

working translations —

Selected works by René Fugler (aka René Furth, René Forain), featuring:

forms and tendencies of anarchism (1967)

the anarchist question (1972)

and articles from *Le Monde Libertaire*, *Anarchisme et Non-violence*, *Noir et Rouge* and *Recherches Libertaires*.

— libertarian-labyrinth.org

It is an all too common experience, when exploring the historical literature of anarchism, to encounter tendencies, trends, preoccupations and theoretical developments that have been largely overlooked in the histories of the anarchist movement — often despite being accessible in various digital archives. The Libertarian Labyrinth archive has always been dedicated specifically to highlighting the elements that might otherwise continue to be overlooked. In general, the Working Translations project has focused on the translation of similarly marginal texts.

The texts collected here are perhaps a bit different, being obscure only in a very relative sense. They appeared in sources as popular and accessible as *Le Monde Libertaire* and are all available in the original French in various digital archives. Of the longer works, *Forms and Tendencies of Anarchism* has even been reprinted in French relatively recently. Still, I expect that most of this material is unknown to most of the readers of my own writing and to at least many of my colleagues in the field of anarchist studies. And I suspect that the circumstances under which they were written — something of a boom in a kind of anarchist studies among anarchist militants of various tendencies — is equally unknown.

This is very much an *odd assortment*, rapidly translated, for the most part, between other, more pressing projects. It does not exactly fill any particular gap in the English-language archive and the unfilled gaps within the collection itself should be obvious. I hope, however, that sharing it may encourage others to begin exploring this part of the anarchist literature.

— Shawn P. Wilbur, translator

1965

FOR A RENEWAL OF LIBERTARIAN RESEARCH

Le Monde Libertaire 111 (April 1, 1965): 4.

At the last congress of the Fédération Anarchiste, during the inevitable discussions on updating our ideas, a number of participants agreed on the need to establish “research groups.” Little progress has been made on this project. This is not due to indifference, but because the first approach envisaged was tedious and ineffective: the preparation of a series of mimeographed fact sheets that would be sent to interested individuals and groups. It appears, all things considered, that considerable time savings and more direct use of the work carried out could be achieved by using the anarchist press, and more specifically *Le Monde Libertaire*. We will therefore publish here, as regularly as possible, the studies of the “libertarian research groups.”

It will first be necessary to clarify the spirit of this initiative and the proposed work plan.

a widely felt need

The need for coordinated research is not only felt within the F. A. On the fringes of our organization, groups and individuals have set to work without waiting for an “official” start. This is evidenced by the circular distributed in January by the “Noir et Rouge” group.

“We have found,” the circular states, “a surprisingly high number of comrades working, either individually or in small groups, on this or that aspect of anarchism; most often, their work is unknown and isolated (...). In the face of these very positive facts, there is something profoundly aberrant and incomprehensible: not only are these efforts isolated and ignored, but they are also carried out without any information or mutual connection (...). There is enormous waste in parallel work, in purely technical work (bibliographical research, reading, compilations, translations) - which limits original and creative work. Thus, despite the good will and the undeniable capabilities, the results are very modest, slow, and uneven.”

There is no question of making “Recherchés libertaires” the planning body for all these scattered attempts, nor even the study center of the Federation. We will try to cover a specific sector, collaborating with comrades who may not be from the Federation. We will exchange information with other teams already

formed (the most advanced seems to be *Noir et rouge* at the moment), and we will choose questions that are not a priority on their work plan. Where inevitable interference occurs, we will ask for their contribution or offer our own.

We will publish a draft annotated work plan next month. Two guidelines will guide this research: the confrontation of the fundamental hypotheses and analyses of anarchism with the methods and results of the “human sciences;” the rereading of our “classics” based on specific questions about their methods, in the light of current techniques.

a libertarian anthropology

The primary concern of “Recherchés libertaires” will be to define the postulates, methods, and main fields of application of a libertarian “anthropology.” What are the conditions, criteria, and processes of a libertarian psychology? Have the human sciences advanced the resolution of the problems posed by anarchist theorists? Can anarchism propose fertile hypotheses in certain fields of sociology or psychology?

Is it possible to establish and develop a science of the paths to liberty? A sociology, psychology, or history of liberty? It is clear that the characteristic of a libertarian method is not only the primary importance given to the problem of liberty, but also the assumption that liberty, both individual and collective, actually intervenes in the real world. In the interweaving and gaps of determinisms, libertarian inquiry reveals the degrees, modifications, progress, and failures of liberty.

It is to elucidate such a method that we will reread socialist and anarchist theorists. Thus, we can seek in Proudhon's work the first sketch of a libertarian sociology, the first elaboration of a libertarian dialectic. We have not done enough justice to his consistency in simultaneously identifying the role of social determinisms and that of collective creative effort in the development of society, to his rejection of all fatalism. It will not be a question of creating “Proudhonism,” but of highlighting the specificity of a libertarian approach to social reality.

Some recent works, by authors unconnected with our movement, will facilitate this confrontation between current research and anarchist theories. For Proudhon, for example, the work of Georges Gurvitch presents an analysis that is both comprehensive and critical.¹

¹ *Proudhon sociologue* (University Documentation Center, 1955) and *Dialectique et Sociologie* (Flammarion, 1962)

facilitating the transition

Two new avenues of research extend this development of a libertarian methodology. It first requires a philosophical reflection on liberty and, more generally, on human reality. We must therefore return, in the history of philosophy, to works more specifically concerned with the problem of liberty, and also examine how the debate is situated in contemporary thought. At the same time — and this is the easiest, but not the least useful task — we will have to account for recent studies and investigations on questions to which anarchism has always attributed crucial importance: the evolution of different forms of state and their relationship to social life, the development of bureaucracy, the individual in mass civilization, alienation and protest in daily life, collective management, etc.

All of this will lack brilliance and originality. We cannot hope to produce original work anytime soon: A lengthy updating is necessary first. It will not be without delayed discoveries, without hasty enthusiasm. A period of transition is necessarily chaotic. We — and I am thinking of all those simultaneously undertaking the same task — must force the transition from prolonged stagnation to innovative and fertile intellectual activity. It is a particularly arduous passage, which risks being long and tedious. But the collective effort can serve as a stimulus, and interest should grow from stage to stage.

René FORAIN.

1966

Georges Gurvitch and the Sociology of Liberty

Le Monde Libertaire 119 (février 1966): 11.

On several occasions, as part of “Recherches libertaires,” we have drawn attention to the work of Georges Gurvitch. This is because it is of close interest to us. First, because it sets itself, as one of its essential goals, “the sociological study of the paths of liberty,” because it seeks to define and practice sociology as a science of liberty. A second reason, which is also related to the first, is the importance Georges Gurvitch attached to the thought of Proudhon. He was thus one of the rare contemporary intellectuals to directly integrate and develop an anarchist school of thought in his research.

Georges Gurvitch, who was a professor of sociology at the Sorbonne, died on December 12, 1965, at the age of 71. Born in Russia, he was an assistant professor at Tomsk University in 1918 and a professor the following year. The experience of the Russian Revolution remained one of the stimuli for his thinking. In the formation of the basic soviets, he recognized the influence of Proudhon, well known in Russia. When the Bolshevik dictatorship asserted itself, he went into exile, and from 1928 he came to live in France.

a “failed Proudhon”?

“The true terrain of his reflection,” wrote Jean Duvignaud in *Le Monde* (14-12-1965), “was contemporary historical experience, the European political adventure in which he found himself variously engaged.” The Russian Revolution, the Popular Front, fascism, war, the rise of technocracy, and then also the struggles of the Third World constituted this terrain. To the end, Gurvitch maintained revolutionary positions. Even more recently, in a letter to *Le Monde* regarding a conference on “the sociology of nation building in new states,” he clarified the tendencies of the “partisans of Fanon and his own disciples who believe that the only way out of decolonization is a social revolution, both in decolonized and colonizing countries” (17 November 1965).

In his work as a sociologist, his research led him to study the underlying explosive volcanism in different types of society, capable of erupting into innovative effervescence. His most constant effort was to analyze the possibilities and functioning of individual and collective liberty, integrating themselves into the flaws of determinism, combining with it to establish new

forms of life.² In Proudhon, he particularly appreciated the conception of an innovative collective liberty that succeeds in breaking with determinism.

Drawing on the teachings of Durkheim and Mauss, and introducing the techniques of the new American sociology to France, Gurvitch, in order to refine his method, nevertheless always returned to two works he considered fundamental: those of Marx and Proudhon.

“Proudhon aroused his fervor,” wrote Georges Balandier in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (“G. Gurvitch ou la sociologie combatante,” December 22, 1965.) “In the dedication he wrote to me for his recent book on the latter, he calls himself a ‘failed Proudhon.’ He was, in reality, the true successor of Proudhon, whom he considered the Descartes and Pascal of the social sciences.”

pioneer of scientific socialism

As early as 1925, when Gurvitch began writing his thesis on “The Idea of Social Law,” Proudhon played a major role in his thinking. In recent years, he has returned more specifically to the study of Proudhonian texts, in a series of works, each of which clarifies and refines an analysis that is both sympathetic and critical. In 1955, *Proudhon, sociologue* was published, a public course, reissued in 1960;³ *Dialectique et sociologie* in 1962 devoted a chapter to Proudhon's dialectic.⁴ A new public course (1963-64) was published “for the centenary of the death of P.-J. Proudhon: Proudhon and Marx, a confrontation.”⁵ His last published book is *Proudhon* from the “Philosophes” collection.⁶

These studies, the last two in particular, are essential for anyone wishing to carve out a contemporary path through Proudhon's dense work or situate their reading in the context of modern sociology. But Gurvitch does not limit himself to a critical commentary: he also undertakes, with precise arguments, a defense of the libertarian socialist against the accusations of “petty-bourgeois reformism” made by Marx and the Marxists. “He is as much the representative of ‘scientific socialism’ (a term he created) and of the proletarian social revolution as Marx” (*A Confrontation*, p. 26). Gurvitch also studies the influence of Proudhon on the real workers’ movement, noting, on the occasion of the Commune, that “when faced with concrete questions and situations, it was Marx who temporized, and the Proudhonians who showed themselves to be

² See in particular “Déterminismes sociaux et liberté humaine” (PUF, 1955), 301 pages.

³ University Documentation Center.

⁴ Flammarion Publishing.

⁵ University Documentation Center.

⁶ *Proudhon, His Life, His Work*, with an exposition of his philosophy, PUF, 1965.

intransigent” (p. 113). This influence, I have already said, he also sees it in the formation of the soviets, and more recently in the various experiments in workers' self-management. “One hundred years after his death, Proudhon's relevance is as great in the East as in the West” (*Proudhon*, p. 70).

what liberty and revolution mean

This confrontation between Proudhon and Marx, however, never takes on the appearance of a one-sided apology. While he is keen to recognize and utilize Proudhon's contribution, and even to situate himself in his lineage, Gurvitch is too aware of the role played by Marx in the development of the social sciences not to give him a central place. Rather, he seeks to free Marx from dogmatic formulations, to show that his “dialectical realism” goes beyond materialism. Mentioning Proudhon's influence on the young Marx, and the subsequent convergence of some of their analyses outside of any direct influence, Gurvitch generally considers Proudhon more constructive, Marx more realistic and concrete, and above all, endowed with a keener historical sense.

One idea frequently recurs in Gurvitch's writing: Proudhon and Marx complement each other. This was already Georges Sorel's conviction. But another testimony is invoked: that of Bakunin, who wrote in 1868: “Marx is an admirable thinker when it comes to the critique of the capitalist system from an economic point of view... But there is, in his very thought, an incorrigible authoritarian tendency. Proudhon understands infinitely better what liberty and revolution mean. They must be united in a single system to keep the sacred fire of revolution burning” (*A Confrontation*, p. 12).

We will be able to see clearly in the debates on materialism, dialectics, etc. ,which regularly recur in the libertarian movement, only by returning to the sources: the positioning of the problems by Proudhon and Marx, their resumption by Bakunin and Sorel. Here again, the contribution of a sociologist like Gurvitch will be of great use to us. We will have to go back even further, situating these problems in particular within the development and decomposition of the Hegelian movement, in which the ideas of Marx, Stirner, and Bakunin were forged.

Even if Proudhon, after 1853, ceased to envisage the “dissolution” of the state in favor of studying the possibilities of its “transformation,” his work remains the most fertile starting point for a libertarian sociology. We will not avoid supplementing it with the contributions of Marx and a whole body of new research. Gurvitch's work shows us the path to a sociology of liberty open both to the essential contributions of socialist thought and to the adventure of the modern world.

René FORAIN.

1967

Anarchism and the Life of Ideas

Recherches Libertaires no. 2 (février 1967): 1-3.

Anarchism is a thought of becoming, and therefore a thought in the making. The demand for liberty gives it its impetus. The idea that liberty gives human existence its meaning and values constitutes the foundation of its reflection and experiences. But liberty is never taken for granted. It must be achieved, conquered. To be free is to liberate oneself, to become free.

Individual liberation is inseparable from collective liberation. There is no possible existence outside of a community. Outside of it, no individual can survive, much less develop: neither materially, psychologically, nor intellectually. From birth, each person is shaped by their group, conditioned by their group's position in society and in history. Each person is a nexus of relationships with others and with the world. The nature of these relationships marks one's most intimate reactions and one's consciousness.

To liberate oneself is to transform these relationships, and thus to act on the overall situation.

a situated thought

These obvious facts must be recalled against the postulates of abstract individualism and its aftereffects. We must also draw conclusions from them for the very formulation of the problem of liberty.

The demand for liberty has been formed and transformed throughout history. It is always relative to the practical possibilities of an era, to its technologies, its knowledge, its lifestyles. A society without an effective grasp of the world, without the means to overcome natural scarcity, will not have the same conception of freedom as a society capable of providing and using, to an ever-increasing extent, natural energies.

It is individuals who think, one might say, and not societies. Undoubtedly. But each individual thinks within the practical and intellectual frameworks proposed or imposed by the social life of their time. And the idea of liberty is always linked to a general conception of man and the world — and to their implications. This conception is itself conditioned by the sum total of experiences, ideas, and knowledge of a given time.

In a world in the making, the idea of liberty is in the making, just like the idea one can have of man and the world. A concept of liberty can only evolve without ceasing, or else it becomes sterilized and loses all hold on reality.

Since Proudhon and Bakunin, social life has undergone an accelerated transformation, even if its most determining structures — the relationships of domination and exploitation — have not changed. Even if the forms of enslavement have changed, becoming less brutal, but more perfected. Daily life, above all, has undergone profound changes, and, at the same time, the mentality and consciousness of men have been transformed.

At the same time as knowledge of the world expanded, with its technical applications, a new set of sciences took off: the human sciences. It matters little that these sciences are still far from reaching their maturity. Sociology, psychology and ethnology have changed the idea that humans have of themselves and their liberty. In this field too, new technologies have taken shape: they could support our freedom, but they are used primarily to enslave us. Neglecting the contribution of the human sciences is a serious loss in terms of intelligence and efficiency.

their present and our own

Proudhon, Stirner, and Bakunin posed the problem of liberty within the themes of their time, in the face of their historical situation. Two consequences follow:

- 1) Their thought is imbued with the intellectual currents of their time. To truly understand what they are saying, we must place their works within the fabric of intellectual life in which they originated.

This will prevent us from attaching more importance than necessary to formations that are too clearly dependent on an outdated spirit. Above all, it will allow us to grasp the exact scope of their ideas, their internal movement, and their lines of evolution. It is a matter of “refloating” their thought within the currents that carried it or against which it fought.

- 2) A thinker, whatever his stature, is always limited by his particular situation in time and society. His training and experience predispose him to pose certain problems rather than others, according to certain methods. This means not only that anarchism must be rethought in light of new conditions, but that many problems remain to be posed and thought through. It is absurd to simply want to adapt past formulas to the present. We have only one way to be faithful to our authors: to rediscover the dynamism of their thought, to pursue their

reflections within the current framework, taking into account, as they did, the contributions and debates of contemporary thought.

For it is not only a question of reposing problems, but of posing new problems. In doing so, we will not escape the influences of contemporary intellectual life. It is not a question of refusing to accept them, but of criticizing, as far as possible, their failings, their illusions, their mystifications, and of choosing, at the same time, the trends that will carry us furthest, seeking to deepen or transcend them. We will have to take into account acquired knowledge and also its theoretical and philosophical interpretation.

libertarian research

An authentic philosophy, a philosophy in action, is an effort to situate man in the totality of his world and propose solutions that allow him to assert himself within it. To develop a contemporary libertarian philosophy, we must take into account the wealth of experience and reflection expressed in contemporary thought. The closed vessel is the sterile rehashing of an impoverished past, death by asphyxiation.

These remarks may give a first idea of the intentions of *Recherches Libertaires*. We want to deal with living ideas, freed from compartmentalization and ossified formulas. We are for the circulation of ideas, across time and borders. Far from rejecting the works that founded anarchism, we want to revitalize them by reimmersing them in their nourishing environment, rediscovering their spirit, and drawing from them hypotheses and methods for our present. This also implies a process of questioning.

Beyond the language barrier, we also want to reconnect with libertarian activity outside France, whose intellectual expression is so poorly conceived by French anarchists. On all levels, we will try to reestablish connections, communications, and exchanges. To stimulate discussion and collective work. In permanent contact with reality and the present.

This is also why we will not allow ourselves to be absorbed by scholarly tasks or the explanation of tests. Our concern is the future of anarchism, and the theoretical development and clarification we seek aim at a more effective intervention in the social future, the ability to act wisely and to understand in time what, in action and thought, constitutes a new manifestation of the libertarian spirit.

René FORAIN (Strasbourg)

1967

forms and tendencies of anarchism

SITUATION

When writing about anarchism, one has a choice between two perspectives: that of the past, that of the future. The first easily leads to an autopsy. The picturesque evocation of the heroic period of the “en-dehors” and the “tragic bandits,” the clinical examination of a juvenile, if not infantile, fever of the socialist movement, often find their conclusion in the death certificate. In recent years, however, the diagnoses have lost their peremptory assurance. What if the presumed death was only hibernation? It is still claimed that anarchy is dead, but some are allowed the right to proclaim: *Long live anarchy! For the libertarian spirit remains, a certain conception of socialism remains, which can claim their rights.*⁷

It was necessary to recognize that “authoritarian socialism,” when it did not decompose into reformism ready for any compromise, was building the implacable bureaucracy that libertarians had foreseen and denounced in advance. At the same time, the development of techno-bureaucracy within the capitalist regime, with its determination to methodically influence all sectors of life, contributed to giving a new edge to the anarchist critique of the state. Finally, certain paths initiated by the Algerian revolution and the debates sparked by the Yugoslav model made the idea of a social organization based on the federation of self-managed basic units relevant again.

Adopting a perspective of the future does not mean prophesying what anarchism will be tomorrow, nor wiping the slate clean of the past. It is to be concerned first and foremost with the future of anarchism, in ideas and in deeds. My intention in this booklet is not to provide a historical account. If I refer to the forms of action and thought through which anarchism has expressed and formed itself, it is to better identify its essential tendencies: its spontaneous orientations, its driving images and themes, its lines of evolution.

I do not claim to consider all the forms or all the tendencies of anarchism. I stick to what seems fundamental to me. At the same time, I attach great importance to connections, to articulations, to show how a certain number of

⁷ Jean Maitron, *Ravachol et les anarchistes* (Julliard, 1964), p. 211.

ideas, practices, and methods, which have often been separated if not opposed by “tendencies” crystallized on partial truths, are in reality complementary and inseparable.

This also means that I pay little attention here to “tendencies” taken in the sense of fractions. Libertarian ideas have indeed developed in different intellectual experiences and climates; to confine them to a rigid system would be to betray and sterilize them. But it is essential, if we want them to live and evolve, that we first seek their coherence and cohesion. Not by combining them haphazardly with one another, but by rediscovering their common sources, by reconstructing their connections and articulations from a common foundation.

It is not only a matter of identifying the reciprocal implications of a certain number of themes and lines of thought, but also of seeing the interdependence of the different sectors they cut out in reality. It is a matter of verifying that the connections between ideas correspond to actual relationships in the world in which we live.

In order to balance this outline of an anarchism that concerns the whole person, I had to give a fairly large share to the implicit: to make perceptible, between the forms that have been clearly expressed in libertarian practice and theory, underlying, permanent tendencies that are generally blurred rather than explained. Hence the pages on utopia and myth. I also took into account the spontaneous attitudes that reveal a nascent libertarian spirit.

On the level of reflective thought too, certain core problems have not been sufficiently clarified. Driven by the urgency of situations and the needs of day-to-day action, anarchists have been more concerned with the practical, individual, and social applications of a philosophy of liberty than with its theoretical foundations. The foundations laid by Proudhon, Stirner, or Bakunin have hardly been developed. We have sought to adapt their formulas rather than to rediscover and extend the movement of their thought. To sketch the broad outlines of a philosophy of liberty, I have borrowed elements from currents of contemporary thought that have made liberty their center of value and meaning.

The idea of liberty is not a spontaneous creation. Some civilizations have ignored it. As we currently conceive it, it has been forged gradually, following the transformation of societies, the growth of knowledge and means of action in the world. At the same time that liberty has become the major demand of modern consciousness, a debate has arisen around it that extends beyond anarchist reflection, and the latter can only remain vibrant if it participates in a multifaceted discussion that expresses the problems, crises, and possibilities of the current situation.

This brochure is still only a very partial attempt to reintroduce anarchism into the mainstream of contemporary research. It expresses more of an impulse than an achievement. Only collective work will be able to concretize the lines of research proposed here.

The starting point for *Forms and Tendencies of Anarchism* was a series of articles published in *Le Monde Libertaire* from 1958 to 1961. I have reworked them to give the unity of a consistent text to a collection scattered over three years. As it stands, this brochure is, in my opinion, first and foremost a call for discussion, an incentive for renewal through a return to the foundations and a critical openness to modern thought. I will have achieved my goal and it can be for others what it is for me: a transition, a step on a path that must lead far beyond.

ORDER AND DISORDER

A first approach to anarchism inevitably stumbles over the ideas, the images, of order and disorder. Anarchy, in the common sense, is disorder. From a pedagogical point of view, it may be useful to recall that, etymologically, anarchy first signifies the absence of authority and not the absence of order. Faced with the “established disorder,” we can maintain that “anarchy is the highest expression of order.” It is better, however, when we seek to recover the living sources of anarchism, not to avoid this encounter, but on the contrary to seek the ambivalent implications of the notions of order and disorder.

The return to certain fundamental images, to basic experiences, allows us to go beyond the partial theoretical expressions that have immobilized the intuitions of anarchism in exclusive methods and ideologies. It is necessary to return to these experiences, where an anarchic consciousness is revealed in the most spontaneous fashion: an immediate manner of feeling life, of orienting ourselves in the world. It is in this way that, through practical attitudes, we can reconstitute the sense of themes that have become too hackneyed or, on the contrary, been too quickly neglected in rational elaboration. Such research brings to the surface the most primitive nostalgias and the most destructive impulses. It also poses a difficult problem: separating what is original from what is deflected or misshapen.

anarchy, wild liberty

In the social context, the anarchic attitude appears as refusal, disturbance, disorder: rejection of consecrated values, contempt for rules, open struggle against the powers that be. Negative in its expression, it is no less positive in its first movement. It is the affirmation of a life that wants to flourish, but that is stifled and mutilated by a rigid, oppressive order.

Anarchic revolt, individual or collective, signifies the driving force of a new life, which bursts a too-tight shell. To live is not to preserve oneself and survive, but to develop one's forces and follow one's own path. Each time that a vigorous will to live finds itself blocked by material and intellectual conditions, it produces a crisis, a struggle that ends only with the transformation of the world or the crushing of the life.

Thus, the first expression of anarchy is the shock of a vital force against structures that oppose themselves to its extension. And as all existence, at least as long as it is not reduced, has its own movement, every attempt to divert or repress that movement would appear an inadmissible violence. All authority,

every established power, is thus rejected as contrary to life by the one who bears its weight.

By its dynamics alone, prior to any in-depth reflection, an existence that seeks to give itself free rein finds itself in conflict with social organization. Depending on the effective pressure it exerts, whether it is brutal or latent, the revolt takes more or less violent forms. In the extreme case, terrorism seems to merge with the outburst of wild liberty that characterize anarchy.

