprocity if he is worthy of becoming an anarchist.

It is through the diversity and even divergence of our opinions that we are an attractive force, in contrast to the brute, enslaving force of gregariousness. It is because any individual capable of leading a personal and voluntary life, respectful of others but strongly, harshly, aimed against any institution that attacks the personality, will find in our philosophy the meaning and reason for his life that we will have unfailing followers. It is because our philosophy will be constantly related to the increase in knowledge, because it will be constantly available and constantly adapted to developments that it will seduce and retain open minds. It is because well-made minds know that the highest and surest wealth, the only one that liberates, comes to us through the acquisition of knowledge, that our most materially deprived comrades, the most handicapped at the start, will want to educate themselves at all costs and will succeed as so many of the best among us have succeeded. It is finally this enrichment and this freedom of thought that no longer allow an anarchist thus formed to desert without feeling that he is falling. Let this be understood and applied, and anarchism will be in possession of the most effective force, that which always ends up being right — the force of the mind. It makes the anarchist irreducible because it is not in him the fruit of the imagination of desire, or of a vague hope, but the exact concordance with the truth of the fact, whatever it may be, and even in the change of this truth that is modeled by an incessant search.

A FLEXIBLE AND CONSTANT ACTION

From there, everything becomes simple. Propaganda naturally arises from the need to convince, to create comrades in struggle and thought. It begins with a seduction by word of mouth, on the personal level of a balanced life, according to an attractive and true morality whose only rule is stated as follows: avoid harming others and yourself; assume responsibility for your actions and your shortcomings.

Beyond individual moral positions, we cannot be indifferent to human suffering, to injustice, to stupidity above all. They scandalize us in spirit, they move us because they affect our fellow men, and they awaken our defensive reflexes because we are individually threatened by them.

This is where our social struggle begins. It must be organized according to our condition as minorities by definition. We do not have to form partisan-type groups that would remain weak and destroy our very freedom. Our groups must be unions of people with similar interests, associations for an object and agreements of associations for common tasks.

These tasks are determined by events with regard to the exceptional where we find, as needed, each according to our views, the lessons of the past: direct action, underground, secret action.

As for the day-to-day, our tasks are study and teaching, propaganda, contacts for mutual aid and the implementation of our means of action, for the coordination if possible of our activities. This action — beyond the exceptional — will be the constant, the insistent intervention of the libertarian spirit wherever there are anarchists. There should be some everywhere who would strive to make prevail, among several solutions envisaged, the one that goes in the direction of more freedom; who would fight to reject any decision of an authoritarian spirit, who would take the initiative to promote associations, unions, cooperative works; who would unmask, by unexpected, adroit motions, the combinations of the makers.

An anarchist group can only be a union of militants and proselytes in training, without internal, heavy and paralyzing contributors. But, on the other hand, what fields of activity are offered to us, in the ranks or in the spotlight, within a hundred gatherings that are open to us: unions, cooperatives, philosophical societies, social security, works councils, secular associations; cultural, educational, student, literary, artistic homes. We can be everywhere, without masks but with the tact and skill that the intelligence of men and things demands.

Let us be assured that we will never be asked how many contributors we represent, the reply being soon known: "Answer my arguments, then we will talk about your escape." In difficult meetings, in not entirely honest committees, the appearance, the presence of anarchists would affirm their effectiveness by the rumors that would greet them. We would not be those who seek members, but those who go, free and sure of themselves, among men.

If the lion is the king of animals, the master of all is the tiny microbe. In the spirit that I have just described, the anarchist is at once a beneficial ferment and a terrible bacterium. There is no need for expensive laboratories to cultivate it everywhere. It is all the easier because the species is perennial and there is no fear that the stock will be lost.

II

Beyond revolutions

I. — REASONS FOR EVOLUTION

The first part of this study was the subject of a wide discussion during a meeting where Spanish anarchists and French anarchists of various tendencies met. The analysis that I made of the crisis of anarchism in the 20th century — that is to say the “Analysis” — was unanimously approved. This was not the case for the “Perspectives,” which some reject as not being in conformity with the revolutionary tradition of libertarian communism, while others, on the contrary, reproach them for breaking the rigor of anarchist individualism.

In these two tendencies where I have encountered opponents, there have been as many approvers or, at least, minds interested in a possibility of getting out of what seems to them to be an impasse. It is for their benefit that I am taking up this study again, without worrying about whether or not it is in agreement with our catechisms, but by completing my “perspectives” with a project of anarchist “centers.”

INDIVIDUALIST POSITIONS

How do the objections present themselves? On the side of strict individualism, we find the criteria similar to themselves from their origin. Excellent in the dissection of human nature, enriching in this respect, they constitute the lasting foundation and the method of acute investigation of anarchism. Intellectually, they are anarchism itself. Practically, they disappoint by their refusal of social reality.

We have old references against this. The disciples of the Buddha, detached from earthly goods and refusing any effort to acquire them, nevertheless accepted the food granted to them by pious adepts. Without the work and generosity of these nourishers, the preaching of the pure would soon have ceased for lack of preachers. Likewise would have ceased the apostolate and the exemplarity of the monks and nuns devoted to the contemplative orders.

This constancy in the behavior of the preachers of the absolute is the major vice of the intransigent individualist. As the priest lives from the altar — well or badly — the doctrinaire of integral individualism can only last in his intransigence through his clientele. Otherwise, he must enter into illegality or resign himself to taking a place in the social system where his supporters are included, in any case.

Let us say more. All propaganda of integral individualism, all contact with “chosen” friends, every association of comrades, all mutual aid in this association are possible only through society. For a mail plane to transport a newspaper, a book, from Paris to New York, it required the organized conjunction of all the producers of the world, from the plowman who feeds to the postman who distributes, passing through the coal and ore

miners, through the workers, engineers, scientists, planners and dispatchers of all the chains of all the trades.

Is it honest to resort to it without contributing to it? This is the objection that every worker of average intelligence will not fail to make. We know the doctrinaires' defense of this evidence. It has given rise to so many dissertations that it constitutes the most significant part of the individualist literature. To take it up again would take me beyond the scope of my study. It is moreover useful to seek it out at the sources where it constitutes an astonishing anthology of insights capable of freeing the mind from many prejudices. Allow me to insist on this point. I am myself too consciously individualist — but in a different way — for there to be in my remarks an intention to discredit a philosophy rich in lessons and, even less, an intention of denigration.

It is the positive implications of a libertarian individualism detached from the social that interest us here, especially since it has degraded to the point of becoming antisocial. The individualist parade, faced with the salaried worker, can best be concretized in all its ambiguity and sophism by a phrase from a disciple of Raymond la Science whom I met before 1914. This excellent fellow, self-taught with a fine temperament, rich in life and an assertive character, told me a few days before a “coup” that he was doubtless meditating: “The bank collector is the banker's dog. He doesn't interest me. I have the right to take back money stolen from the poor because I am poor. Too bad for anyone who gets in my way.”

