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Akratic contribution to a Christian confrontation. Slightly modified lecture given in the Catholic Franciscan community in Riehen near Basel

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Christianity, Church and Anarchism

Heiner Koechlin

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Dear attendees, I would like to thank you for your kind invitation. At the same time, I would like to express the hope that your confrontation with anarchism will not be entirely hostile.

There was an irreconcilable contradiction and bitter hostility between the historical and ecclesiastical forms of religion, and especially between Catholicism on the one hand and historical anarchism on the other.

On the other hand, it seems to me that of all the ideologies of the 19th century, anarchism is closest to the message of Jesus, much closer in any case than Marxism, which, paradoxically, many Christians who want to be progressive are turning to today. Some Christians, as well as quite a few anarchists, will disagree with me. Yet the German anarchist Gustav Landauer was able to write the following sentences in his ”Call for Socialism”: ”The Marxist is the Philistine, and the Philistine knows nothing more important, nothing more magnificent, nothing more sacred to him than technology and its progress. Place a Philistine before Jesus, who in his wealth, in the abundance of his inexhaustible form, as well as what

he means for the spirit and life, is also a tremendous socialist; place a Philistine before the living Jesus on the cross and before a machine for moving people and things; if he is honest and not a hypocrite of education, he will find the crucified human child a dead and superfluous figure and run after the machine."

Couldn't these sentences be applied just as well to certain Christians of our day who want to be progressive?

Where, we ask, is the difference and where is the point of contact between Christianity and anarchism? The difference is obvious.

It speaks from the anti-religious attitude of anarchist theory and propaganda for more than a century. A forerunner of anarchism emerged as early as the 17th century in the figure of a French country priest, the cure Jean Meslier. He worked as a humane pastor in a poor rural community in Champagne. He did his duty as a priest throughout his life. He read masses, heard confessions, baptized and administered the last rites. He shared his meager income with those under his protection. This outwardly orthodox man left a will in which he denied and condemned everything he had been and done in his life. Not only did he criticize the egoism and abuse of power of the priesthood, he also rejected the church and its hierarchy as such. But that was not all. He denied the existence of God and declared it to be an invention whose sole purpose was to sanction and stabilize the injustices that prevailed in the world. He also rejected the state as the secular equivalent of spiritual power, which upholds it by force of arms and is in turn morally supported by it.

Bakunin's "God and the State" are anticipated in this criticism. Meslier's idea of a just social order was that of a union of communities living together in a community of property and obeying only the laws of nature.

But what led this fanatic of truth to spend his life pretending? The question has never been asked like this before. The circumstances of the time, which made it particularly difficult for a Chris-

World War and its catastrophic side effects, in contrast to the authoritarian-socialist utopias. After Auschwitz, we can still admire the often heroic but, from our point of view, naive optimism of our ancestors, and be fascinated by it, but we can no longer take it seriously in our time.

But to what extent can one say that anarchism has survived this perhaps most serious crisis in world history? Freedom is a value that cannot leapfrog the social without becoming a lifeless, abstract formula, but which transcends the social. For purely naturalistic thinking, freedom is something that does not exist, a mere subjective illusion. Its reality presupposes a spiritual dimension from which it can act on the realities of the social dimension. We have come closer to this truth, of which historical anarchism was only weakly or not at all aware. This gives us reason for hope, not utopian but realistic.

So our confrontation, it seems to me, results in the following, which could give Christians and anarchists food for thought: despite all historical hostility, correctly understood anarchism has in common with Christianity that it never ends and, however much it is able to achieve in the world, will always remain in confrontation with the world. Perhaps anarchism and Christianity also have in common that, due to too frequent misuse, their names can no longer express what they originally meant and that new ones should therefore be invented.

True continuity does not consist in repeating dead letters. Where are the real successors of yesterday's anarchists? It is questionable whether it is the anarchists of today. They are certainly not at the tail of the new left, nor are they its most extreme wing.

They are not there where there is a struggle for power, but wherever belief in freedom, coupled with the will to shape society, manifests itself in creative action.

In many respects the kibbutz movement resembles the great experiment of libertarian socialism in Spain from 1936 to 1939. Both originate from the same ideological basis. There was also an external connection through the Jewish Palestinians who fought on the side of the Spanish Republic in the civil war.