The “tragic bandits” fought to the death against a society that crushed them and seemed to exclude the possibility of profound transformation.⁸ *Let the old world die!* If their fate was settled in advance, it was because they preferred the last blaze of radical protest to a life doomed to languish.

the unleashing of the passions

Revolt, in this case, takes a redirection laden with serious consequences. To use the words of Nietzsche, spontaneous, creative *activity*, because it is hindered, becomes *reactivity*, *ressentiment*, the will to destroy for the sake of destroying. At this extremity, revolt becomes the negation of any form of order and value, the negation of life. It leads to murder as the only horizon and ultimately contradicts its sources.

Yet without resulting in such desperation, anarchists have often viewed disorder, in the face of an overwhelming and crippling “order,” as a factor of creation through the positive energies it releases. “The joy of destroying,” says Bakunin, “is a creative joy.”

This idea, constant in his life and thought, is also found developed as follows: “We understand the revolution in the sense of the unleashing of what we call today the bad passions, and the destruction of what in the same language is called ‘public order.’ We do not fear, we invoke anarchy, convinced that from this anarchy, that is to say from the complete manifestation of popular life, must emerge liberty, equality, new order, and the very force of the revolution against reaction.”⁹

Disorder is not chosen here for its own sake, but in preparation for a new order. The yearning for a new order is one of the original lines of orientation of anarchic consciousness. Its occultation in despair and *ressentiment* constitutes a

⁸ See the pages by Victor Serge on illegals in his *Mémoires d'un révolutionnaire* (Ed. du Seuil) and the texts presented by Jean Maltron in *Ravachol et les anarchistes* (Ed. Julliard collection Archives).

⁹ “Programme et objet de l'organisation des frères internationaux” — Text published in *Ni dieu ni maître, anthologie historique du mouvement anarchiste* (Ed. ed Delphes, 1966), P. 229-230,

serious loss of balance. The clash between the spontaneous deployment of individuality, on the one hand, and the state of natural scarcity, the oppressive social structures, on the other, produces, simultaneously with revolt, even before revolt, the yearning for a harmonious order, where needs could be satisfied, interests and the wills balanced freely, the social forms evolving in flexibility.

Animated by the desire for a full life, anarchic consciousness can trace itself in reality in two opposing ways: those of an equally virulent pessimism and optimism. According to the first, the world quickly appears as the closed field of a struggle of all against all, a disordered universe where the struggle for life eliminates the weakest every time. According to the second, humanity is on the march towards a living order, gradually eliminating natural obstacles and artificial constraints.

The theoretical elaboration of anarchism will rediscover these spontaneous colorings. Depending on the circumstances, one or the other will dominate. But the circumstances are not the only determining factors, and we cannot avoid the question: of these contrary tendencies, which one actually corresponds to the internal dynamism of anarchy?

THE SENSE OF REVOLT

The question is not purely formal: the answer will guide behavior and action. If we again take up the opposition between activity and reactivity, it already appears that the aspiration for an order allowing the flourishing of life is in accordance with the anarchic impetus. But isn't the ruthless struggle for life, the "law of the jungle," enshrined in natural reality? Is revolt only one aspect of this struggle?

a human community

Here we must go one step further, and seek to identify the human significance of the revolt. An explosion of compressed vital energy, it is also, in its first movement, an affirmation of values for which the rebel will accept the risk of death. "Conscience," says Camus, "comes to light with revolt."¹⁰ In this "about-face", impulsive as it is, the human being feels and proclaims that they are not a thing among things — that a limit has been exceeded beyond which the *inhuman* is no longer tolerable.

The rebel no longer accepts that a part of themselves — the possibility of development, of choice, of refusal, of self-determination — should be denied, crushed any longer. "Apparently negative, since it does not create anything," Camus continues, "revolt is deeply positive since it reveals what, in the human being, is always to be defended."¹¹

Claiming the right to a human existence, respect for their integrity, the rebel does not take long to give a name to this demand which launches them into contestation and struggle: *liberty*. Feeling this need for liberty as the essential tension of their being, they affirm a liberty constitutive of their human reality. The rebel — still following Camus's analysis, which is particularly enlightening here — "acts, therefore, in the name of a value that is still confused, but of which they have the feeling, at least, that they have in common with all humans. We see that the affirmation involved in any act of revolt extends to something that overflows the individual as far as it draws them out of their solitude and provides them with a reason to act."¹²

It is in this sense that revolt overcomes despair and sheer destruction. It sheds light on the solidarity of the oppressed, the reasons for a common

¹⁰ Albert Camus, *L'Homme révolté* (Gallimard, 1951), p. 27.

¹¹ id. p. 32.

¹² id. p. 28.

struggle. Awakening awareness of oneself and of others, awakening, through the action of rupture by which it is expressed, others to awareness of their liberty, calling for active solidarity, the revolt gives rise to a new community. The oppressor excludes themselves by their *inhumanity*: by an existence based on the negation of humanity in others.

from anarchy to anarchism

Revolt thus leads to a desire for a justice for all, for a true order that produces the conditions of liberty. Revolt leads to revolution, anarchy to anarchism.

Anarchism, a reasoned, reflective reaffirmation of the anarchic desire for a full existence and indefinite development, establishes itself through reflection on the values posed in revolt, on the conditions and means of their realization. Clarifying and prolonging the movement of a spontaneous anarchy, anarchism tends to establish a new form of anarchy: the spontaneous creativity of a free existence in a disalienated society. It is from that perspective that we can say: *Anarchy is order*.

Between these two forms of anarchy, between the gushing of the source and the horizon that never ceases to recede, extends the field of anarchism.

Proposing the fulfillment of a human being who carries life to the limits of the possible, anarchism cannot confine itself to the struggles and crises of the present moment. It must promote a coordinated undertaking extending the present toward the future, building on experience, in order to reach what is still only a plan. It must define the means and ends.

Hence the necessity for a guiding line that involves not only knowledge of human beings and the world, but also the choice of the values that will orient the human future. For there is no road drawn up in advance, no infallible instinct nor knowledge given once and for all. The goals and the paths leading to them are to be ceaselessly defined and redefined as conditions that present themselves and possibilities that open up.

Anarchism is thus led to identify the sense (meaning and direction) of human existence, to clarify what constitutes the fundamental reality of the human being. It is from experience, from revolt, that it draws its first assertion: existence has no meaning outside of liberty. In other words, it is through liberty that authentic human existence is defined. Or again: what makes the very reality of the human being is liberty.

the logic of liberty

Such a position is indeed subject to a “choice,” to a fundamental hypothesis (laying the foundations) that simultaneously determines thought and action. And that choice is not free, since it is expressed in an experiment that commits all mankind in the risk. The fact remains nonetheless that this vital hypothesis must be developed in terms of coherent thought, compared with acquired knowledge and tested in practical existence.

It is indeed a philosophy that takes shape here: an uninterrupted effort to situate the human being in the universe — a universe Interpreted by knowledge, transformed by work and lived after a fashion by individuals and their societies. This effort to situate the human being in nature, culture and society necessarily leads, as far as anarchism is concerned, to a practical philosophy, a philosophy in action: liberty is only real when it is lived, expressed by the behavior, action.

But if anarchism has its origins in revolt, the path leading from one to the other is not inevitable. Not every rebel necessarily becomes an anarchist. They may remain in a phase of anarchic insurrection, which does not lay down the means, or even, perhaps, the ends of an anarchist order. They may also, in the choice of the means leading to a free society, decide in favor of compromises that will ultimately preserve the established disorder or of a path that lead to a new oppression.

Anarchism is defined by fidelity to the logic of revolt. It refuses to use contradictory means, denying the values posed by them — not to maintain a first affirmation at all costs, but because it judges, with experience to back it up, that we cannot achieve liberty through the negation of liberty. The revolution must extend the revolt, but without betraying it.

LIBERTY AND LIBERATION

It is because it makes liberty its central theme, its core, because it defines human reality by liberty, that the anarchist philosophy rightly calls itself libertarian. Doubtless, neither the reflection on liberty nor the will to liberty are exclusive to anarchism. Its philosophy is part of a long cultural evolution, a dramatic succession of struggles. What gives it a claim to originality is having followed the logic of liberty to its end, maintaining that at no level do we actually achieve liberty through its “temporary” negation or its abdication: through that, it is anarchist.

Isn't it contradictory to maintain simultaneously that the human being is free and that they must choose means that actually lead to liberty? If they were free, would they be concerned with freeing themselves? To put the question in this way does not take into account the conditions of liberty. Human beings can concretely achieve their liberty because it is the essential characteristic of their being. They can liberate themselves because they are free.

liberty and determinism

Such an affirmation is, implicitly or explicitly, at the base of every doctrine that proposes to organize individual and collective life in accordance with liberty. Here we find the “choice” that we have already discussed: the affirmation of liberty is not subject to any verification or nullification of the scientific order. Scientific knowledge is based on the principle of determinism, on the search for the necessary and universally valid relations between facts. As a natural being, the human being is subject to physico-chemical and biological determinisms. Its originality is to escape the sphere of animality, to manage bit by bit to know and dominate natural determinisms.

As an animal species, humans have appeared endowed with fewer means of defense and adaptation than the other species. Deprived of rigid instincts that will adapt their behavior to the world according immutable patterns, the human species is called upon to invent the means of its survival. It is that state of incompleteness that has forced on the human race a decisive passage toward its humanity. Taking a step back from its situation, planning behaviors that organize time and space, codifying past experience in order to prepare for the future: these are the rules of human consciousness.

In the development of consciousness, of memory, in the progress of knowledge and means of action, is formed a species that is incomparable with other living beings. Consciousness takes over from instinct, invents solutions that can be a source of success or failure.

At the core of human reality there is something like a rift, a void to fill, from which the consciousness emerges, forced to make the connections, to tie the circuits together, to take on choice after choice.

It is starting from this that the human specificity is defined. It is not a question of indeterminacy, since none of the forms of determinism find themselves undone and since, on the contrary, new determinisms, psychological and sociological, come to structure the human world. It is better to speak here of self-determination or of over-determination: to the determinisms, humans add the determinations of their projects, their creations. Human projects are based on determinisms, which give a firmness to action. Liberty employs the determinisms, which influence its situation.

Every science isolates a fragmentary aspect of human reality. To rediscover the whole human being, to account for the emergence and progress of its consciousness, to understand invention and creation, philosophical reflection in its turn chooses its guiding hypotheses, controlled by reasoning and by the experience of a lifetime.

The idea of liberty is one of these hypotheses, and because it constructs itself around it, anarchism is indeed a philosophy.

action and values

Philosophy does not content itself with interpreting the relation of the human being and the world, the human becoming: it seeks to guide that becoming, to transform the world, to change life. Scientific knowledge clarifies the conditions of action, not its ends. It can measure the efficacy, not the human value of an action. And the efficacy, finally, is evaluated in relation to a goal to be reached. Among the possible enterprises, it is for the human being to choose, at their own risks and perils, the one that corresponds to their idea of a useful life, of a meaningful human becoming

The fundamental choice that constitutes a philosophy has practical consequences: it expresses less the choice of an idea than the choice of a life. For anarchism, the value of an action or behavior is judged according to the increase in liberty and consciousness it allows, according to the liberty it expresses.

Concrete action is not dictated by an abstract idea of liberty, but informed by a constellation of particular values, transitory and relative values, drawn out by the project that guides our life. Justice, sincerity, courage, love, beauty, etc. are not values given once and for all; they are posed or rejected by a consciousness always tending towards a world in the making, by a will, sometimes obscure, to realize in the moving and uncertain the meaning that an existence has chosen for itself. And this meaning is itself not given once and for all in its clarity, but

clarified, taken up again, reflected upon, in the ambiguity and the hazards of practical life.

This same movement of an existence that invents its values and chooses its ways is liberty. And this liberty is engaged in a constant effort of liberation.

the stages of liberty

This liberty, which for us constitutes the essential reality of the human, may not find its effective manifestation, may remain an unrealized possibility because it is suffocated in an existence entirely dependent on external forces. There is always the possibility of a revolt, and in this liberty is never completely excluded, but there are cases where the revolt can only lead to death. Liberty is therefore inseparable from a struggle to achieve conditions allowing its deployment, through the establishment of a non-constraining society, through the satisfaction of basic needs and the reasoned use of determinisms.

It is still an activity of transition, of passage, that characterizes anarchism here: the passage from liberty as pure possibility to liberty as real power. From this perspective, the free act is the liberating act. Anarchism is a practice of liberation.

No doubt, even in an existence that is still alienated, which is the case with all of us, we can envision moments of full liberty, moments of anarchy prefiguring the “final” anarchy, (which is to say, in fact, the “inaugural” anarchy of a truly human civilization or history.) There are moments of spontaneity and fulfillment, where, beyond the difficulties temporarily overcome, the convergence of circumstances, vital energies and personal projects would place the individual in a movement of creation, unhindered expression or deep agreement. Such moments can only be exceptional. At the same time, as the habit of servitude bogs down the individual (and the community) in its inertia, the experience of liberty and the difficult practice of liberating behavior support a libertarian approach.

Liberty, in daily life, is expressed by the aptitude for free action, and especially by the tension and vigilance of a liberating will and activity.¹³

¹³ The current elements of a philosophy of liberty have been developed above all by existentialism, in particular by Sartre. On the theme of “liberty and liberations,” one can draw interesting reflections from essays more accessible than *Being and Nothingness* (Gallimard, 1943), which develop the moral implications of Simone de Beauvoir’s *Ethics of Ambiguity* (Gallimard, 1947. Reprinted with *Pyrrhus and Cinéas* in the pocket collection “Ideas”) and *Le Problème moral et la pensée de Sartre*, by Francis Jeanson (1047, new supplemented edition: Le Seuil, 1966)

THE UNIQUE AND SOCIETY

To be free is to become free. This continued liberation cannot be reduced to abandonment to the impulses of the moment, to the pure and simple refusal of any order and any rule. Leading an independent life requires consistency and perseverance. It requires the integration of the vital energies in a personal synthesis, the knowledge and domination of determinisms, and fidelity to a project maintained through failures and missteps.

an art of living

The elaboration of a flexible and detailed art of living has always preoccupied anarchists: an art of living that bases invention on knowledge, on learning, on the consideration of ends and means. Here again it is a question of regaining the vital impetus through the mediation of intelligence, of harmonizing the available forces, of consciously ordering the drives to avoid dissipation and shortness of breath.

This art of living necessarily implies scorn for conventions, the refusal of roads plotted in advance, in order to open a way proper to one's own personality, which feels its originality and its singular destiny.

The integration of natural energies into a conscious and enterprising existence is not the only problem with such an art of living. It's not even the most pressing problem. To live is to live with others. They often appear to consciousness as the first obstacle. Group pressure pushes the individual into a long-established rut. Social organization makes everyone a cog among cogs. Oppression, when it is evident, prevents personal determination.

But to revolt against every collectivity is as futile and as deadly as to claim to be cut off from natural realities. Revolt unveils, along with my liberty, the liberty of others and the possibility of a human community. Reflection on the concrete conditions of existence uncovers a collective life that preexists all individual life.

the originary social

The individual cannot, without withering, cut themselves off from the natural order: likewise they can only last in a social order. The satisfaction of its most basic needs already implies the existence of a community where each benefits from the work of all. The material conditions are not the only cause. Through the development of humanity, the individual distinguished themselves from the

group only recently. At the individual level again, the child knows its relations before knowing itself, and it is through them that it will gradually become aware of itself.

From the family to the workplace, at school as well as in games, the environment is an essential factor in our psychological training. If it is indeed in solitude that human beings find the creative unity of their existence, if it is in solitude that they must make their most important choices, the influence of the environment can mark the most individual, and all “interior” life can only run dry in too long isolation. Inability to communicate with others results in an imbalance that translates into the vital balance itself.

“Society,” writes Bakunin, “is anterior to and at the same time survives each human individual, like nature itself; it is eternal like nature, or rather, born on earth, it will last as long as our earth lasts. A radical revolt against society would therefore be as impossible for humans as a revolt against nature, human society being moreover nothing other than the last great manifestation or creation of nature on this earth.”¹⁴ Kropotkin develops the same idea, showing that mutual aid is a factor in evolution.

“Mutual aid,” he writes in a work which was to have a significant influence on the intellectual climate of his time, “is as much a law of animal life as reciprocal struggle, but as a factor of evolution, the former probably has a much greater importance, in that it favors the development of habits and characteristics eminently suited to ensuring the preservation and development of the species.”¹⁵ From insects to mammals, sociability is, according to Kropotkin, the greatest advantage in the struggle for existence, to the point that species that renounce it are doomed to decay, while the animals that know best how to unite have the greatest chances of surviving and evolving, even if in many ways they are inferior to others.

the individual in history

When humanity gradually emerges from the animal sphere, when culture takes over from nature in evolution, this naturally-based sociability will be called upon to play an increasingly important role. Anarchism will base a large part of its social conceptions on this observation. Knowledge, which allows human beings to orient themselves in the world, technique, which allows them to dominate it, are the fruit of a collective labor. Reason itself is not an innate faculty, but the consequence of a long collective elaboration, which continues.

¹⁴ “Dieu et l’Etat,” dans *Œuvres*, tome I (Stock, 1902), P. 286.

¹⁵ *Mutual Aid* (Hachette, 1906), p . 7. See also *Pierre Kropotkine, le prince anarchiste*, by Woodcock et I Avalcoumovitch (Calmann- Lévy, 1953), pp. 250-255 et 343-344.

And language, without which no thought is conceivable, is a social phenomenon par excellence.

The society of a time, with its legacies and crises, constitutes the very fabric of individual existence. The human being is a knot of relationships, and the nature of these relationships marks them deeply. Whatever their level of consciousness, their energy, the creative originality of their life, they are conditioned by their situation in a certain society. Each personal destiny is inseparable from that of an entire civilization and participates in its impulses as well as its crises.

It must first be concluded that my personal existence is determined by the relationships I have with others. The very movement of my existence atrophies if I fail to establish relations of exchange and understanding with others. My thinking sterilizes or turns to madness if no authentic communication is possible. In a society dominated by relations of oppression and servitude, individual liberty is bogged down and corrupted. The art of living becomes a mystifying illusion, or solitary and bloodless delight, or even the worship and search for power, and therefore oppression.

“I am truly free,” Bakunin said, “only when all living beings around me are equally free, so that the more free people around me, the deeper and wider my liberty becomes.”¹⁶

If my liberty is only realized through an effort of liberation, then this liberation must be collective. It is not possible to cut oneself off from society: the will to liberty thus becomes the will to transform society, to establish a society where free relations become possible. My liberty can only be won through history, and this history is that of all men.

“The meaning of history,” writes Victor Serge, “is the consciousness of participation in the collective destiny, the constant becoming of men.”¹⁷

Thus the passage from revolt to revolution is again confirmed.

an anarchist ethic

Does that mean that anarchism puts off concern for a free individual life, for authentic relations between human beings, for the future times of a society without oppression? Not at all. Liberation is a constant task, which comes, through the continuous effort to institute other relationships between men, to increase the capacity of individuals for conscience, judgment, decision and

¹⁶ *Œuvres*, tome, I p. 281. Cited also in the collection of texts *Bakounine: La liberté* appearing in the collection « Libertés » (Pauvert, 1965), p. 49.

¹⁷ *Carnets* (Jullard, 1952), p. 51.

initiative. In the struggle for a revolutionary transformation of society the anarchists refuse the means that would compromise liberty and conscience. They try to model their relationships with others as much as possible on the idea they have of genuine human contact.

If it is difficult to imagine what the relations of human beings in a disalienated society would be, if spontaneously free behavior is always undermined by the present society, we still have to maintain, against all odds, libertarian behavior: behavior underpinned by a constant desire for liberty and respect for the liberty of others. Thus emerges an anarchist morality, which is not only a compass in everyday life, but a factor of collective evolution and liberation.¹⁸

This morality once again reflects the vocation of anarchism: to force the passage towards a liberty of initiative, of invention, of real power. The very concern for an art of living is not forgotten, within the limits of the possible, nor its experimentation.

Anarchism develops a morality because individual life cannot be reduced, if it is to be realized, to the pure palpitation of the moment; because every individual lives with others, and the liberty of each requires the liberty of all the others. But this morality is not an obvious and conventional code. No situation is absolutely clear or immutable; each human individual is opaque to the others and individualities collide in their needs and their aspirations. In an alienated society, which maintains itself by violence, any action is always at risk of being distorted, and violence permeates all means to some degree. There is no choice without risk, uncertainty and ambiguity.

Liberty, for an anarchist philosophy, is the foundation of all values and all meanings. But liberty, even if it defines human beings, is never the liberty of an abstract humanity, but that of a concrete, singular, unique human being. Because the fabric of their being is social, because all liberties are held together, the individual needs a morality that can be understood and recognized by others. Because it involves the collectivity, the duration, the organization of the natural world, such a morality is based on reason.

But every individual also knows their solitude, their uniqueness. Their personal existence requires ruptures, the dissolution of what is outdated or sclerotic, the unreason of dreams and passions, which revive dormant energies, reintegrating temporarily sacrificed forces. Individual life also has its indispensable moments of chaos, and its dialectic of order and disorder. There are moments of transgression, which do not go without risks and often without intense conflicts. Here we come across the realm of the exception, which

¹⁸ The conception of an essentially moral and evolving anarchist is expressed particularly today in the writings of Charles-Auguste Bontemps. See, among others, *L'Anarchisme et le réel* (Les Cahiers francs, 1963).

libertarian thought cannot elude. The work of Max Stirner¹⁹ is centered on this effervescent and dissolving phase of liberty. It constitutes one of the most authentic expressions of anarchism, on condition that we do not make it the whole of anarchism, and that we place it once again within the ensemble of a philosophy that does not forget that the human being is first of all a social being.

¹⁹ *L'Unique et sa propriété* has been published by Pauvert, unfortunately in a very poor translation. In Germany, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* has just been republished by Reclam, at Leipzig.

SOCIAL LIFE AND STATE SCLEROSIS

Any project of personal liberation implies that of collective liberation, the establishment of a social order where life could unfold in its spontaneity, where the relationships of individuals would not be disrupted or made impossible by oppression and exploitation. This desire for collective liberation, which results in a coherent reflection on the conditions of liberty, is expressed before any theoretical formulation in social life. On the collective level too, anarchism is the reflexive revival of an unreflective vital impulse. Before having a clear view of the goals and the means, oppressed social groups struggle against the conditions imposed on them. It is in the course of action, through failures and successes, through successive awakenings, that socialism was formed.

from the bottom up

The fundamental project of socialism is to restore free rein to the social, to social life, by eliminating the parasitic and oppressive structures that exploit and sterilize it. Socialism is the desire to reshape social activity according to collective needs, through collective management.

The implementation of such a project, from the very first attempts, comes up against the State and its repressive apparatus. *The opposition between society and the State*, already found among the physiocrats and liberal thinkers, is a key idea of socialism. But it is libertarian socialism that gives it the most coherent expression, insofar as it refuses any compromise, even of a temporary nature, with the State apparatus.

Social life is the development of the original, or natural, social, to use Bakunin's term, in the increasing complexity and efficiency given to it by labor and culture. This social life is placed under the dual sign of spontaneity and tradition. Of *spontaneity*, since it is the domain of free agreement, of the incessant initiatives that constitute appropriate or inviable responses of human groups to the given situation, with its needs and possibilities. Of *tradition*, insofar as social life is governed by a whole set of customs, mores, ideas and collective techniques. If as tradition social reality is a source of cohesion as well as inertia, it is nevertheless driven by an incessant dynamism, a vital impulse that tends without respite to create new and better adapted forms, to overflow and burst out of the old and fixed forms.

“Every social connection,” writes Rudolf Rocker,²⁰ “is a natural formation, which, on the basis of common needs and reciprocal agreements, is constituted organically and from the bottom up, in order to discover and ensure the interests of the community. Even when social institutions gradually become rigid and rudimentary, the end to which they originally conformed can be clearly discerned in most cases.”

No life is possible without struggle and destruction. At this elementary social level too, conflict is inevitable, but as long as no external force comes to distort and use it, it is a factor of progress and renewal.

socialism and the economic crisis

Social life cannot be reduced to economic life. Nevertheless, especially in the modern world, economic forces are acquiring an intensely driving role. Socialism, in the last century, presented itself as the only rational way out of the crisis provoked, following the “industrial revolution,” by a sudden and uncontrolled surge of energies. Machinery, increasing production, should have increased at the same time “the greatest happiness of the greatest number.” In fact, working hours increased, intensive production led to “overproduction” and unemployment.

