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From Marxist to Anarchist

Sartre 1972-1980

Alfred Betschart

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ZA Simone de Beauvoir: *Die Zeremonie des Abschieds und Gespräche mit Jean-Paul Sartre. August-September 1974*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1986 (*La Cérémonie des adieux suivi de Entretiens avec Jean-Paul Sartre août – septembre 1974*. Gallimard: Paris 1981).

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SN *Das Sein und das Nichts: Versuch einer phänomenologischen Ontologie*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1995 (*L'Être et le néant*, 1943).

SP „Sartre et le Portugal“. In: *Libération* 22.-26.4.75.

SPSJ „Selbstporträt mit siebzig Jahren. Interview mit Michel Contat“, in: *Sartre über Sartre*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1980, p.180-246 (*Autoportrait à soixante-dix ans*, 1975).

SR „Jean-Paul Sartre répond“. In : *L'Arc*, Nr. 30: *Sartre Aujourd'hui*, Aixen- Provence Okt. 66 (Interview von Bernard Pingaud).

SS „Schreckliche Situation“. Interview [von Alice Schwarzer] in the occasion of Sartre's visit with Baader. In: *Der Spiegel*, 2.12.74. p. 166-169.

SÜS „Sartre über Sartre. Interview mit Perry Anderson, Ronald Fraser und Quentin Hoare“. In: *Sartre über Sartre*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1980, p. 144-167 (*Itinerary of a thought*, 1969).

TCBJ „Terrorism Can Be Justified“. In: *Newsweek*, European edition, 10.11.1975.

UV „Umanesimo e violenza. Intervista di Maria Antonietta Maciocchi.“ In: *L'Europeo*. Okt./Nov. 1979. p.83-88.

VE „Die Verdammten dieser Erde“ von Frantz Fanon“. In: *Wir sind alle Mörder*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1988, p. 141-159 (*Préface à ‚Les Damnés de la terre‘*, 1961). 38 / 38

VNBG „Volksfront nicht besser als Gaullisten“. In: *Der Spiegel*, 12.2.1973, p. 84-98.

WHUV „Die Werksbullen haben uns verprügelt“. In: *Der Spiegel* 19.6.1972. p. 124-126.

WI „Wahlen, Idiotenfallen (1973)“. In: *Plädoyer für die Intellektuellen*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1995. p. 480-490. (*Elections, piège à cons*, 1973).

WIL *Was ist Literatur?*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1986 (*Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, 1947).

WSTL „What's Jean-Paul Sartre thinking lately?“. In: *Esquire*, Dez. 72, p. 204-208, 280-286 (Interview by Pierre Bénichou).

KUF „Die Kommunisten und der Frieden“. In: *Krieg im Frieden* 1. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1982, p. 75-301 (*Les Communistes et la paix*, 1952/54).

LGK „Der Linken den Garaus machen oder sie kurieren?“. In: Jean-Paul Sartre: *Plädoyer für die Intellektuellen*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1995. p. 76-83 (*Achever la gauche ou la guérir?*, 1965).

LOJP „Lynchage ou justice populaire?“. In: *La Cause du peuple- J'accuse*, 17.5.72, S. 12.

LPNV „Libertà e potere non vanno in coppia“. In: *Lotta Continua*, 9.9.1977.

ME „Machismus und Ebenbürtigkeit: Simone de Beauvoir befragt Sartre zur Frauenbewegung“. In: *Sartre über Sartre*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1980, p. 167-179 (*Simone de Beauvoir interroge Jean-Paul Sartre*, 1975).

MIF „Die Maoisten in Frankreich“. In: *Plädoyer für die Intellektuellen*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1995, S. 449-456 (*Les Maos en France*; 1972).

MFSL „Man muß für sich selbst leben und für die anderen leben. Ein Interview mit Rupert Neudeck“. In: *Merkur*, 12/1979, p. 1208-1222.

MSE „Les militants socialistes et la construction de l'Europe“. In: *Le Monde*, 10.2.77, p. 1-2.

MR „Materialismus und Revolution“. In: *Der Existentialismus ist ein Humanismus*. Reinbek: Rowohlt 2000, S. 193-266 (*Matérialisme et révolution*, 1946)

PJP „À Propos de la justice populaire. Entretien avec Jean-Paul Sartre“. In: *Pro Justicia*, Nr. 2 (1. Trimestre) 1973, p. 13-26.

PL „Pouvoir et liberté“. In: *Libération* 6.1.1977.

QS *Qu'est-ce que la subjectivité?*. Les Prairies ordinaires: Paris 2013.

SF *Sartre. Ein Film*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1977 (*Sartre. Un film réalisé par Alexandre Astruc et Michel Contat*; Feb./Mrz. 72+Herbst 75/Winter 76; published as book in Paris in 1977).

Sartre is understood not only by most sartrophobes but also by most Sartrians as a thinker of Marxist existentialism. Two works that had a major impact on the political understanding of Sartre's philosophy are titled *Existential Marxism in Postwar France* (by Mark Poster, 1976) and *Sartre and Marxist Existentialism* (by Thomas R. Flynn, 1984). The period from 1941 to 1972 is justified in speaking of Marxist existentialism, insofar as this period was indeed marked by Sartre's increasing approximation and partial adoption of Marxist topoi.

After his return from the Stalag XII D prison camp near Trier in 1941, Sartre clearly expressed his political affiliation for the first time when he, who had previously refrained from any political engagement, founded an albeit ephemeral resistance group with the programmatic name Socialisme et liberté. Five years later, in 1946, he dealt theoretically with Marxism for the first time in *Matérialisme et révolution* (English: *Materialism and Revolution*), even if his knowledge of Marxism was largely limited to the works of Stalin. In 1948, Sartre was one of the co-founders of the Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire, a left-wing socialist movement made up not least of former Trotskyists in favor of an independent, united, socialist Europe. In 1952 he was still distancing himself from the communists by differentiating between his principles and theirs (KUF 142)¹, but it was in the midst of a phase of intense confrontation with Marxism. Five years later, Sartre wrote in *Questions de méthode* (Eng: *Search for a Method*) that Marxism is the philosophy of our time and existentialism is just an ideology.

However, Sartre's confrontation with Marxism did not end there. As he said in *Sartre. Un film* (Eng.: *Sartre. A film.*), not only the *Cahiers pour une morale* (Eng.: *Notebooks for an Ethics*) but also the *Critique de la raison dialectique* (Eng.: *Critique of Dialectical Reason*) were the result of his struggle with Marxism

¹ References to Sartre's works are in the form of sigles, followed by the page numbers. The list of sigles can be found at the end of the article.

(SF 191f.,222)². But Sartre's relationship to Marxism was always very differentiated. Certain topoi of historical materialism in its Marxist form can be found *tel quel* in Sartre's political philosophy. These include key points such as that history is a history of class struggle and that the transition from one form of society to another takes place through revolution. With the communists, Sartre shared a very political conception of revolution, heavily influenced by the French and October revolutions as violent events of relatively short duration. His concept of revolution thus differed from a more economically and sociologically oriented one such as that of the industrial revolution, which took place over decades, if not centuries, with limited use of force.

On other points Sartre's agreement with Marxist political philosophy was only partial. Even if Sartre started from the fundamental contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, his concept of class was more differentiated both in relation to these two classes and to the intermediate classes. Conflicts such as those between colonizers and colonized even largely escaped the terminology of class society. It is true that, according to Sartre, the working class was the bearer of the future revolution that would lead to socialism and communism and with which history or pre-history should come to an end. With a successful revolution, the realm of freedom begins and the state will wither away. But unlike the communists, Sartre was skeptical about the proximity of this event. Sartre's ambivalent attitude towards Marxist political philosophy was also expressed in his attitude towards dialectics, which he adopted in the form of dialectics related to humanities but which he radically rejected as natural dialectics in the sense of Engels and Stalin.

² "The *Critique* was written against the communists, although it is Marxist. I was of the opinion that the communists had completely distorted, falsified true Marxism. Today I no longer think quite like that [i.e. Soviet communism is true Marxism, A.B.]." (SF 191f.)