However, this was not the avant-garde work of an elite, but of a broad mass of farmers and workers rooted in traditional customs. After the landowners and factory owners fled and the state collapsed, they took collective ownership of land and businesses and organized production and distribution through community organizations, works councils, unions and cooperatives. Small farmers, craftsmen and small industries also voluntarily joined this socialization from the bottom up. Since this was a spontaneous, not centrally controlled movement, the form of organization, production and distribution varied from place to place and from profession to profession.

The flat lands were closest to the anarchist ideal. Here there were farm collectives who knew neither forced labour nor wages, and often no money at all. Everyone worked according to their own understanding of the needs of the day and took what they needed from the common storehouse for the modest living of their family. In many places, food was only stored in the church because it was particularly cool there. But perhaps this type of profanation can also be seen as having a symbolic meaning.

After the libertarian Spanish revolution had been destroyed by a combined party communist-fascist reaction, the outbreak of the Second World War and with it the collapse of all hopes of an immediate realisation of liberal-socialist ideals was inevitable.

What can we still do with anarchist theory today? I have suggested that anarchism differs from the utopias of the 19th century in that it places freedom at the centre and pushes social projects and models to the periphery as tools for experimentation.

This seems to be one of the reasons why anarchism, under whatever name, was able to survive the great crisis of the Second

tian and clergyman to openly confess a heretical opinion, do not seem to me to be sufficient to explain Meslier's attitude. Giving up his poor position as a country pastor would certainly not have meant any special sacrifice. I think it is likely that he was unable to abandon his charges, whom he could only help within traditional norms.

One is tempted to think of Miguel de Unamuno's story of the unbelieving priest San Manuel Bueno Martir and indirectly of his book entitled "The Agony of Christianity". Two centuries later, Pierre Joseph Proudhon described God as evil in one of his books. And a little later, the Russian Michael Bakunin declared war on both religious and secular authority in his work "God and the State", saying that man who wants to free himself must deny God because God denies his freedom. God appears here as the metaphysical expression of all violence, oppression and exploitation on this earth.

The guiding principles of the anti-authoritarian wing of the First International were in this sense: "Atheism, federalism, collectivism". Later, the temperamental and aggressive German anarchist John Most with his pamphlet "The Plague of God" and his French comrade Sebastien Faure with his "12 Proofs of the Non-Existence of God" moved on the same ground.

Faure's "proof" is not a philosophical masterpiece, but it is written from a genuinely human feeling, just like the book by the same author, which bears the telling title "la douleur universelle". The basic tone is the conviction that, given the suffering of the majority of humanity, there can be no world ruler worthy of worship.

In Spain, the classic land of mystics and anarchists, philosophical materialism was and is often championed by the latter with mystical fervor. They are reminiscent of the Russian nihilist who is said to have said: "There is only force and matter, so love your neighbour as yourself." Anti-clericalism is primary here and atheism secondary. Anti-clericalism led to atheism, not the other way round, atheism to anti-clericalism.

Thus anarchist atheism differs from other atheisms in that it does not place the emphasis on theoretical rejection of the idea of God, but on combating its authoritarian social function. God is here the great tyrant, the all-powerful ruler of heaven and earth, who delegates his power to earthly rulers and privileged people who see that this is quite simply a reversal of the idea of "government by the grace of God", an idea that was inseparable from the Church for centuries and that lives on today hidden in a bourgeois or proletarian shell. Just as it has been said, with some justification, that world history is a history of class struggles, it can be said, from another perspective, that it is a history of misunderstandings.

The historical misunderstanding in this case is that the practical materialism of the theoretical idealists led to the theoretical materialism of the practical idealists. In apparent contradiction to what has been said, it is striking that a relatively large number of important anarchists came from a decidedly religious background. The brothers Elie and Elisee Reclus (the first names are telling) grew up in a Huguenot parsonage and spent part of their youth in a German pietist communal settlement. Proudhon's first writing dealt with a biblical theme, namely the sociological significance of Sunday observance. In a later letter he once described himself as a student of Blaise Pascal. The basic mood of the young Bakunin was a mystical one. Gustav Landauer, the martyr of the Bavarian Soviet Republic, was fundamentally religious and can be seen in his publication of the German writings of Meister Eckhart. From him there is a direct path to Martin Buber's transcendental existential philosophy, which received significant impulses from anarchism in its social aspect. In general, Judaism was an indispensable element in the modern anarchist movement. This is clearly evident in Rudolf Rocker's memoirs. As a refugee in East London, this important German anarchist found contact with the Jewish workers' movement, the majority of whom were anarchists. He learned Yiddish and edited the anarchist newspaper "Der Arbeiterfreund" for many years, which was written in this language. These Jews, who

is the opinion that Caesar in all his historical forms is not the representation of the spirit but of the unspirit, regardless of whether he will ever be able to disappear completely from the earth.