Why this right at the price of the life of a man who earned only his bread? “Because,” he said to me, “I take the risk of the attack and he submits.” The risk he actually took did not pay off. This boy died from it. I have often since met honest citizens without doctrine who reasoned in a rather similar way with more success. The banker could be one of them. He too would say that he takes risks useful to economic exchanges. He therefore does not find the methods he uses abusive nor the profits he makes from them scandalous because he, too, despises the collector.

It will be protested that this is an extreme case and that the theory does not necessarily lead to it. This is fortunate. However, in the limit, it contains it, since it is even more frequent than one would like. By refusing any collective social action, by disdaining the involuntary condition of the collector, the theory implies a will to get by at all risks, supported by a feeling of personal superiority. To despise the social is to despise man in society, it is to evade all solidarity by arguing that one is not in solidarity with people one disdains. This is not a position that can found a worker's existence. Now most anarchists, current or future, are and will remain, in one way or another, workers.

This answers my asocial objectors: the condition of the worker is a social condition. If, as an anarchist, the individual can and must withdraw from the social in order to escape its stupidities, in order to preserve his essential “self,” in order to enter it at his own will without being caught, as a worker he must accept solidarity in a struggle on which his material standing, the freedom of his thought and a lifestyle in conformity with his thought depend. A conciliation of the individual and the social is not a figment of the imagination.

LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST POSITIONS

The objections of the libertarian communists concern me more. The conclusions of my “perspectives” supposed a synthesis, in a new spirit, of the various anarchist doctrines developed in the last century. The courteous arguments that I courteously recorded could only confirm the validity of my proposals. On the other hand, I now doubt that militants who have long been engaged in one or the other current would agree to move towards a confluence.

However, it is after the confluence that new boats should be launched. But it is obvious that as far as my communist comrades are concerned, we do not agree on what constitutes their precise and defined objective: to achieve a global anarchist society by violent subversion of the established orders, including — it goes without saying — the Soviet order. Revolutionaries above all, they are seeking the means of a libertarian revolution, preferably soon. This is what I call quite frankly a very high and very beautiful illusion, and venerable to boot, its nobility going back a long way. How many valiant knights, for centuries, have thus been lost on the road of the Icarians!

I admit very well, nevertheless, that I am wrong with regard to the libertarian who does not consider revolutions as they are objectively, that is to say intermittent accidents of a thwarted evolution. According to a conception — which appeared in the 20th century — which makes revolution a thing in itself, an ideal constant, this libertarian is revolutionary as one is Catholic, Buddhist or Freemason. For him, the recruitment at all costs of militants and potential fighters is essential. I also readily recognize that the idea thus understood of a libertarian revolution — whether or not it is utopian — arouses the approval of a naturally rebellious youth, sometimes revolted against what was and against what is, and especially against the betrayed revolution.

But it is in the nature of things, in the nature of man, in the unfolding of history that revolutions are betrayed. It is a double betrayal of youth to seduce them to the mirage of an imminent anarchist advent by means that deny anarchism itself in advance. Recruitment by the summary slogans of a sharp catechism, by the seduction of passionate ideologies, is all the more effective as the spontaneity of youth is sensitive to ideal certainties. Anarchism — and this is fortunate in a sense — does not keep such promises. Youth, soon disappointed, sets off on other paths.

In order not to hide anything about what causes the defection of certain young people thus recruited by misunderstanding, we must take into account a potential for semi-unconscious insincerity; which misleads among us boys who are in need of existence — intellectuals and semi-intellectuals especially — who quickly free themselves from an egalitarianism that offends them and a desire to succeed that worries them. We have all seen this seed of demagogues grow against a background of poorly concealed petty careerism. This type of young person is not the least restless. Their overflowing and muddled activity multiplies the damage when, under the cover of a primacy of the social, they open up a field where anarchism no longer finds its place.

At all times, libertarian circles, like trade union circles, have been poisoned by this category of activists, who are all the less restrained because they are less sincere. The most gifted, in the absence of an introduction into society through diplomas or connections, have been able to make anarchism a political or literary stepping stone. The least cumbersome have finally made careers in business or the civil service. The most harmful are the mediocre, those whom a certain awareness of the limitation of their means has forced, according to the old adage, to want to be the first in the village rather than the last in Rome.

That anarchism is a springboard from which characters are manifested, we agree. When the characters are authentically libertarian, the springboard is a platform around which other characters are formed. When the platform is nothing more than a recruiting office for all comers, it is better to abandon it to the parties of which it is the normal instrument. Anarchism has no interest in encouraging vocations turned towards the golden laurels of mass leaders.

THE CURRENT CONDITION OF REVOLUTIONS

That said, let us not conclude that an anarchist is justified in becoming disinterested in the people. In my opinion, as a man who earns his living against his will, this attitude seems to me to be a kind of demagoguery *a contrario*. This contempt for men and this ostentation of disdain are loaded with a pride that is nothing but vanity. Intransigent individualism presupposes, I repeat, a certain economic independence. It is a privilege, a luxury product. It only flowers and bears fruit in a hothouse. I know how to appreciate the exceptional particularities of greenhouse productions. I only note that the exceptional is defined only by the general. The general is men, all men.

Let us return, then, to the problems that are situated in a world as it is, as experience helps us to apprehend it, if not as we like to imagine it. Certainly, the views of Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin and others were often prophetic. It is in no way my intention to deny the essentials of their principles, to which I never cease to refer, nor to reject all of their constructions, but to transpose them into the conditions of our time. For example, the principles of Proudhonian federalism are winning over circles, throughout the world, which are far from libertarian. By this very fact, federalism will be as it was with trade unionism. It will adapt to economic and social data. This will certainly be progress, but it will not be a libertarian federalism for long. Similarly, the great Proudhonian idea of contracts is increasingly imposing itself on the minds of sociologists. It appears to be a rational way of transferring the “administration of things” to producers and users, of removing from the abusive authority of the State areas that do not concern it and perhaps thereby avoiding a civil war.

It would not be surprising if Sovietism were to evolve in this direction one day. But at present it is authoritarian, bureaucratic, oligarchic — and its satellites copy it in every way. Its power of attraction is such that all insurrectional propaganda refers to the totalitarian directives of Moscow, which places the libertarians exactly between Charybdis and Scylla. From this perspective, what are the chances, the probabilities of an anarchist revolution?

I have answered this question in advance in *The Democrat Before Authority*, among others, by referring to predictions of Proudhon, confirmed by the experience of the revolutions of our century. I returned to it in the first part of this study. It is there that lie the oppositions where the passion of desire and the rigor of fact confront each other.