“Socialism analyzes the structure of capitalism and the economic conditions of its development; it proposes reforms that will prevent the human race from being the victim of a progress that should, on the contrary, have showered it with benefits. This is the whole problem of modern socialism, an economic problem and not a political one.”²¹

It is a question of integrating into collective life the wealth and techniques produced by collective effort, which for the most part only benefit a minority. It is above all a matter of developing the forms of organization required by an accelerated renewal of the situation. New possibilities of life turn into their opposites as a result of the senseless “organization” of production and distribution. Only collective management in the interest of the community appears reasonable. Between the evidence of such a solution and its application, there is an abyss, manifested by more than a century of socialist struggle. The antisocial minority will not relinquish its privileges, since it has at its disposal an enormous force of defense and repression, the State, its army and its police. At

²⁰ Anarchist militant and writer, born in 1873 in Mayence, dead in the United States in 1958. He has been, on the international level, one of the principal theorists of anarcho-syndicalisme. His most important work, on *Nationalism and Culture (Die Entscheidung des Abendlandes)*, has been published in English and Spanish, among other languages.

²¹ Elie Halévy: *Histoire du socialisme européen* (Gallimard, 1948), p. 21.

this level, the problem also becomes political, but anarchism has been able to call itself antipolitical, since it does not aim at the conquest or transformation of the State, but at its destruction.

the state, a parasitic and antisocial outgrowth

In fact, if socialists agree to recognize that "the government is only a committee that manages the common affairs of the entire bourgeois class" (Marx Engels), "a parasitic excrescence that feeds on society and hinders its free movement" (Marx), they will divide and even oppose each other on how to eliminate the parasite.

The divergence is theoretical, not only tactical. For the historical materialism of the Marxists, the State is the product and manifestation of class antagonisms. It gives itself, as supreme power, the "mission" of curbing these antagonisms and forcing them to compromise. Although it thus claims the role of arbiter, the State is nevertheless only the expression of the economically dominant class, which is forging a political apparatus that rises ever higher above society. The task of the proletariat is then to organize itself for the conquest of the State, to turn its force of repression against the bourgeoisie, to reorganize through the dictatorship of the proletariat the relations of production in the interest of society. Thus eliminating classes, and therefore the antagonisms that found it, the State abolishes itself and, losing all material basis and all function, it *withers away*.

Libertarian socialism considers such an analysis insufficient, as it does not account for a specific political alienation, which, in practice, encourages the establishment of a State apparatus that in turn turns against society. Without doubt, Proudhon, who was the founder of libertarian sociology and one of the great founders of sociology in general, emphasized *economic contradictions* before Marx, and Marxism itself does not deny the role of consciousness and ideas in history. Proudhon, however, grants moral forces a role as dynamic as that of economic forces and, in the total effort of society, he sees material production and spiritual production interpenetrating in a complex dialectical relationship.²²

What makes Proudhon's sociology modern is precisely that in its pluralism it can demonstrate their share of the important psychological burdens that magnetize social life.

²² On the sociology of Proudhon, see the recent works by Georges Gurvitch: *Proudhon sociologue* (Centre de documentation universitaire, 2nd ed. 1961) — *Proudhon et Marx: Une confrontation* (CDU, 1964) — *Proudhon* (PUP, 1965, collection «Philosophes »).

The formation and preservation of a State, certainly, are linked to a global situation, — economic, technical, social, — and especially to its conflicts. But they also arise from other factors: the will to power and domination leading conquering minorities to impose their power through conflicts; the adherence of the mass of the oppressed, through fear of liberty and responsibility, to the “simplest” solution, to a “necessary evil.”

More than an outgrowth, the State is therefore “an artificial mechanism, imposed from the top down” (Rocker) on the organic development of society, and paralyzing it. The great flaw of Marxism is its failure to recognize in the State a specific reality, which has its own interests and dynamism, which gradually causes the proliferation of a bureaucracy imbued with its high offices and prerogatives, concerned above all with maintaining and increasing its power. Far from being able to abolish classes, the State creates around itself a new class of leaders, who rise more and more above the mass of workers and executors. The “Soviet” State has verified the objections that Bakunin had already made to Marx's conceptions on the conquest of power.

the state, a “moral” reality

The nature of the State is not only economic and political, but also moral. “The State,” writes Gustav Landauer,²³ “is a relationship, a way of behaving among men.” It imprints on morals, on individual and collective relationships, its own modes of being, which are authority, violence, systematic lying, careerism and servility. Its fundamental tendency, even if it only appears in its purity in dictatorial regimes, is to render men incapable of free relationships, of personal reflection, of initiative. It is through the intellectual and moral disintegration of society that the State maintains itself.

The individual must be convinced of the omnipotence of the State, of its absolute necessity. By channeling towards itself and centralizing all essential functions, regulating cultural life, paralyzing social spontaneity through rigid supervision, the State makes individuals irresponsible, incapable of assuming their particular destinies and even more incapable of assuming their collective destiny. It goes without saying that too frequently laziness and cowardice, combined with cultivated ignorance, come to meet this tendency. The State thus carries out an incessant task of dehumanization.

Through official morality, through schools and barracks, through the press, shows and all forms of the constantly developing “mass media,” through religion also, where libertarian thought has always seen the very source of authoritarian

²³ German anarchist (1870-1919), murdered in Munich during the repression that followed the attempt to form a “Council Republic.” He left numerous writings on socialism and cultural life. His essay on revolution has just been translated into Spanish.

ideologies, power imbues men with a debilitating conception of life. “The State dominates man from within. The State and religion make their laws accepted with such certainty that these end up identifying with the human unconscious and the latter then re-identifies with the established social authorities.”²⁴

It is upon the incapacity that men have assumed to have free relations among themselves and to organize collective life autonomously, on the abdication of their liberty, that the power of the State is ultimately founded. We must attack this very incapacity, while the State, by its very existence, develops and aggravates it. This perspective alone allows us to appreciate at their true value the sophisms of Engels and Lenin: “As long as the State exists, there is no liberty. When there is liberty, there will no longer be a State.”²⁵ For the State, precisely, prevents any passage from one stage to the other.

It is only outside the State, and against it, that society can rebuild itself and take charge, through a flexible and federalist structure, of economic management and those functions of public utility that give power a false semblance of justification.

²⁴ Marcel Jean et Arpad Mezei : *Maldoror* (Le Pavois, 1947, p. 100).

²⁵ Lenin, *L'Etat et la révolution* (Ed. de Moscou, 1946, p. 120).

ACTIVATING SOCIAL LIFE

The same theoretical errors lead, in the more or less long term, to the same practical failures. Democratic socialism, which proposes to establish socialism through the peaceful conquest of the State and the progressive transformation of economic and political institutions, results in the same inconsistencies as Marxism-Leninism. Its “progress” ultimately only tends to strengthen power.

the peaceful conquest of socialism by the State

The democratic state appears to contradict the libertarian thesis of the irreducible antagonism between the power and society. In fact, and this is what creates the illusion, democracy constitutes a mixed reality where two opposing forces confront each other: the inherent tendency of power toward indefinite growth must constantly contend with the resistance and pressure of society.

Thus, when the parliamentary parties of the left succeed in “imposing” social reforms, they only ever ratify the conquests of direct action. The role played by “Her Majesty’s Opposition” has the major consequence of paralyzing the workers' will to fight and spirit of initiative through the mirage of the ballot and parliamentary efficiency.

As for the policy of nationalization (which has nothing to do with socialization), its effective result is to gradually make the state the country's main entrepreneur, a stage already reached in France. At the same time, the needs of economic and industrial expansion require work and initiatives of such magnitude that only the State can carry them out in the current situation. This development is all the more inevitable since the social laws themselves, wrested through hard struggle, extend State control over all sectors of economic life. From this perspective, the sterilization of workers' resistance, the colonization of trade unions, and the conquest of the best positions in the government or economic bureaucracy summarize the revolutionary effort of democratic socialism.

We are far from the “watchman” State as conceived by liberalism. But the development of the active role of the State does not contradict our analyses: the bureaucratization of society, the manipulation of needs and ideas through propaganda and conditioning techniques constantly increase the atomization of individuals, the loss of the sense of responsibility and initiative. Assuming that a particularly serious crisis leads to a large-scale revolutionary response, would not the abolition of the enormous state machinery provoke disorder of such magnitude that only an iron dictatorship could stop it?

This is the central problem of a socialism that refuses to resort to the state for the “transition period,” a transition that has never taken place so far.

revolution: birth or creation?

The only way to radically destroy one type of organization and relationships is to immediately replace it with different structures. Only the creation of a new order can completely destroy the old state of affairs. This does not exclude stages. But if there is a transitional mode of organization, it must have broken with the old spirit and the old type of relationships, and the reorganization must be carried out without any centralist and dictatorial orientation.

In order to be abolished, the State must be replaced. This requires two basic conditions: people prepared for initiative, responsibility and collective management; active and efficient social organizations, well connected to each other, capable of taking over to meet the needs of the hour and to lay the solid foundation of a socialist and libertarian society.

Anarchism has always paid the greatest attention to these two conditions, and for this very reason it has been possible to classify it in the category of “utopian socialism.” It seems indeed more realistic and more “scientific” to say: “We seize the State, and we establish socialist institutions in stages, according to possibilities.” For anarchists, this is the illusion; more: the mystification. But then, how to resolve the problem? Seizing the state apparatus, and even strengthening it in a “first stage,” as Marxism-Leninism advocates, is to establish the bases of a state capitalism that cuts off at the root the possibilities of collective management, and creates new class oppositions. Sweeping away existing institutions, without being capable of immediately making new organizations to manage production, distribution, transport, and defense also, in a socialist sense, is to bring forth from disorder, misery, and organizational impotence, a fascist power.

There remains another hypothesis: action makes its own way, the revolution creates, in its creative effervescence, in the innovative impulse that it communicates to the community, the socialist structures that correspond to the needs and possibilities of the hour.

Such an idea was defended by both Bakunin and Kropotkin. A personalist thinker objects to them that, on the social level, “the revolution has no creative force, but a force that releases, liberates and confers power, that is to say that it can only complete, make free, powerful and complete what has already been prepared within the pre-revolutionary society. Considering social development,

the hour of the revolution is not the hour of conception, but that of birth if indeed a conception has preceded it.”²⁶

reconstructing society?

Such an argument underestimates revolutionary dynamism. It nonetheless contains a key idea of the libertarian movement, an idea that complements rather than contradicts that of innovative action. This idea is that there is no creation from nothing. The revolution restores vigor and inventive momentum to social life, it frees it from state constraints, but revolutionary action will be marked by the nature, positive or negative, of the social life that precedes it and, in part, produces it.

An economic crisis is not enough to make a revolution; it can provoke its outbreak, but its development, its radical nature, depends on the determination, the awareness and, as Proudhon says, the capacity of the men who make it. Revolutionary enthusiasm quickly subsides; the tasks of reconstruction and self-management require competence, endurance, and efficiency. The organizations born of the revolution require coordination and mutual support.

How will the men react who, in the old society paralyzed by the State, have lost the sense of social realities, the meaning and practice of initiative, of responsibility?

Faithful to their analysis of the State-society opposition, libertarians, following Proudhon, advocated a strengthening, a revitalization of society. It would be necessary, outside the State and against it, to revive and restructure society. To promote different relationships between people, to create collective management organizations immediately that would revive social life, would familiarize people with economic and technical problems and could, in a moment of revolutionary rupture, constitute the basis of the new social organization.

This is the fundamental idea of a pre-revolutionary “libertarian development:” since the State hardens and disintegrates real society, only a regeneration of social life from its cells and its elementary functions will in turn be able to disintegrate the State or, more precisely, to burst the unnatural straitjacket that it imposes on society in order to fully develop its own possibilities.

Hence the interest shown by libertarian socialists in the attempts of consumer and especially production cooperatives, as autonomous organizations seeking to resolve the problems of economic life by themselves, through

²⁶ Martin Buber: *Pfade in Utopia*, Heidelberg, 1950, P. 79. In English: *Paths in Utopia*, London, 1949.

collective management. Moreover, syndicalism has long remained the anarchists' battleground par excellence. Nothing highlights better than anarcho-syndicalism the dual aspect of libertarian social action: an immediate defense of workers, struggle for better living conditions, and at the same time an effort to lay the foundations of tomorrow's society today. "Syndicalism, today a resistance group, will in the future be the production and distribution group, the basis of social reorganization." (Charter of Amiens, 1906)

In the same spirit, trade unionism proposed itself as the link that would unite the various production associations. "Workers' syndicalism articulates self-management (*autogestion*). It appears as the instrument of planning and unity of production."²⁷

A third task, finally, inherent in the other two, defined the vocation of anarcho-syndicalism: to prepare workers technically and morally for their collective function as managers.

to act in the present

Groups are no more immune than individuals to the sterilizing influence of the current social and political situation. Consumer cooperatives are drawn into the rut of competition and threatened with bureaucratization as soon as they expand, because they do not establish direct relationships between consumers and managers, or even between consumers. As for communities of production, they are at best islands that exhaust themselves in the struggle for survival. Capitalist society sooner or later assimilates the attempts made to build the cells of a free society. Trade unions have been no exception. Their subservience to the parties and the gradual integration of their own bureaucracy, which they have been unable to avoid, into the techno-bureaucracy of state capitalism, makes them increasingly incapable of revolutionary transformation. If they have managerial aims, it is through participation in capitalist "decision-making centers."

The experiences of self-management in Algeria or Yugoslavia reveal similar difficulties. Can an authentically socialist sector coexist with the State? Logically, libertarians should unhesitatingly support projects that seek to revive social life at its roots. But the State apparatus constantly tends to limit their autonomy. At the same time, it needs them, because they respond to both economic demands and collective aspirations: is supporting self-management working to gradually eliminate the State, or on the contrary, indirectly helping it to maintain itself?

²⁷ Daniel Guérin: *L'Anarchisme* (Gallimard, 1965 - collection «Idées 9»), p. 68.

“The very idea of workers' councils,” writes Paul Zorkine, “is incompatible with the existence of the State apparatus; whenever an attempt has been made to make the two (State - workers' council) coexist, it has never been the State that “withered away,” but, on the contrary, it has absorbed the councils.”²⁸

This, for libertarian socialism, is a crucial problem. We cannot effectively fight the State without stimulating and restructuring social life now. And yet, the pressure of the State and general conditions always ends up assimilating or corrupting the new fabric of relationships and organizations.

We will resume the discussion after considering other aspects of the question. A first conclusion is nevertheless possible: rather than stubbornly defending a particular mode of organization, it is a matter of supporting, in the relative and transitory, initiatives calling for awareness, for collective management of life by communities. The essential thing is to awaken awareness, mobilize energies, and sharpen the sense of autonomy and initiative. This also implies an intense activity of criticism and protest, the only defense against numbness and wear and tear.

²⁸ “Le Mythe des conseils ouvriers chez Tito,” in *Noir et rouges* No. 14 (1959). Article taken up again in No. 33 of the same revue (1966), among other texts sur *autogestion*. On the same subject, see also the work by Guérin cited above.

UTOPIA

The desire to build a new society without recourse to the State implies that the builders already have a general idea, a plan of the edifice to be realized. All the more so since by builders we mean not a team of "specialists", but the entire community. This is why libertarian socialists have often applied themselves, and to this day, to clarifying the image of the future society, either in the broad outlines of its functioning (Kropotkin: *The Conquest of Bread*) or in the details of its economic and administrative organization (Pierre Besnard: *The New World*, Sébastien Faure: *My Communism*.)²⁹

scientific socialism and utopian socialism

These plans, let us note, were not conceived in the abstract. They are based both on a critique of the capitalist economy and on the fragmentary achievements of associations of producers and consumers, on the development of communes, in short, on all the concrete cells where social life has sought the direct resolution of its problems and the satisfaction of its needs. Anarcho-syndicalism in particular proposed union structures as the basis of the new order. Federalism, the central idea of Proudhonian socialism, was taken up by all these projects as a guarantee both of the autonomy of individuals and groups, and of the cohesion of the whole.

These prospective views, which are already found in Fourier and Saint Simon, have been, on two counts, accused of being utopian.³⁰ Their adversaries first criticize the illusion which would consist in wanting to renovate society from the piecemeal attempts of free associations and communities. They reproach them above all for fleeing revolutionary action for abstract reveries, for appealing to moral will, to the sense of justice, to idealism rather than to a daily struggle based on the scientific study of social evolution. For the determining causes of revolutions must be sought, objects Engels, "not in the heads of men, not in their

²⁹ For recent accounts of libertarian principles and organizational methods, see Gaston Leval, *Pratique du socialisme libertaire* (Cahiers de l'humanisme libertaire.)

³⁰ On utopian socialism, and utopia in general, see, among others: M. Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (London, 1949); M. L. Berneri, *Journey through Utopia* (London, 1950); F. Buber *L'utopie et les utopies* (PUP, 1950); K. Mannheim, *Idéologie et utopie* (Rivière, 1956); G. Duveau, *Sociologie de l'utopie* (PUE, 1961).

superior knowledge of truth and eternal justice, but in the metamorphoses of the mode of production and exchange.”³¹

The evolution of the forces of production will overflow and destroy outdated forms of organization; the permanent tension between the two engenders the class struggle, the only effective motor of history. The role of scientific socialism is to study historically, scientifically, and thus to bring to consciousness what is being prepared in the process of material production. Consciousness and will can at most be midwives, resorting if necessary to a Caesarean section. They cannot play any creative role.

From the study of economic phenomena, the researcher can only derive laws of evolution and conclude that they will culminate in the inevitable revolution. But the prediction of the positive forms that socialism will take will never be anything more than the projection, onto a diagram, of metaphysical abstractions, of the technological conditions of the present. Utopias are the fantastical reflection of current relations of production, and not of the plans to which the relations of tomorrow would conform. They block the road instead of clearing it. “Anyone who composes a program for a future society is a reactionary,” wrote Marx.

Such criticism, valid sooner or later with regard to particular utopias, which age quickly, does not undermine the very function of utopia. One could respond first that the inevitable revolution is the result of an extrapolation that has nothing scientific about it, and also falls under the category of utopia, or more precisely, myth. Libertarians maintain above all that no economic crisis is enough to bring about a revolution: determination and the capacity of men are also required. Men must be educated with a view to revolution and socialism. This was already the goal of anarcho-syndicalism and cooperatives. It is a constant concern of anarchism, and recourse to utopia is justified as a method of knowledge and education. Libertarian socialism does not, however, admit to being utopian: utopia is for it only one means, among others, of apprehending and transforming reality. Nor will it proclaim itself scientific: science determines the conditions of action and the possible lines of evolution, but does not replace energy, the will to fight, the demand for liberty or the creative spirit.

the lateral possibilities

Utopia is first, in a narrow sense, a method of research. It is “the process of representing a fictitious state of affairs as realized in a concrete manner, either

³¹ F. Engels, *Socialisme utopique et socialisme scientifique* (Editions sociales, 1918), p. 58.

in order to judge the consequences it implies, or, more often, in order to show how advantageous these consequences would be.”³²

Let us suppose that a classless and stateless society has been realized, and let us see how it can function. Such a "mental experiment" cannot be done in a vacuum; its gratuitousness is reduced. It requires precise documentation: current situation of the economy, natural and energy resources, technical equipment, organization of work, etc. It requires knowledge of the principles of economics, of social psychology, and also a great familiarity with the history of workers' struggles. For the solution, or the outline of certain solutions, can be sought and the investigation is undoubtedly fertile only at this price in the experiments attempted each time the workers have taken their fate in hand.

As a synthetic activity, utopia becomes creative through *the new relationships it establishes between people and things*. It provides an illuminating extension to types of organization whose scope has remained limited due to historical circumstances. It confronts these organizations (factory councils, etc.) with the requirements of a planned economy, studies their relationships with consumer groups, and seeks to predict local, regional, interregional, and even international relationships.

Utopia breaks down given reality into its elements and recomposes them according to hypotheses drawn both from social history and a new idea of collective life. It can thus provide operating models that will support the effort of adaptation and invention in a period of crisis or revolutionary transformation. It is in no way prophecy, but rather operational forecasting. It does not say how things will be, but how they could be done.

At the same time, it plays an educational, pedagogical role. Not only does it shed light on the “lateral possibilities” (Ruyer) of the current situation, the possibilities that have not been realized because the political context opposes them, but it informs workers of economic problems and techniques; it encourages them to react against the idea of the inevitability of exploitation.

A call to action

“The relationship between utopia and the existing order,” writes Mannheim, “is a dialectical one. By this I mean that every age allows the birth of those ideas and values in which are contained, in condensed forms, the unrealized and unfulfilled tendencies that represent the needs of each age. These intellectual elements then become the explosive material that will push back the limits of the existing order. The existing order gives rise to utopias which, in turn, break

³² .A Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique de la philosophie* (PUP).

the bonds of the existing order, giving it the liberty to develop in the direction of the next order of existence.”

The meaning of the term utopia is broadened here. It is no longer simply a question of intellectual activity that elaborates hypothetical plans, but of a global image, which concentrates the aspirations of men and groups for a fuller, freer life. The global image of a future society, where psychological fulfillment corresponds to free economic and social development. Georges Sorel,³³ after Marx and before Ruyer, criticized “utopia” for placing too much trust in reason and relying too much on the virtues of education. Utopia has often fallen into this intellectualist failing. But if this criticism applies to many plans for future cities, taken in particular, it separates the domains too rigidly and forgets the vital aspiration, the part of myth that nourishes the utopian tendency in general.

Preceding the analyses of the sociologist Mannheim, the anarchist Landauer sees in social evolution a dialectical relationship between topia and utopia. The topia represents the whole of the collective life of men, caught in a relative stability. This topia is transformed under the action of a utopia, a magma of aspirations and individual efforts, which merge in the enthusiasm of a period of turmoil, and are organized in the will to create a new topia, which would function without fault. This utopia will therefore create a new topia, different in essential points from the old one, but a topia nonetheless, with its defects and limitations. Evolution is thus made up of an uninterrupted succession of topias and utopias.³⁴

Such a conception goes beyond the opposition between revolutionary action and its preparation, its utopian prefiguration. It maintains the value of utopia in the narrow sense, provided that utopian research and pedagogy remain plastic and dynamic, explicitly hypothetical, and that they never cease to incite action.

And the positive meaning of utopia should not make us forget its critical value: presenting a model of rational functioning, it simultaneously accuses the irrationality of the present organization. It can finally, as is often the case in the literature of anticipation (or science fiction) take the form of negative utopia: isolating and recomposing the most worrying tendencies of the present, and thus finding another role of critical awareness.

The function of utopia as preparation for the future, or more precisely for the future, was well highlighted by the original and nuanced reflection, unfortunately interrupted by the death, of Georges Duveau

“The problem today is to offer man, based on all our knowledge, the means to react in the face of situations that seem to defy our imagination. It is a question, to use an expression of Dewey, not only of adapting man to this or that situation,

³³ *Réflexions sur la violence* (Rivière, republished in 1950).

³⁴ *Die Revolution* (Rütten & Loening, Francfort, 1900).

but of transforming, of broadening his capacity for adaptation. History is no longer the great teacher; we must create a pedagogy that allows man to face history. Faced with innovation, the growing importance of which we know in the mechanisms of the modern economy, those who are accustomed to the schemes of utopia retain more imaginative freshness and more concrete meaning than those crushed by the avalanches of history.³⁵

³⁵ “La Résurrection de l’utopie,” in *Sociologie de l’utopie*, pp. 59-60.

MYTH

Proudhon, says Célestin Bouglé, “does not only believe in the force of things. He appeals to the energy of souls.” One reason for the failures of socialism is precisely that it has been too exclusively concerned with material realities to the detriment of the explosive potential of forces that constitutes the “soul” of man, taken in a sense that Proudhon did not envisage.

socialism and psychology

Under the pressure of immediate circumstances and struggles, and also in its ambition to achieve the certainty of the physical sciences, socialism has abandoned certain bold intuitions of “utopian socialism” to turn entirely to economics.

Half a century before modern psychology, socialism certainly could not have foreseen its methods. One can at least reproach it for not having assimilated them subsequently.