This means a fundamentally different relationship to nature than that inaugurated by capitalism, but also by Marxism. While Marxism sees the historical progress of mankind essentially in the overcoming of nature by technology, anarchism wants the spiritualization of nature by human reason.

In Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto, the concentration of people in industrial cities is praised as a progressive act of the bourgeoisie. In its belief in industrial progress, Marxism was in agreement with the optimism of the rising bourgeoisie.

The anarchists, with the exception of Leo Tolstoy, did not reject technological progress either, but they did not want it at any price. Rather, they subordinated it to a more general human interest, as Thomas More and the later utopians did. An anarchist, in the manner of humanizing salon Bolsheviks, will never accept mass deportations and forced labor camps for the sake of technological progress. Anarchist humanism also includes the protection of man's natural environment.

In his work on agriculture, crafts and industry, Kropotkin called for the decentralization of industry and its organic integration into the all-supporting agriculture. Landauer saw that inorganic industrialism had already progressed so far that it could only be countered with a counteraction driven by a conscious desire for culture. He suggested the establishment of settlements combining agriculture, industry and intellectual activity, not to realize utopias, but to make the beginning of a new social and intellectual development. This work was halted in its infancy following the outbreak of the First World War. However, it found expression in Palestine, where the Zionist settlers took up the idea. If there is anything anarchist today, not in name but in spirit, it is the kibbutz movement, which, hopefully not only for Israel but for the world, has not yet spoken its last word.

Society consists of free associations. It can be locally limited or expand across countries and continents through multiple associations of associations. It can encompass all of life or just certain functions and sectors. It can have a scientific, philosophical or religious character. It is always colorful, diverse, pluralistic, never centralized or hierarchical. Society existed before the state existed. It exists when states collapse. It exists alongside the state, with the state, against the state. In particularly strictly centralized and despotically governed states such as Spain or Russia, there has been an intense social life at the same time, which has come to the surface more or less strongly in history, has rebelled against the state at regular intervals, has been suppressed by it but has never been completely destroyed. Since the Middle Ages, the Spanish have used the descriptive term ”vecindad” for society, i.e. neighborhood.

”Between Society and State” is the title of a text by Martin Buber. Contrary to Bertrand Russell’s opinion that the principle of all society is power, Martin Buber believes that only the state is subject to the principle of power, not what he and his friend Gustav Landauer call society. Here he sees the opportunity for an incarnation of spirit and freedom.

This distinction is central to anarchism and not the naive belief that power and violence would disappear completely from the world after the suppression of the state. To the extent that the anarchist believes in the total disappearance of the human drive for power as a result of social upheaval, he is just as much a utopian as the Marxist, who believes that the state will die out after a proletarian seizure of power.

But the setting of values is essential. An anarchist is someone who believes in a spirit incarnated in power and therefore reveres Julius Caesar and Napoleon as historical greats. An anarchist is someone who opposes spirit and power. The biblical saying ”Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s” has often been interpreted by Christians and non-Christians to mean that Caesar is the representation of God on earth. Anarchist, on the other hand,

mostly immigrated from Eastern Europe, formed the most economically miserable section of the English proletariat. They had turned their backs on the religion of their fathers. Yet it was precisely this religious tradition that enabled them to make a final commitment to their ideal of justice on this earth.