48. Rowohlt: Reinbek 2000, p. 145-192 (*L'Existentialisme est un humanisme*, 1945/46).

EM *Entwürfe für eine Moralphilosophie*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 2005 (*Cahiers pour une morale*, 1947/48).

EUG „J. P. Sartre: Les Élections, L'Union de la Gauche, la Nouvelle Gauche“. In: *Libération* 13./14.4.74, p. 4-5.

FM *Fragen der Methode*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1999 (*Questions de méthode*, 1957/60).

FUW „Freundschaft und Widersprüche. Über Merleau-Ponty.“ In: *Sartre über Sartre*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1980, p. 61-128 (*Merleau-Ponty vivant*, 1961).

GDE “La Gauche. Le désespoir et l'espoir. Entretien avec Jean-Paul Sartre. Propos recueillis par Catherine Clément“. In: *Le Matin*, 10./11.11.79, p. 3-5.

HJ „Die hereingelegte Jugend“. In: *Plädoyer für die Intellektuellen*. Reinbek 1995, p. 242-258 (*La Jeunesse piégée*; 1969).

IAR Jean-Paul Sartre, Philippe Gavi, Pierre Victor: *Der Intellektuelle als Revolutionär*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1976 (*On a raison de se révolter*, 1974 ; Gespräche 1972-74).

IJPS „An Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre“. In: Paul Arthur Schilpp (Hg.): *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*. Open Court: La Salle 1991, p. 5- 51 (Interview von 1975).

IS „An Interview With Jean-Paul Sartre“. In: Hugh J. Silverman, Frederick A. Elliston (Hg.): *Jean-Paul Sartre. Contemporary Approaches to His Philosophy*. Duquesne: Pittsburgh 1980. p 221-239 (by Leo Fretz on 25.11.76, first published as *Gesprek met Jean Paul Sartre*, 1977).

KDVI *Kritik der dialektischen Vernunft. I. Band. Theorie der gesellschaftlichen Praxis*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1980 (*Critique de la raison dialectique*, 1960).

KEML „Kein Erbarmen mit den Linken. Interview mit Pardon, 1970“. In: *Plädoyer für die Intellektuellen*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1995. p. 439-448.

List of sigils

AAC „Antwort an Albert Camus“. In: Jean-Paul Sartre: *Krieg im Frieden 2*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1982, p. 27-51 (*Réponse à Albert Camus*, 1952).

ACL „Antwort an Claude Lefort“. In: Jean-Paul Sartre: *Krieg im Frieden 2*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1982, p. 106-165 (*Réponse à Claude Lefort*, 1953)

AM „Anarchie und Moral. Interview mit J.-P. Sartre“. in: Raúl Fornet-Betancourt: *Philosophie der Befreiung*. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt a. M. 1983, p. 365-370 (Interview by Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, Mario Casañas and Alfredo Gómez-Muller 1.11.79).

B *Baudelaire*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1978 (Baudelaire, 1947).

BT „Ein Betriebstribunal“. In: *Plädoyer für die Intellektuellen*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1995. S. 398-415 (Interview von Claude Kiejman 1971).

BUG *Brüderlichkeit und Gewalt*. Wagenbach: Berlin 1993 (*L'Espoir maintenant*, 1980).

CCJPS „Conversación con Jean-Paul Sartre“. In: *El País*. Attachment *Arte y pensamiento*. 11.6.1978, S. I-VII (Interview by Juan Goytisolo).

CRDII *Critique de la raison dialectique. Tome II (inachevé)*. *L'intelligibilité de l'histoire*. Gallimard: Paris 1985.

DST „Déclaration de Jean-Paul Sartre à Toul“. In: *La Cause du Peuple – J'accuse*, no. 15, 7.1.1972 (declaration by Sartre on the occasion of the prisoners' revolt in Toul).

EAS „entretien avec Sartre“. In: *Tout Va Bien*. Nr. 4, 20. Feb.-20. Mrz. 1973, p. 30-35. (published in in *Actuel* as „Sartre parle des maos“).

EEP „Entretien. L'écriture et la publication“ (with Michel Sicard). In: *Sartre inédit. Obliques*. No. 18-19. 1979, p. 9-29.

EH „Der Existentialismus ist ein Humanismus“. In: *Der Existentialismus ist ein Humanismus und andere philosophische Essays 1943-*

However, there were also points where Sartre's view clearly clashed with that of the Marxist-Communists. He thought little, at least in his Stalinist version, of the Marxist model of explanation, according to which the development of the productive forces determined those of the production relations and these together as a basis determined those of the superstructure. For Sartre, as for the heterodox Marxists Georg Lukács or Antonio Gramsci, the superstructure of politics, society and culture always played an independent role. Accordingly, his interest was in oppression rather than exploitation.³

However, the most important contrast between Marxist philosophy and existentialist “ideology” arose from their methodological differences. The former stands clearly on the methodological standpoint of holism. Like Durkheim, Marxism explains the social through the social (or economic) [As in the German original version: “Wie Durkheim erklärt der Marxismus Soziales durch Soziales (resp. Ökonomisches)“]. The classes are the true agent of history. In contrast, Sartre's philosophy, like Max Weber's sociology, proceeds from methodical individualism.⁴ Sartre rejected Plekhanov's view that the individual is not of essential importance

³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty recognised a parallel to the anarchists in this as early as 1955, in *Les Aventures de la dialectique*: “With Sartre, as with the anarchists, the idea of oppression is always superior to that of exploitation”. (*Die Abenteuer der Dialektik* [Engl: The Adventures of Dialectics]. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt a. M. 1974, p. 187).

⁴ The opposition between methodological individualism and methodological holism runs through the whole of modern political philosophy and is often associated with the opposition between liberalism and republicanism. As a methodological individualist, Sartre stands in the tradition of the Enlightenment, as do Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Kant, Tocqueville, J. St. Mill, Beauvoir, Camus and modern liberals such as Rawls, Dworkin, but also Habermas or Benhabib. In contrast, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, Arendt and communitarians such as Sandel, Taylor, MacIntyre and Walzer are considered methodological holists. When it comes to the meaning of community, however, Sartre's position has similarities with those of the communitarians, even though he focuses on *communities of choice* rather than *communities of fate*. Sartre's position is also closer to that of the commu-

in history [CRDII 103]. Valéry is a petit bourgeois, but not every petit bourgeois is a great writer like Valéry (FM 64). Rather, history is made by individuals, by groups in which individuals have come together.

For Sartre, the politically most important form of the group was the party. In a discourse with Claude Lefort, a member of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* who believed in class as a revolutionary agent in the old Marxist sense, Sartre (1952) emphasized the importance of the revolutionary party as the most important condition for the success of the revolution (ACL). This position earned him the accusation of ultra-Bolshevism in Merleau-Ponty's work *Les Aventures de la dialectique* in 1955, since the importance of the party as the avant-garde of the revolution was even greater for him than for Lenin. In contrast to Lenin, however, Sartre lacked belief in the fundamental goodness of the party. Rather, according to him, the wrong development of a party towards fraternité-terreur, the terror brotherhood, was almost unavoidable. During his Marxist phase, Sartre had evidently not completely given up his skepticism about the parties, which characterized Sartre's first "protoanarchist"⁵, apolitical period up to 1941, together with his fundamental reservations about the state and politics.

The third period, the anarchist one from 1972 until Sartre's death in 1980, differs from the preceding Marxist one in important respects. Only for this period, in my opinion, can one speak of an independent political philosophy of Sartre. The findings from his two fundamental philosophical works, *L'Être et le néant* (Eng.: *Being and Nothingness*) and the *Critique*, had always been in a fundamentally conflicted relationship to Marxist theory due to the methodological contrast between individualism and holism. Only in his anarchist period, in which he no longer felt compelled

nitarians on points such as the discussion of the social contract or the liberal separation between the good and the right.

⁵ In the *Carnets de la drôle de guerre*, his war diaries, Sartre himself writes of his early "anarchist individualism" (TB 272).

I think [...] that Marxism is not sufficient to understand our epoch. I think that Marxism has totally failed. [...] I used to be a Marxist. I am no longer, because human freedom and morality are ceaselessly pursued as a force against which the powers of the world fight. And for me it is a question of restoring freedom and morality as the only effective and real forces of the historical world. [TRANS. A.B.]