A revolution in the twentieth century has inevitable international implications. It gives rise to direct or indirect interventions by states interested in directing it or making it fail. Examples abound, from the barbed wire network with which the West surrounded the Soviet revolution at its beginnings to the Spanish revolution that was sabotaged and made to fail by these same Soviets in the service of Stalinist aims. We know what happened to the Guatemalan revolution against United Fruit, to those of South America, the Near and Middle East.

It is not said that the revolt of the people has nothing to do with the awakening and development of a modern revolution. It is said that its success or failure depends on international circumstances of a political, economic and also technical nature. The general factor of particular revolutions is the revolution of techniques. The conditions of the post-revolution are linked to the technical potential, especially to the number and capacity of indigenous technicians. The Russian revolution, after the senseless liquidation of intellectuals, was for years handicapped by the lack of professors and engineers.

A revolution is not only upheaval, which is only a kind of catastrophe. It is the construction, the organization of a new society after the upheaval. It would be childish to insist on what this implies in terms of planning, of synchronization in the use of capital knowledge, labor, machines, materials. On all that this implies in terms of oppositions of skills, real or abusive, of competitions in an environment where the spirit of anarchism is not the most widespread thing in the world.

As for state interventions, we know what they can be. When armaments have become what they are, when economic pressures are all-powerful, a revolution is conducted like a war. Should we recall Spain, Indochina, Hungary, North Africa and others? It is therefore political before being social, with what this condition entails of hierarchical organization, of compromises and compromises.

Anarchists — if they remain anarchists — have no place there except as snipers, as detached activists working to bend it as best they can in the direction of the least sectarianism, the least gregariousness, a maximum of freedom. We know, from bitter reminders, how the “politicians” of the revolution intellectually and physically eliminate libertarian activists as soon as they have the pretext and the means. Anarchist action is therefore forced, in order to be effective and to last, to act in the revolution as in the reaction, to camouflage itself, to become an infiltrator rather than a leader. Its position as an arrow, consequently a minority, only allows it this attitude. Any other behavior is an illusion or a vain sacrifice.

Libertarian militants and theorists of action, those for whom social considerations are more important than the fundamental conception of anarchist man, have never been mistaken. They have never ceased to elaborate projects of effective organization, of discipline accepted in principle, sanction born in fact by a constraint that does not say its

name. As often as anarchism has fallen into this partisan rut, it has lost its originality and even its reason for being. It has had to disguise itself under the limiting inflections of libertarian communism or libertarian socialism by formally excluding the anarchist inflection.

These make-ups have confused and alienated the undecided, without rallying the slightest beginning of a mass. Based on an internal contradiction, a libertarian “party” combines the defects of centralism with those of individualism, without retaining any of their qualities. The public, solicited by more adequate training, cannot be mistaken. It does not find its customary norms there, its need for a standard and a leader. A libertarian “party” cannot accept a leader. Moreover, there are none who can count in a competition of this magnitude. Those who have the stuff and the intention turn towards formulas more in line with their object and more realistic.

It is normal that young people, driven by a need for immediate efficiency, rather than a desire to become anarchists, turn away from a climate that disappoints them. What is not normal is that anarchism persists in recruiting followers by opening horizons that are theirs, but not its own, where it is quite incapable of leading them. What is also not entirely normal is that anarchists, educated by so many revolutions and so many wars, oppose the latter and aspire to the former in their form of civil war, the most atrocious, the most liberticidal there is.

Have we not seen enough how, alongside enthusiasms and voluntary sacrifices, the blindest, often the most sordid passions are unleashed there? How all opinion, all thought is constrained there? How exasperated Caliban brutally dominates there, only to be finally dominated and used by the cynics and the clever?

There are justifications of fact and necessity for armed revolution. Is it not war? By what means did the Greeks and Slavs free themselves from the yoke of the Turks? We accept revolutionary justifications. What must not be accepted is that they become imperatives and deceptions, that the slogans of the liberation of the people join the slogans of national defense. We affirm precisely that war does not pay, that there is no conflict that cannot be resolved by negotiation. Why do we not dare to affirm, in the same spirit, that violent revolution, civil war, costs too much in human lives, in atrocities, in works of art and spirit that it destroys? Let us not make it an end in itself, an ideal. The goal is a balanced society where justice would enter into facts. The ideal would be to bring it in through intelligence rather than through weapons.

Of course, it is as difficult to lead men to draw practical conclusions from developments as it is to lead them to negotiate before fighting. We will doubtless still have to support the people’s revolts when all other options are denied them. But it is one thing to bow to a necessity and another to praise it, to blind oneself to its nature and its consequences. In order for the people to come to judge the revolutionary fact as the warlike fact, who will say that the revolution is an accident that has not been dealt with and not an ideal, except the anarchists? The ideal revolution is a prejudice like any other, which is exploited like any other in the name of the people, at the expense of the people. Unfortunately, the condition of men makes it as tenacious as it makes tenacious religious

prejudice, of which it is only another aspect. It is neither easy nor without risk to oppose it because it is again a premature opinion. So it is indeed anarchist and it is up to anarchists to take the risk.

OF A DEFINITION OF ANARCHISM

The very nature of anarchism implies an infinity of nuances in the thoughts that make it rich and seductive, its capacity for exploration and, therefore, for construction. It does not explain our divergences of definition. In truth, these divergences are of a conceptual order and have their source in the ambiguity of meaning and content of the term *anarchism*. Let us not stop at its vulgar and pejorative definition and try to analyze its sociological content. It is due entirely, initially, to the position of the theorists of an anti-state socialism. For them, anarchism does not have, strictly speaking, an exactly philosophical meaning. If one prefers, its philosophy stems from a sociology developed at the time when Auguste Comte gave it a name and not yet a definition of man as such in his biological environment. The biological human barely appears in the socialist schools (Marxist or anarchist) of the origins. His libertarian study, philosophically approached by Stirner, will have to wait for Reclus, Kropotkin, Le Dantec to develop in the atmosphere of Darwinism. It is only in its beginnings and it constitutes one of the factors of a necessary renewal of anarchism.

Our classical libertarian publicists stuck to views of social economy and did not define anarchism as a personal refusal of all authority, without discrimination. We know how much Proudhon was fond of the authority of the father of the family. The anarchism of Proudhon or Bakunin, of Godwin even before them, is less the absence of all direction than the rejection of governmental direction. They deny the State, and therefore the government of the State, which is quite different. Proudhon's administration of things and his admirable conception of contracts, his federalism and Bakunin's opposition to centralizing Marxism are not constructions without rules. For them — as for their disciples and, singularly, with Pelloutier, for the pioneers of syndicalism — it was a question of removing the proletariat from exploitation, from the abuses of the possessing classes, the rulers and masters of the State.