The Russian-American anarchist Alexander Berkman reports the following dream vision in his prison memoirs: As a child, he saw himself praying fervently for the coming of the Messiah in the Hasidic prayer house. I think it is appropriate to think of Simone Weil here. This unique and idiosyncratic personality cannot be categorized, not even as an anarchist. But her life and thinking are more anarchic than that of many supporters of any anarchist system. Coming from a wealthy Jewish family, she decided, when she was already a university professor, to work as an anonymous laborer in a factory in order to share the life of the proletariat. She describes her bitter experiences movingly in notes, diaries and letters, which were later published under the title ”la question ouvriere”. Simone Weil’s criticism goes deeper than anything that socialists have written about the capitalist system. She does not stop at listing material and economic disadvantages, but above all castigates the moral humiliation to which the workers are subjected by their superiors from morning to night. She sees the root of the evil in the fact that the industrial worker can only oversee a minimal sector of the production process and therefore only makes stupid hand movements without really knowing what he is doing. This, she believes, condemns him not only to material impotence, but also to psychological inferiority. This type of social criticism seems to me to be more relevant than ever today, when only the material situation of the working class has improved, but despite all the economic progress that the workers’ movement has made, it has not yet taken note of this aspect of the social question, or has only taken it very superficially. Simone Weil’s articles quickly made her popular with the French working class. As a supporter of revolutionary syndicalism, she went to Spain in the summer of

1936. On the Aragonese civil war front, she was venerated as a saint by the anarchist militias who fought under the leadership of Buenaventura Durruti.

The Second World War, which she spent first in France and then in the service of the resistance movement in London, brought Simone Weil's spiritual change. She immersed herself in oriental, classical and Christian mysticism. The thoughts she wrote down during this last period of her life place her alongside the great mystics of the past. Simone Weil took the opposite path. The Reclus brothers, Bakunin, Domela Niuwenhuis and others started from religious experience and arrived at the social revolution. Simone Weil's starting point was the social revolution. From there she went on to the religious search for truth. The difference, however, is that the former, as revolutionaries, rejected their religious starting point, while Simone Weil, as a mystic, never lost sight of her social criticism, not only held on to it, but deepened and radicalized it spiritually.

On our path we have now reached the most consistent and pure anarchist, Leo Tolstoy, for whom anarchism and Christianity were not only not opposites, but one and the same. Tolstoy drew his social teaching directly from the Gospel. "He who has two coats, let him give one to him who has none" ... "But I say to you, do not resist evil; but if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if someone appeals to the judge against you and wants to take away your coat, let him have your cloak also."

For him, the whole of Christianity consists in such statements. This is where wealth and capital belong, not courts, police, army, and just as little revolutionary uprisings, not even political and social organization. Tolstoy expected nothing from politics, whatever its program. He expected everything from the moral knowledge of the individual in the sense of the evangelical precepts. From this he drew the ultimate conclusions.

He was not concerned with the contradiction between the omnipotence of God and the freedom of man, or between the

founding of states is a history of internal and external power struggles, of bloodshed and terror. Our national borders are not signs of natural geographical or linguistic divisions, but owe their existence to the military balance of power between dynasties or other power groups. That is why the state is not a factor of human unification, but of domination, arbitrariness and fragmentation. We can observe how states are created today in Africa and Asia, where we are witnessing almost the same bloody struggle for territorial control that was at the beginning of our state system.

I must refer here again to Simone Weil, who points out with a clarity that I have not encountered elsewhere the contradiction that exists between our state thinking on the one hand and our Christian consciousness on the other.

So it seems quite natural to us to praise Christian charity to our children as the highest thing and at the same time to teach them to admire the greatness of conquerors and state founders such as Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Charlemagne, Napoleon and others. How many human lives, how many intellectually superior cultures have been trampled under the rough boots of these successful people! How much irreparable damage has been done to humanity as a result. In her cutting criticism of false greatness, Simone Weil does not even stop at her own Mosaic tradition. She does not accept the idea that the conquest of Jericho and the destruction of Canaan culture were acts intended by God, nor does she accept the so-called historical merit of the destruction of Celtic culture by the Roman soldiers.

Simone Weil wrote all this shortly before the defeat of National Socialism. In her eyes, all those who admired false greatness in any way are jointly responsible for the Third Reich and none of them will have the moral right to condemn Hitler to death after his fall. Gustav Landauer wrote analogously: "Where there is spirit, there is society; where there is spiritlessness, there is the state. The state is the surrogate of the spirit."

communalism, which seeks to place all economic powers in the hands of autonomous communities, Bakunin's collectivism, which later developed into syndicalism, and the anarcho-communism of Kropotkin and Malatesta.