Sartre's rejection of Marxism, first hinted at in the *Spiegel* interview of 1973, had become a permanent feature of his political self-image. Not only had his late political philosophy taken on clearly anarchist features, but he also saw himself as an anarchist in his political self-positioning towards the end of the 1970s. However, the anarchism Sartre professed was an anarchisme à la Sartre. Sartre remained as idiosyncratic in the end as he had always been. It was an anarchism that still called for the state and parties for a transitional period.⁷⁵

With his new anarchist political philosophy developed between 1972 and 1980, Sartre not only distanced himself from Marxism, but he also presented a sketch for a new political philosophy. It was a political philosophy that was more in line with his main philosophical works *L'Être et le néant* and *Critique de la raison dialectique* than his past one from the Marxist period. In retrospect, the physical problems that plagued him from 1973 onwards prove to have been a stroke of luck, for it probably took the stroke and blindness for Sartre to find the peace from political actuality to develop a new political philosophy. It is all the more regrettable that most Sartrians have not received this further development of Sartre's political thought.

⁷⁵ On the positioning of Sartre's anarchism in relation to the various anarchist currents, see also footnotes 9, 24, 26, 37, 40 and 55. Thus Sartre would probably be most likely to be counted among those representatives of anarchism who advocated an anarchist synthesis, an anarchism without an adjective.

to be a higher authority that forces me to think something or do certain things. I think that it is I who should determine what I should do, what I should do it with and when I should do it. That's why I consider myself deeply an anarchist. When I try to sum up my political ideas about power and freedom, they go in that direction. I have always sympathised with the anarchist thinkers, even though I think they didn't always approach the problems in the exact way they came up with them. [TRANS. A.B.]

That this is not a one-time statement is confirmed by the interview Sartre gave to Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, Mario Casañas and Alfredo Gómez-Muller in November 79, published in 1982 under the title *Anarchie et Morale* (AM 365):

I have called myself an anarchist because I use the word an-archy in its etymological meaning, that is, as a society without power, without a state.

The following two sentences in this interview are remarkable:

Traditional anarchism has never tried to establish such a society. The anarchist movement has tried to build a society that is too individualistic.

They are noteworthy because they give an indication of Sartre's understanding of "his" anarchism. He could do little with individual anarchism, as found especially among philosophers, such as Stirner and Thoreau. Man is not only an individual with his ontological freedom, but also essentially an *animal social*. This also explains Sartre's preference for anarcho-syndicalism, which he obviously saw in contrast to philosophical individual anarchism.

With his commitment to anarchism, Sartre had completely turned away from Marxism. This is also clear from the interview with Macciocchi (UV 86):

to make concessions to Marxism, did Sartre succeed in further developing his philosophy, which was based primarily on an ontological and epistemological core of psychology and anthropology, into an independent political philosophy. Only now did he manage to separate himself from the elements of a political philosophy that was committed to methodical holism and to build up an independent political philosophy that was consistently based on that methodical individualism that formed the basis of his two main works. At the center of Sartre's political philosophy was the question of how people can live freely in groups according to their fundamental choice (also called project). Sartre increasingly saw the state as the main antagonist to such a life in freedom. In doing so, he took a position that he initially coyly described as *libertaire* and then increasingly uncoded as anarchist.

There are various reasons why Sartre's late anarchist political philosophy has remained largely unnoticed until today. A first subjective reason may be that Sartre's image as a Marxist thinker probably makes most Sartrians and Sartrophobes alike feel comfortable. But the objective factors seem to me to be more significant. Since Sartre went largely blind in the spring of 1973, he was unable to read or write coherent texts.

The only possibility left for him to express himself was the interview. This medium, however, did not allow for a systematic development of his own ideas. The hard core of Sartre's late political philosophy is usually only weakly expressed in the interviews and only reveals itself to the reader when he interprets and understands the statements in the interviews against the background of *L'Être et le néant*, the *Critique*, but also the *Cahiers pour une morale*. The sometimes abundant delay in the publication of the interviews – up to six years – also makes it difficult to classify what was said, especially since Sartre's thoughts developed relatively quickly despite his physical handicap.

However, the greatest obstacle in the reception of political philosophy in this third period, is the fact that the interviews were

published in different languages. Of the twenty-five interviews that I consider significant for political philosophy that Sartre gave between 1972 and 1980, only fourteen were first published in French.

In four interviews the original publication was in German, in two each in English and Italian, and in one case each in Spanish and Dutch. In addition, the importance of the other languages tended to increase over time, as interest in Sartre and his philosophy steadily declined in France in the 1970s. At the same time, the number of translations decreased steadily. Of the fifteen interviews published in French, only seven were translated into German and six into English. It is significant that *On a raison de se révolter*, Sartre's most important political book in the last ten years before his death, has been out of print for years and has been translated into English only in 2018 (*It Is Right to Rebel*). It is therefore hardly surprising that *L'Espoir maintenant* (Engl: *Hope Now*) caused such a stir in the Sartre community and that Olivier Todd and Ronald Aronson could only see in this work a case of old man's seduction. Even old companions of Sartre such as Simone de Beauvoir and Raymond Aron had not noticed Sartre's development in recent years. This lack of awareness is probably also the main reason for the rejection of Sartre's last publication before his death.

The aim of this article is to close this gap in our knowledge of the development of Sartre's later political philosophy. After the first, rather apolitical, proto-anarchist period up to 1941 and the second, Marxist period up to 1972, Sartre developed a political philosophy from 1972 to 1980, which, in Sartre's own words, must be described as an anarchist one.⁶ This last period was not uniform,

⁶ Sartre adopted a similar division of his life into three periods in *Sartre. Un film* (SF 64-66) and in *On a raison de se révolter* (IAR 60), a related division of his life into the three periods of moralism, amoral realism and materialist, moral realism. However, this did not refer to his political philosophy but to his political commitment, which is why the second period ended as early as 1965 with his break with the USSR.

Sartre's statements to Contat and Rybalka leave no doubt, the phase of anarchism was no longer just an episode from his past, but anarchism had anew regained importance in Sartre's political thought. Sartre's pro-anarchist statements were accompanied by further distancing from Marxist ideas regarding the necessity of a socialist revolution and regarding its results. In *Autoportrait à soixante-dix ans* he stated (SPSJ 241):

Therefore, socialism is also not a certainty but a value:
it is freedom elevating itself to an end.

And to Rybalka's question whether scarcity would cease to exist under socialism, he replied (IJPS 32):

[Socialism] would not make scarcity disappear. However, it is obvious that at that time ways would be sought and found to deal with scarcity.

It took another two or three years before Sartre made clear commitments to anarchism. That these were made to Spanish-speaking interlocutors is hardly surprising, given the much more vibrant anarchist traditions in Spanish-speaking countries. In an interview with Juan Goytisolo, who grew up in Barcelona, which was strongly influenced by anarchists, Sartre said in 1978 (CCJPS VII):

I think that anarchism is one of the forces that can build the socialism of tomorrow. Personally, I have always seen myself as an anarchist; not exactly in the way that anarchists do, who have a programme, a way of thinking and work out their ideas within an organisation. The reason through which I grasp anarchism is that I have always rejected power and especially the disposal of state power over myself. I don't want there

Despite further confirmations of Sartre's distancing from Marxism (TCBJ, LPNV), little has changed in the image of Sartre as a Marxist existentialist, either among Sartrians or Sartrophobes. Even the (relatively) great success of Michel Contat's interview with Sartre on the occasion of his seventieth birthday in 1975, which was published under the title *Autoportrait à soixante-dix ans* in the same year in the *Nouvel Obs* and a year later as a book by Gallimard, led to no fundamental change in the political perception of Sartre. In this remarkably open interview there was the following dialogue, remarkable for Sartre's relations with anarchism (SPSJ 196):

CONTAT: After May 68, you said: "If you read my books, all of them, you will realise that I have not changed at heart and have always remained an anarchist ...". SARTRE: That is true. [...] But I have changed insofar as, when I wrote *Nausea*, I was an anarchist without knowing it [...] Later, through philosophy, I discovered the anarchist in me. But I didn't discover it under that name, because the anarchism of today has nothing to do with the anarchism of 1890. CONTAT: But you never identified yourself with the anarchist movement. SARTRE: Never. On the contrary, I have been very distant. But I have never tolerated a power above me and have always believed that anarchy, that is, a society without power, must be realised. CONTAT: You are, in a word, the thinker of a new anarchism, a libertarian socialism.⁷⁴

a conditional one: the condition was that Marxism adopt essential parts of existentialism.