We know today that the crisis of our society is not only economic. Phenomena such as Nazism and its wake of murderous delirium, the constant increase in cases of mental illness, the uninterrupted explosions of “causeless” violence are, among other things, the symptoms of a psychological imbalance that is shaking entire societies.

It is impossible to bring order to the world if we cannot bring order to man. And vice versa. An authentic, effective socialism must transform all the conditions of existence, and thus succeed in recognizing the psychic energies of individuals, in finding and developing collective psychological structures in which they can express themselves and find balance. Victor Serge was one of the first, after the surrealists, to conceive the importance of psychology in a revolutionary perspective, to note the existence of “psychological superstructures” so complex and so heavy “that they have acquired, in relation to the economy, a considerable, involuntary, creative or destructive autonomy.”³⁶ The work of Wilhelm Reich, Herbert Marcuse, and Erich Fromm has allowed progress on this minefield, but socialism has not yet been able to truly take advantage of it. As for the progress of psycho-sociology, it has served above all to perfect the techniques of conditioning and manipulation implemented by capitalist technocracy. Such a failure seriously weakens socialism.

Anarchism, too, from this point of view, has often remained a prisoner of the scientific schemes of the last century. While at its outset it implied a total

³⁶ “Socialisme scientifique et psychologie,” in *Carnets* (Julliard, 1952).

conception of man, encompassing all the dynamisms and aspirations of the individual. Proudhon always gives its share to a primitive and creative spontaneity. Stirner wants to tear man away from the imperialism of reason, assert the rights of feeling and passion, and encourage the individual to deploy his self with all its powers and all its potentialities. Bakunin proclaims that life is irreducible to the knowledge gained from it by science; he trusts in the unleashing of passions to pave the way for a free society. We will undoubtedly not find here the foundations of a psychology, but rather an impulse, a requirement that already marks the place that psychological research will have to fill.

from the eternal return to the revolution

In the analysis of the explosive forces that accumulate and constantly threaten the established order, anarchism, in order to remain faithful to its primary intuitions and its subversive vigor, must give psychic energies their due. It can also thereby confirm its idea of a vital impulse that constantly tends to shatter outdated and paralyzing forms of life. The various clinical and theoretical currents of psychoanalysis, in particular, have already pushed quite far the study of the unconscious tendencies that intervene in the motivations and behavior of the individual. These psychic energies, essentially dynamic, are an infinitely more flexible and plastic form of animal instinct, the expression on the mental plane of the organic, vital powers of man. They do not manifest themselves only in pathological forms. They give free rein to dreams and more generally to the whole range of imaginary expression. Psychology, ethnology and the history of religions have thus been able to rediscover images and symbols that consistently translate typical trends and situations.

Georges Sorel, at the beginning of the 20th century, sought to highlight the driving value of collective images, which “allow us to understand the activity, feelings and ideas of the popular masses preparing to enter into a decisive struggle; they are not, he specifies, descriptions of things, but expressions of wills.”³⁷ He called them myths. “The general strike of the trade unionists and the catastrophic revolution are myths.” (p. 32).

The general strike was the passing translation of a deeper symbol, and the study of myths has developed considerably since Sorel. For the most part, however, his hypothesis remains fertile.

In primitive societies, past or contemporary, myth constitutes the very structure of the collectivity: it provides both an explanation of reality and the exemplary model of all activity. This is the dual role, for example, of “stories”

³⁷ *Réflexions sur la violence* (Rivière, 1950), p. 46.

relating the creation of the world and of man. Its main function is to situate man in the world, to organize the world around him. But myths survive in the modern world, in the form of unquestioned, mobilizing collective adherence to certain images, activities or beliefs.

At the same time as a symbol expresses unconscious forces, these give it an astonishing power of attraction or repulsion over men. It gives certain ideas a psychic reality that makes them resistant to any logical or moral refutation.

Among the myths that have survived to this day, that of the “eternal return” is one of the most constant.³⁸ It signifies the belief in the periodic destruction and recreation of the universe, the conviction that all reality is exhausted over time and must temporarily return to chaos to recharge. In primitive societies, ritual festivals, “Saturnalia,” symbolically concretize this return to chaos. New Year's celebrations still reflect the same hope. And much more profoundly, the revolutionary expectation.

The myth of the eternal return expresses above all the desire for an absolute new beginning. Individually and collectively, it arises with particular intensity in periods of crisis. “Change life,” demands Rimbaud. Here we are at the source of the revolutionary impulse: the revolutionary myth that launches man, “with all his soul,” into the liberating struggle.

the apocalypse

History shows us this myth at work, with its devastating power.

At the dawn of modern times, as the dissolution of medieval civilization ushered in the era of revolutions, a “peasants' war” broke out in Germany, reaching its peak and ending in 1525. It left far behind all the peasant revolts of the Middle Ages, in scope and violence, but above all in ambition. Desperate revolts and local demands were followed by demands that were not only “national,” but universal, the desire to overthrow political and clerical powers, to establish community property. Thousands of peasants were massacred in the conviction that the day was near when the kingdom of God would be realized on earth, that the course of events would abruptly reverse, that a new life would emerge triumphant from the violent elimination, in gigantic battles, of evil and the wicked.

What the peasants, the weavers, the insurgent miners think they are living is the time of the Apocalypse. Only the righteous will survive, for whom a reign of justice and happiness will open, which the Last Judgment will close after a thousand years. Thus bursts forth, with devastating power, an incandescent vein

³⁸ Voir Mircéa Eliade: *Le Mythe de l'éternel retour* (Gallimard, 1949), *Mythes, rêves et mystères* (Gallimard, 1951), etc.

which runs, from heresy to heresy, through the entire Middle Ages: the millenarian myth.³⁹

The peasants are massacred, their leaders burned, but the myth remains alive. This “splendid dawn” that Hegel hails in the French Revolution, Year I of the Republic, signifies it clearly. The institution of a new calendar must mark a total break in time and a radical new beginning. Nicolas Berdiaev shows the birth in the 17th century of Russian apocalypticism, and its role in the formation of the revolutionary intelligentsia.⁴⁰ Millenarianism again in Marx and the Marxists, who think they can scientifically establish their “prediction” of the end of “prehistory” with the collapse of capitalist society: the advent of a truly human history, where man will take up his destiny in full knowledge of the facts in hand. Revolutionary syndicalism, when it prepares the expropriating general strike, is linked to the apocalyptic tradition like any conception of a “catastrophic revolution,” which awaits from the “great night” the brutal advent of a classless society.

So we should not be surprised when Berdyaeu, after many historians and essayists, most often reactionary, concludes that “all the atheism of revolutionary and anarchist circles (...) will basically be nothing more than the old Russian religiosity and its apocalyptic meaning, turned inside out, inverted.” This is a hasty judgment, because the Judeo-Christian apocalypse is itself only a variant of the myth of the eternal return.

It is indeed on the primitive myth, even if it borrows the language of Christianity, that revolutionary hope is grafted. The very term revolution, which means circular movement, the complete turn of a star in its orbit, takes us back to the elementary cyclical concept. Without doubt, in the revolutionary dream, the emphasis is no longer placed on a past golden age, to which we must return, but on a golden age related to progress. The same ineradicable conviction remains, however: an aging society, torn apart by its contradictions, undermined by the imbalance in which it maintains the individual, is destined to sink sooner or later into a whirlwind of antagonistic forces. It is the hope of a measure found in the very excess of immoderation.

³⁹ Among the increasingly numerous studies, see, on this subject: Ernst Bloch, *Thomas Münzer als Theologe der Revolution* (Munich, 1921), translation published by Ed. Julliard (1964); Maurice Pianzola, *Thomas Munzer ou la querre des paysans* (Club francais du livre, 1958); and, with serious reservations: Norman Cohn, *Les fanatiques de l'Apocalypse* (Julliard, 1962). Erie Hobshawm, *Les primitifs de la révolte dans l'Europe moderne* (Fayard, 1966).

⁴⁰ *Sources et sens du communisme russe* (Gallimard, 1951, in the collection “Idées.”)

the passage

The archaic idea of an age of plenitude and order, where man lives without constraint because he is in tune with the cosmos, is matched by the modern idea of a civilization where man, capable through his science of dominating and utilizing all natural energies, succeeds in establishing harmony in the world and within himself, after having eliminated injustice and oppression. Whether such a golden age is transitory or not matters little: reconquering the youth of the world is a rather exhilarating task.

This mythical perspective also constitutes a valuable source of energy: the vital forces that cannot give themselves free rein in the daily grind accumulate there. Imaginary release, tranquilizing mystification? Far from it. Every authentic myth responds to a natural necessity. “Biological necessity,” writes Roger Caillois, “produces an instinct or, failing that, an imagination capable of fulfilling the same role, that is, of arousing equivalent behavior in the individual.”⁴¹ In the human world, where instinct is relayed, as a principle of behavior, by conscience and liberty, a vivid and haunting image fulfills the function that would be assigned to instinct in the preservation or increase of life. The myth is one of these images created by unconscious psychic activity, in response to the given situation. They express needs, and lead to action aimed at satisfying them. The myth of revolution is a natural recourse against stagnation. It stimulates the search for positive solutions, it tears men away from despair and apathy when intelligence, seeing no way out, is ready to abdicate. It calls for destructive and creative action, which opens new possibilities.

Because the image, the dream of the re-creative cataclysm, magnetizes his whole life, the “millenarian” is permanently on the alert, ready to pounce. He watches, watching for signs, for the moment to throw himself into the ultimate battle. He feels intensely that he is in a time of transition, of passage, a time of gestation and mixing where this transmutation of life is being prepared, this integral rebirth which is the most constant and fertile passion of humanity, when it does not precipitate it into the delirium of a saving Heaven — or exterminating! — or even of an all-powerful State creating the new Man.

Collective, myth situates itself at the very tip of social superstructures, at the level of the most innovative and creative collective representations. And it is quite wrong to radically oppose myth and utopia. Myth preserves utopia from disembodied rationalization; it gives it its vital warmth and its aspirational force. On the other hand, utopia preserves myth from archaic regression, from

⁴¹ *Le Mythe et l'homme* (Gallimard, 1958), p. 143.

destruction without a future: it inserts it into the modern world, into historical development. It is the very fusion of a natural impulse and a cultural project that gives the myth-utopian formation its dynamic and innovative character.

INTEGRAL REVOLUTION

In the practice of social struggles, in the concrete existence of activists, libertarian socialism has always known how to re-immense itself in the very sources of “revolutionary romanticism,” which attests to the vitality of ancient myths. He often hesitated, however, to theoretically explain this spontaneous tendency, which is an original component of the anarchic mentality. We do not have to modestly defend ourselves against accusations of utopia and mythical hope. We have to show the role that they actually play in social evolution, and to translate this observation into action in our methods of education and subversion.

To succeed in its project, which is the knowledge of social life, a sociological method must meet two requirements:

– to describe as faithfully as possible the changing complexity of a society, taking into account all the series of forces that pass through it, with their interaction and their mutual implication;

– to detect and express the insertion of liberty (individual and collective) in the whole of social dynamisms and determinisms.

a pluralist sociology

Every society, according to Saint Simon's expression, is *in action*. It is the global activity that a community tirelessly provides to adapt to natural and historical conditions, to exploit the new field of possibilities that it opens up by this very effort of adaptation, to resolve its internal conflicts and overcome its contradictions. This activity, with all that it entails in terms of initiative, invention and memory, is the very sign of human liberty making its way through the obstacles and opportunities that the environment presents to it.

Social development results from the interference of a multiplicity of spheres of action that are both specific and inseparable. There is no privileged activity that can explain on its own the history of humanity and the evolution of societies: neither economic production nor intellectual progress can serve as a single and determining explanation. On the contrary, as sociology refines its methodological tools, it is led to distinguish a plurality of spheres of activity which overlap or envelope one another, and each of which, depending on the type of society, can play a more specifically driving role. And if each of these spheres obeys its own dynamism and coherence, none can ever function to the exclusion of all the others, because they constantly influence each other.

Without going into the details of such an “in-depth sociology,”⁴² we can briefly outline the modes of relations that can exist between three of the most efficient “levels:” economic production, cultural works and the collective mentality. For the very nature of revolutionary action depends on the conception we have of these relations.

The philosophies of an era, its artistic tendencies, and all of its intellectual “superstructures” logically derive, by filiation or opposition, from the intellectual currents that precede them. They may even draw in their genesis from the acquired knowledge of different civilizations and eras. But since they essentially constitute a reflection of man on the world in which he lives, a response — often insufficiently explained — to his historical moment, the understanding of a cultural creation must go beyond the framework of its particular sphere to connect it to the material, economic situation where the concrete foundations of life are developed. And this is all the more so since their way of being, their conditions of existence often unwittingly guide the ideas of individuals and groups.

Thought situates man, more or less adequately, in his universe in perpetual evolution. In doing so, it penetrates this evolution: developing a more appropriate knowledge of reality, giving rise to new values and a new mentality, it becomes a source of action.

In this way, intellectual superstructures can constitute a stimulant as well as a hindrance, as is the case for reactionary ideologies. The dynamism or weight of “spiritual productions” is all the more effective when a culture expresses not only the intellectual demands of man, but also desires and aspirations that are rooted in the darkest and most elementary parts of his being.

Here we find the domain of psychology: it too knows no pure element. The most “instinctive” impulses of the individual psyche are taken up from birth in the frameworks and categories of a culture, remodeled by society.

Each time corresponds to its psychology, and there is no economic or social crisis that does not reverberate in a psychic crisis. Culture and productive relations, which are in constant interaction, shape mentalities: at the same time, psychological tendencies and formations, including the most unconscious, constantly animate or disrupt economic, political or intellectual activity.

⁴² It is particularly developed in the works of Georges Gurvitch, whose reflections have been stimulated in a great measure by a reflection on the sociology of Proudhon. See: *La Vocation actuelle de la sociologie* (PUF, 1950, new edition in 1963). *Déterminismes sociaux et liberté humaine* (PUP, 1955), as well as the studies on Proudhon already cited.

the revolutionary act

The primary consequence of this correlation between all sectors of social life is that any revolutionary attempt is confronted by an entire civilization. Such an observation must lead to the rejection of any materialist or spiritualist postulate. The upheaval of the economic sphere alone, far from succeeding in transforming other areas of life, considered as its reflections or secondary productions, is compromised from the outset by the coherence and weight of other spheres of activity. They will reintegrate the change into their previous status, shaken to a certain extent and even partially transformed, but always marked by the same character of authority, constraint, and inequality. Conversely, the progress of reason or morality, as long as it is not grafted onto a concrete and global historical movement, will remain ineffective, slowed down, and distorted on all levels by other unrestructured sectors.

In fact, when it explodes, a revolution globally challenges the given reality. It is the product, first of all, and socialist thought starts from this, of an economic and political crisis that can no longer be stopped by the usual means, but also of a generalized malaise. To the extent that this crisis introduces a new and unforeseen situation, it calls for a new and unforeseen collective conduct. The models of behavior and the values crystallized around the collapsed order of things lose their meaning and their effectiveness. Social life accelerates its course and the collective forces, finally freed from their shackles and stimulated by a climate of intense consciousness and participation, express themselves in the creation of new values and symbols, in the collective invention of new models of behavior.

It is the blossoming, or at least the outline, of another civilization. But the creative enthusiasm that makes a revolution the crucible of a civilization gradually falls back, in the exhaustion of daily tasks. In mentalities and mores, in the relationships between men, the aftereffects of the abolished regime persist. In difficulties and conflicts, they risk stifling new values and practices. As the surrealists said: we must put an end to the old regime of the mind. Not through repression, which is one of the worst factors of degradation, but through the effort to positively develop recent achievements, the new spirit.

We must, at all costs, prolong the moral and cultural impulses that arose in the revolutionary ferment. Ideological demystification, elucidation of the values born of the common struggle, intensification of rediscovered spontaneity, initiative, and responsibility. Above all, we must reinforce a lucid and exciting idea of life and happiness.

Such an undertaking has all the more chance of success if it has been prepared more actively before the revolutionary rupture. And since it comes to break against the institution that maintains the old relationships with the most tenacity and virulence, namely the State, it will be able to draw support from the

social formations that will have been built in the pre-revolutionary period on a basis of reciprocity and self-management. This is not only true on the economic level: all the needs of men, material, psychological, cultural, call for immediate collective elucidation, and a united struggle for their satisfaction.

Parallel to the class struggle, in close connection with it, is a spiritual struggle that is sometimes explosive, often underground, whose stake is that of the social revolution: the metamorphosis of all reality. To sacrifice one or to renounce the other is to resign oneself to the same defeat.

CULTURE AND REVOLUTION

Preparing workers for their task of self-management: this has always been one of the main slogans of libertarian socialism. Anarchists, even when they are divided over the methods and means of their action, always agree on emphasizing the need for an educational task. Consistent with their idea of a revolution to be carried out on all fronts, they have also applied their concern for education to all levels of life. And even when the analyses made by different groups of activists lead them to give immediate priority to a particular sector, the very plurality of conclusions, which vary according to the situation and the training of the members of a given group, has the result of directing overall action on all levels...

The search for a libertarian morality, an art of living, also goes in this direction. More generally, it is a question of achieving, through the extension of knowledge, an elevation of the level of consciousness. Working-class culture, popular culture, cultural animation: these themes that are fashionable today were from the start libertarian demands and lines of action.

expression of collective life

It is still necessary to see what these terms cover. What the current evolution towards a “mass culture” clearly shows is that the popularization of cultural products, the absorption of high doses of heterogeneous and incessant information, lead above all to a passive ingestion, to the sleepy attitude of a spectator constantly subjected to the bombardment of the means of diffusion and mass communication: radio, television, press, cinema. The result is a constant conditioning, a progressive impregnation, which engraves in minds an image of life, a scale of values conforming to the dominant ideology.⁴³

And if there is thus a quantitative increase in “cultural” insights, it is at the expense of true culture, which is awareness, lucid orientation in life, active and coordinated assimilation, possibility of initiative and invention.

There is no “neutral” culture: it always implies values, choices bearing on the relationships between men. A culture is always relative to the concrete conditions of existence in a given society. This also applies to a culture's most elaborate creations, its works of art.

Each era is characterized by a certain number of attitudes that the people who live there adopt toward themselves and the world. These attitudes are

⁴³ On mass culture, see, among many other studies, *L'Esprit du temps*, by Edgar Morin (Grasset, 1962), *La Foule solitaire*, by David Riesman (Arthaud, 1964).

conditioned by the body of knowledge and techniques, by the means of action these techniques offer, and finally by the totality of social relations and their tensions. Artistic activity expresses these attitudes, giving them significant forms. Periods of stability and balance allow, on the basis of a certain number of experiences and discoveries, the progressive perfection of a style. Times of rapid transition, on the other hand, lead to a permanent upheaval in the means of expression.

But here too, it would be unenlightening to consider these aesthetic superstructures as simple reflections of production relations or even, more generally, of social relations. As an innovative activity, art also has its own specific dynamism. It is one of the factors that guide life in society.

The new attitude that men adopt in certain times towards reality has nothing to do with spontaneous generation. It involves the accelerated degradation of a mentality, and above all the slow adjustment of new positions, through a succession of trials and errors, mistakes and waste. It is for men to find the meaning and unity of the new universe that is emerging in discordant sections through the most diverse activities. Above all, they must find their place in this unusual and changing environment. Except for a few specialists, themselves confined to separate fields, and for those who are already deeply conditioned by the various techniques of propaganda, the world appears more and more like a chaos where the new order that could take shape can be read only with difficulty and in contradiction.

a new man

The divorce between knowledge and collective life is irresistibly growing, between the powers brought to light and the use made of them. Old values and learned behaviors are losing their meaning and effectiveness. If a different art of living is emerging, it is through blurred lines, in exceptional successes and countless failures. A whole readjustment to an environment devoid of reference points must be done. At all costs, the incarnation of knowledge, the practice of reason and logic that are out of all proportion to what has been, must be attempted.

Art plays an active part in this necessary reshaping of the mind, this learning of feelings, reflexes, and perceptions adapted to the world that is being made. Art is also a form of utopia, driven by the desire for a full and creative life, a search for harmony and balance. Its negative and derisory forms are a protest, a denunciation that hastens the disintegration of dead structures. In both positive and negative aspects, it does not proceed by illustrating theoretical knowledge, but by global and visceral reactions to the world explored.

The starting point is given by individuals more particularly sensitive to the call of an unknown life, and thus to the delay and sclerosis of the prevailing mores. Collective adhesion is given only slowly, beyond incomprehension and refusal. Little by little, unpredictable styles and sensibilities will assert themselves. On the uneven paths of living art, the psychology of tomorrow is being prepared. Art is a mirror in which the face of the man of today and that of the man to come are reflected and superimposed.

In the revolutionary project, which is to establish a civilization where man expresses himself and lives freely, art has its place. Not an art that follows revolutionary slogans, but one that seeks to understand the world and transform man. By shattering outdated relationships and inventing new ones, it serves the revolution by seeking its own path.

active culture

If artistic activity only responds to the stimuli of the present and its spontaneity, which does not exclude the use of acquired knowledge, its integration into collective life requires an intense and vigilant cultural effort. Undoubtedly, through the various means of diffusion, an impregnation is always underway. But this is also the greatest danger. This diffusion responds to a choice, which is the responsibility of technocratic minorities. It invades the market with consumer products that gradually replace activity, personal research. Refuge in the illusory world of entertainment accustoms the individual to hollow compensations, to a passive and lethargic attitude. Passivity in leisure time reinforces the passivity that already permeates the entire organization of labor. The aptitude for invention and initiative atrophies more and more, the values of the classes in power color the most intimate dreams of the basic consumer.

Does a revolutionary education still have a chance in this context? Yes, provided one is harshly critical, denouncing step by step the “cultural” intoxication and market. But here again, one only truly destroys what one replaces. Awareness is not enough to counter the manipulation of minds and the resulting apathy. Constantly solicited from the outside, kneaded by mass-produced “artistic” models, the individual loses all autonomy and all desire for autonomy. The concern to appear to conform to the prevailing models increasingly develops social conformism.

Seeking to appear, to possess, to behave like their peers, anxious about the judgments of other consumers (“to be in style,” to maintain one's “standing”), the men of the “consumer society” are in fact profoundly separated. Their passivity undermines their relationships with others, and the atomization of

society into apparently similar individuals but without effective links is making rapid progress.

This is a particular case of this sclerosis that paralyzes social life and delivers men to relationships of domination and exploitation. And the cultural task of anarchists is also a particular form of their fundamental attitude: to vivify, to reinvigorate social life, in order to eliminate the virus of domestication. To participate, where sufficient guarantees of liberty are given, in associations that strive to restore to individuals, in their leisure and cultural activities, the habit of solidary action, initiative, and critical reflection.

On the cultural level too, socialism and anarchism involve a reshaping of interpersonal relationships, in the sense and practice of responsibility, autonomy in solidarity. This is a dual task, which is in fact required: to stimulate free activity; to choose, from the inflation of cultural productions, the forms and works that translate an emancipatory conception of man and his relations with the world. Art is a modality of our being in the world; it offers lifestyles and orientations of sensitivity. Through a common activity, it is a matter of identifying, assimilating, and developing the currents that give a lucid image of the present world, a stimulating prefiguration of life to come.

It is a matter of giving back to individuals their capacity for invention, and the information necessary to nourish and concretize it. This is indeed a constant tendency and method of anarchism that we find here: dissolving stereotyped behaviors and models, openly or surreptitiously restrictive, to develop a flexible, plastic aptitude for decision, judgment, and personal and united action.

VIOLENCE

Embedded in the general conditions of collective existence, a liberating culture cannot progress without ruptures or conflicts. Authentic art forms cannot easily separate themselves from the mass of productions required by the incessant renewal of the leisure and entertainment market. Moreover, free cultural associations also have difficulty resisting the spirit and practices that are current around them. The desire for autonomous and original expression, where it persists, is sooner or later led to forms of violent protest, galvanized by the malaise developed by the capitalist and bureaucratic regime, through its continual brainwashing, its organization of work, and its living conditions.