Such was the sociological meaning of anarchism, denier of the State and the legitimacy of its power. It is as a consequence of this denial that we came to the affirmation of the primacy of the individual. From now on, anarchism is defined by this primacy. But we have realized that man is limited, constrained, reduced, enslaved by many other factors than his economic condition. We have realized, for example, that the knowledge that liberates can become a formidable means of enslavement through the intermediary of directed education, that nationalizations escape statization only to fall into the hands of ruling cliques. We have realized many things that our thought leaders could not have foreseen a century in advance. We must therefore rethink anarchism based on the acquired knowledge and its implications.

II. — LIBERTARIAN CENTERS

Libertarian communists and individualist refractories persist in posing the problems of our time in terms of paleography and examining them in a rear-view mirror. We should, however, realize that the individualism of some, debased as it is by all sorts of totalitarianism, will survive only through the potential for freedom that is smoldering in the people. We should also realize that, at the same time, libertarian communism no longer appears to public opinion as anything other than a purely theoretical variant of Soviet communism, too powerful to be supplanted by an old, crushed rival.

COMMUNISM AND AMBIGUITY

Clever Marxism has found the formula that discredits anarchism in the eyes of the masses by pretending to adopt it as its own ideal, but an ideal that cannot be reached by rushing through stages. In active politics, there is only one criterion, which is success. Marxism has succeeded in conditions such that its errors, its contradictions, its very crimes have no other consequences than to force it into changes of tactics that the dialectic takes care of justifying.

Against it, the libertarian dialectic does not lack excellent arguments. The disadvantage is that its postulates, obvious in spirit, realistic in time, are practically out of date. Salaried workers, even when they oppose totalitarianism, even when they are sympathetic to libertarian ideas, do not expect from anarchism a construction that is immediately realizable.

We must also be careful that the revolutionary epithet no longer has the importance that was attributed to it in the last century. It does not situate anyone or bother anyone, except a few conservative old men. It flies from the Moscow tribunes to the tribunes of the M. R. P. in a noise of wings stirring the wind. It is found in the pens of publicists of all persuasions as the expression of a fact that is a theme of analysis and not of contestation. We have noticed that for fifty years the world has been in revolution. And what a revolution! That of laboratories, with the surge in high technology, the incredible acceleration of developments where men seek to find an economic and social balance, to rebuild an ethic, to define the meaning of their lives. It is in this chaos of ideas and things that anarchist action must be original without cutting itself off from the world in which we live. The perspectives that I have proposed have only been criticized according to the data to which we are accustomed. If we do not agree to change these data, anarchism will be nothing more than a survival.

ANARCHISM AND THE MILIEU

Perhaps we will agree on a first definition and its consequence: the anarchist is a person who wants to be free to the full extent of his natural faculties, as much as the conditions and resources of the environment in which he lives allow. From which it

follows that the anarchist is constantly interested in promoting an evolution of the social in the direction of greater freedom.

But the freedom of the anarchist is not based only, like that of any man, on his economic condition. It is affected by the whole behavior of the person and, singularly, by the thought and the sensibility that command this behavior. It is affected also and above all by the conception that the anarchist has of his purpose. It is quite obvious that one does not live in the same way depending on whether one believes in survival or in an absolute end. Consequently, it is because of this conception of life that one reacts socially to the imposed moral principles, to the traditional or religious ethics and aesthetics that constrain us. It is these same principles, taught as much as imposed, which incline the masses to accept or to support as being natural, inevitable, obligations of all kinds: authority of the State, of the leader, rights of property, respect for institutions and constituted bodies, civic duties disguising interests, etc.

There is thus a “moral” environment more oppressive than the economic one since the shelters of the economic only last through a tacit acceptance of the public educated and deformed for this purpose. Education is the key that closes or opens the social *ergastula*. Unbearable economic conditions have given rise to revolts, but the revolts have only led to revolutions after propaganda, which had precisely changed the moral climate, denounced the lie of certain traditional foundations. This propaganda was the task of men and women who had educated themselves more or less, who in any case drew their arguments from thinkers whose original insights renewed philosophies.

This does not contradict the fact that technical developments are the root cause of revolutions. These technical developments have science and knowledge at their origin. Their achievements open the minds of the most humble through comparisons. The revolutions of Asia and Africa are a demand for equality by comparison. Let us say more, the revolutionary exaltation of the ex-colonized is so clearly of a spiritual nature (the spirit here was still rudimentary) that the desire for political independence prevails among them, despite their extreme poverty, over their concern for material well-being.

Everything therefore indicates, in the final analysis, that the struggles for freedom have their deep motive in thought and their means in knowledge. Now, new thought, prophetic, extrapolating thought, the acquisition and diffusion of knowledge are the work of nonconformists and of them alone. One changes something only by refusing to conform to it. The anarchist being the total nonconformist, the nonconformist by definition, it seems to me that he manifests himself validly only by a will to know, to think to the best of his knowledge and to lead his life according to his thought.

He is therefore necessarily ahead of his time. His way of life is different in part from that of his contemporaries. He is not unaware that every revolution is already outdated in his mind and that it establishes neo-conformisms, those required by the new principles by which the masses have been led into the revolution and of which most of the leaders and their henchmen do not fail to take advantage. The anarchist will therefore remain a non-conformist after as before. This is why anarchists cannot lead a revolution and organize its aftermath without ceasing to be anarchists. This is why a society that is exactly libertarian

communist is a myth, the reason for being a libertarian spirit being not to be satisfied with what has been achieved.

It is, in fact, an admirable paradox that the anarchist is a permanent revolutionary who does not believe, who cannot believe in revolutionary ends. And this is very good, paradoxes being truths in the making, therefore anarchist truths.

TRAINING AND ACTION CENTERS

This leads to nothing, our revolutionaries will cry, without troops and without revolution. I answer them in advance that it leads to everything. To everything that is anarchist. First to a philosophy of life that is libertarian, that is to say objective and in continual evolution, relativist, skeptical in the proper sense, and therefore anti-sectarian. Then and above all to a personal life modeled on this philosophy and independent of contingencies. Finally, to an action led by each according to his tastes, his situation, his means, a sniper action that is only a matter of coordinating with that of the comrades.

The crucial point — I insist on this — is that the anarchist lives his life above all. What would you think of a true Christian who would wait, in order to live and act as a Christian, until his religion had conquered the world? It is by his fidelity that religion has been maintained for two thousand years. He knows that as long as there is a believer, himself, his faith will be alive. From the Catacombs, he assures himself of this and takes comfort in the churches and temples where the faithful learn their catechism together.