⁷⁴ The translation has been corrected. The expression "socialisme libertaire" (Situations X. Gallimard: Paris 1976. p. 156) was wrongly rendered as "liberal socialism" in the German translation. This error is probably symptomatic of the lack of understanding of Sartre's new political philosophy in the 1970s. (A.B.)

however, but rather three different phases of development can be identified between 1972 and 1980:

- that of 1972-74, when Sartre saw himself as part of the anti-hierarchical-libertarian movement,
- that of 1975-79, during which he worked on the book *Pouvoir et liberté* (Eng: *Power and Freedom*), and
- that of 1979/80, in which he developed the idea of a society based on fraternity.

Parallel to this was a development in his political self-understanding from a Marxist to a libertarian to an anarchist. In order to give the reader an original picture of Sartre's third political period, Sartre himself will be quoted at length in the following.

Sartre and the anti-hierarchical-libertarian movement

The best starting point for Sartre's late political philosophy is the conversations between Sartre, Benny Lévy alias Pierre Victor and Philippe Gavi, which were published in 1974 under the title *On a raison de se révolter*. The conversations began as early as the end of 1972, but were interrupted in 1973 due to Sartre's illness. It is noteworthy that Sartre counted himself politically as belonging to that movement, which he described as anti-hierarchical and libertarian. Addressing Philippe Gavi, who was of the spontaneist rather than the Maoist left and heavily influenced by the American counterculture movement, he said in Dec. 72:

[IAR 59] For these various reasons, I believe I see in you – and not only in you, but in the whole

anti-hierarchical and libertarian movement – the announcement of a new politics and the roots of the new man who will make it. [..., 60] What has changed me is that, under new aspects, I see old things reappearing that I believed in when I was young – moralism⁷ for example – things that I dropped in favour of realism when I began to work with the communists, and which I find again now, in the anti-hierarchical and libertarian movement.”

To our ears, “libertarian” may sound very liberal⁸, but since the so-called “nefarious laws” (lois scélérates) of 1893/94, by which all anarchist activity was persecuted by the state, the anarchists predominantly used the word *libertaire* as their own designation. Even though Sartre did not yet profess anarchism to third parties (see below the chapter Sartre’s Path from Marxist to Anarchist), the reference to it is clear.

The basis of this new anti-hierarchical-libertarian politics was a change in Sartre’s conception of society. According to conventional communist doctrine, the main contradiction in capitalist society is that between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. All other contradictions in society, those between women and men, blacks, Jews and whites, LGBT persons and heterosexuals, are considered mere side contradictions. Communists and Maoists alike held that the socialist revolution, in resolving the main contradiction, would also resolve all the secondary contradictions. Accordingly, Benny Lévy said in the discussions that the representatives of the sec-

⁷ The turn from his moral realism and from his focus on metaethics to normative ethics had already become apparent during his collaboration with the Maoists. See Sartre’s praise of the Maoists for their morality (alongside violence and spontaneity) in Sartre’s preface to Michèle Manceaux’s *Maos en France* (published Feb. 72; MIF 456).

⁸ See also footnote 62. The title of Michel Onfray’s biography of Camus, *L’Ordre libertaire* (Engl: The Libertarian Order), has also been distorted and translated into German as *Im Namen der Freiheit* (In the Name of Freedom).

I have always agreed with the anarchists, who were the only ones who held the view of developing the whole man through social action and whose main characteristic was freedom. On the other hand, the anarchists are somewhat simplistic as political figures. R: Perhaps on the theoretical level as well? SARTRE: Yes, as long as you only look at the theory and leave certain of its intentions on the side, which are very good, especially those about freedom and the whole man. Occasionally these intentions were realised: for example, around 1910 they lived together in Corsica, formed communities. R: Have you recently become interested in these communities? SARTRE: Yes, I read Maitron’s book⁷² on the anarchists. [TRANS. A.B.]

In view of this change in political positioning, it is not surprising that Sartre, when asked in response whether he would rather use the term Marxist or Existentialist to indicate his position, answered clearly: “That of the Existentialist” (IJPS 22). Sartre, who for twenty years saw himself as a Marxist, albeit an existentialist, had made the shift from Marxist to Marxian back to existentialist in the space of three years. What he had written in 1952 in his reply to Albert Camus applied again: he was not a Marxist (AAC 39).⁷³

⁷² This is probably Jean Maitron’s book *Histoire du mouvement anarchiste en France (1880-1914)*. Whether it was one of the two old out-of-print editions from 1951 and 1955 or the new edition from 1975 is not known. In any case, it is remarkable that Sartre was interested in the history of anarchism in the mid-1970s. (A.B.)

⁷³ Similarly, in the second part of KUF (written in autumn 52), Sartre distinguished his principles from those of the communists (KUF 142). It was only with his visit to the Soviet Union in 1954 that an alliance with the communists was formed, which – despite the break in 1956 because of the occupation of Hungary – led to the subordination of existentialism as an ideology to Marxist philosophy in 1957. However, the simultaneous fierce criticism of Marxism, which had come to a standstill (see FM 28 et passim), shows that this subordination had only been

It remains to be seen whether this was an act of lying or of bad faith that led the philosopher of the *mauvaise foi* to deny his closeness to anarchism. The fact that Sartre occasionally had problems with his self-positioning was probably a consequence of his intense political commitment. As much as he overestimated his closeness to the communists and Maoists, he underestimated it with regard to *Socialisme et barbarie*, the Trotskyists in general or even the anarchists. Ian H. Birchall has shown this in an excellent way with regard to the Trotskyists in his remarkable book *Sartre against Stalinism*⁶⁹.

Sartre's game of hide-and-seek about his closeness to the anarchists came to an end two years later in two interviews. In the interview with Michel Rybalka, Oreste Pucciani and Susan Gruenheck in May 75 for the Sartre volume of *The Library of Living Philosophers* Series edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp (though not published until 1981), the following statements were made (IJPS 21):

[RYBALKA:] In more recent interviews you seem to have accepted the notion of "libertarian socialism"⁷⁰. SARTRE: This is an anarchist term, and I keep it because I want to recall the anarchist origins of my thought. R.: You once said to me: "I have always been an anarchist" and to Contat you declared: "Through philosophy I have discovered the anarchist in myself."⁷¹ SARTRE: This is a little premature; but

⁶⁹ Berghahn: New York 2004 (see my review of this book). Apart from the Trotskyists (with the exception of taking over the editorship of the newspaper *Révolution!* in June 71, behind which were dissidents from the Trotskyist Ligue Communiste), the anarchists were the only extreme left group that Sartre never committed himself to.

⁷⁰ Rybalka was probably referring to the conversation that appeared in *Libération* in April 75 under the title "Sartre et le Portugal". There Lévy used the term libertarian socialism to indicate their common position. (A.B.)