These demonstrations, most often spontaneous, can erupt as a violent extension of a mass spectacle or more generally, in daily life, as a refusal of the accepted rules of life and of the transmitted culture. These are behaviors of rupture, which refuse to sort the dead from the living, in a desire to avoid any integration into a society controlled on all levels by capitalist and state technocracy.

foundation of a social state

In most cases, this is indeed anarchic behavior. The importance that anarchism attributes to revolt, as a rise in consciousness and a break with an imposed "order," must logically lead it to recognize the subversive value of these manifestations. Violent rupture, moreover, appears to be a constant feature of anarchism. Revolt, in general, is expressed through acts of violence. Revolutionary struggle, throughout history, is inseparable from civil wars, or at least from violent confrontations with the forces of repression. The great historical experiments of anarchism took place in the midst of combat. For common sense, the anarchist has remained the man with the bomb, the systematic denier.

The assimilation of anarchism to violence, however, is not self-evident. There has been, and still is, a non-violent libertarian current, whose reasons also concern those who advocate, by force of circumstances, violent means.

All violence is a sign of failure: a failure of reason, which cannot succeed by its own means in establishing just relations between men. A failure of liberty which, in order to be realized, must submit to the principle it condemns: constraint. Does not the originality of libertarian socialism consist precisely in the affirmation that the means employed determine the nature of the society they establish? How could constraint overcome constraint? How could a

balanced and prosperous society emerge from the massacres and miseries of a civil war?

Armed struggle requires an organization that directs it with rigor, an exceptional discipline. Who will prevent the “revolutionary general staff” from concentrating all power in its own hands, from degenerating, once the enemy is crushed, into an institution of oppression and exploitation? This danger is even greater if the adversary remains capable of intervening from the outside, with the complicity of the remaining capitalist states. (This was one of the main arguments of Stalinist power.) And suppose that reaction triumphs: its army will impose the most implacable “order” to “restore national power and unity.”

But war, internal or external, murder and massacre, are never anything but the concretization of a permanent contempt for reason, of a fundamental and constant violence: the law of a society divided into ruling classes and exploited, dominated classes. There is violence as soon as, by brutal or diffuse constraint, individual and collective existence is used for ends external to it, compressed within arbitrary limits.

Any resistance to this oppression is met with violence: the banning of workers' organizations, the reduction of "agitators" by starvation, imprisonment, or even death. As soon as radical opposition is organized, a situation is created where the last word remains with force. A strike, like a street demonstration, is intended to inflict violence on the adversary, to wrest part of his power from him, to impose limits on him that he cannot recognize. This is why he calls into action those organizations specialized in the exercise of violence (army, police, courts) without which he could not survive.

the inevitable violence

Deciding on a strike or a demonstration triggers a process of violence, the extent of which is unknown. But there is no choice, strictly speaking, of violence. The desire to achieve a free society, to ensure the free flow of personal and social life, inevitably clashes with the world that it condemns. The entire fabric of collective relations is imbued with violence, whether overt or covert.

In certain cases, extreme risks must be taken: a fascist *coup d'état* in a democratic country would compromise the social gains of a century and impose the burden of systematic training on generations.

It is not possible to accept the idea of the integral pacifists that any servitude is better than resorting to arms. Accepting servitude in no way limits violence, because sooner or later the fascist state, if it feels strong enough, will take the war abroad. The concessions made to Hitler by the democracies did not prevent the Second World War. Accepting concentration and extermination camps, was that not granting more to violence than the risks of an armed struggle?

There is no doubt; we have everything to fear today from a generalized war. This is precisely why libertarians fight primarily to overcome a regime based on violence and the race for power.

In any case, we must distinguish two forms of violence: the instrument of domination and preservation, used by the classes that exploit social life for their own benefit, and the defensive reaction of the exploited and dispossessed masses. In this second form, is it only a blind convulsion, to be replaced as quickly as possible by a more rational and more appropriate tactic, or, on the contrary, one of the driving forces of any socialist struggle?

violence and revolutionary consciousness

As a surge of revolt, even reduced to a seemingly aimless explosion, violence expresses an awakening awareness. It proclaims the unbearable nature of a condition endured for too long, along with the irrepressible demand for “something else.” The worker who breaks his machine or the Black American who sets fire to a department store turns against a world where he was nothing more than an irresponsible object, manipulated to assert his own existence.

The oppressor himself will hasten to clarify this awareness. The existing social state, which veiled its true nature under a facade of ideological and legal justifications, will set its repressive machinery in motion. Insurgent violence thus plays a revealing role. If the insurrectionary movement spreads, the harsh reality of the class struggle will sweep away the trappings of “civic harmony.” Collective existence under a state and capitalist regime will reveal its truth: permanent war.

Strike, street demonstration or sabotage, revolutionary violence illuminates with a harsh light what parliamentarianism and round tables with the bosses seek to hide: the separation and opposition of classes.⁴⁴ In the intensification of the struggle, class consciousness becomes flesh and blood, it permeates the whole man. Violent action re-tempers energies, reawakens past anger. At the same time, it creates a climate of effervescence where new ideas germinate.

Provoked by the conditions of collective existence, violence feeds on the very energies of psychic life. It is the eruption of natural impulses and aspirations compressed within the narrow and mutilating frameworks of the moral order by which the State and capitalism psychologically reinforce their domination. It is the aggressive externalization of the needs for initiative and invention frustrated by the poverty, material and psychological, of daily life. Pacifism has too often underestimated the fascination that war can exert on men with its promises of adventure and great holidays.

⁴⁴ Georges Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence* (Rivière, 1950).

A natural response and ferment of conscience, violence is indeed an element of revolutionary action. However, we must never forget the risks it poses to liberty when, under the pressure of circumstances, it ends up being institutionalized, militarized. This is why revolutionaries must take the greatest care to ensure that violent action formations (militias, etc.) are never bureaucratized, separated from the whole of social organizations fighting for the suppression of the old regime and the establishment of socialism.

It should also not be forgotten that violent action is not the same as armed struggle, and that recourse to the former at the right time, and using effective methods, can sometimes avoid the risks of the latter. Finally, anarchists, and more generally revolutionary groups, do not have to trigger a general movement of violent insurrection at a given moment, and more often than not they do not have the means to do so. Such a movement is only possible and effective as a collective response conditioned by the overall situation.

EVOLUTION, REVOLUTION

The problem of the relationship between revolutionary minorities and the masses does not arise only on the level of violent action, but in all sectors of social activity. In theory, libertarian socialism rejects the idea of constituting a “revolutionary leadership,” which is inseparable from other authoritarian and centralist conceptions such as the “dictatorship of the proletariat” by an intermediary person (or, more precisely, party.) Pinning all its hopes on direct management, it appeals to the spontaneity of the masses, not forgetting that this spontaneity must be prepared and supported by the capacity of men.

spontaneity

In practice, libertarian organizations, particularly in their anarcho-syndicalist form, have always recognized a stimulating role for themselves. Without claiming a leadership role, these organizations, foreseeing and realizing that education alone was insufficient to shake off collective inertia, sought to raise awareness and mobilize workers around a number of demands concerning living and working conditions. Certain situations call for action, and this action can fail if a relatively representative organization does not take the initiative at a critical moment.

At the organizational level, such a decision must be collective. If the union in question is large enough, it can be assumed that the initiative of its activists expresses a widespread attitude, even among the unorganized. However, it should not be forgotten that anarcho-syndicalist organizations are also led by activists who are more determined and dynamic than the average member, which again raises the problem. The essential thing, however, is that the organization be sufficiently federalist and libertarian, so that the most revolutionary elements can provoke awareness without ultimately forming a leadership group.

In any case, a double pitfall presents itself. Minorities, often tending to live in isolation and taking their desires for reality, can launch premature actions that trigger repression and, if not followed through, compromise the chances of a general offensive instead of hastening them. On the other hand, a well-established organization, with its activists and “proven” methods of action, risks distrusting spontaneous initiatives, which overwhelm it and which it fears it will no longer be able to control; it will either slow down the movement or seek to impose its plans and methods on it.

Both experiences have been repeated. They led to the conclusion that only the spontaneity of the masses, with their ability to find the appropriate organizational forms in revolutionary upheaval, could bring about a decisive break and the establishment of truly socialist structures. Such an analysis finds numerous points of support: the present absence of authentic revolutionary organizations, the bureaucratic degeneration of Bolshevik formulas, the spontaneous appearance and development of workers' councils in the early days of the Russian Revolution, in Germany (1918-1919), in Spain, Hungary, self-management in Algeria.

Libertarian socialism does not have to choose abstractly between these two paths. Through its analyses and experiments, it draws simultaneously on the innovative and creative forces of the community in times of turmoil and rupture, and on the need for human education, for a prefiguration, at least utopian, of socialist structures. Proudhon's ideas, known in Russia, played a role in the formation of the soviets, and the image of the Commune attracted this revolution. Similarly, the example of the first soviets played a role in Germany, and later in Hungary; the strengthening of social ideas during the Algerian war, and in Algerian syndicalism, contributed to clarifying the self-management model.

Spontaneity proves all the more effective when it can implement more fully developed hypotheses and partially tested models. The chances of success of grassroots workers' councils, of self-managed units, are all the greater when they more quickly find liaison, coordination, and planning bodies at their disposal. Revolutionary enthusiasm is not enough, and it is necessary to urgently respond to the needs of daily life, the demands of economic reconstruction, and the dangers of a new state outgrowth that would take advantage of all the failings of self-management.

social regeneration or capitalist regulation?

The nature and scope of a revolution are inseparable from the evolution that prepared it. The worst mistake would be to abandon the daily struggle while waiting for the great rupture where the wonders of spontaneity would manifest themselves. A practical consequence of the anarchist idea of integral revolution is that men must immediately tear themselves away from the psychological and moral conditioning of the capitalist regime, exercise their judgment, their initiative, try new relationships, new ways of thinking and feeling.

We have seen the difficulties of such a project. It is no longer possible to hope that the present society, less "dying" than had been hoped, will collapse from its own conflicts, in order to give free rein to young and vigorous social organisms that have developed within it. Capitalism, with more or less damage, manages to

overcome its crises by gradually transforming the institutions and types of organization that are no longer profitable.

Attempts at "social reconstruction" are unwittingly inserted into this process of adaptation and regulation by remedying some of the most directly perceptible inadequacies of the system of exploitation. Its pressure is such that achievements of an opposing orientation can only follow the general slope or disintegrate. "Reasonable arrangements," says Arthur Koestler, "cannot succeed in an unreasonable society."

What is at issue is not the constructive effort of anarchism, its desire to act in the present, outside of which it sinks into sectarianism and agitation in a vacuum. But we must question the evolutionary postulate that admits that education and community development will suffice to transform society completely. Libertarian education is sometimes based on the illusion that the order of things will change when men behave according to their reason. This is to ignore the weight of living conditions that paralyze and distort intelligence, to ignore the distortion that power relations and exploitation inflict on all human relationships.

We must fight day by day to help individuals emancipate themselves from the authoritarian morality instilled in them, to overcome servile, passive, careerist relationships. We must propose another image of life, experiment with new forms of organization and decision-making. But all this only becomes effective through offensive interventions in the social future, transformations of structures conquered by direct action. "Evolution and revolution are the two successive acts of the same phenomenon."⁴⁵ All evolution has a double face: the development of productive forces and the transformation of production relations, with their impact on collective existence; the evolution of minds, ideas, relationships with the world and others, which are the combined effect of the first factor and a collective effort of knowledge, intellectual creation, existential renewal.

Conscious and voluntary intervention prepares for revolution; it makes men capable of acting efficiently by exploiting the crises of the economic process, the deterioration of living conditions, new needs and possibilities. But if no revolution comes to clear the way for them, to give them the impetus of a collective drive, the cohesion of a global restructuring, the partial, localized progress of evolution is neutralized and recuperated by the old regime, which maintains itself through superficial changes.

Social formations with a libertarian tendency, whether in terms of production, distribution, daily demands or culture, are inevitably distorted in the long run by the historical environment in which they operate. Beyond a

⁴⁵ Elisée Reclus, *L'évolution, la révolution et l'idéal anarchique* (Stock, new edition, 1921), p. 15.

certain stage, they practically deny their goal and must be abandoned for other, equally transitory experiences. If some of them remain in their original form until a period of revolutionary rupture, they can provide useful organs of liaison and coordination, provided that they integrate flexibly into the self-management bodies created by the revolution.

the stages of the revolution

We do not know what form the revolution will take in the industrialized countries, but without a radical break, a takeover of social life by the community, we will not escape the grip of the state and capitalism. The abolition of the state will probably take place in stages, not because the state can wither away by itself, but because the development of self-management, in all sectors of social life, could progressively reduce the power and role of the state. This was Proudhon's hypothesis at the end of his life. Such an evolution would take place by leaps, crises and conflicts, where regressions would always be possible, where the state apparatus could regain the upper hand over industrial, agricultural, communal federations, etc.

This does not mean that anarchists can accept the idea of establishing a "transitional state," or participate in it in any capacity. But given the balance of power, and also the level of consciousness and organizational capacity reached by the working class, democratic socialism has every chance of prevailing over libertarian socialism and maintaining a state apparatus. The task of libertarians will be in this case to strengthen the self-managed sectors as much as possible, to intensively pursue their work of training and enlightenment.

As Landauer saw, the Revolution will be made up of a series of revolutions, each of which will realize only a part of its projects, part of the transformations to be accomplished. Predicting how the decisive transition to a new and truly human civilization will take place is far beyond the possibilities of utopia.

Revolution on the scale of an entire civilization, and of a civilization that tends to become planetary: won't such a perspective lead to giving up the revolutionary struggle, while waiting for an evolution to take place that will lead to unsuspected material and psychological conditions?

There is no justification for waiting. On all levels of existence, daily struggles challenge us. If we are moving towards a planetary civilization, it is thanks to the development of technology, but also as a result of the partial revolutions that are constantly shaking our world. These revolutions are making their way in particular conditions: economic, political, geographical, cultural. Social struggles, in highly industrialized countries, for a rational organization of production and distribution, for a free use of life, against psychological and moral underdevelopment, against the expansion of the State. Struggles of

underdeveloped and colonized peoples against the economic and political oppression of imperialism, for the elimination of hunger and poverty. Every victory won by the exploited, wherever it may be, is a step towards the integral revolution.

This is why we must be careful not to judge the event, at first glance, from too narrowly anarchist a perspective. Each experience must be placed in its historical context, examined from the perspective of the world revolution. We must of course seek to analyze the role, regressive and disruptive according to our hypotheses, of power in the movements studied, but also to identify their positive contribution and their original figure, to discern the libertarian practices implemented, and to reinforce them if possible in the inevitable conflict which will oppose them to state, bureaucratic or bourgeois structures.

FOR AN ANARCHIST PRESENCE

In any case, it is a question of abandoning our entrenchments in order to be present with the greatest vigilance in our own time. Kropotkin already said that the revolution would be the result of a number of forces, of which anarchism was by far not the most powerful. To refrain from participating in a collective movement whenever the objectives and means are not specifically anarchist, is to condemn us to impotence.

theory and practice

Voluntarism is one of the wellsprings of anarchism, but it has its downside: the underestimation of the real dynamisms at work in the world. The idea that there is no inevitable becoming, no historical determinism necessarily leading to a classless society is voluntarist. Socialism requires more than the development of the productive forces and the crises of capitalism: it requires the consciousness, the decision, the capacity of human beings. It demands the intervention of human liberty, individual and collective. This energetic, militant attitude sometimes leads one to think that the only determining factors are actions undertaken by revolutionary minorities and carried out according to carefully developed methods. Theory, from this perspective, must precede and control practice, and anything that goes beyond the former is dangerous for the outcome of the struggle.

This is to forget the dialectical relationships that link liberty and determinism, theory and practice. The broad lines of the evolution of a society are conditioned by the development of the productive forces, of technique, of the relations of production, but liberty, which already intervenes at the level of the effective use of natural forces, can hasten or slow down this evolution, and, in times of crisis and turmoil, radically change its direction. There is no revolutionary action that is not taken in the irregular course of the class struggle.

Socialist thought has emerged from daily struggles, as a simultaneous effort to understand the historical situation and to transform it. Explaining the functioning of the given society, theoretical reflection proposes methods of action, but at the same time analyzes and specifies the methods employed “on the job” as spontaneous responses to the situation. Constant exchanges are thus established between the sociological hypotheses and concrete experimentation.

Anarchism has developed out of a diverse set of individual experiences and thoughts. By abstraction and generalization, it has arrived at a theory that

proposes new hypotheses and new methods. These must be verified and renewed, taking into account all the experiences that have occurred in social development, regardless of the actual role played by libertarians in these events. Action creates its own path. A fair interpretation, fruitful proposals, an effort of coordination and stimulation all contribute to its success. But in no case can a theory, whatever it be, be considered as the essential and determining motor of becoming. The fact remains that a coherent, evolutionary, forward-looking theory is essential for the effectiveness of long-term action.

organization

Such a conception also sheds light on the relations of anarchists with social organizations. It is not their role to create, in the abstract, the organizations that seem to correspond to the theory, which would remain in the state of small closed groups. But each time that individuals come together, at the base, to meet their immediate needs, each time that individuals and groups decide to unite to consciously act on social life, to exercise their responsibility and their initiative in the sense of liberation, of a defense against capitalist and bureaucratic conditioning, libertarians must find their place there. And their training should not encourage them to play the role of infiltrators, but of facilitators and lucid critics.

The same goes for any action, organized or not, aimed at questioning the established order or strengthening revolutionary dynamism. This obviously implies the ability to judge to what extent an enterprise serves or harms the cause of collective emancipation, and rigor in the choice of alliances. It is in the context of a felt need, of a real movement, that libertarians are most likely to gain acceptance for radical critiques and direct action solutions.

Should we for all that give up our “specific” organizations? This would be another mistake, because they are essential for theoretical development in the search for original methods, for the training of militants. On one condition: not to be isolated centers of thought, but real research and training centers, driven by a team spirit. They must be in direct contact with daily life, concretizing the idea of the integral revolution: to create collaboration among individuals and groups united by particular tasks, in connection with their situation and their concerns. It is normal for some to concern themselves primarily with education, psychological development or cultural animation, for others to first study the problems of industrial action, production, distribution, or else political turmoil.

But it is essential that the complementarity of these activities appears, that both accept, call for reciprocal criticism. It is also essential that no one is confined to his specialty, that certain activities are carried out in common, that there is no separation finally between the “thinkers” and those who act, that all

take part in the working of the dough. And all the solutions identified should find their experimentation in everyday life, to be proposed again for a collective examination. Must we recall that in an authentic revolutionary organization, relations between individuals and between groups must prefigure socialist society?

Is all this utopia? If so, the future of the anarchist movement seems seriously compromised to me.

the sense of historical adventure

A failure of the anarchist movement will not prevent new ideas and libertarian initiatives from arising in the heart of the event, because social life does not allow itself to be permanently stifled. It always ends up breaking through the faults and errors of the systems of profit and authority. The state is expanding its field of action everywhere, but the very excess of centralism and power, when it does not provoke violent responses in which self-management councils reappear, gives rise to the need for decentralization and the recourse to basic social unities to compensate for the failures of the bureaucratic machine. In the latter case, no doubt, fragmentary self-management is intended to serve as a regulation for the established regime: it is nonetheless a significant concession and a double-edged sword.

Revolutionary practice creates new forms of struggle and organization, and it is in this way, with or without the participation of anarchists, that anarchism is renewed. However, we maintain the conviction that a dynamic, incisive, prospecting anarchist movement is necessary to identify, in the light of its experience and its project of integral revolution, the ins and outs of the action in progress, to bring about cohesive in the challenges and partial actions, to stimulate and strengthen individuals, revive social spontaneity, radicalize the demand for liberty in socialism and in modern consciousness.

Despite the growing interweaving of state and society, because of the very crises and disturbances with which state expansion erupted in an increasingly torn and atrophied social fabric, thwarted functions and needs lead to chronic conflicts. The issue of our time is becoming clearer as a struggle between two irreconcilable tendencies: on the one hand, the desire for direct, collective management of life at all levels, and, on the other, the control of all activities, the remote control of public and private life through an increasingly tight network of technical and psychological influences.

This primordial conflict sheds light on the meaning of our historical adventure. A coherent and dynamic anarchism would find there an unlimited field of action.

There is nothing that allows us to announce a finally united and free humanity. It can be sterilized, literally disintegrated, by the powers it abandons in the hands of ruling minorities. In the race for power and the potential for destruction, the techniques intended to make human beings triumph over their situation of natural scarcity are transformed into factors of dehumanization and death.

The control of techniques, more and more urgent, will remain impossible as long as the community does not determine for itself, effectively, the modalities and direction of its existence. Assuming that the danger of total destruction can be avoided, the balance of terror, the development of techniques in the direction of domination and profit will extend and harden the totalitarian grid of social life through repressive application or numbing psychological knowledge (psychoanalysis, psychotechnics, etc.) and the systematic use of mass communication media.

Anarchism must also avoid pessimism and optimism in order to incite essential action and to accurately assess the forces at work. If the libertarians are aware of the lines of force that structure the world-historical adventure, it never separates for them from a personal adventure. Personal liberation and collective liberation are inseparable, the crises and stagnations of our time have constant repercussions on our life. We can only act for the future in the present, an effective will for liberty can only be embodied in everyday life.

Whatever the risks and the chances in the future, whatever the ebbs and the uncertainties of the present, there is no respite possible.

THE FUTURE IS OPEN

Rereading this text thirty-three years after its publication in France,⁴⁶ I have decided not to revise it, except for slight adjustments to the notes. I certainly do not consider it an untouchable classic, and I am well aware that the world has turned, that books have been written. Without denying the ideas expressed here, I would write something else now, and probably differently. I prefer to leave the text its coherence, and allow the reader to make the extensions for what interests him.

The search for coherence was one of the concerns of this study: to see how some essential themes of anarchism, which I encountered in isolation or in opposition, are linked together, and the connections made still seem acceptable to me. This project went hand in hand with the choice to flesh out the argument by drawing on philosophical currents and works that were not situated in the delimited sphere of anarchism but developed, often without reference to its specific foundation, ideas that fit within its logic. This exploration should be continued through more recent contributions; others have conducted it and are conducting it today from their perspective.

In the years when I wrote this series of articles, there reigned in the French libertarian movement an obvious timidity, which sought to preserve the tradition — generally impoverished — from external contamination. This sectarianism, on the whole, has disappeared. The questioning and the mixing of ideas brought about by the turmoil of 68 have a lot to do with it. The diversification of initiatives, centers of study, discussion and dissemination, maintains openness. Interferences have become more numerous — they barely existed — between these groups and the academic environment.

This return of libertarians to the field of intellectual life has taken place in parallel outside France, and it remains to be hoped that it will, in turn, succeed in penetrating and influencing contemporary ideas and research more broadly.

The crises and stagnations of our time constantly reverberate in our lives, I said. The 20th century seems to have taken with it the idea of revolution. And even, more broadly, the sense of the future. The spirit of the times weighs on us. Collective representations surround us and permeate us, regardless of our attachment to a minority culture that still brings us convictions, rejections and hopes that no longer exist around us. “Historical failures” block the horizon, and we are subjected to a continual flow of messages that, in all forms, throughout

⁴⁶ This new conclusion was written for the Spanish reprint of the work. The note originally appeared, with the new section, in *Le Monde Libertaire* 1376 (18 novembre 2004): 15-16.

our daily lives, teach us that illusions are dead, that the world is what it is, that liberty is in the virtual world, and that it is time to buy.

The collapse of the "Soviet" system, with its crimes and scarcity, with its ecological ravages, must signify the failure of the Revolution and the condemnation of Utopia, which is inevitably deadly. The liberal economy — we no longer say capitalism — presents itself as the “natural” order that will sooner or later compensate for its excesses, even if it means bringing with it its normal contingent of excluded people. Political ideologies are also dead: the notions of right and left would no longer have meaning; only consensus could ensure evolution without calamities.

nothing but the present

The idea of progress has slipped down the same slippery slope. Technology undoubtedly continues to facilitate our tasks and our escapes; medicine keeps us young, older and older. But cities are becoming dangerous, traffic is blocked, and nature is rotting under its waste.

Very close to us, in this old Europe, barbarism is erupting, archaic violence is unleashed, when it was believed to have been extinguished under the rubble of totalitarian empires and the dislocation of colonial empires. Not only is the hope of radical change thus fading from people's minds, but suspicion is taking root, as is a certainty, that this upheaval would be accompanied by an unleashing of violence, to which the apotheosis of technology would give catastrophic effects.