Could we not establish a liaison, a permanence of this order, “centers” where we would teach each other to live and act against all catechisms? Our groups and circles of social studies, which constitute the elements of our federal structure, indicate sufficiently that this idea is viable. Its practical realization will not detain us here. What counts is the goal and the spirit of this realization. It is that in these “homes” the young would learn the meaning of our life. Everyone would keep up to date with discoveries, new ideas. They would be discussed without bias in order to correct attitudes of action without having to change anything in the bases of personal behavior. They would train militants acting on all occasions in the most diverse environments, arousing the intrusion of our ideas at all times and in all places.

In such a conception, every militant, man or woman, being first an anarchist, their convictions, their constancy would depend only on themselves. The activity of each autonomous center (local or affinity, or even both in solidarity agreement) would be assured permanently since its tasks would be the training of young people, the incessant acquisition of knowledge for the benefit of each, as much as to guide their action, and, finally, the implementation of propaganda and local interventions, coordinated and supported by the press and federal congresses.

If, to conclude, we want a program of studies and action, here it is in a few lines: know everything about everything (not each one, but together), be interested in everything, be present everywhere (directly or indirectly), intervene in everything, confuse the cards of politicians and doers, reveal what they hide from the public and — on a constructive level

— recommend and support the least bad or best current solutions to the problems that arise at a given time and in given conditions.

To animate these centers, if we were only a few hundred active militants, very firm in our convictions of personal life, a little trained in discussion and dialectics, constantly alert, each in his corner, at the task of his choice, without useless violence but without ever giving in, that would make some noise and some work.

And so anarchism, logical and concrete, would never end.

III

Doctrines and Realities

I. — THE CONDITION OF THE ANARCHIST

The very flexible outlines of a libertarian doctrine of action and organization, as I have outlined them in the first two parts of this study, do not satisfy libertarians — both individualists and communists — who are committed by sentiment or doctrine to traditional positions.

I therefore come, to conclude and at the risk of some repetitions, to summarize myself and to attempt a brief synthesis for the sole benefit of minds detached from systems. For more than thirty years the continuity of facts has not ceased to confirm my views; perhaps readers will notice it and draw from it some useful reflections.

THE DUALISM OF AFFILIATIONS

I know how vain it is to want to reconcile in action temperaments that are recalcitrant by nature and definition. Nevertheless, in the absence of an unthinkable discipline of anarchists, they should not be forbidden from agreeing on the essential common bases and from organizing, if not individuals, at least their work.

I have a long experience of this, acquired it is true in other circles. I myself am extremely reserved with regard to organizations, their mechanisms and their majorities. I have never joined anything without prudent reservations. However, I was able to campaign for decades, with serene constancy, within various associations whose behavior was not precisely mine. It was enough for that that I was not committed, either in fact or indirectly, by decisions that I had not personally accepted.

Would this independence of personal opinions within simply liberal associations be impracticable in a libertarian organization? I would be inclined to believe so if I referred to the criticisms that my para- or extra-libertarian collaborations have sometimes attracted. However, it is these parallel activities, I remind you, that have allowed me to persevere in an anarchist attitude that is repelled by too many disappointments when the need to act has no other hold on reality. Exonerated by this means from all complexes, we ask nothing more of anarchism than the enchantments that it blossoms in the heart and in the mind.

This dualism of belonging to the libertarian world and to the world of the century, as the religious would say, is worth dwelling on. It specifies what the relative condition of a strictly libertarian personal life can be in an environment that is not anarchist, which perhaps never will be, among people and friends who are even subject to all sorts of ethics, or even without any ethics.

It also denounces an illogicality in the judgments of the “pure,” others would say sectarians, with regard to the professions, relationships, social positions of activists too alive to confine themselves to the circle of their own virtues, too concerned with their good health to feed on the eternal rehashing of dreamlike formulas.

It is not uncommon for these “pure,” outside of their moments of vaticination, to have their feet firmly on the ground and to be, for example, ardent trade union activists. Now you would greatly anger them if you maintained that they are much more bound, much more committed by trade union and corporate disciplines and solidarities than one is by the statutes of an association where everything is voluntary. You would inconvenience them completely by telling them that such and such a trade unionist, holder of a class A or B state function, that such and such an avant-garde writer, a publicist whom they are accustomed to praising, has a financial situation and bourgeois amenities that more than one small craftsman or shopkeeper would envy them.

To this, the wisest respond — and I agree — that it is neither money nor position that counts, but devotion to good causes. Which does not prevent them from being without indulgence and without scruples towards those who have the right mind, having acquired some fortune in business, to support libertarian enterprises. This does not prevent them from estimating devotion only by the yardstick of their sect. Doctrinal purities have these inconsistencies.

On the other hand — and this is where one of the fundamental singularities of anarchism is recognized — it is inconceivable for anyone that a libertarian should bind himself, without self-denial, to a party, a sect, a theology whose nature, principles, statutes, dogmas restrict his availability and force him to take or not to take options of which others than himself are judges.

This leads us to say a word, in passing, about the often-mentioned cases of the Christian anarchist and the anarchist Freemason. In both of these cases, personal conscience is too deeply involved for a third party to allow himself to decide, even on the basis of a doctrine. As a libertarian, my opinion is expressed in the fact that I have not acceded to the friendly appeals of Freemasons, even those who claimed to belong to mixed lodges that cared little for the Grand Architect. But this is only an opinion whose reasons, however doctrinal they may be, do not lie in the philosophical principles taught in the lodges. In themselves, these principles do not contradict libertarian ethics and if what is done with them, there as elsewhere, is something quite different, it is up to the libertarian Freemason alone to debate it.

If the idea of Christian anarchism bothers me more, it is because it contains a contradiction with regard to my libertarian philosophy. This is not a sufficient reason for me to make it an absolutely decisive incompatibility. Libertarian philosophy is rich in distinctions and, consequently, what is a contradiction for me may be a coherence for others. It is permissible to believe in God as much as not to believe in him, since his existence does not come under objective probations. The *non possumus* is indisputable only in submission to a Church authority.

These various aspects of participation in activities whose object is not specifically anarchist will shed light on our discussion.

A COMPLEX OF PRIDE AND DEMAGOGY

There is something of a paradox in the fact that so many libertarians submit to the minimum discipline required by a union or a legally constituted association and do not know how to coexist sustainably in a libertarian association. This is because in an extra- or para-libertarian organization, one feels bound only by the clearly circumscribed necessities of the object in question. In a libertarian association, it is the whole being that is engaged and committed precisely to the defense and propagation of conceptions whose slightest nuance defines the color of an anarchism that can only be diverse. As such, it lends itself as poorly as possible to the compromises that are the condition of any work accomplished in common.