⁷¹ See the quotation below from Contat's conversation with Sartre on his seventieth birthday. (A.B.)

ondary contradictions could bring in their concerns, but that these had to merge with and be subordinated to the main contradiction, as if in a crucible. In *On a raison de se révolter*, Sartre now advocated an image of society that moved beyond the Marxist thought patterns of main and subsidiary contradictions (Dec. 72):

[IAR 86] Sartre [turning to Pierre Victor]: I don't like your "crucible". In a crucible you put different things of different shapes, and then you melt that and everything takes on a different, uniform shape. I'm afraid you want to throw a lot of ideas into this crucible so that they melt and become Maoist ideas. [...] VICTOR: Into the crucible people bring different [87] partial aspects which are confronted and fused. SARTRE: I don't agree. Think of women: those who come to us bring a view that is not at all partial. They say: until today there have been revolutions made by men for men. What is to become of that now in your melting pot? I am not in favour of the melting pot. [...] GAVI: [...] Think about homosexuality. I often talk about it to provoke. Because the struggle of women can be written on anyone's banner. Even the CP and the Socialist Party must recognise that the women's movement is becoming a mass movement. But nobody wants to know anything about the homosexuals, who are still a minority. [...] SARTRE: A tricky question, because the homosexual movement is not popular. [...] It is unjust to treat women and homosexuals badly, and you must fight against these forms of repression or alienation. [...; 89] But it's not about shouting a cheer for homosexuals. I couldn't shout along either, because I'm not homosexual. Our point is to make it clear to the readers of the newspaper that

homosexuals have the same right to life and respect as everyone else.

As one of the first among philosophers and humanists, Sartre switched from a model of class society to a model of society in which the central political actors were the New Social Movements⁹. In the *Critique*, Sartre had already largely disempowered the concept of class by seeing in class only a series, at best a milieu, and the masses – except in cases of group-in-fusion – were no longer agents of history. The agents of history, still generally defined as groups in 1960, were concretised by Sartre twelve years later as the New Social Movements. It was a model of society as pursued by the French sociologist Alain Touraine with his Centre d'Etudes des Mouvements Sociaux at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, founded in 1970. The extent to which Sartre was treading a new path, especially among leftists, becomes apparent when we consider that France's other great sociologist besides Touraine, Bourdieu, continued to pursue a model of society that was Marxist in its basic structures until his death in 2002. Slavoj Žižek, currently the best-known Marxist among philosophers internationally, also proves to be an old communist in this respect.

In *On a raison de se révolter*, Sartre found repeated opportunities to support the New Social Movements. He argued for giving the question of feminism its well-deserved place and not treating it as secondary. He defended the rights of regionalist movements in Brittany or in the south of France against Pierre's attempts to belittle their importance.

⁹ André Gorz, a close collaborator of Sartre in the 1960s and 1970s, was a forerunner of the representatives of this changed image of society. In his work *Stratégie ouvrière et néo-capitalisme* (1964), he had adapted the concept of the proletariat to the effect that the proletariat was no longer granted a per se exclusive revolutionary role. The proletariat was no longer the impoverished, exploited worker, but now also included the highly qualified technician and manager, who had alienation in common with the traditional worker.

There Sartre said of his political stance in the 1930s: “We were anarchists, if you like, but our anarchism was of a special kind. We were against the bourgeoisie, we were against the Nazis or the Fire Crusaders”⁶⁸ (SF 31). But these were statements about a distant past, which ultimately always implied that today, as a mature philosopher, he no longer had anything to do with anarchism.

In 1972, however, a change took place when Sartre described himself as belonging to the anti-hierarchical libertarian camp. *Libertaire* in French, however, is neither an innocent adjective to *liberté*, freedom, nor does it refer to the American term “libertarian” (French: *libertarien*). Sartre has little in common with Ayn Rand, Robert Nozick or Murray Rothbard. Libertarian has rather been a French code word for anarchist since the infamous *lois scélérates* of 1893/94. Most French anarchists called themselves libertarians. Attentive observers of the French political scene had not failed to notice Sartre's new self-designation. This was noticed by neutral observers, too. Accordingly, the interviewers of *Der Spiegel* approached Sartre about it in early 1973 (VNBG 92):

SPIEGEL: So you are not an anarchist? *SARTRE*: No [...] I am close to a conception which in France is called “libertaire”. By this I mean that people are masters of their lives and their living conditions. If I decide about my life, then we have freedom. That presupposes that there is no form of coercion. In other words, this presupposes a complete overthrow of the bourgeois capitalist social order. [...] I am a marxian and not a Marxist. [...] If Marxism is dialectical, I am in complete agreement. But there is a Marxist determinism about the valuation of individual or collective action that I do not accept because I remain faithful to the idea of freedom. I believe that people are free.

⁶⁸ Croix de feu (Fire Crosses) were a far-right movement in 1927-36.

phy towards a thinking much closer to that of the anarchists. This change from self-declared Marxist to anarchist, however, caused Sartre himself no small problems.

Sartre's path from Marxist to anarchist

At the beginning of the 1970s, no Sartre connoisseur would have expected that Sartre could confess to being an anarchist, since he had stated in an interview with Perry Anderson, Ronald Fraser and Quintin Hoare, published in 1969 under the title *Itinerary of a thought*, "It is as true today as it was yesterday that anarchism leads nowhere." (SÜS 162). Arguably, Sartre's praise of anarcho-syndicalism in *Les Communistes et la paix*, the *Critique*, *Qu'est-ce que la subjectivité?* and in *Achever la gauche ou la guérir?* (LGK 78) is known: "In 1900, anarcho-syndicalism was at the height of its power. The French working class has never been more aggressive and never stronger than at that time." But this praise was for an anarchism that Sartre considered an anachronism in the 1950/60s. Although anarcho-syndicalism had brought into being the first organs of unification of the working class, it had ultimately been the product of a working-class elite for whose existence the universality of the machine was a historical prerequisite. According to Sartre, with the advent of specialised machines and mass production, the basis for the existence of anarcho-syndicalism had ceased to exist (KF 260-5; KDV1 257-263; LGK 78).

Sartre's statements about his political stance in the period before the Second World War were also well-known. In *Merleau-Ponty vivant* (Engl: *Friendship and Contradictions. On Merleau-Ponty*, 1961) he described himself as a belated anarchist: "Merleau converted me: at the bottom of my heart I was a belated anarchist (FUW 80). He repeated the same statement in a film that Alexandre Astruc and Michel Contat made substantially in Feb./March 72, but which did not appear in cinemas until 1976.

Sartre was to continue his commitment to these New Social Movements until the end of his life. Even though there was a division of labour between Beauvoir and Sartre, insofar as the feminist concerns fell into Beauvoir's domain and the others into Sartre's, Sartre repeatedly spoke out clearly in favour of the legitimacy of women's concerns and also actively campaigned for them¹⁰. As early as 1972 there was a debate in the Maoist newspaper *La Cause du Peuple*, whose editorship Sartre had taken over, at which Sartre pushed through that women finally had more to say (EAS 32). In an interview with Rupert Neudeck in 1979, he said (MFSL 1221):

I am entirely in favour of this attempt to give women equal place and rights in society.

Regionalist movements, including those that sought separation from their nation-states by force, repeatedly received Sartre's support. In 1973, *Les Temps Modernes* published a triple issue – the only triple issue besides the one on the Hungarian uprising – entitled "Minorités nationales en France". In a centralist state like France, this publication bordered on treason. In 1971 and again in 1975, Sartre spoke up for the Basques at trials of ETA members in Spain, and in 1976 for Corsicans accused of the events in Aléria. In November 71, he wrote a preface to the programme of an event at which singers from the Basque Country, Brittany and Occitania performed at the Mutualité. But distant minorities could also count on Sartre's support, such as the Québécois in the years around 1970 or the Kurds in Iraq in 1975.

Alongside women and regional minorities, gays were another focus of Sartre's commitment to a diverse society. The importance of deviant sexual behaviour as undermining bourgeois morality

¹⁰ See WSTL 286, VNBG 84 or in GDE 5 ("I am a feminist myself"). Sartre already expressed Beauvoir's central statement "One is not born a woman, one becomes one" from *Le Deuxième sexe* (1949) in *Baudelaire*: "that the 'feminine' springs from the circumstances and not from the sex." (B 94).

was already expressed in Sartre's early literary works, from *La Nausée* (Engl: *Nausea*) to the collection of novellas *Le Mur* (Engl: *The Wall*) and the series of novels *Les Chemins de la liberté* (Engl: *The Roads to Freedom*). After the Second World War, together with Jean Cocteau, he tried to help Jean Genet, a self-confessed homosexual who was unpopular with most homosexual writers, to achieve a breakthrough as a writer. In the early 1970s, Sartre actively supported the newly emerging gay movement. Guy Hocquenghem, the co-founder of the Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire and the most important left-wing gay activist, wrote a provocative article on homosexuality in the magazine *Tout!* in 1971, which earned Sartre a criminal complaint as editor of the magazine. From 1976, Hocquenghem also worked in the newspaper *Libération*, founded by Sartre, which was the first French newspaper to publish gay contact advertisements. On the occasion of Pier Paolo Pasolini's murder by a hustler in 1976, Sartre spoke out against the widespread condemnation of homosexuality. It is significant that Sartre gave the very last interview before his death to the first French gay magazine, *Le Gai Pied*.