The very fact of this diversity shows that no system can be the be-all and end-all of anarchism. Above all, there is freedom, without which even the best system cannot function as the anarchist wants it to. Most anarchists wanted some kind of socialism because, unlike bourgeois liberals, they could not imagine freedom without a social structure that supported justice, but at the same time they believed that any socialism would be the opposite if it disregarded individual freedom. The utopian believes in his system, which he considers to be the guarantor of the happiness of a future humanity. He therefore does not shy away from using any means of power to implement it. The anarchist believes only in freedom. He designs systems as facultative supports of freedom to be experimented with. He must be prepared to revise them or even withdraw them if they prove to be an obstacle to the great, overarching goal of freedom. He does not want the power to implement a system, but he wants the abolition of power. This attitude was often his political weakness and condemned him to failure. But it is his intellectual strength, which we will return to.

In Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto of 1848, the Jacobin model called for the centralization of political and economic power in the hands of a state ruled dictatorially by a revolutionary party. The anti-authoritarians or anarchists, on the other hand, advocated the dissolution of the state into a union of autonomous, federated communities and regions. In their eyes, the state was not a representative of the human will to form a community, but the expression of the rule of people over people. The state did not come into being through a social contract, as Rousseau believed, but through the conquest, subjugation and exploitation of the weaker by the stronger. The German sociologist Franz Oppenheimer has convincingly presented this fact in his book on the state. The history of the

all-goodness of God and the misery of this world, which was felt with particular intensity by the atheist anarchists. Anti-Gnosis, he believed, man did not need to know such inscrutable things as the nature of God. To ask about them was to distract from the only essential thing.

Another Russian was not satisfied with this resignation, but, following Dostoyevsky, set about solving this problem speculatively. I mean Nikolai Berdiaev, a religious philosopher who, even though he did not call himself that, is intellectually an anarchist. He hated the almighty dictator-god just as much as his compatriot Bakunin. This historically transmitted concept of God, Berdiaev believed, was not really transcendent, but a sociomorphic image of the human drive for power and the earthly institutions created by it. He considered the idea of eternal punishment in hell to be the most horrific invention of human-sadistic imagination. He said of his, the actually transcendent God, that he was nothing but freedom in antithesis to created nature and had less power than any policeman. In this view, anarchist antitheism would be a fight for God.

You see that anarchism cannot be reduced to a unified philosophical denominator, unlike Marxism, for example. There is no such thing as anarchist philosophy, although anarchists have always believed this. Yet a uniformity of attitude runs through all philosophical explanations. This attitude was already prefigured in certain medieval heretical movements or mystical currents that moved on the fringes of Orthodoxy, most clearly, it seems to me, in the teachings of Joachim of Floris. Joachim, who founded the monastery of Floris in southern Italy in the 12th century, preached to his monks a doctrine that was later called the doctrine of the three Gospels or the eternal Gospel. The first Gospel, that of the Father, was the Law of Moses, which had to be followed under threat of severe punishment. Christ the Son brought the second Gospel, which softened the cold severity of the law through the grace of the Word. But man still remained bound to Word and Scripture. Real

liberation was only to be brought by the third Gospel, the dawn of which the monk announced. It is the gospel of the spirit in which the Holy Spirit - announced and prepared by the first gospels that preceded it - manifests itself as a free creative force in every individual. The mission of the third man is to create a new world in the freedom that is revealed in him.

This Christian vision seems to me to be the actual starting point of anarchist attitudes, regardless of which philosophical aspect it might be viewed from.

As late as the 16th century, it found a Christian embodiment in Peter Cheliki, the Moravian Tolstoy and intellectual opponent of Martin Luther. In the 18th century, it retreated to the ground of rationalistic criticism. In the 19th century, it donned the garb of positive science.

Peter Kropotkin believed that he knew how to base his ideal on scientifically justifiable facts. Following on from Darwin's epoch-making book on the origin of man, he wrote "Mutual Aid in the Animal and Human Worlds".

Based on countless observations of nature and studies of historical sources, from the symbioses of the lower plant and animal world to the guilds and federations of medieval townspeople and farmers to modern self-help and life-saving societies, he sought to prove that mutual help is the prerequisite without which no life, and certainly not its higher development, is conceivable.