A logical consequence of this reversal of perspective in the collective mentality is the withdrawal of individuals into the immediate present and private existence, with the compensations this allows in the constant tension.

Individualism as a type of behavior is once again coming to the forefront; it is recognized and celebrated as a model of modernity, but it is an individualism that has lost its subversive and refractory dimensions. On the contrary, it is a new conformism.

It's an adaptive behavior that isolates everyone in the pursuit of performance and security, in an option that ultimately amounts to the old "struggle for life," for survival. A "quest for happiness" that once again leads us back into the endless cycle of consumption, at least for those who are not radically excluded from it. And in countries that have escaped totalitarianism, as in underdeveloped countries, we dream of Western happiness.

There remains little room, then, to imagine another possible life, to even glimpse the meaning it would have to imagine another life for an entire society. In the intellectual and psychological structures of the present time, a veritable blockage of the imagination freezes the vision of the collective future.

the sterilization of the imagination.

This pessimistic overview is not intended, all things considered, to lead to depressive conclusions; the horizon was no clearer when I wrote this brochure. I have sketched this pessimistic “panorama” in broad strokes in order to emphasize once again the need to constantly return to this partly irrational trust that anarchism places in the creative powers of life, both individual and collective. And to emphasize the fertility of the utopian spirit. Even the most uncompromising individualism, in the anti-establishment sense given to it by the history of the libertarian movement, carries within it the will and hope to establish new relationships with others and with the environment.

Confronting the sterilization of the imagination is becoming a crucial issue. From this perspective, we must first maintain the critical and conflictual edge of our analyses, in order to open breaches in the unifying ideology. But I persist in believing that it is essential to develop and renew the utopian perception of reality, to explore its “lateral possibilities,” and to already bring out this vision in the actions of collective resistance that are mobilizing energies today. Even when they only seem to aim at an adjustment of the current organization of production and consumption. In the struggles for a preserved or restored ecology, for a healthier diet — I cite these currents because they have developed in recent decades, and not as a catch-up solution — the image of another orientation of the economy, one that calls for ruptures. Utopia is also revived here.

It is in the same vein that, in the face of reductive attempts that freeze the idea of utopia in the closed and authoritarian schemes of perfect cities, or in the eschatologies of defunct totalitarian regimes, research is once again emerging on the variety and plasticity of utopian projections, through the innovations of social groups as well as in art and literature.

The negative utopia also retains all its virtues, when it highlights and amplifies the risks and threats perceptible in the lines of evolution of the current world. If, to help crack the layer of demoralization that tends to set in, we must return to the very hopes that invigorate our actions, it is also salutary to let our nightmares express themselves: they stimulate the awakening of the imagination. The future is open...

1969

POSITIVE ANARCHY

Recherches Libertaires no. 5 (Mai 1969): 1-7.

Now that it has become difficult to deny the resurgence of anarchist action and ideas, we have witnessed a new operation designed to limit and distort the scope of this resurgence. Much has been said about the libertarian spirit, the leaven, the ferment, the libertarian detonator. The implication is that anarchic extremism has proven capable of galvanizing energies, directing youth revolt toward social struggle, and harshly shaking up a socialism mired in reformism and bureaucracy. But once the momentum is given, anarchism reaches the end of its possibilities. It is then a matter of returning to tactics that effectively prepare for the seizure of power: restructuring and strengthening left-wing parties and workers' organizations, developing a government program, etc.

Such a conception excludes the possibility that anarchism could be anything other than a transitional moment of violent negation and radical critique. Recent experience, and the very positions expressed by many of our comrades (sometimes the most active), seem to confirm such a point of view. The resurgence of anarchism has not so far strengthened the libertarian movement, if by this we mean the organizations and publications proclaiming themselves libertarian. No new connections have been envisaged; dispersal remains the general rule. This, it might be said, is because the anarchist movement does not exist outside of the movement in the most immediate sense: direct action, agitation, violent confrontation.

this is only the beginning...

In fact, the question cannot be avoided: can anarchism lead to the formation of a permanent, evolving "movement" and doctrine, or does it only truly express itself in the spontaneity of a period of upheaval and acute crisis? In the latter case, anarchism would not be linked to any organization or set of theoretical works. It would simply be the awakening of consciousness and the surge of protest occurring at a given time to shatter oppressive structures and open a breach. It would be linked exclusively to phases of brutal confrontation, global questioning, and violent rupture. We would then have to be content to "read" anarchism in a discontinuous sequence of historical events (the Paris Commune, Makhno's Ukraine, revolutionary Spain).

There would therefore be a libertarian *practice*, recognizable by a certain number of constants, but not a libertarian theory. Various statements by Daniel Çohn-Bendit, and *Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative*, point in this direction. They indeed contain references to historical experiences, but also a clear refusal to adhere to a specific theory. Finally, we come to say with Daniel Guérin (“Le fait public” No. 6): “Any social revolution cannot, *at the moment of its emergence*, be anything other than libertarian.” (Emphasis added.) This is a return to the idea that anarchism is merely a moment of revolutionary upheaval. To account for this moment and the practice that characterizes it, all that remains is to resort to another theory, starting, for example, from the perspective that “anarchism has entered into symbiosis with Marxism” (Guérin).

In fact, the libertarian action of the spring of '68 has been commented on primarily, even by those who led it, in Marxist terms. I am not at all inclined to side with the “traditionalists” in the old anarchism-Marxism quarrel, whose terms remain as ill-defined as ever. (Bakunin saw things much more clearly than our current purists.) However, one can only introduce a great deal of confusion by formulating a specifically anarchist action in Marxist terminology. And it must be recognized that this is not a simple borrowing of vocabulary. The almost exclusive use of Marxist references and concepts reveals, beneath the explicit rejection of all theory, the recourse to Marxism as the only available revolutionary theory.

Was it not possible to express libertarian practices by drawing on the intellectual resources of anarchism? This effort at “specific” expression would not only have allowed us to better identify the ins and outs of the action, but it would also have highlighted, through concrete examples, the foundations and particular themes of libertarian thought.

is there an anarchist theory?

There is no question of “purging” anarchism of all contributions from dialectical materialism! But it seems essential to me to clarify, even if it is primarily a matter of making our practice understood, the guidelines and foundations of an anarchist theory. This raises a new question: does this original anarchist theory exist? Can we rely on anything other than disparate works, involving very different methods and postulates, sometimes difficult to reconcile?

To answer seriously, we would first have to return to the works, rediscover their internal logic, their lines of evolution, and clarify their concepts. We will undoubtedly search in vain for those willing to undertake this work. All recent studies on Proudhon, for example, are by men who have no connection with

anarchism.⁴⁷ This necessarily influences the direction of their analyses. And even these works, which nevertheless reflect a certain updating of Proudhonian thought, we ignore. The same can be said of studies devoted to Stirner.⁴⁸ It is also true that many of us, relying on the polemical judgments of Marx and Marxists, consign Proudhon and Stirner to the dustbin of history without further ado.

All this, it will be said, has nothing to do with the action that must mobilize us permanently and as a priority; this remains to be proven. To those who in May-June criticized libertarians for their sole aim of destruction, the best response was slogans: all power to the councils, self-management. Wasn't this the moment to make known, even for informational purposes, the idea that anarchists had of a socialist organization? And what can self-management represent for us if we don't situate it within a federalist framework? A wonderful opportunity to shed light on Proudhon through current events. There was no need to pull out a rigid and infallible model, but at least to propose a possible path, capable of various extensions.

The imagination in power! It is true that imagination abdicates and becomes rigid within the shackles of conventions, passivity, and systematic conditioning. But it is also certain that it runs on empty if it cannot rely on precise information and reasoned hypotheses. Federalism is one of these hypotheses; it supported revolutionary spontaneity more than once. Let us recall the leading role played by the Proudhonists in the Commune: "All the administrative, economic, and political measures taken by the Commune were inspired by Proudhon," writes Gurvitch. "The very name of *fédérés*, adopted by the supporters of the Commune, attests to this."⁴⁹ And further: "The combined influence of French revolutionary syndicalism and Proudhonism itself played a certain role in the formation of the rank-and-file soviets which, after the October Revolution, seized power in factories and enterprises, where they achieved workers' self-management." Finally, it is unnecessary to recall the extent to which the federalist model — which had its original roots in Spain — stimulated the achievements of the CNT during the Civil War.

⁴⁷ Georges GURVITCH : *Proudhon sociologue* (Centre de documentation universitaire, 1955) — *Dialectique et sociologie* (Flammarion , 1962) — *Proudhon et Marx, une confrontation* (Centre de documentation universitaire, 1964) — Pierre ANSART : *Sociologie de Proudhon* (PUF, 1967) — *Proudhon : Oeuvres choisies*, par Jean BANCAL (Idées-Gallimard, 1967)

⁴⁸ Henri ARVON : *Aux sources de l' existentialisme : Max Stirner* (PUF, 1954) - Gilles DELEUZE : *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (PUF, 1962).

⁴⁹ *Proudhon* (PUF, 1965 — collection "Philosophes") pp. 66-67.

the illusion of a clean slate

Destroy first, build later. The formula is more striking than realistic or even imaginative. We only truly destroy what we are capable of replacing. If the May revolt had escalated into a revolution, how, through what channels and through what coordination, would the establishment of a self-managed economy have taken place? Even if, from the outset, the most lucid saw the May movement as nothing more than a stage in the revolutionary process, the question must be asked. For we will encounter it at all decisive turning points, and in any case, it should be a stimulus for the imagination, a guide for action.

Undoubtedly, more immediate problems were at hand. Although there were enough discussions in which such utopias could have been inserted. And now? Attention is so focused on the new detonating action that we forget to deepen and develop the ideas of May. And the disappointment of the relapse blocks both exchanges and intellectual work. All of this only reinforces the distrust of any theoretical research that goes beyond the realm of radical criticism.

At least as far as anarchists are concerned. For others, just as left-wing, are organizing, disseminating their ideas, and developing their own tools. Should we once and for all abandon the need for coordinated activity, the need for connection and permanence that constantly draws those who find no opportunity to build in the anarchist movement to other groups or alternative activities? Is it an aberration to want to “build” in today's society? Is it necessarily a way to neutralize the energies directed against the capitalist system?

The desire to participate, with a minimum of permanence, in a collective effort seems to me to be a healthy and spontaneous psychological factor. Creation within the provisional limits of the possible is also a defense against sterilization and conditioning. And the clean slate is itself a dangerous illusion: in the network of determinisms and conditionings in which we are caught, a revolutionary outbreak constitutes only a temporary liberation. Once the excitement has subsided and been repressed, the old mechanisms, the old models of life and thought, are taking over. Undoubtedly, real cracks remain: we must prevent them from closing at all costs, and above all, prevent demoralization and nihilism from further strengthening the framework of conditioning. To achieve this, we must tirelessly develop not only a critique of the imposed way of life, but also the affirmation of other values and other possibilities, the experience of different relationships and behaviors.

It is also essential not to limit ourselves to fragmentary expression and experimentation. Of course, each of us, and each group, can only undertake partial attempts. It is all the more necessary to place these fragments within a general framework that gives them meaning and coherence. Hence the

importance of theoretical research and expression with a dual goal: to propose models of action and implementation, and to establish a constant link between criticism, protest, experimentation, and restructuring efforts.

for a libertarian culture

Here are some paths toward a “positive anarchy” that could be briefly outlined:

It is within our capabilities, and it is extremely urgent, to revitalize and develop a libertarian culture. I know the allergic reactions provoked by the very word “culture,” but we must move beyond this fetishism, this conditioned reflex, to seriously examine the various critiques of culture that have been made in recent times. It is certain that culture, whether “elite” or “mass,” is an instrument of ideological intoxication. But cultural activity cannot be reduced to this factor alone. Otherwise, all that would remain would be to renounce all knowledge, all reflection, all expression. If it is true that there is a *dominant culture*, it is also true that there is one, or more precisely, many *cultures dominated*, mutilated, and repressed. This is the case with libertarian culture. And anarchists themselves have done much to sabotage it.

A considerable body of studies, reflections, critiques, original ideas, and constructive proposals remain buried in works abandoned to the “gnawing criticism of mice,” even though the essence of libertarian thought was formed there. Men who fought their entire lives against oppression left their testimonies, the results of their experiences, and plans for new experiments. Very often, the proponents of the dominant culture have tried to lock them away behind a wall of silence and derision, and have succeeded only too well. It’s a matter of “taking them out of the ghetto,” not through pious commemorations, but by extracting from their contribution what is current and powerful, by rediscovering behind formulas that may have aged the logic behind their thought, the dynamics of their activity, the tendencies of their sensibility. It’s not a matter of constituting purely biographical or literary knowledge about them, but of identifying a way of feeling, thinking, and acting: a position taken in the face of the present world.

By the way, it is certain that this will not lead to a single theory, an all-terrain system, but to diverse currents, inspiring diverse practices. The important thing will be to give each of these currents its coherence, its aptitude for experimentation and renewal, and to use the work and imagination of those who preceded it to give us an instrument of understanding, communication, and a grasp of the world.

This libertarian culture would already cease to be bookish at a time when its development would lead us to renew ties, to find forms of collaboration and

relationships consistent with such an undertaking if it is indeed conducted in a libertarian spirit. A project of this kind also requires a minimum of means for publication, distribution, etc. Providing resources is not everything: it is also necessary to preserve and develop them. The instability of libertarian groups makes this difficult. When a team manages to build a tool (magazine, newspaper, bookstore, publishing cooperative), the fear of seeing what it has acquired shattered in the hands of newcomers immediately incites an attitude of distrust and withdrawal, if not outright sectarianism, which prevents any progress. It is also true that we have seen enough examples of irresponsibility in our circles to understand, which does not mean accept, such an attitude.

The result of such a situation is well known: we constantly start from scratch, energies are exhausted, and available wills are scattered. The work provided by both sides is lost in the short term. The effort to express anarchism positively is therefore necessarily accompanied by an effort to create the indispensable instruments of connection, production, and exchange. It is unreasonable to loudly demand self-management if one is incapable of collectively managing even the most modest equipment. Blaming the capitalist environment for such an inability is often a false alibi.

recuperated by the system?

The most urgent thing is not to think about "equipment." We must first see if teams can be formed. If they come to life, if they manage to maintain coordination and a certain rhythm of activity, the rest will follow.

One more clarification, to avoid a common misunderstanding. What is suggested here is not intended to be considered the only way to advance anarchism. It will never be anything more than a complement, but a complement that cannot be ignored, to the various forms of action. It is not a question of calling back to their studies those who deem it more useful to remain available for permanent harassment and practical protest. Even if we recall that the much-cited unity of theory and practice also requires that theory not be sacrificed for activism.

The primary goal is to stimulate and organize intellectual activity that can engage all tendencies of the anarchist movement, regardless of the type of practice they advocate. It must pose problems for everyone and also propose answers to these problems. It must encourage a critical attitude that is not focused exclusively on the positions and achievements of other groups, but on the choices specific to each individual. This collective intellectual activity could also include in a new community those who, in isolation, attempt to partially apply their ideas in the most diverse sectors of social life, precisely where the greatest risk of "recuperation" exists: teaching, leisure, "popular" education,

information, trade unionism, etc. A constant link must be maintained between those leading offensive revolutionary action and those who can serve as relays and mediators to make this struggle known and properly understood. The latter can also devote themselves more easily to creating instruments of exchange and dissemination made available to more mobile and more exposed groups. In return, a permanent confrontation between the two groups has some chance of provoking a self-examination among those who, in their isolation, risk slipping into the ruts of the established order.

The important thing is to react against intellectual sterility and prostration. Because we have allowed the current of libertarian culture to be lost, because we have failed to keep abreast of the evolution of knowledge and ideas, because we renounce original production for fear of being caught up in the system, the awakening of spring 1968 and the resurgence of anarchism are threatened with neutralization.

But isn't the effort to formulate a "positive anarchy" destined to quickly become a factor of integration into the dominant ideology and its means of conditioning? The danger is real, and it would be serious to lose sight of it. Shifts toward harmless liberalism, toward educationism, moralism, or union reformism, for example, can lead us to participate, despite our intentions, in the organization of life under capitalist and technocratic control. We can at least bet on the fact that anarchism manifests an intrinsic tendency toward criticism, negation, and radicalization, which remains latent even in a weakened ideological expression, and which quickly regains its virulence in favorable (individual or collective) terrain. And anything that helps clarify, support, and renew our positions, strengthen connections at the expense of dispersion, stimulate the imagination, and clarify and develop information will sooner or later contribute to the effectiveness of our action.

René FURTH

1971

On the individualist postulates of nonviolent anarchism

Anarchisme et non-violence no. 25 (avril-mai 1971): 21-26

The confrontation between nonviolent anarchism and other currents of anarchism cannot be based solely on the theme of violence. To approach the problem in very simple terms, no one would think of defining themselves as a “violent anarchist.” Rather, one would say revolutionary anarchist. But the nonviolent does not necessarily accept being considered non-revolutionary... At what level, then, should we locate the essential divergences?

The debate, most often, takes place on the level of strategy: is violence an effective means or not; is it capable of achieving the desired end, namely the establishment of free relations between men, and therefore the elimination of violence? Can one, in a society founded on violence, avoid violence? This strategic discussion quickly reveals deeper divergences, which concern the very conception of social reality. The idea that each side has of revolution allows us to clearly grasp this difference, and on this point of theory, non-violent anarchism is clearly distinguished from what is commonly called revolutionary anarchism.

the revolutionary conception of revolution

The nonviolent idea of revolution does indeed imply a radical change: the end of oppression and exploitation, the disappearance of the state and classes, and direct management of collective life by the community. Agreement is reached on the goal to be achieved — the same is true for Marxists — but not on the way to achieve it or on the nature of this mutation.

What, in my opinion, is foreign to the non-violents is the notion of the “revolutionary phenomenon,” of the creative dynamism of the “catastrophic” revolution (in Sorel's words.) The revolutionary conception of revolution is characterized by the conviction that through disorders and crises, suffering and enthusiasm, a life-giving process unfolds, bringing new forms of existence, organization, and consciousness. The conviction that by sweeping away restrictive and arbitrary structures, the revolution releases the contained forces that will give the collectivity the energy and power of invention necessary to lay the foundations of a new order.

Such a dynamic is not without violence, neither in its triggering, nor in its extension, nor in its defense. For many libertarians, it is the eruption of insurrectional violence which, by breaching the repressive apparatus, sets in

motion the process of creation; something that non-violents dispute. In a rather old issue of ANV, where he kindly critiqued my brochure *Forms and Tendencies of Anarchism*, Lucien Grelaud quoted the passage where I said: "Violent action reinvigorates energies, reawakens past anger. At the same time, it creates a climate of effervescence where new ideas germinate." To which he replied: "It seems to me that, rather than applauding the reawakening of past anger, it would be more beneficial to divert it, to sublimate this violent reaction, to replace it in creative actions, such as those that the author himself advocates, self-management in particular." (ANV no. 10)

This response sidesteps the problem more than it solves it. If self-management becomes possible, it is because the violent reaction has not been sublimated but has, by exploding, introduced the rupture that calls for and allows the investment of the forces mobilized by the revolt. How can past anger be diverted toward creative action if it has not been reactivated in a collective surge that opens the way to socialist realization?

Grelaud blithely skips a link in the chain. Self-management can easily be thought of in the logic of nonviolent anarchism: rational decision, reasoned agreement, collective work undertaken according to a precise contract, ongoing education through the very practice of direct management. The same is not true of the previous stage, that of the reversal of balance. What prevails here is the impassioned impulse, improvisation, rapid and often contradictory decisions taken in the heat of the moment. And also, if the movement gains momentum, the determination and authoritarian pressure of well-organized and centralized groups, which poses serious problems for revolutionary anarchists as well.

In the insurrectional phase, it is no longer a matter of the convergence of carefully considered and thoroughly controlled (self-controlled) efforts, but of collective impulses with often unpredictable results, with partly irrational motivations (anger, apocalyptic dreams, apparently insane hopes, etc.), whose agents, for the most part, have been trained by anything but the wise school of non-violence.

social mutation

And yet these mass movements, through the vigor of their impact and their contagious power, can provoke situations that previously seemed completely improbable. Moreover, revolutionary dynamics not only change situations, but they transform their own agents. Old value systems, networks of inhibition built up by years (centuries?) of conditioning, are disintegrating in the general effervescence. A new image of life and happiness is emerging. Archaic dreams are surfacing in consciousness and driving action: the millenarian expectation of the great apocalypse that will give birth to a world regenerated from chaos, the

aspiration for the great transformation where man and society reintegrate their “lost powers.”

Ethnology and the history of religions provide numerous examples of these myths of the “eternal return” or the “great time,” and each revolutionary movement sees them emerge in a form specific to its time, but easily recognizable. Because unconscious charges, fueled by the very sources of vital dynamism, are thus mobilized and invested in action, the entire individual is concerned by the upheaval underway; the similarity of reactivated dreams and desires unites all the more strongly those who are thus carried by this “primitive” impulse. And the revolution effectively becomes this microcosm of which Landauer speaks, where all developments accelerate and intensify incredibly.

Only a violent confrontation can trigger such a process. It doesn't have to be bloody. What happened in May '68 (which was far less deadly than a good weekend on the roads) can provide a limited but legible illustration of the phenomenon I have just briefly mentioned. The stark opposition of two camps, the breakdown of all dialogue between them, and the conviction of waging a decisive battle arouse considerable energies and unprecedented tactics. I doubt that nonviolent action could have such effects.

One can object to revolutionaries the miseries and sufferings of a confrontation turning into civil war. I only cite for the record one of the responses to this argument, because it would require longer developments: that these very miseries are, at the collective level, a factor of maturation and awareness. Marx and Bakunin agree on this. I recognize that this kind of philosophy of history, basically quite foreign to the anarchist mentality, can lead far...

From the above, we can begin to draw out the theoretical implications of both positions.

Revolutionary anarchism focuses on the action and dynamics of the collective *as a specific subject*. It considers it capable of innovative behaviors that have nothing to do with the simple juxtaposition of individual behaviors, since the novelty of reactions and initiatives comes precisely from the fact that individuals find themselves in a situation of intense participation in a collective future.

Nonviolent anarchism, on the other hand, does not start from the collective as a global reality, but from the individual. It does not exclude joint action, but conceives of it as a (mechanical) addition of concordant individual actions. The welding, the meshing is brought about by consultation, carefully considered decisions and permanent control. In its view, social reality will not be transformed by a general mutation, but by the reorganization of well-localized sectors that end up joining together. This is a distinctly individualist point of view, which constitutes, in fact, a negation of sociology (which no longer has a

specific object if there is no collective agent.) It is also what we can call a reformist conception of revolution.

Individualist in its theory and practice, nonviolent anarchism is also rationalist: it distrusts impulsive movements, beliefs dependent on unconscious impulses. In this way, it joins pacifism, which has always ignored the fascination exerted by “warlike adventures,” and has therefore been unable to combat them in depth. To ignore unconscious motivations is to give in to their disruptive intervention, as well as to renounce their reorientation along a creative path. The intellectual framework of nonviolent anarchism is social individualism as understood by Bontemps. It can even be admitted that the only active current of libertarian individualism is currently forming around *ANV*.

Having made these demarcations, it is obviously necessary to qualify their application. Remember that revolutionary anarchism also requires reasoned and persevering effort, the training of the individual, consultation for collective management, etc. That non-violent anarchism, for its part, can provoke “dynamic and creative phenomena” (*ANV* no. 23, p. 39). I do not have the impression, however, that this aspect has often been highlighted. Perhaps, precisely, because individualist schemes do not lend themselves to it.

relativity of non-violence

The fact of starting from individualist positions is not without consequences, and I am not writing this article for the pleasure of cataloguing an unusual trend according to our dear old categories. On the theoretical level, individualism ignores an essential aspect of social life. It is thus led to delude itself about methods of action that turn out to be very partial because they do not take into account the totality of social fact. Key phases of historical development escape its perspective, and its interventions are very likely to remain marginal.

For these reasons, nonviolent tactics appear to me above all as an addition that is integrated into a course that is foreign and even contrary to their principles. They are included, for example, in the whole of a protest that does not hesitate to resort, at times, to violent provocation, aggression, and collective letting off steam. In a period of revolutionary upheaval, nonviolent groups and activists can effectively insert themselves into the effort of socialist reconstruction. But advocated as the only valid methods, individualist modes of action lead to relying too much on limited restructuring (free environments, cooperatives, piecemeal self-management) that are quickly diverted by the conditioning and integrating power of the statist and capitalist system. We come here to the critique of individualism as a libertarian form of reformism.