In addition to the women's, gay and regionalist movements, Sartre was also active in various other social movements. The fight against racism and the fight for prisoners were of particular importance. As his works *Réflexions sur la question juive* (Engl: *Anti-Semitism and Jew*) and *Orphée noir* (Engl: *Black Orpheus*) and many actions against anti-Semitism and racism as well as his lifelong support for the state of Israel show, the rejection of racism was one of Sartre's fundamental political values. In contrast, his commitment to prisoners in the years 1970-74 (see DST; often alongside Michel Foucault) represented a new field of action. In the German-speaking world, Sartre's visit to Andreas Baader in 1974 in particular achieved a high profile. This visit was mistakenly understood as an act of support for the RAF instead of an action against the background of the discussion about (political) prisoners and their living conditions in France.

Sartre poured out his vitriol on the parties in general and the communists in particular in *L'Espoir maintenant*. Whereas in the 1977 interview with *Lotta Continua* he had accused the Eurocommunists of being oriented towards the bourgeois, traditional state, he now described them as the worst enemies of the revolution (BUG 32). Every party is necessarily stupid, he said, because the ideas come from above and interfere with what is thought below. (BUG 17). He had already stated in the interview with Clément that the parties with their party leaderships are right-wing and only mass movements are really left-wing (GDE 3).

Many Sartrians were highly surprised when *L'Espoir maintenant* was published. The expression "seduction of an old man" was in circulation, the image of a Sartre who, at the end of his life, was pushed by Benny Lévy towards a philosophy that contradicted his earlier philosophical thinking. However, the development of Sartre's political philosophy described here shows that it was not an old man's seduction, but a systematic further development of Sartre's own thinking, which he advanced independently and in part against Benny Lévy's intentions. Benny Lévy can be accused of many things. He displayed a very dominant behaviour in the conversation. It is not surprising that Sartre, who was an outspoken softie, had his difficulties with this. Similar things had happened before in interviews, for example in those with John Gerassi. But there can be no question of an old man's seduction. Sartre did not give in on the decisive points.

Sartre's new political philosophy was not a foreign product, but was consistently advanced by him. It is much more in line with his main philosophical works *L'Être et le néant* and the *Critique* than his earlier mixture of a Marxist existentialism. Only in his late political philosophy can one speak of a unified methodological basis, for before that it was always a compromise between his original methodological individualism and the methodological holism essentially associated with Marxism. With his new political philosophy, Sartre moved away from a Marxist-inspired political philoso-

the rejection of nation-state and national party-based politics. The project of a transnational party alluded to in the interview with Clément was to find its actual realisation in 1989, when the Partito Radicale renamed itself the Partito Radicale Transnazionale.

Sartre probably understood this supranational Europe at the same time as a Europe composed of small and smallest units – whereby these units would probably be even smaller than Leopold Kohr and Alfred Heineken imagined in their visions of a Europe of the regions. In the conversation with Goytisoló, Sartre showed an unwavering interest in Spain’s regionalist, separatist movements. The combination of transnationalism and regionalism points to the idea of a federal Europe of small regions, whereby Sartre’s small electoral communities would still form the original cells⁶⁶ of such a federal Europe.⁶⁷ Sartre advocated true democracy as a way of life. This would be more than just a political form of power or a way of allocating power (BUG 41). Our current democracy with its parties, Sartre stated in continuation of his earlier views, is the opposite of a society based on fraternity (BUG 42):

But now it is obvious that in modern democracies there is no longer a people, because the people does not exist. [...] at present there is no longer a people, because those whose way of life is completely individuated by the division of labour, who have no relations with other people except professional ones, and who every five or six or seven years perform a certain act, which consists of taking a piece of paper with a name on it and putting it in a ballot box, cannot be called a people.

⁶⁶ One could imagine that today controversial issues such as those around immigration, refugees, multiculturalism, sexual and gender issues, weapons, but also social security would be regulated at the level of small electoral communities.

⁶⁷ With this view, Sartre is close to Proudhon’s concept of a federalist organisation of society – at least as far as the transitional period is concerned. For the distant future, a model of a Bakunin-type society is not excluded.

Behind Sartre’s commitment to the anti-hierarchical and libertarian movement and support for the New Social Movements was his increased identification of socialism and individual freedom (IAR, Dec. 72):

[108] For me, the society that would emerge from a revolution would have to be a society in which man is free and responsible. [198] In our discussions here we have defined our idea of freedom. These ideas express how each of us sees man, explains man in his totality, which presupposes freedom. In other words, I think that revolution, if it is to take place, must give man access to freedom, nothing else, and I believe that in a certain sense all revolutions have had the same meaning, even for Lenin.

Despite Sartre’s *captatio benevolentiae* in direction of Lenin, his conception of a socialist society had always been more influenced by Kant and early Marx than by the later communist theorists. Socialism for him was that form of society in which every human being is at once an end, not merely a means. He identified the future socialist society with Kant’s realm of ends (EM 246, also MR 240, WIL 222). In his Marxist period, the realm of ends was transformed into the ideal of “to each according to his needs”. This phrase was not only an integral part of the Marxist definition of a socialist-communist society, but has just as much validity among the anarchists. It was the lowest common denominator that united Marxists and anarchists in the First International (1864-72)¹¹. The following quotation from *On a raison de se révolter* (May 1973; IAR

¹¹ See also the sentence from Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels: *Manifesto of the Communist Party*: “In place of the old bourgeois society with its classes and class antagonisms comes an association in which the free development of each is the free development of all”. (http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me04/me04_459.htm; 27.3.17).

164) proves that the ideal of “to each according to his needs” was still valid for the Sartre of the 1970s:

A real revolution takes place when you move from the idea of a wage for a manufactured object to that of a wage for the individual, for the person who has needs..

By referring to the freedom of the individual and individual needs, Sartre laid the foundation of his conception of society as a pluralistic society beyond the simplistic Marxist conception of society. Needs and values are based on the person’s fundamental choice. Every project is ultimately an individual project based on an *acte gratuit*, however much the individual projects may be based on the same objective spirit that was imparted to individuals in the phase of constituting the subject. But in the phase of personalisation, the individual has the ontological freedom to revolt against the mediated values and needs. The plurality of fundamental choices forms the basis of pluralist society and thus also for the conflicts between individuals, which for Sartre always formed a basic constant of social life.¹²

Sartre connected very early the idea of socialism with the idea of freedom, as the name of his short-lived Résistance group of 1940 shows: *Socialisme et liberté*, Socialism and Freedom. But in the Cold War and liberation wars of the 1950s and 1960s, the idea of socialism as individual freedom receded into the background. In the aftermath of May 68, it took the various New Social Movements, each of which emphasised the interests of members of a wide variety of groups, to revive the link between socialism and individual freedom.

¹² Sartre advocated a metaethical position of relativism, according to which ultimately all values are equally (un)justified. The recourse to natural law or moral sense (e.g. as an innate sense of solidarity) advocated by most anarchists is not compatible with Sartre’s metaethics, which in this respect has more in common with extreme representatives of individual anarchism such as Stirner.

Marco Panella’s Partito Radicale was an Italian party that could be described as spontaneist⁶⁴ in a similar way to Philippe Gavi’s *Vive la révolution* movement. In the Partito Radicale, which always campaigned against Catholic Italy and for progressive causes, Sartre seemed to have found a new political partner on the level of party politics in the last years of his life.⁶⁵ His most important contacts with the Partito Radicale were Macciocchi as well as the Italian writer Leonardo Sciascia, both of whom had previously been involved with the Communists. With its campaigns for divorce, abortion, legalisation of light drugs and women’s and gay rights, among other things, the Partito Radicale was largely in Sartre’s political line. Sartre accordingly also symbolically supported their hunger strike against world hunger and the boycott of the first elections to the European Parliament. An important feature of the politics of the Partito Radicale was

⁶⁴ As a genuinely spontaneist party, it also included spontex actions such as the candidacy (and election) of the porn actress Cicciolina to the Italian parliament.