To this normal difficulty is unfortunately added a sort of completely gratuitous complex of pride, resulting from a degeneration of self-pride, from a hypertrophy of the sense of personality. One is an anarchist by refusing all subordination and this is a nobility. This does not imply a valid singularity in all things, in all circumstances, among other personalities, some of whom, without being in any way libertarian, are nonetheless affirmed according to their own standards. One must know how to add to pride in one's self, discretion and tact in the manifestation of a character. One must also know how to avoid the ambiguity of a refusal to succeed that would not be sufficiently obvious. By taking advantage of it out of place, one risks that it will only be considered as a camouflage for involuntary failure.

Many libertarians confuse, in their systematic contempt, the interested and vile submission with the good faith that makes one accept and proclaim a particular capacity, with the thoughtful homage paid to a marked superiority. By a slope that has distanced us from the sources, the greatness of the refusal has paradoxically transposed itself into a desire to impose oneself. This deviation stems from a muddled propaganda, which was dominant between the two great wars and was amplified for a time after the Liberation. It was marked by an organic demagoguery, a sycophantic workerism whose only visible consequence was a regression of the taste for culture in libertarian circles. Everything that was and appeared bourgeois was condemned pell-mell, the excellent with the worst, the intellectual with the businessman.

It was at that time that the bourgeoisie was twice invaded by the crooks and B. O. F.s who finished ruining its traditions and made it irremediably odious. But was it not up to us to collect the legacy of the masters of thought who had opened the way to its revolution in 1789? When triumphant Marxism degraded the spirit in the brutal efficiency of an inhuman dictatorship, was it not up to us to raise up the legacy and to renovate it by seeking that spirit of finesse, that enrichment of taste, that measure which made the true greatness of the 18th century? For that is the authentic message of the bourgeoisie who rose from the Middle Ages, their accession to power and the excesses they committed there being situated in the process of historical evolution.

The anarchists have not grasped that the Revolution of the 20th century is not their revolution and that, if they have a role to play in it, it is much more that of scouts and

exegetes of human development than that of agitators poorly equipped with outdated formulas.

I do not know whether I was right or wrong, in straying from venerable errors, in attempting a reconciliation of tendencies and a regrouping around a formula approaching what I called a social individualism and, thirty years ago, a realist anarchism. What I do know, and these thirty years underline it, is that I have been very unsuccessful. What, for me, these six years heavy with events specify more usefully is the validity of the concept of a basic personal anarchism, since I continue. Could I have done it if I had not set up my tower of withdrawal and reflection? But unlike what too many individualists do, I am forced to constantly leave it, because I cannot conceive of an anarchism that refuses human contact.

However, I understand those whose intellectual and moral sensitivity is hurt and who are incited to withdraw. It is not always pleasant, in the present state of the libertarian movement, if one can speak of a movement, to express oneself publicly under its banner. One suffers setbacks there and some are unpleasant. Not long ago, I supported a discussion concerning the idea of equality. My position was certainly not demagogic, for the reason that I consider this problem to be somewhat metaphysical and more related to ideology than to biology. Nevertheless, one opponent, referring to remarks made by others, mockingly opposed me with this exaggerated syllogism: "Anarchists," he said, "reason wonderfully on evidence like this: Einstein is a man. An anarchist is also a man. Therefore an anarchist is equal to Einstein." I pretended to laugh with the audience at this joke, but I could not deny that I had heard elsewhere, and precisely in the presence of my opponent, "reasonings" of this quality.

Of course, it was easy for me to point out that the syllogism in question concerned man and not the mathematician and that, outside the domain of his genius, Einstein himself would have readily agreed that he did not lack equals. The entire anarchist doctrine of the equality of individuals is normalized in these kinds of nuances which would deliver us from sophisms, utopias and, sometimes, let us agree, puerilities.

THE PRIMACY OF A CULTURE

Let me therefore return to the anarchist importance of culture and to strict training in objective reasoning. Our dialectic would doubtless gain in relevance and effectiveness if, in the centers of study that I propose, whose interest some pretend not to grasp, our militants polished their rough edges by courteously bumping them.

I pray that no one misunderstands my intentions. This is not a question of intellectualism, of a hierarchy of castes discriminating between manual workers and intellectuals. On the contrary, I say, because I know from sure experience, that there are intellectuals who are narrow-minded and congenitally primary-minded. On the other hand, there are manual workers of fine intelligence, curious about everything, open-minded about worldly matters and sometimes very educated.

It does not follow that every intellectual is a fool and every manual worker a thinker. It does follow, however, that with equal intelligence the educated man outclasses the

ignorant and that the cultivated man outclasses both. After which I am obliged to blame myself for having formulated this elementary truism. It is because many, through laziness to study, through self-esteem, through flattery and other bad reasons, do not consent to recognize that thought, the intrinsic superiority of man, is only worth as much as its information and because the subtlety of sophisms, hazardous extrapolations are not anarchism. They are too easily confused with the probable truth of the reflective paradox, which projects itself into the future. It is from this that the revolutionary or simply evolutionary social action that we never cease to put forward flows. It therefore only comes afterwards. We are anarchists first, socialists second, because, all the same, in any anarchist view, whatever it may be, the individual is not subordinated to the social.

I am not unaware that propaganda, even if it does not propagate anything, requires that these primary truths be masked. This logic of anarchism must go so self-evidently that it is useless to define it, in order to safeguard a certain recruitment. This is what anarchism is miserably dying of. We recruit rebels, discontented people, ambitious, mediocre people who have nothing to do with the libertarian doctrines, which they alter and from which they distance more than one rejected activist.

So what, will one object to me? Is it therefore necessary, in order to train anarchists, to recruit them from our class enemies, the wealthy who attend the great schools and who, probably, will make a springboard of anarchist originality? No, we must look for them everywhere, because they are everywhere and the notion of class has no meaning in this case. As an anarchist, I belong to the class of these cultivated and emancipated bourgeois who were the Godwins, the Proudhons, the Bakunins, the Stirners, the Sébastien Faures and so many others, to the class of scholars who were the Recluses and the Kropotkins, to the class of educated workers who were the Jean Graves and the Pierre Martins.

I refuse to place myself, even if I come from it, in the catch-all class that is said to be the people. Because the people are the best with the worst, the mass of the ordinary. The people are the dispossessed, the cheated, the suffering, whom I defend by defending myself with them. But it is also the indistinguishable in the crowd, the harsh and the narrow that we spot in the office, in the factory, in the market, in the union, in the party, in the church and in the lodge, those who will become if they can the B. O. F., the cops, the controllers, the foremen, the vergers, the pedants, the speculators and the crooks.