To the extent that my analysis is correct, non-violence seems to me to be susceptible to only partial theorization. (Can we speak of a non-violent psychology or sociology?) The basis of its practice would therefore be above all a

moral choice: “Whatever the case, and whatever the role of violence in history, I refuse to resort to it.” It would therefore be necessary to admit that violent intervention is inevitable and even necessary in certain situations, but that we reject it for ourselves, by deciding to use forms of struggle that find their effectiveness on other levels and in other situations. Becoming aware of this relativity would avoid the dogmatism of nonviolence, and its justification by postulates that are difficult to reconcile with current data from the social sciences.

It goes without saying that the dogmatism of violence is just as unjustified and that it risks contradicting the libertarian project even more.

Recognizing the (relative) practical value of nonviolence, one can begin another criticism: that it does not deepen its methods sufficiently. The criticism can be made of individualism as a whole, which has too often limited itself to an education of judgment (which is no small thing) and to a certain emancipation of behavior (seriously limited by environmental constraints). Two elements are not sufficiently taken into consideration: that an intellectual and moral “conversion” is not enough to profoundly remodel the psyche, to undo the inhibitions and malformations caused by education and daily life; that personal development implies the integration and activation of energies, of functions that an incoherent and repressive apprenticeship has left fallow.

It would be the task of a consistent individualism to develop the techniques of “individuation” in accordance with this double purpose, based, among other things, on the achievements of psychoanalysis and also on what we can assimilate for the moment from Eastern teachings.

To believe that one could thus escape the harmful influence of the environment would be to fall back into another of the pitfalls of individualist reformism. But a person trained in this way would be better equipped for his defense, for combat, and for his personal fulfillment. Nonviolent training undoubtedly constitutes a first (practical) approach to this distant goal. We see what remains to be understood, organized, and attempted if this project were taken seriously...

René Furth

1972

the anarchist question

DISPERSION

Anarchism is a permanent obstacle for the anarchist.

It scatters more than it gathers. It fritters away energies rather than concentrating them. It squanders its gains when what is necessary is to mobilize them for new acquisitions. Summary judgments and the remnants of old popularizations stand in for the methods of analysis and the precise knowledge that it lacks.

Instead of devoting the best part of our efforts to the struggle against capitalism and political power, we exhaust ourselves struggling to patch up and hold together our fragile means: groups, press, networks of communication. It is with great difficulty that we find the means to support ourselves on any kind of basis. The groups and organizations keep breaking up; those that take their place slip despite themselves in the ruts dug by the predecessors — unless they refuse everything, and toss and turn, for a while, this way and that.

The majority of the publications are as ephemeral as they are little known. Their theoretical basis — when there is something that resembles a theoretical basis — remains unstable and ragtag. In the best of cases, they earnestly reframe the old questions: celles those that had been forgotten for fear of the challenges. Or else they inject into the little anarchist world some elements of research and analysis done elsewhere, which is certainly useful and only too rare.

to depart or to begin again?

This complete lack of cohesion and continuity reduces the anarchist movement's powers of attraction to such a point that it can only retain a minority of the minority that traverses its sphere of influence. The numerical insufficiency contributes in turn to the limited life span of the initiatives, the poor quality of the contributions and the resorption of the exchanges.

That penury does not only concern the "specific" milieu, the groups and formations that proclaim themselves libertarian. Those who identify their

practice with a libertarian perspective, without associating themselves with the milieu — precisely because they observe its deficiencies and because they are wary of the confusion that tarnishes anarchism — would have everything to gain from the existence of a living movement: information, theoretical reflection, variety of experiences, contacts, stimulants (even in polemics).

It remains to be seen whether we must stick with this admission of failure. Many have done so and have left for revolutionary tendencies that offer them greater means, a coherent theory and a more stimulating intellectual climate. Others hang on, unmoved by the confusion and fragmentation, because all that interests them is the radicality of specific, ad hoc actions or the rough outline of a lifestyle. Let's not speak of those who have ordained themselves the proprietors of an "inalienable anarchy," anarchists of divine right and guardians of orthodoxy, assiduous above all to track down the deviations not provided for in the catalog of their ideological bric-à-brac. Let's leave these dealers in second-hand goods to call the shots in their shops; the innocents who stumble in there linger less and less.

If we want to put an end to this critical situation, the question arises: is anarchism condemned by its nature to fragmentation, to outbursts with no future, to vague ideologies? If not, can it find within itself the unifying principles that would give it strength of conviction and power to intervene?

What is serious is that these questions are so rarely posed, except by those who respond by leaving anarchism behind. They are at least implicitly at work in the attempts made by certain groups to find their way out of the fog. The inertia of the milieu reins in these attempts and limits their duration; they nevertheless constitute a first positive element, without which it would hardly be worth the trouble of struggling with this sort of questioning.

the absence of forms

At first glance, what characterizes anarchism and its lack of continuity is the absence of forms. At all levels, we encounter the shapeless.

Its most obvious manifestation is the inevitable return — always in the same terms — of the problem of organization: the absence of forms in the relations between individuals, between groups. The proclamation of the informal is only a resignation to the unformed. We can indeed perceive that spontaneous relations are more to be valued than being stuck in a closed group, set against all others and worn out by internal conflicts. I also admit that nothing is more delusive than the formalism that consists of mapping out mighty organizational schemes and waiting for the masses to throw themselves into them, or the formalism that wears out people in the maintenance and upkeep of some bit of machinery that cannot find a use in real life. But the informal cannot be a solution, precisely

insofar as the temporary and fluctuating character of this type of relations does not allow the preservation and extension of gains.

The problem of organization is, in fact, secondary. It is a question of consequence, and not of causes. No real accord is possible as long as we limit ourselves to pooling refusals, vague formulations and slogans. At the slightest debate regarding substance, the facade of unity cracks. It could hardly be otherwise: how, in the absence of some clearly defined bases, can we know what we've signed up for? Agreement on a particular point does not make up for indecision and contradictions on a variety of other questions, which remain in the shadows because no effort is made to achieve an overview. It is impossible for us to offer newcomers a comprehensive vision with which they can engage.

It is this way that the dispersion and loss reach their culmination. It has become customary — for a long time now — to carve anarchism up into little, clearly separated segments, each of which bear the marks of some popularizers. The link with the original works or the social movements that furnished the "label" is most often cut. The "individualists" know as little of Stirner as the "libertarian communists" know of Bakunin or Kropotkin. What does it matter? The founding fathers (and Stirner is one despite himself...) tended to have a general view of the problems, and a connection with the knowledges and ideas of their times. They often show themselves to be more modern than their followers.

Another purely internal and outdated criticism? It is true that a new generation of libertarians is better able to avoid arbitrary splits, by no longer separating the social revolution from the subversion of everyday life. But it pushes negligence, and even pure and simple refusal, even further as soon as it is a question of giving a coherent expression to its reasons for acting and its practice.

Even groups anxious to translate their experience into a more rigorous formulation, to widen the discussion and allow a reflection on their journey, have difficulty avoiding breaks. First, because they want to keep their distance from the anarchist milieu and, on the other hand, because the consciousness of making an original and modern attempt tentatively releases them with little thought from seeking in the past of the libertarian movement for the precedents or arguments that could support their research. So they remain engaged in a very compartmentalized activity, which prevents them from grasping as a whole the links, theoretical and practical, that connect their enterprise to the global project of the anarchist revolution.

fragments of anarchy

Another fragmentation further weakens our capacity for expression: ideas circulate very badly across borders. Few translations are made and the French, to take one example, pour prendre un exemple, are largely ignorant of the anarchist books published in German, England or Italy.

We can ask ourselves whether the dispersion results only from temporary conditions or if it is inseparable from the anarchist movement. A backwards look leaves no doubt; the multiplicity of tendencies and sub-tendencies is chronic. But this is also more a symptom than a cause. The fragmentation does not only come from loss, from the fact that, of the essential works, we only retain isolated elements, detached from the unity that gave them their true sense. The "inaugural" works are themselves fragmented. Even at its highest level, libertarian thought remains fragmentary.

In Proudhon, anarchy clearly underlies certain books (those of the period 1848-1852) more than others; it fades in some periods, or remains mixed with reactionary slag. His multiple activities, the crises of daily life divert Proudhon from ordering and clarifying his concepts, which often leads us to believe there are contradictions where there is only imprecision. Eitzbacher rightly reproaches him for his irregular and changing language. (But it is also true that a theory does not immediately create its own intellectual domain, and we have made no effort to reread Proudhon.)

What can we say about Bakunin? His work is made up mostly of unfinished books, of immoderate letters. Stirner himself, the most purely "theoretical" of the anarchists, is the man of a single book, composed of fragments: commentaries on works read, polemics, the still trembling transcription of interminable tavern discussions. Nothing is more characteristic than the title of Tucker's book: "Instead of a Book. By a man too busy to write one. A fragmentary exposition of philosophical anarchism."

More generally we can say that anarchism appears only in fragments in the life of an anarchist. It is not just a question of "crises of youth." The conditions of existence are such, and the mental pressures, and the influence of the mechanisms assembled through education, that anarchy struggles to free itself from authoritarian reflexes, intolerance and fear of liberty. It is the same for events: revolutions are anarchist in their beginnings...

The fragmentation is still more intimately connected to the nature of a current that attaches more importance to life than to thought, and has always emphasized passion, intuition and instinctive urges. "Science only deals with shadows," said Bakunin. "The living reality escapes it and only gives itself to life, which, being itself fugitive and fleeting, can and indeed always does grasp everything that lives, which is to say everything that passes or flees." The sentence could be from Stirner...

the words of the tribe

Everything leads us toward the rupture. Where would we find the unifying energy capable of susceptible gathering up the fragments, of resisting the dispersion? We lack the elementary basis for any possible cohesion: a common language. We have no language. That is why we are still always reduced to speaking of anarchism, instead of speaking as anarchists regarding today's world and the life that we lead here. How to speak as an anarchist, to speak anarchistically, is not self-evident. We employ the words of other, haphazardly, with all the misunderstanding that produces, or we use worn out, lifeless words, which drag along for generations, from pamphlet to discussion and from discussion to "incendiary" tract...

Result: we have no end of trouble making ourselves understood or even to make ourselves heard; these stammerings become truly inaudible. It is at this level that the necessity of a theorization makes itself felt every day. A theory is, first of all, a well constructed language, some clearly defined notions between which we can establish logical relations.

It is not a question of a formal procedure. Clarifying concepts implies — and calls for — a clarification of ideas and methods of analysis. This also demands on our part the confrontation of different expressions of anarchism in order to discover common forms and constants. Finally, and above all, this effort of clarification demands a labor of critical revisions and updating, since the aim is not to establish a catalog but to elaborate a language capable of grasping (for purposes of knowledge, communication and action) the present reality.

It is tempting, obviously, to simply use the categories and notions produced by systems better assimilated by those to whom we wish to address ourselves (and marxism, in particular.) And in that way it is impossible to avoid the use of a marxist (or psychanalytic) vocabulary circulted widely through the human sciences. This is, however, a new source of confusion. This vocabulary reflects theoretical constructions whose cohésion is strong and whose imprint can divert our ideas, distort their meaning and obliterate their originality. To use the words of others without further examination is to lock ourselves within their ideology. Hence the need to examine what can be integrated into our coordinates without parasitism... and to check if our intellectual tools withstand the confrontation.

Whatever the domain envisaged, going beyond atomization requires a radical overhaul of our way of seeing and of our habits. Beneath the discontinuous, we will have to look for the continuous; beneath disorder, the forms that give cohesion and meaning to the whole. More generally, we will have to come to grasp anarchism as a global reality that refuses partial and arbitrary definitions

insofar as we can identify and describe its concrete manifestations in the history and in the life of men.

a return to the sources

Even if this proposition appears absurd to the partisans of tradition and spontaneity alike, it is a question of becoming fully aware of what anarchism is, consciousness of the anarchist phenomenon: as historical movement, as current of thought, as a permanent feature of social ferment and individual emancipation.

This recasting implies a return to the sources that will allow, so to speak, the rediscovery of anarchism in its nascent state, not only in the events and works of the past, but in the actions, behaviors and writings that, today, give it a new expression.

To clarify the connections, most often explicit, that exist between the fragments, their common reason for being. Through gradual restructuring, to identify the connections in larger and larger wholes. And this is still only a prerequisite, which is insufficient to effectively merge in practice, in spontaneous consciousness, the fragments of anarchy that are accessible to us. It is useful to know what there is in common between a savage strike, a communitarian experiment, a past insurrection, a page from Proudhon and a new analysis. But the dispersion will only cease when a current of life spontaneously connects these exploded realities in order to establish between them a field of force capable of producing new impulses and ideas.

In other words: we will have a real chance of overcoming dispersion when we have reestablished an active cultural life in the anarchist milieu.

CULTURE, COUNTER-CULTURE

What many among us forget — or want to ignore — is that a common culture is a powerful unifying factor. When pushed, we recognize this force of cohesion when it is a question of denouncing the dominant culture: doesn't it function to join together in a single submission, in a common "ideal," the diversity of individuals and social classes? But the fact is that it ne s'installe qu'en écrasant, en disloquant des cultures particulières. The history of colonization and its cultural imperialism furnishes no end of examples. And one discovers, finally, that there exists in France an "internal colonization," that the centralizing State is built on the ruins of regional cultures, on the crushing of differences.

The bourgeoisie ideology only extends its influence by condemning to suffocation the ideas, works and modes of life that are opposed to its principles and rules. The deviant elements that are persistent enough to resist find themselves gradually assimilated and distorted. Denouncing this process is quite insufficient. The true response consists instead of reviving, reinforcing the cultural forms thus eliminated or neutralized.

One could also respond that only the complete disruption of the capitalist system will allow the implementation of a different culture. Okay... if we do not forget that no revolution is possible outside of certain "subjective conditions" (awareness, knowledge of means and end, "capacity" in the Proudhonian sense), which are precisely cultural factors.

the state against culture

The affirmation of the liberating role of culture has long remained a constant in the workers' movement. Revolutionary syndicalism, in particular, has endeavored to put this conviction into practice. It has not only stepped forward to give militants the training (political, economic, technical) necessary to lead effective struggles and to participate, after the revolution, in the collective management of the new society, but also to develop a "producers' ethic." The very idea of a proletarian culture was to gain ground for some time: that the working class forge its own forms of expression and oppose the artistic productions of the bourgeoisie with works devoted to the life, problems and values of the proletariat.

The libertarian conception of culture was closely linked to its critique of the State. We find it expounded in all its aspects in Rocker's work (still unpublished in France) on "Nationalism and Culture:" culture and state power are two fundamentally contradictory realities; the strengthening of power inevitably

calls for a regression of cultural activity, since that activity requires complete freedom of expression and respect for diversity. The stimulant of collective spontaneity is essential for the blossoming of works suited to the needs and aspirations of the greatest number. Direct state intervention, on the contrary, paralyzes creativity through its exclusions and instructions, or else it only supports production that meets the tastes and interests of a privileged minority.

We are far, today, from such positive conceptions of culture. The word is from now on invested with a negative charge, automatically serves to repel. But if we have every reason to be wary of cultural optimism, we must also react rapidly against the automatisms that replace reflection with conditioned reflexes. (There is a leftist conditioning...) The fetishized words, whether positively or negatively charged, are as pernicious as slogans. They bypass the discussion and deny the problems instead of tackling them head on.

We must avoid, at the outset, too restrictive a definition of culture. To stick to a very general and common sense, I would say that it consists of the set of representations, symbols and works that express the moral, intellectual and aesthetic values that guide the relationships of men with the world and the relationships between men in a collectivity. Culture codifies and transmits the beliefs of the collectivity, its conception of the world, its impression of life. It inscribes itself in behavior, at best in a lifestyle.

Defined in this way, culture cannot escape the critique of ideology as developed, in particular, by Marxism. In fact, any culture is determined not only by the state of technology and knowledge at a given time, but by all the conditions of life (forces and relations of production, social and political divisions, systems of domination, etc.) It will therefore mobilize in the first place the conceptions of the classes that own and control the means of expression and dissemination. It will celebrate the values invoked to justify and preserve the established hierarchy.

toward a one-dimensional culture

A first restriction imposes itself. No culture can be considered the simple "reflection" of the economic and social infrastructure. It develops in a sphere of activity that has its own logic — often stubborn — and contains too many elements borrowed from previous forms of existence, elements that remain tightly interwoven in the more recent representations. Witness how slowly the repercussions of new scientific and technical conditions are assimilated by the collective mentality.

Furthermore, great cultural works do not constitute a simple demarcation of the given reality, or an interpretation totally structured by the dominant ideology. The work of art is an attempt at reinterpretation, often critical. Far

from being limited to a justification of the forms of existence imposed by contemporary society, it generally denounces the suffering caused by these forms of existence: loneliness, failure, nostalgia for a life where the values proclaimed would actually be achieved. Even "the demand for happiness takes on dangerous accents in a system that brings distress, deprivation and pain to the majority" (Marcuse).

Culture is thus shaped by two opposing tendencies. One aims to justify the existing order, to shape collective life according to its standards, to disseminate beliefs, myths and an image of life that integrate the individual into the whole and ensure the survival of the system. The other, on the contrary, encourages criticism of what is in the name of what could be: in the name of the unrealized values, repressed desires, denied fulfillment and new possibilities opened up by the revolution of knowledge and means of action.

It is this contradiction that is in the process of eliminating what we have called "mass culture" and is, in the words of Marcuse, a one-dimensional culture. The products that they bring to the markets, intending them for mass consumption (films, television programs, records, "popular" novels, magazines) suppress contradiction and its critical ferment. The demand for happiness is reduced to the desire for well-being, the accomplishment called *standing*. There is no longer any question aspiring to the impossible: happiness is a matter of savings and payments.

The role of one-dimensional is to make the given reality appear *natural*, to show it capable of infinite progress. And if, most of the time, labor remains a matter of coercion and boredom, the margin of leisure offers compensation for that effort and that wear and tear: peace at home, vacation trips and machines that let us dream in our seats. To the passivity imposed by the conditions of labor is added the fascination with the flood of images that transform the news of the world into a soap opera. And each, according to their means, seeks to give to each in spectacular form the achievement of their existence.

What place remains for "working-class culture" in this magma that drowns particularities and the sense of reality, that veils the real conflicts? Material access to cultural in no way means effective appropriation. Works of critical culture may be sold as paperbacks, but they are only read by those who are prepared to read them. The same goes for television, where late artistic or intellectual broadcasts are seen only by "the elite."

In the end, it is no longer even necessary for the State to intervene to channel production (even if it does not hesitate to do so, on occasion, to eliminate a product that is insufficiently compliant.) The "cultural" industry itself ensures the promotion of entertaining and anesthetic goods that meet the needs of the dominant ideology.

the counter-currents

These observations, and more simply the gloomy prostration of sanitized imagery or “cultural” rites, can lead quite naturally to the rejection of anything that pertains to culture. But the sterilization cannot reach the desired degree. Against the homogenizing current of "mass culture" are opposed counter-currents, ceaselessly turned back, but which for some time at least resist the general mingling. Through books, films (often low budget), theatrical shows (often marginal), through cartoons and comics, they express what the euphoric ideology seeks to camouflage: that violence is not the privilege of a wicked few, but is inscribed in the whole of relations of domination and exploitation; that daily life, with its exhaustion and its illusory compensations, constantly reinforces isolation, aggression and fear of liberty.

These negative currents innervate what is now called a “counter-culture”. For a long time, this has also remained reserved for a minority. It becomes a collective phenomenon and takes a more radical orientation: a global refusal of cultural production (except for records...), a craze for raw information, a systematic preference given to the spoken word over the written word (except when it takes the form of the *parole brute*).

Against the fetishism of the product, against the passivity of the consumer, the counter-culture affirms play, improvisation, and celebration. Against isolation, it calls for encounters at the mercy of chance and wandering, community life. Against the “moral order” (work, family, country), it extols vagabondage, sexual freedom, spontaneous cosmopolitanism, respect for life and nature, non-violence. We could go on, but this is not an inventory. What I would like to make clear is that the counter-culture acts like a culture. By rejecting the values of the dominant culture, it affirms its own values, which are not only proclaimed, but embodied in the beginnings of a way of life.

The strength of the counter-culture is that it proceeds from a collective sensitivity and is realized in behavior. This is the sign of a living culture. Its weakness, on the other hand, lies in the scarcity of the works, in the absence of the coherent thought essential to overcoming the stammering and the vague humanitarian considerations. It thus easily becomes prey for confused mystics. Ecology itself becomes mystical, with quite a wave to the soul of returning to the earth always put back and tours of the world never undertaken.

We find the dispersion, haziness and incompetence of expression which also paralyze the anarchist movement. An additional point of convergence between anarchism and the counter-culture... It is still to be feared that their weaknesses are added more easily than their creative potential.

LIBERTARIAN CULTURE

The counter-culture is a potential culture. It can be, at least, — if it is not sooner or later recuperated by the dominant ideology — the breeding ground of a new culture.

One of the reasons for its fragility is the absence of a past. We can obviously consider that as an advantage and as an additional attraction. No constraining tradition, no stifling models, no knowledge to take in or respect. Invention can give itself free rein. Life rediscovers its spontaneity, invades forbidden playgrounds. But spontaneity is exhausted in repetition, thought ends when it is enclosed in a limited circle of ideas. Expression is frozen when it no longer finds form on which to base itself. So the counter-culture seeks a past, or pasts, by taking hold of fragments drawn from ancient cultures, preferably exotic (Buddhism, Hinduism) or from cultures crushed by white imperialism - (Africa, the Indians of the Americas) or else from marginal traditions (esotericism).

the anarchist pasts

Because it has a past, anarchism can more easily refocus and thereby find a power of resistance against dissolution in the great one-dimensional magma. Paradoxically, its past is virtual: it is still to be established...

More precisely, anarchism has two pasts. A "manifest" past, which is that of the established anarchist movement, with its patchiness and its narrow tradition, but also—a positive point, which will be discussed further—its non-conformist way of life. The defeats and disappointments, the constant internal struggles have left their legacies of mistrust and unavailability. Years of survival cut off from the world have prevented the irrigation of the milieu by modern ideas. The poverty of means and the waning of intellectual activity have dried up the resources of a tradition that was no longer mentioned except in hearsay to preserve the orthodoxy of reassessments and new inputs.

This sclerosing past has lost its grip after the recent development of a new libertarian milieu, which is very informal and still disparate. It owed little to the established "movement" and began to discover the past of anarchism as a social movement.

What we retained of it so far was too often legend embellished by nostalgia and self-justifications.

The renewed interest in anarchism and, more generally, the disruption of the stalinist and leninist hegemony draws new attention to the revolutionary

movements and the socialist experiments that did not lead to the "proletarian" State. From the war in Spain (finally viewed other than through military deeds) we go back to the Makhnovist movement, then to that Jurassian Federation that was the true crucible of anarchism. The centenary of the Commune has also allowed some things to be put in order.

Publications and translations multiply. New studies are published and others are in progress. Historians connected to the anarchist current take part in this work of rediscovery, with the obvious aim of identifying the original and positive aspects of the experiments that they describe, without piously leaving in the shadows what they consider to be weaknesses or errors. It would, however, be unjust to pretend that all anarchists have lacked interest in their history until recent years... Indeed, they hardly had the chance to publish their research, and that information blockade, which locked manuscripts and documents in desk drawers, was enough to stifle burgeoning careers. Even published books, like Voline's *The Unknown Revolution*, do not escape the little circle of initiates.

read, comrade

This past is still virtual: both because it is in large part still to be brought to light and because it is not yet active. It will be active from the moment that it exerts its influence on our thinking and our behavior. This implies an intermediate stage: moving from fragmentary rediscovery to the reconstruction of the whole. At the point where we are, the stages of our history which reappear are still too exclusively those of heroic periods. Publishing, even when it is somewhat marginal, does not escape the laws of the market. By force of circumstances, we publish what is most likely to sell. In the history of the Makhnovstchina or the Durruti column there is an epic, "western" side that can appeal to a large number of readers. And, a bit more seriously, the unknown aspects of the Russian Revolution or the achievements of self-management in Spain appeal to a relatively large fraction of the leftist public or simply the left. As for the exploits of the Bonnot gang or of Marius Jacob, they can boast of the suspense and the quaint elements so dear to detective novels.