⁶⁵ I have long argued that Sartre’s core political values, his four great No’s against militarism, colonialism, discrimination and bourgeois morality, originated with the left-liberal Radicaux-socialistes (often mistakenly translated as radical socialists instead of socialist radicals) and that Sartre was ultimately a radical radical. The philosopher and radical-socialist Alain, Sartre’s role model at the time of the ENS [*École Normale Supérieure, public higher education institution training the elite of the French Nation – Translator’s note*], wrote in his proposition “Les mots et les choses” of 3 April 1909 that people were becoming socialists because liberals were not living up to their own principles: “The view was progressive against the retreating opportunists, radical against the retreating progressive governments, radical-socialist against the retreating radical governments, and yet always remained the same. I can already see a time coming when the whole world will be socialist.” If we join Sartre’s development, Alain’s statement must be extended as follows: “[...] radical socialist against the retreating radical governments, left socialist against the retreating radical socialist governments, communist against the left socialists, Maoist against the communists, anarchist against the Maoists.” Sartre ended up back where he started, as a sympathiser of a party of radicals. Incidentally, when Sartre spoke of the *Radicaux-socialistes*, he usually called them *Radicaux*.

European Defence Community and the Franco-German treaties because he feared they would cement the separation of Western and Eastern Europe. In 1978, he consistently supported Leonardo Sciascia when he launched a petition to boycott the first elections to the European Parliament as a protest against a Europe under American-German domination. A year earlier, Sartre had already protested in *Le Monde* (10.2.77) in an article entitled *Les militants socialistes et la construction de l'Europe* against the Atlanticist policy of the four presidents Jimmy Carter, Helmut Schmidt, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Giulio Andreotti, which divided Europe and did not unite it. He did not want to see Europe descend to the level of a new Latin America under American-German leadership (MSE 2):

One cannot hope to separate domestic politics from international problems today, nor to change society in France, without fighting American-German hegemony over Western Europe. [TRANS. A.B.]

His surprising words in the interview with Clément about the Italian Partito Radicale should also be understood in the context of a supranational Europe that transcends the nation state. (GDE 5):

An international radical party that would have nothing to do with the current radical parties in France? And which would have, for example, an Italian section and a French section, etc. I have seen Italian radicals and I liked their ideas and actions. I think that parties are still needed today; only later will there be politics without parties. So certainly, for such an international organisation I would feel friendship. [TRANS. A.B.]

With sympathy for the New Social Movements, there was also a rise in Sartre's interest in workers' self-management in the workplace.

[IAR 179, July 1973] At the beginning [of the self-management movement with Lip as the outstanding example] was, I think, after all, the equality of workers at all levels. This is at the same time the deeper meaning of Lip and the unity prevailing in the new left, the idea of abolishing hierarchy, the idea of absolute equality of all work and of all workers. [...; 180] [The workers at Lip] have experienced in a very concrete way the absurdity of a hierarchy and different wages [...; 181] We are dealing here with a first attempt, that will fail.¹³

Sartre did not have in mind here self-management in the degenerated sense of Yugoslav self-management,¹⁴ but rather that which was associated with the movement of the anarcho-sindicalists. He had already found praise for these in *Les Communistes et la paix* (Engl: *The Communists and Peace*; 1954; KF 260-65)¹⁵, the *Critique*

¹³ Lip was a Besançon watch factory at the forefront of the movement for workers' self-management. The campaign for a self-managed Lip began in 1973, but as Sartre foresaw, it failed. The company went bankrupt in 1976.

¹⁴ Due to Sartre's trips to Yugoslavia in the 50s and 60s and his friendship with Vladimir Dedijer, a comrade-in-arms of Milovan Djilas, it can be assumed that Sartre already had contact with the Yugoslav form of self-government in the 60s. Before that, there were already relations with the group *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, whose leader, the ex-Trotskyist Cornelius Castoriadis, had already advocated self-management in the 1950s. When Michel Contat noted in an interview on Sartre's seventieth birthday that the libertarian socialism to which Sartre now referred had previously tended to be found in the group *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, Sartre's discomfort was palpable, for Sartre had previously rejected them. He replied that their thoughts may now seem more correct, but their position had been wrong at the time, i.e. in the 1950s (SPSJ 214f.).

¹⁵ In *Les Communistes et la paix*, Sartre spoke generally of revolutionary syndicalism, which, in addition to anarcho-syndicalism, also represented a not explic-

(1960; KDV 257-163), *Qu'est-ce que la subjectivité?* (Engl: *What is Subjectivity?*; QS 68-71) and in *Achever la gauche ou la guérir?* (1965; LGK 78). In the 1970s, Sartre returned to self-management as the form of management most compatible with his ideas of an anti-hierarchical and libertarian society. On this basis, Sartre also supported the Lip activist Charles Piaget as a presidential candidate in the first round of the presidential elections in 1974. That Sartre's interest in self-government was not a flash in the pan became apparent during his 1975 trip to Portugal a year after the Carnation Revolution. In the series of articles "Sartre et le Portugal" (SP 24.4.1975), Sartre manifested a much clearer interest in self-management than Lévy.

A year and a half passed between the first discussions and the publication of *On a raison de se révolter*. The fact that the political discussion had advanced in the meantime did not benefit the reception of the work. However, the fact that the positional references in the discussion were not of a one-off, merely time-related character is demonstrated by Michel-Antoine Burnier's interview, which first appeared under the title *Sartre parle des maos* in the magazine *Actuel* at the beginning of 1973 and then under the title "Entretien avec Sartre" in *Tout Va Bien*. This is probably the most representative text of Sartre's political stance around 1973, but since it only appeared in insignificant journals, it unfortunately remained largely unknown.¹⁶ Here too, Sartre professed his support for the anti-hierarchical and libertarian movement. He again deplored the sexist attitude of many Maoists and recounted how he had to inter-

itly anarchist syndicalism in the style of Pierre Monatte. The mention of syndicalism in this context probably occurred not least against the background of the discussion with Albert Camus (cf. AAC 30f.). Both Sartre and Camus held syndicalism in high esteem. What separated them was the relevance of syndicalism to the second half of the 20th century. In contrast to Camus, Sartre considered it at the time to be a phenomenon that had been rendered obsolete by technological development.

¹⁶ And this despite being published twice in English, first in *Telos* in summer 73 and the second time in Feb. 74 in *Ramparts* magazine in San Francisco.

Looking back at Sartre's statements about France and the Soviet Union in the 1950s, this major change is quite surprising. The statement in the interview with Macciocchi is confirmed by Sartre's scathing judgement of the French left in the interview with Catherine Clément.

This raises the fundamental question of what kind of state Sartre had in mind. Sartre did not comment on the possible tasks of such a state.⁶² There are, however, indications of Sartre's ideas regarding the size of the state. A look at Sartre's past shows that he always advocated a united, independent Europe. In the run-up to the founding of the R.D.R. (Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire)⁶³, Sartre signed two appeals for an independent, united, socialist Europe together with Camus, Rousset, Mounier and others in autumn 47. In 1948, he was a member of the committee of the Comité français d'échanges avec l'Allemagne nouvelle, which aimed to reintegrate Germany into international cultural life. In April 49, he gave a lecture at the Centre d'Études de Politique Étrangère on the *Défense de la culture française par la culture européenne*. His participation in various East-West writers' meetings between 1954 and 1963 also primarily served the goal of maintaining the cultural unity of Europe across the fences of the Cold War.

In keeping with the goal of a united Europe, he fought early on against all forms of division. In 1954, he protested against the

⁶² In addition to traditional tasks such as external protection and the maintenance of a minimum level of internal tranquillity, the state, which would be superior to the small electoral communities, would probably have the following tasks in particular: 1. setting the rules on the free movement of persons between the communities; 2. setting the rules on the free movement of goods between the communities and the rules on joint infrastructure projects; 3. setting a common minimum set of guaranteed human rights.