That in the 19th century anarchism was founded by men who almost all came from the ruling classes confirms the priority of culture. The ruling class, the only educated one, alone gave us the great libertarians. Among the workers who mark the exception, I mentioned Pierre Martin, this lucid journalist of whom only what remains dormant in the collections of the "Libertaire" remains. How he would have understood me, this anarchist shoemaker whom one never met without a book under his arm! It was he, around the age of twenty, who knew how to attract me and keep me in the libertarian order. This was not done with vague formulas, believe me.

Today, when the path to knowledge is open to all, when a few — from the working world as well as from the world of executives — advance very far in the meanders of the

University, an anarchist movement, which only has meaning if it is on the rise, cannot be a movement of the ignorant.

Let me be clear. It is not about recruiting graduates of something, nor even particularly educated young people, girls and boys. If I have emphasized culture and not education, it is because anarchism is made of open minds. But open does not mean empty.

One can, without much knowledge, be a boy or a girl of attentive intelligence, of logical reason and of high moral value. If one is that and an anarchist to boot, one knows, one feels that one lacks the instruments that would allow a wider use of it. One knows, one feels that the anarchist is justified in his vocation of exemplarity only if he aggregates to the maximum, that which makes the true man: cultivated thought, refined sensitivity. From then on one passionately sacrifices to study — as have done, without exception, at various levels, all the thinkers to whom we claim, those of the great era.

Would it be a manifestation of idolatry, of iconophilia, to ask whether there was not some cause-and-effect relationship in the coexistence of great men and the great era? Has a great creator ever felt diminished for having taken lessons from masters whom he would neither have surpassed nor even equaled if he had not first understood them by loving them, admired them by understanding them?

II. — SELECTION IS MADE AT THE SEMINAR

Let us now consider the translation of these views into practice.

Without going back over what I wrote in the second part of this study on a metaphysics of revolution considered as an end in itself, I will only recall that anarchist lucidity does not allow us to delude ourselves about the real content of ideologies. Intellectual honesty therefore forbids us from deceiving young people with the glimmerings of revolts without results. At the base of proselytizing propaganda, we need more solid elements, permanent reasons for adhesion. The exclamation too often repeated: “Who was not an anarchist at twenty!” implies a lack of foundations, a lack of seriousness which excludes duration in mature age.

Everything happens as if anarchism were a game of soap bubbles where only people of simplistic mentality would linger. It is up to us to prove on the contrary that anarchism is a philosophy of life, an arduous philosophy, difficult to acquire, even more difficult to realize, which demands the formidable refusal to achieve, the difficult detachment by which one attains serenity, high and radiant joy.

This is contained in two phrases, which situate the two stages of training and action: conquest and self-mastery; generous egoism of man in search of the human.

This, some will say, is as clear as Hebrew, which is true. Hebrew is perfectly clear to those who know how to read it. But one must learn to read it. So it is with anarchism. This is why the idea of a mass anarchist gathering is nonsense.

It is different with the recruitment of virtual libertarians “in” the mass where they are in great numbers, waiting for enlightenment. Even more numerous are those who will

never be anarchists but who incline in all things towards solutions inspired by the libertarian spirit. To reach them by writing and speaking, without going beyond the realities of the moment, to seduce them by disinterestedness, to convince them by the care of a loyal objectivity, is to circulate among the people currents of ideas which guide the institutions, which weigh on the decisions of the powers, which maintain or establish conditions of social life where the affirmed anarchists are allowed to live better from their own life and to constantly open up new horizons.

A TWO-CLASS SEMINAR

It is useless to say more, in order to be understood by those who are able to live this anarchism. For those who are more precisely, under the cover of libertarian labels, social agitators, all that I could add would be a dead letter.

But it is difficult for us to do without each other. Without the rigor of individualists opposed to random proselytism, the substance of doctrines would disintegrate into compromises. Labels would soon no longer stick to anything. Without social activists, whose inconvenient temperament makes spontaneous anarchists, disappointing in their behavior, contradictory in their action, but constantly active, anarchism would risk becoming sclerotic in the negative impassivity of the stylite.

How to order this concomitance? By acting separately in cordial competition? This is what the most authentic anarchists, the individualists, the trainers par excellence of refractory people, and the libertarian communists, the agitators in contact with the changing world, have done for ages.

What has resulted? This is what everyone sees and complains about: the disappearance of anarchists through the extinction of veterans who die without posterity. Everything is contained in this last word: to find posterity.

Experience teaches us that only those men and women who have built for themselves a life of anarchist morality remain in the movement. It is therefore toward this formation of the anarchist personality that we should strive above all. It is not at all necessary to seek an absurd fusion of incompatibilities. It is enough to know that nothing is truly viable without a friendly alliance. The two generic tendencies are not as clear-cut as an analysis would show. The interferences are numerous and diverse. More than one among us acts in the social without neglecting his culture, just as more than one forbids himself in his tower from closing its shutters. We could, with a little open-mindedness, with less shopkeeping sense, instead of wanting to do everything at home and thus exclude all coherence, jointly constitute cultural centers where mutual studies would be established on two levels. On the one hand, studies of fundamental training, dealing only with the philosophy of biological essence. This would result in a common, realistic and permanent ethic, independent of the contingencies and fluctuations of politics and society. On the other hand, analyses of the political, economic, technical and social situation in its current reality.

It is from this teaching and from the readings that it supposes that each person would organize his life in his own way, would direct his activity in his own way and that, by

affinities, groups of tendency and specific groups would be formed — literary, philosophical, artistic, scientific groups — where the work that would be specific to them would be coordinated.

I do not see how this conception contradicts the libertarian principles of free initiative, how controversial studies would hinder the options. I see better what anarchism would gain in quality and how the best among the young, educated to be libertarians and live as libertarians, would finally know how to last in the discipline of a morality of election. The rest would go without saying. These boys, these girls, these couples united by a common thought would act spontaneously on their social environment, their professional environment and in various associations, in groups or as snipers, according to their faculties, their tastes, the circumstances.

HELP YOURSELF, HEAVEN WILL HELP YOU

Comrades have urged me to set up, as a test, a center of the type I advocate. It is because they had misunderstood me. The mutualist character for each center, federalist for the whole, is essential. These are achievements that are only conceivable in a team. The objective study of problems involves the collaboration of debaters of various aptitudes and instructors with specialized knowledge. A single facilitator would not be able to avoid influencing the studies.

In practice, I know, the centers would not be quite like that. We do not have the means, at least at present. This is therefore only the meaning of the effort that I wanted to indicate. Nothing prevents it from being accomplished in another way. However, there is an essential minimum of confrontation of fundamental themes and current facts, if we want to identify and disseminate conclusions that hold. Without this work, what is the value of our ventured assertions in the eyes of competent adversaries?