This book is far less well known than Marx's Capital, according to its name. But it was certainly read far more than that. Beyond anarchism, it contributed more than any other to the formation of socialist thought. It is without doubt a genuine scientific study. It does not make a single claim that is not based on observed facts. After official science had long ridiculed and ignored Kropotkin as a dreamer and utopian, ethnologists and sociologists today come to strikingly similar conclusions to him. But this is more than just science. Because what Kropotkin saw only ever exists as a possibility. Others have said: "Man is a wolf to man" and they were right.

everyone who throws bombs, whether an Arab nationalist or an Irish Catholic, as an ally. They are indiscriminate in their methods. They are far removed from those Russian revolts who would rather have given up on an assassination attempt on the Grand Duke, which they had planned with many victims and dangers, than sacrifice his wife and children. (See Boris Savinkow's memoirs and Albert Camus, Les justes.)

But can one refrain from using violence in every situation? One can and must refrain from using violence as long as one has not gone to the extreme limit in the use of peaceful means. But there are borderline situations in which the decision to use or not to use violence is made on a level that is no longer affected by the rational criteria of the normal state. Many convinced pacifists found themselves in such a situation when they joined the Allied armies in the face of the threat posed by Hitler. Such a situation exists today in Israel, where an entire people is threatened with physical annihilation. This is not a rationally definable category, so it is not possible to objectively state when such a situation exists and when it does not. Time and again, the tragic case arises in which such a borderline situation, where in reality it no longer exists or never existed, is used as a pretext for the use of violence. The result is that the violence has an effect that no longer has anything to do with the aim that motivated it. Anarchism is also involved in this problem.

Shortly after the end of the war, a small Swiss publishing house published a small book entitled "Anarchism and the Present", which received little attention at the time. Peter Heintz, its author, contrary to a popular opinion that sees anarchism as an extremely utopian idea, sees the relationship between anarchism and the present in that it is a radical rejection of the utopian thinking of the 19th century. He sees any ideology that seeks to reform society by means of a unified organizational system as utopian. Anarchism, on the other hand, produced not just one system, but a whole series. I mention the idea of mutual exchange with the help of a people's bank, as developed by Proudhon,

violence to break shackles, but not to forge new ones. They no longer saw what Proudhon had seen: that violence cannot simply be stopped once its chains have been broken, and that liberating violence has in its turn turned into enslaving violence throughout history.

Albert Camus has recently distinguished between revolt and revolution. According to this usage, the revolutionary anarchists were revoltes, but not revolutionaries. The individual terrorists of the years 1880-1890 were also revoltes. They were an anarchist minority who recommended the so-called "propaganda of the deed" to achieve their goal. By this they understood, among other things, the execution of acts of terror against exponents of the ruling system.

Such terror kept kings, ministers and police forces of Europe in fear and terror for a relatively short period. Such a situation could arise at a time when the bourgeoisie was at the height of its impertinence and the mass of the proletariat was at the lowest point of its misery.

It would be wrong to conclude from this episode that anarchism was particularly violent. There have been terrorists among Catholics, Protestants, democrats, royalists and nationalists. There is neither a religion nor a political ideology whose history has not been burdened by a more or less terrorist phase.

Today people are again talking about anarchist terrorists, and by this they mean, for example, the Baader-Meinhoff group, whose members call themselves Marxists. Are they Marxists? The answer to this question can be left to the Marxists.

"The anarchists practice terror, so wherever bombs explode, anarchists are at work." This misunderstanding, cultivated by the guardians of order, has recently also been shared by those who are, for some reason, dissatisfied with the existing order. So today groups of young people are emerging who call themselves anarchists, and by that they mean nothing but terror. One way they prove that they are not really anarchists is that they see

When the anarchist replies to this: "Man is a friend to man", he is actually saying: "Man can and should be a friend to man".

This is a distinctly Christian book, not in a dogmatic sense, but in an ethical sense.

The philosophical naivety with which the Russian identifies the anarchist ideal and scientific knowledge was not shared by all of his anarchist contemporaries. The Italian Errico Malatesta polemicized against his view in the name of the moral will, as did Gustav Landauer with the radical statement: "Sociology is not a science, and even if it were, revolution would be excluded from a scientific approach." I quote the following definition of socialism from another of Landauer's works: "Socialism is a will of united people to create something new for the sake of an ideal." The statement "Socialism is possible at all times if people want it" is aimed directly against Marxist historicism.