We must note the thing without lamenting it too much. It is good that these books can appear and that they come to break the wall of silence (and of falsification) deliberately maintained by the Stalinist "historians." Even the history of illegalism — not to mention the exceptional personality of a Jacob — sheds light on certain nihilist tendencies of anarchism, and therefore on anarchism itself.

What is in question is the still incomplete nature of the "disinterment," first with regard to the periods chosen, but also at the level of the method of

approach. By limiting ourselves to a particular series of events, we often give up on making comparisons between it and other anarchist interventions. What is important for us is a global view of libertarian social movements, with their lines of force, their constants and their interferences. It is indeed a question of reconstruction and not partial descriptions.

I believe, moreover, that such a work can only be carried out in a truly fruitful manner by libertarian historians. I do not doubt the honesty of researchers who are not "committed." We can often even recognize in them more than honesty: a real passion for their subject. But I expect more from anarchist historians. Let them go beyond the reconstruction of the facts, to see what sort of anarchism is at work in the events they are studying, what it brings that is new or particular compared to the anarchisms that preceded it, and what identity persists beneath the variations.

I do not wish to open a debate here on objectivity in history. But I hope that the history of the anarchist movement will be for us more than "historiography", that it will really be a past questioned in the light of our present. A past that, at the limit — and this limit is inevitable — changes with our present, according to the lights and shadows that our concerns, our intuitions and our projects throw on it.

Let us go farther. The facts are nothing in themselves. They do not "speak" until they are illuminated by the meaning of a coherent whole. It is precisely through their sensibility and libertarian consciousness that a historian can establish new links between facts, give a common sense — or just a sense — to events that have thus far remained disparate and "silent". Must we specify that such an understanding has nothing to do with a manipulation of history according to the needs of a *line* to be defended or revised?

the history of ideas

The reconstructing of our past will only be complete, will even only be possible on the condition of integrating the history of ideas into the history of events. I am not thinking only of the ideas formulated by the men and groups involved in the events that we study. That goes without saying. It is also necessary to address the theories developed in a certain of works presenting themselves as libertarian or claimed as their own by libertarians. It is, quite simply, a question of making a history of anarchist philosophy.

In this regard, we find ourselves almost totally destitute. Doubtless, there are useful works on Proudhon, Stirner and Bakunin. We owe them, almost always, to authors foreign to the libertarian movement ... and in general we do not take them into account. (What attention have we shown to Gurvitch's, Ansart's or Bancal's books on Proudhon, or to Arvon's book on Stirner?)

Even more than in the domain of social history, the reconstitution must here be a reconstruction, if not simply a construction. The relations to be identified are multiple. It will be necessary to study the influences of social movements on the works, and vice versa; to situate each work among the intellectual productions of its time. Truth be told, two types of history of anarchist philosophy are possible — and necessary. The first would describe the "systems," their intellectual and sociological circumstances. The second — a more subjective and, properly speaking, a more philosophical work — would start from current thought to reread (in the sense of reinterpreting) the founding texts. Such a rereading could lead, to give one simple example, to rejecting Stirner in the name of Bakunin, or Bakunin in the name of Stirner; it could also assimilate both in the name of a single existential revolt against the System. We have to rewrite anarchism.

The interest, for us, to unearth old tomes? First of all, they are not all to be unearthed, as some are carefully arranged in publishers' stocks (Rivière's Proudhon, for example.) These old books are first of all testimonies, attempts to draw from consciousness and give form to proposals for transforming the real. That reality, we can agree, is no longer ours. Or no longer quite ours... But what certainly remains, what deserves examination and discussion, is the spirit in which the critiques and the proposals were formulated.

If there exists (at least virtually) an anarchist theory, studying its genesis and its transformations is a way of grasping it.

To deny is amount to the same thing as rejecting the history of the revolutionary movement under the pretext that only the present interests us.

There is more. Behind each book stands an individual, who fought to change the world they lived in, to find other forms of life and of relations. To condemn those individuals to oblivion or to pious dismissal, is to agree with those who sought to reduce them to silence during their lifetimes; with those who, after their deaths, have distorted their thoughts or actions in order to eliminate their influence. Regarding Proudhon, Stirner and Bakunin himself, many — among us too — settle for the considerations of Marx and his followers. Giving a fair and credible image of anarchism also means showing that anarchists have said and done something else, and that what they have said still provides us with the means to understand our world and to act in it.

a lifestyle

Through the reactivation of its past, anarchism can recover its culture. The diversified activity that this renaissance entails will in itself constitute an invigorating factor of cultural life. The aim of the operation, of course, is not to be able to bring a bookish knowledge into line with our antecedents. It is above

all a matter of knowing ourselves better, of reintegrating into our field of consciousness the values, dreams and ideas that have made anarchism a historical reality.

Libertarian culture, however, has other sources and other manifestations. An active past is a past mobilized by and for a present activity. A culture, to come back to the initial definition, only becomes reality if it permeates mentalities and behavior, if it is embodied in the lifestyle of a community. On this level, at least, libertarian culture has held up quite well. Anarchism was formed and developed in the struggle against all oppressions and all alienations. In the most diverse conditions, it has manifested consistent conduct: primacy granted to direct action, confidence in spontaneity (individual or collective), a refusal of means that contradict the aims and a desire to simultaneously change the world and life.

This consistency is not due solely to the permanence of a "revolutionary tradition." It is above all the effect of a fundamental will to liberty that produces homologous reactions in a variety of situations.

What applies to collective struggles also applies to personal existence: rejection of domination and submission, attempts at a way of life freed from taboos, independence of judgment and decision. It was logical that anarchism was the revolutionary tendency whose attention was most immediately directed to everyday life. The presence of an individualist current, skeptical of the possibilities of a future social upheaval and all the more concerned with short-term liberations, strongly contributed to orient the anarchist milieu in this direction.

The struggle against repressive sexual morality, birth control, the search for a non-authoritarian pedagogy thus inscribed anarchist values in the forms of practical life. These were not just propaganda themes; they were also more than hypotheses to be experimented with: a way of life developed, education was spontaneously carried out in daily contacts. The meeting between the libertarian culture and the new counter-culture takes place in the most natural way on this level. We find this overlap even in attempts at communitarian life (which had already encountered the same difficulties in the days of *milieux libres...*)

So the existence of a libertarian culture, with its own values, with its accumulated ideas and experiences, with its particular sensibility and way of life, does not seem to me to be contestable. I would even add that, like every culture, it has an integrative function. It imbues individuals with the convictions and aspirations of the anarchist collectivity, leads them to assimilate the means of understanding, of communication and of specific intervention, and it inserts them into the community.

There is no reason to refuse this natural and necessary process, if the culture in question expresses and puts to work these essential resources of anarchism

which are questioning, insubordination, a critical spirit and the will to personal achievement. What is really problematic is the form taken by libertarian culture: its gaps, its losses of substance, its weakening and its aging. It is precisely because it is not in a position to fulfill its function of integration that we are reduced to dispersion.

a dominated culture

One could ask if the integration process does not insidiously go beyond the purpose that I attribute to it. The insertion of a momentum of revolt in the forms of an anarchist culture could well constitute a first step, a mediation, in a process of recuperation for the benefit of (dominant) Culture.

The first point to consider — and I have already touched on this in passing — is the fact of dominated cultures. To extend its hegemony, the state system must abolish the distinctive characteristics, the non-institutionalized collective links that prevent it from having a direct hold on the “citizen”: historical communities (voluntarily or forcibly melted into the “nation”), regional languages, class consciousness. The mold of compulsory education, the control of the media, not to mention the sacrosanct military service, aim to create a normalized individual, cut off from their concrete attachments.

Libertarian culture is subject to the same flattening as the cultures of the provinces or colonized countries. The mechanism of repression operates from day to day, according to the logic of the system, without even the need for visible interventions. The gaps in official history, the silences of the news media and the closure of access to the means of dissemination do their job quite naturally. Let us add, for anarchism, that the whole apparatus of conditioning renders minds unreceptive to ideas that put freedom first. In the end, the weakening of the currents thus neutralized does the rest.

Yet another factor has contributed to the stifling of anarchist culture. As dogmatic Marxism has gained the status of dominant ideology in the revolutionary movement, it has imposed a falsified image of anarchism. It has thus come to reinforce very effectively the repression exercised by bourgeois culture.

It is now a question of reversing the proposition. If the dominant ideology must crush particular cultures in order to reduce the individual to the stage of an atomized element, cut off from any autonomous community and any divergent tradition, the reactivation of a refractory culture can be a very effective leaven of resistance. Without doubt, it will be influenced by established ways of thinking and imposed living conditions. But it will suffer them all the less to the extent that it is supported by a clearer consciousness of its difference.

social life

The return of an anarchist cultural dynamism should stimulate the counter-currents, which would feed it in return. We come back to the earlier question: is this not a participation in global cultural life, and therefore indirectly participation in the renewal of the dominant culture?

We cannot simply reduce the cultural life of a society to its dominant culture. One of the essential ideas of libertarian sociology is the opposition between the State and social life (society), the State being considered a parasitic excrescence capturing the energies of society and focusing them according to the interests of a minority.

The battle against the State cannot be limited to an action of opposition and contestation; it also demands a permanent effort to reinforce, on all planes, social spontaneity and the collective capacity for initiative and autonomous organization. (I have developed this idea at greater length in *Formes et tendances de l'anarchisme*.) The same is true for cultural activity, which springs from a collective need, a spontaneous tendency in social life. Again, we must not forget that the multiplication of state interference and the extension of ideological apparatuses intertwine the statist and the social much more closely than at the time when the first anarchist analyzes (of liberal origin) were developed.)

So it is not a question of rejecting cultural life as a whole, but of preventing as much as possible its diversion, its alienation by ideological apparatuses. The best way is still to reinforce as much as possible the counter-currents, the anti-authoritarian tendencies, by giving them means of expression and grounds of confrontation, by radicalizing them with an anarchistic consistency. If regional cultures are already perceived as a danger, a source of division and non-conformity, the existence of a revolutionary culture, born of the struggle against capitalism and the State, constitutes a permanent risk of insubordination and deviation.

FOUNDATION

The arguments for a libertarian culture are limited in scope. Their interest consists above all in defining a possible field of action, in bringing together on a more explicit basis those who feel the need for continued intellectual activity. Only a vibrant and diverse cultural life will be able to create a real force of conviction by drawing a growing number of individuals to places where “something will happen”: discussions, study days, editorial boards, etc.

points of reference

It is futile to seek to revive an intellectual activity if all its manifestations have dried up. We can coordinate, intensify, but not begin from nothing. Despite the dispersion, despite the occultation of the anarchist tradition, we can graft new contributions onto the fragments of anarchy that have remained alive.

The work of questioning and updating undertaken by the review *Noir et Rouge* is still recent, and can be continued. *Anarchisme et Non-Violence* reaches a circle of readers little marked by the old anarchist milieus and its concerns can take hold directly on the "counter-culture"; its working methods and approach to relations can be extended to other groups or publications. In *Recherches Libertaires* (I also cite my own ties...) we tried, with modest means and intermittent perseverance, to at least maintain an awareness of the shortcomings and a conviction regarding a possible renewal. *ICO* (“Informations, correspondances ouvrières”), whose references are to the socialism of the councils rather than to anarchism, remains an active meeting point where discussions and exchanges of information continue. Let us not forget *La Tour de feu*, some issues of which (“Salut à la tempête”, “Artaud”, etc.) represented the counter-culture well at a time when it was hardly mentioned. The reflection on anarchism has also continued in personal works. That of [Charles-Auguste] Bontemps, for example, who in the elaboration of his "social individualism" has always been concerned with the rigor of the foundations and the persistence of an anarchist intellectual life. Or that of Guérin, announcing — and stimulating — this current of ideas that is now rediscovering anarchism starting from Marxism.

Another notable sector of our cultural activity is the historical studies undertaken by certain of our comrades on the stages of the anarchist movement, on pedagogical experiments, etc.

Research on anarchism once again becomes an anarchist research. The CIRA (Centré international de recherches sur l'anarchisme) can become an essential link in the network of exchanges since it allows not only the circulation

of documents but also information on the works in progress and contacts between those engaged in them.

With regard to the established anarchist movement (I am speaking of its situation in France), we can consider as positive the renunciation of the illusion of a single organization whose basis of agreement is the vagueness of common principles and the flight from substantive discussions.

The formation of groups based on "ideological" and tactical unity presents at least the one advantage the we are entitled to expect from them: a clear definition of their bases and the elucidation of the tradition on which they claim to be founded. The need for clarification seems to be recognized, since there was talk some time ago about organization-to-organization dialogue. It remains to be seen under what conditions it will be done, and whether the absence of a sufficiently developed language will not cloud the confrontation.

In the end, within the limits that I have already noted, we can count on the contagion of the "counter-culture". The clarification that is taking place in the movement of ideas that emerged from May 68 may become another component of our cultural life, insofar as spontaneist agitation and its systematic anti-intellectualism are beginning to give way to the demand for theoretical reflection and more in-depth information on the currents that have come together in leftism.

This panorama will appear very optimistic after the admission of bankruptcy in my first chapter. It is, in part, a matter of perspective. Yes, there were living cells that endured in the atrophied tissue of anarchism. The irrigation is now better, and new cells have come to graft themselves on what remains. But we still haven't found the forms (theoretical structures, communication networks) that would allow us to unify and assimilate the disparate material of the anarchist revival.

the anarchist tradition

This is why I insisted so much on the need to first identify the forms produced by anarchism in its genesis and its evolution. To take up against a word I used despite an apparent contradiction, it is about reconnecting with the anarchist tradition. If a tradition is sclerotic, it is because the community that claims it is sclerotic.

A living community, in permanent evolution, has an active tradition (in the same sense in which I spoke of an active past.) If we content ourselves with bringing to light fragments of our past, we will end up at best creating a mosaic of information, a fragmented knowledge. A tradition, on the contrary, retains and nourishes everything that lets itself melt into its organic unity.

However, we have not escaped the paradox. Tradition implies transmission, continuity, available funds. While we have yet to invent our tradition... A tradition is always in the process of transformation. Some of its elements are falling into disuse, others are unearthed and reactivated. Links are made which were not given at the start. Connections are established between different stories. Stirner is introduced into the anarchist current by his posterity. Kropotkin places Fourier at the source of libertarian socialism, and as a function of Fourier's current "return" we can expect an imminent injection of his ideas into modern anarchism. These processes of appropriation can also carry much further in time: Etienne de la Boétie, Epicurus, Lao-Tzu... A living tradition is a conquering tradition.

The reestablishment of certain connections prompts us to reconsider some renunciations. The libertarian communist groups are tempted to assert that they owe Proudhon nothing. No doubt they are far from the People's Bank. But libertarian sociology is the essential work of Proudhon and we all remain dependent on his hypotheses and analyzes. Rather than concentrating on some of his utopian constructions, we should re-examine — and reuse — his methods of analysis, his dialectics. Let us not forget either that the theory and practice of self-management have solid roots in Proudhon. Not to mention his influence on Bakunin, on the anti-authoritarian current of the First International (even if the “collectivists” had to fight “proudhonian” reformists there.) Likewise, non-violent anarchists deny Tolstoy and more readily attach themselves to Gandhi,... who himself owes much to Tolstoy,... who himself was marked by Proudhon.

This is not a genealogy undertaken for fun. The interest of the thing is to discover what is implicit in our positions and what are the lines of cohesion. The search for unity comes through the search for foundations. But this is still only one aspect of the real foundational work, which for us takes place in the present. The anarchist past is not lacking in disparity or inconsistency. Our reading of the past will therefore also depend on the consistency that we have introduced into our current ideas, these two structuring efforts constantly sending us from one to the other.

And as soon as we tackle the shaping of our ideas for the present, we find ourselves confronted with the stream of modern intellectual life.

communication networks

We would again be the losers if the “rereading” was done to the detriment of a “reading” of the present: a theoretical interpretation of the new forms of alienation and of the fight against alienation, a confrontation with the theoretical research that is developing around us. The libertarian movement will be animated by an effective cultural life when all these processes are intimately

linked, when we can approach the intellectual life of the moment with the knowledge originally acquired by our tradition and re-examine our past with both acquired knowledge and current experiences.

We will arrive at this degree of "mobilization" in stages (if we arrive there at all...), through a collective work that will require great diversification. So there is a new risk of dispersal. We could only remedy this by increasing the overlaps, by forming teams based on common interests, on synergies or interactions. Here again, we will be hampered by our small number and our geographical dispersion.

The first condition, and the most stimulating, will be to multiply the number of encounters, using all the means of communication at our disposal (including the means of transportation...). Periodicals will be needed so that everyone can be kept abreast of other research, and so that all of this output can be used and discussed. At a more spontaneous level, we can envision networks of correspondence (relayed if necessary by newsletters) that would announce projects, provide information on the research and maintain the more informal discussion.

Above all, it will be necessary to create meeting places and times, where contacts would be established beyond the limits of organizations or particular sectors of intervention. I do not see these meetings primarily as "seminars" or "colloquia" (which I do not exclude, far from it), but as crossroads where the exchange of ideas would take place as current events (significant events or actions taken) dictate.

The interest of these "cultural centers" would be to be independent of "organizations", whose exclusivity and rivalries are not very conducive to unprejudiced encounters.

So much the better if each group hosts its own intellectual activity. But to set up cultural networks, it is much better to start from personal relationships and affinities, communities of interest or relations that certain groups maintain between themselves according to the needs of short-term actions. Nothing would, of course, prevent the members of an organization from participating in these contacts.

One could object that it is, once again, to remain informal. The forms — when there is a need for forms — would be determined by the tasks pursued: debates to be prepared, journals to be published, editing, etc. And, in any case, it is a question of allowing precisely those forms (theoretical structures, language, cultural ramifications) to emerge that could provide a *raison d'être* and some transparency to the formalization of relations.

Here I would like to leave the field of hypotheses and proposals, in order to jump into that of utopia (or even the science fiction dear to many of us.) These networks could give themselves a center, or centers (let us remain federalists),

points of interference and passage, places for permanent meetings. Friendly bookstores are already playing this role. More is needed: access not only to recent books but also to older or rarer documents with reduced print runs. And above all the possibility of working on site, alone or with others, of living for a while at the “center”, of meeting people there. Scattered teams would meet there, meet other teams, take and give the "news". Let us add — why skimp? — means of publishing, and one more step will lead us to a community built around an activity of publishing and printing (some American communities live on the publication of a newspaper.)

Finally, community or not, we would have there a nerve center for the libertarian movement, at once memory and factor of invention, laboratory and good hostel, in short, to return to science fiction, a “powerhouse.” A Foundation.

OVERTURE

The "program" that I have just outlined is the result of great optimism. I will invoke in favor of optimism the current extension of an anti-authoritarian movement in all aspects of life and I will recall the historical precedents. The anarchist movement has already experienced periods of intellectual turmoil, which indicates that it is not congenitally insane.

That said, the proposed program is tainted with a primary weakness: it is the work of a single individual. This is common in anarchist milieu, but that is no reason to put up with it. From my point of view, like that of *Anarchisme et Non-violence*, these notes are therefore intended first of all for the discussion of the reasons and the modalities of a cultural activity. From there, we will see if a "common program" is possible, not in the form of a manifesto in x points, but as a coordination of actions already initiated or at least planned.

To prevent this debate (and the expectation of debate is another proof of optimism) from starting with misunderstandings, I would like to put some of my positions in perspective. The negative and dissolving tendencies of anarchy prevail by force of circumstances over its positive and creative tendencies. To really bring into play the dialectic between one and the other, it seems necessary to me to reinforce the latter, and I have oriented my remarks in this direction. This does not mean that I wish to eliminate the negative.

The search for unity. — I do not believe that a re-reading of anarchism (as a social movement, as an intellectual tradition) can lead to a single theory. An anarchist "system" is unthinkable, but we can at least consider a systematization, always open to questioning and new contributions. It would already be a big step forward if we found face to face — with all the contradictions and interferences that entails — with well-structured and well-informed theories.

A thought centered on the idea of freedom ("it is the emptiness of the hub that makes the wheel turn" said Lao-Tzu) is inevitably led to plurality, because it cannot base its orthodoxy on any authoritarian body, even of a "scientific" nature, that would distinguish between the straight line and heresies. But we can interrogate each theory regarding its consistency and the value of its information.

Theorization and culture. — We have such a delay to make up for that shaping one or more theories will necessarily be a long-term project. It is the theorization that is to be immediate. It has as a condition a plural intellectual activity that must be able to inscribe itself in a diversified cultural life. I have particularly mentioned the "founders" here, but cultural life implies the circulation of much more varied texts: works relating to testimony or rage, imagination or the

lampoon. Déjacque, Darien and Coeurderoy will have their say. Biographies, memoirs, books filled with souvenirs maintain the traces of the “lived tradition.” The very multiplicity of small, ephemeral publications is not a cause of weakness and loss if there exists a current of clarification and unification that can serve as a relay and a stimulus.

Finally, there has been a lot of talk in these notes about work, effort, elaboration, etc. It is true that there is a lot to do, but we will do it all the better if we do not forget the pleasure of encounters and discoveries, the taste for exploration and experiment, curiosity and receptiveness. A cultural life is largely made up of those things.

“External” ideas. — The “reinvention” of an original tradition in no way means a return to a vacuum. We recognize a spontaneous anarchy on the plane of action: regardless of any anarchist label or any filiation, certain interventions in social movements or in daily life manifest the logic of a libertarian struggle. It is time to recognize that the same is true of thought and cultural activity. We have no more monopoly on libertarian expression than on libertarian action, even if it is up to us to develop to the end the anarchist logic of certain attitudes or certain ideas.

Particularly incandescent "fragments of anarchy" have been emitted by the surrealists, and quite recently by the situationists. After the war, existentialism released a current of ideas that had clear libertarian components. The anarchists have gone right past surrealism as if nothing had happened. (A regular collaboration of the surrealist group with the *Libertaire* group began in the early fifties ... but the newspaper was already in the hands of "revisionists.") Existentialism has been no better understood — and even the sponsorship that Stirner could give it has been of no consequence.

Situationist ideas have had a more direct impact, as they have had on the whole of the authoritarian movement (even if the mark often remains superficial); but as regards the official spheres of the anarchist “movement”, they above all triggered a panicked reaction and helped to ripen one of the periodic schisms of the F. A. (1967).

I am sticking here to clearly marked cross-currents, in order to go quickly. Each group, each individual, according to their own coordinates, can be led to look for their references outside of the tradition. No limit, except that of internal cohesion, can be opposed to the absorption, by an anarchist theory, of substances and radiations useful for its growth and vitality.

Order and progress. — It is above all from the anti-authoritarian movement of recent years that anarchism will draw its energies for the time being. Such a process of assimilation calls in return for questioning. But anarchism carries within itself the impetus for its own questioning. Its negative and dissolving tendencies are unlikely to lose their vigor with cultural revival. Contestation, the will to rupture, the temptation of particularism and fragmentation, the rejection

of everything given and the passionate impulses are inseparable from anarchism. No tradition, however flexible and evolving, can avoid questioning, least of all in an anarchist environment. The drying up of cultural life, and not its demand for form and continuity, leads to the sclerosis of tradition. The effort of construction and unification does not suppress negativity; on the contrary, it directs the destructive tendencies towards their true aim: the "old world", its ideology and its apparatuses of domination.

The anarchist question — since we must speak about it once again in closing — awaits a practical answer. Prove movement by walking. Reappropriation and assimilation only take on their meaning and effectiveness in a new production: the development of a language through precise analyses and experiments in communication, the extension, in our writings, of writings passed down or recognized.

I list here two particular steps, because they can be undertaken immediately, with all of the incomplete, approximate and provisional character that our situation will lend to them (as evidenced by this text..) The more-or-less groping and erratic search for a new kind of life also continues its course, with a first effort (part of the "underground" press) to achieve expression.

This attempt at communication, which is itself in search of antecedents, should naturally converge with that which derives from the written word.

We can hardly say more. I have tried to indicate some necessary steps, some starting points and some potentialities. The concrete forms of our cultural life will take shape along the way, each stage being able to open up, for the stage to come, possibilities that were unforeseen until then.