Other comrades have objected to me that my plan is only a version of the Social Study Circles. I have given enough lectures in the Study Circles and the Popular Universities, in Paris and in the provinces, for over forty years, to know how what I advocate differs from them. The centers envisaged do not have as their object the information of the public and the education of the people. They must be conceived as anarchist seminars for young people and as colleges for the mutual education of adults. The Study Circles, places of contact and platforms for propaganda, are something quite different.

As for formally defining the structure of these centers, as I am asked to do, this would presuppose the existence of financial means that we totally lack, the small foreseeable number of participants not allowing us to overcome this poverty. It could therefore only be a question of empiricism tending modestly to approach the ideal type. It would be an insult to our comrades to believe that they are all incapable of the methods and tricks suitable for fine adaptation. Such centers, in the conditions which are ours, do not lend themselves to abstract elaborations. Their realization is conceived strictly according to the intellectual and material resources available in each place.

It is obvious that where the elements abound, a home would normally be completed by a Social Studies Circle for public lectures. In modest villages and cities without

intellectual life, the center would be resolved into a circle of friends. The important thing is that it be made lively, that distractions mix with work, that friendships are founded there, that companions are not absent and that a prominent place invites them to promote a playful education of children. There is no future without the child and it is pushed aside if the mother abstains.

All this is quite far from the Study Circles. However, let us admit if we want that we cannot achieve anything else. The step will still be taken if these circles propose to detect, educate and retain followers by means approaching those envisaged here, as the low density of anarchists in the country allows. Everything is therefore to be considered from the angle of dispersion. It is a question of coordination.

On the local level, our old principle of autonomous initiatives is that of capital efficiency; two centers cannot have the same structure because no two have equivalent means. A center in a large city will group together fifty, a hundred or more regular participants and will bring together, in public conferences, a large audience. Elsewhere, it is four or five comrades, men and women, who will associate the life of their thoughts.

On the national level, the coordination of efforts poses no problems. Our classical federalism would benefit from the faith and energy aroused by an immediate and constant reason for being, in a coherence of realistic doctrine. Doubtless then the financial difficulties of propaganda would be more easily resolved, although we would have to add to this the expensive publication of a review nourished by serious studies, without concessions to intellectual laziness. A review that could be put without ridicule into the hands of young people who know how to read, that would place anarchism on a different level than contentless palaver and anecdotal literature.

Why dwell on details? Everything is developed and can only be developed by existing. If we retain the essence of my argument, which is not organization for its own sake but rather the renewal of a libertarian culture, we will create the means for it, one way or another.

I will, however, answer one last question. How, I have been asked, by giving absolute primacy to culture and, especially, to an eclectic culture, will we agree to carry out continuous social action together? The answer to this concern could not be simpler: we must above all be careful not to waste time trying to reach an agreement. Anarchism is not a party of motions. It is not a cog with majorities. Unanimity is too rare a thing — and in our country more than anywhere else — for it to be the condition of a common task.

Since the law of majorities is excluded from anarchist behavior, or at least, does not impose itself in any way on the minority, there is no need to explore this path. Others have tried it who came from partisan backgrounds. They failed as was fitting.

Anarchism, in my opinion, reconciles opposites very well, but at a certain level. Below its low point it is better to give it up. Anarchy is sterilized by wanting to make it bear fruits that are not its own.

We are already in agreement on the essentials: the desire for autonomy of thought, the desire for intellectual honesty, the concern for lucidity. Nothing more is needed to know

what must be said and done in the professional and social spheres where we live in the associations where we judge it useful to be present. It is the sum of these individual activities, nourished with substance by the exegeses and controversies of groups, congresses and by our readings, which constitute, with our press and our demonstrations, the effectiveness of anarchism. This effectiveness would be better assured if it were not compromised by claims to “make” a revolution whose ridiculousness cannot be concealed.

CONCLUSION

I have tried to stick to a general theme. It is doubtful whether I have completely succeeded. I must therefore, so that others can distinguish between what is general and what is personal to me, conclude by summarizing the elements that determine my own positions, my conception of anarchism as it comes from the teachings that I have retained and amalgamated for my own use.

What concerns me essentially is the maturing of authentically anarchist characters, that is to say, characters free in their thinking to the point of appearing versatile as soon as more extensive, more in-depth information, or a confirmed discovery leads to a change of perspective. The efficiency of anarchism is not in the propagation of a rigid and circumscribed system but, quite the contrary, in the art of breaking the rigidity of doctrines, of constantly keeping minds attentive to the evolving world. The updating of ideas is not a versatility.

What concerns me just as much, and what is difficult, is the conformity of personal behavior to the opinions expressed. When the opinion is anarchist, this requirement is not of a nature, I agree, to facilitate recruitment in quantity. Whoever could have imagined that quantity was the measure of anarchism was ignorant of its essence.

The complexity of libertarian thought is betrayed in a summary. I will venture, since my conclusion nevertheless needs to be clarified, to formulate three views that define my position quite well, provided that they are not considered either absolute or limiting.

Refusal to achieve. — It is not the refusal of earthly goods nor a vow of poverty. It is to disdain social distinctions, to exempt oneself from degrading approaches, from promotions of all kinds that suppose a compromise with oneself and a compromise with others. It is to accept, if necessary, poverty without seeking it, rather than to break this rule.

Hierarchy of values. — To have no ambitions other than those that elevate in the order of the mind and the heart, without however rejecting any of the daily satisfactions, as long as they do not compromise those of the mind. Between a book and an evening at the dance hall, between an hour at the museum and an hour of strolling, choose the book or the museum. Then, if one has the taste and the leisure, grant oneself the dance hall or the stroll with a joyful heart, laughing frankly at the complexes of the puritan.

A double morality. — To renounce conformisms, profitable perhaps, surely of mediocre result, to make oneself by study, observation, meditation, a conception of man that is a conception of life, a personal ethic. It will diverge on more than one point from

the ethics of the time, from the morality of the people with whom we must live. From these, who will often envy our freedoms and will be angry with us for not daring them for themselves, we will have to protect ourselves by whatever is necessary of discretion, without for that reducing ourselves to the state of outlaws. It is perfectly reasonable to practice at home, with our own, a free morality and to lend ourselves in social relations to the social rules. The anarchist loves life and it would be an ineptitude to make it impossible for oneself in order to distinguish oneself at all costs. We can be assured that the only intransigence with oneself will not be without bearing some fruits outside. It is useless to force the note.

What I am writing comes from a long experience. It is not a catechism. The nuances, the variations, the personality, in a word, are a matter of temperament. What is certain is that a youth formed in this way would be, with or without revolution, despite the always sectarian revolutions, an indefectible anarchist youth.

Anarchism thus understood is man affirmed in a world that is still humanoid. This quiet pride in feeling capable of building a personality for oneself, of endlessly expanding oneself, is no longer the uncertainty of an ideal, it is a fact. It is living anarchism.

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