In one of his crime novels, the Catholic writer K.G. Chesterton has his master detective Father Brown unmask a thief disguised as a priest. Father Brown sees through the false priest the moment he makes a dismissive remark about reason. The author believes that a real priest would never speak against reason. Likewise, a false anarchist unmasks himself the moment he speaks against morality. Anarchism was and is a decidedly moral movement.

It is always against existing morality, but never in the name of immorality or amorality, but always in the name of a more humane, honest and moral morality. It rejects existing morality, not because it is moral, but because it is hypocrisy and lies, and therefore immoral.

In Spain, this attitude often went as far as Puritanism. During the revolution of 1936, the anarchist youth of Barcelona closed not only nightclubs and brothels, but also ordinary dance halls, and in some villages in Aragon and Andalusia the village cafe was replaced by a library. There was something of the spirit of medieval monasticism alive here. Many a boy who calls himself an anarchist today would feel uncomfortable in such an environment.

Moralistic exaggerations aside, this attitude is logical. It must be obvious that one cannot do without the state and its coercive means if people do not voluntarily abide by moral laws and respect the life and freedom of others without being forced to do so by the police. In a sardonic obituary for Proudhon, Karl Marx wrote that this philosophical dilettante had never understood Hegel's dialectic and that the only German philosopher he had read in a French translation was Immanuel Kant. I believe that Marx hit the nail on the head here, since Kant's ethics, although Kant himself did not draw any immediate anarchist conclusions from them, seem to me to be a key to the morality not only of Proudhon but of anarchism in general. Kant's categorical moral imperative was misunderstood by friends and opponents alike. The bourgeois state misused it as the foundation stone of its purpose-driven authoritarian laws. In reality, no one like Kant advocated the complete autonomy of the individual's ethics from any purpose. This can therefore only be subjective, i.e. internally determined.

It can never coincide with a demand that seeks to determine the individual from the outside. Kant's morality is subjective not in the sense of arbitrariness, but in the sense of a personal decision, which is all the purer the less it is determined or co-determined by external purposes. Kant's ethics transcends all psychological constraints as well as all social coercion. It is nothing but freedom.

According to the view of historical materialism, man can only be free when the conditions of production have reached a level that enables the creation of prosperity for all. The anarchist is by no means indifferent to improvements in human living conditions, but he considers man to be free here and now, in accordance with his potential.

His freedom is not limited to the satisfaction of material needs, but is itself creative. Its aim, its task and at the same time the condition of its existence is the creation of justice.

But how can this be achieved? Logically, an ideology that rejects state power would have to be hostile to violence in and of

itself, because it is difficult to imagine that violence would lead to a non-violent state. The most consistent anarchist was undoubtedly Leo Tolstoy, who rejected the use of violence in every case. The intellectual fathers of modern anarchism, Godwin and Proudhon, did not reject violent revolution with Tolstoyan absoluteness, but they were at least skeptical about it. The question of violence played a role in the dispute between Proudhon and Marx, in such a way that the anarchist warned against the use of violence, while the father of so-called scientific socialism took its use for granted in the process of social transformation. In a letter to Marx in 1847, Proudhon refused to make himself the leader of a new intolerant church following the example of Martin Luther and then said that so-called revolutionary action should not be propagated as a means of social revolution, because this alleged means would simply be an appeal to violence, to arbitrariness, in short, a contradiction. He saw a contradiction in violence, which in his opinion could only ever lead to counter-violence and never to freedom. But the contradiction was within himself. In 1848, the same Proudhon helped build barricades, something he later had to laugh about.

Later authoritarians (anti-authoritarians?, note) like Bakunin saw no contradiction in violence when it came directly from the people and was not centralized in state hands.

At the time of the First International, the federalist socialists propagated the "social revolution". They understood this to mean a broad popular uprising whose goal would be to destroy the state and economic institutions of the existing hierarchy and to enable the people to form a new society freed from all shackles. However, the specifically anarchistic aspect of this program is not violence, as is often assumed, but rather its limitation.

These revolutionaries shared their belief in revolutionary violence with all liberals, democrats and socialists of their time. The anti-authoritarians differed from all of these in that they only wanted to use violence in a negative, destructive way, but rejected it for the organization of a new social order. They welcomed