⁶³ The R.D.R. was a neutralist, pro-European movement of the non-Stalinist revolutionary left, committed to freedom, human rights, socialism, non-alignment and against colonialism. Its leaders were Sartre and Rousset. It existed from spring 48 to autumn 49.

As Sartre put it in conversation with Fornet-Betancourt, it will take at least three more generations for the state to disappear (AM 366):

Yet neither we ourselves nor our children will witness the disappearance of the state; perhaps our great-grandchildren will succeed.

Sartre is obviously borrowing here from the Marxist concept of a transitional period of socialism towards that time which, according to the Marxists, will be the time of communism, where there will no longer be scarcity and the principle of “each according to his ability, to each according to his needs” will prevail.⁶⁰ But while according to the Marxist view this transitional period of socialism is one in which the dictatorship of the proletariat rules and the proletariat (or the party as its vanguard) uses the state and its power to suppress its opponents, Sartre envisages a state for this transitional period that is more like Proudhon’s federalist state.⁶¹

But what kind of state did Sartre envisage for the transitional period? It is quite obvious that Sartre did not envisage a socialist state in the sense of Soviet real socialism. Indeed, he prefers the less authoritarian French state to the Soviet one, as he noted in the interview with Macciocchi Sartre (UV 86):

The state, for example, is less determinant in France than in the USSR and is a slight advance. [TRANS. A.B.]

⁶⁰ Already in *On a raison de se révolter* he had spoken of the fact that politicians could only be dispensed with in a communist society (IAR 221).

⁶¹ This brings us back to the early Sartre, who drafted a constitution for the French Republic in 1941, which, according to Simone Debout, who was then a member of Sartre’s resistance group *Socialisme et liberté*, was strongly influenced by Proudhon’s thoughts (Annie Cohen-Solal: *Sartre 1905-1980*. Rowohlt: Reinbek 1991, p. 279).

vene to make women’s ideas more heard (EAS 32). Again he also spoke up for the gays, despite the unpopularity of this cause among the working class (EAS 31).

A new addition was his advocacy for the free use of drugs (EAS 32):

Everyone has the right to do what he wants; the state justice should have nothing to object to. [...] In the name of what right do they want to prevent people from committing suicide? [TRANS. A.B.¹⁷]

as well as the environmental movement (EAS 33):

[Ecology] is also part of the investigation we want to undertake with *Libération*. I don’t think that the society that would be born of a revolution could be a growth society. [...] Only socialism will bring a solution here, provided that it does not lock itself into the productivism and centralism of the Soviet model. [Ü. A.B.14]

Alongside the protests against the Fessenheim nuclear power plant in Alsace in 1971, the struggles against the expansion of the Larzac military training area in southwest France in 1973/74 marked the birth of the French Green movement. It was here that the career of José Bové, probably the best-known French Green, began his political campaign. Sartre was one of the first famous supporters of this movement.

It is also highly noteworthy in *Sartre parle des maos* that Sartre emphasised the rights of the individual to a trial under the rule of law. A fifteen-year-old miner’s daughter had been murdered in Bruay-en-Artois. The suspect was the notary Pierre Leroy, who

¹⁷ Translation by the author.

also worked for the mining companies. The Gauche Prolétarienne, Sartre's politically closest ally, called for lynch law, Foucault for a special form of popular justice. Sartre, who had himself advocated popular justice a year earlier¹⁸, contradicted both and in the 16.5.72 issue of *Libération* now took the view that even a political opponent was entitled to a trial conducted correctly under the rule of law (see also PJP 22f.). Sartre reiterated this position in an interview with Burnier (EAS 33):

For me, executing Leroy without a trial would have been tantamount to a pure act of lynching. [TRANS. A.B.]

In fact, Sartre increasingly clearly advocated that those who were in political opposition to him were also entitled to fundamental human rights¹⁹. As early as the mid-1960s, he advocated for Soviet dissidents and, since 1971, for the right to emigrate from the Soviet Union, which was demanded above all by Jews – this despite the fact that most dissidents, like most Jews willing to emigrate, were ideologically mostly Sartre's opponents. The culmination of this stance in favour of individual rights was his work on behalf of the boat people in the summer of 1979. Together with his long-time ideological opponent Raymond Aron, he campaigned for the rescue of South Vietnamese small capitalists and their families who were fleeing North Vietnam's racist policies. A supporter of North Vietnam and the Viet Cong in the 1960s and early 1970s had

¹⁸ In *La Cause du Peuple-J'accuse* of 28 June 71 with his contribution *Why a people's court against the police*.

¹⁹ In Sartre's ethics, all values are based on individual decisions. Today's common understanding of human rights, based on natural law concepts, is not compatible with Sartre's (but also, for example, Habermas') philosophy. Accordingly, human rights do not exist as claims and rights independent of concrete people, but only insofar as they are granted by political (or judicial) decisions. But the objective relativity of values (and truth) does not change their claim to absoluteness from the perspective of the subject.

constraints⁵⁸, a central concept for explaining the reasons for the failure of subjects and groups, and thus for better explaining the limited anthropological freedom of subjects and groups.

Violence arises from the conflict over the individual realisation of the human being and the associated struggle against scarcity. Even if Sartre was not entirely clear about the exact relationship between violence and fraternity, as he himself admitted, violence was for him the opposite of fraternity (BUG 52f.). Sartre did not want to agree without reservation to Lévy's proposal of a fraternity without terror (BUG 38, 56). As a dialectician, Sartre refused to abandon the *fraternité-terreur* of the *Critique*, despite pressure from Benny Lévy. Sartre insisted on the position he had already taken in *Sartre. Un film*, that social harmony is not realisable today because of scarcity (SF 188)⁵⁹. And scarcity will continue for a long time. Accordingly, violence does not disappear immediately. Violence in the struggle of the colonised against the colonial masters is and remains justified (BUG 53). Sartre, for whom failure was an integral part of his philosophy, remained a realist. Benny Lévy in *L'Espoir maintenant* did not succeed in dissuading Sartre from his philosophical pessimism (BuG 21f.).

Because scarcity will continue to exist in the future, the state will still be needed in the foreseeable future (AM 367):

However, these communities cannot be completely anarchist, since the police, the army and the laws of the state in which they will find themselves will continue to exist and will watch over the fact that the state is respected.

⁵⁸ In French: *la rareté, les contre-finalités, les exigences*. In this context, the latter stand for factual requirements. For the sake of clarity, however, I prefer to translate them as factual constraints.

⁵⁹ As much as Axel Honneth's concept of social freedom shows kinship with Sartre's concept of fraternity, Honneth's apotheosis of social freedom would not be shared by Sartre.

of the non-productive, liberation from the oppression of the state represented for Sartre a goal at least on a par with changes in the relations of production.

This does not mean that Sartre no longer attached importance to materiality. Rather, it was a further development of ideas whose origins can already be found in the *Questions de méthode* and the *Critique*:

[BUG 50] people [...] have a future based on the principles of common action, while at the same time a future looms around them based on materiality, that is, basically on scarcity. [...] 51] People have certain needs and the external situation does not allow them to realise these needs. There is always less than one needs, too little food for the needs and even too few people who care to produce this food. In short, we are surrounded by scarcity, which is a real fact. We always lack something. Consequently, there are two attitudes, both of which are human but seem incompatible, and yet which one must try to live at the same time. There is the effort, apart from all other conditions, to realise man, to produce man: that is the moral relationship. And then there is the struggle against scarcity.

With the concept of scarcity, Sartre adopted a central *terminus technicus* from *Critique I*. Scarcity, actually a core concept of (bourgeois) neoclassical economics, but which Sartre understood in a very broad sense⁵⁷, was, along with counterfinalities and factual

⁵⁷ Scarcity in conventional economics refers to material goods. Already in *Critique*, Sartre, who took the concept of scarcity from bourgeois economics, expanded its content. Scarce goods also include loved ones, health, happiness or – as he shows in the second volume on the basis of Stalin and his struggle to succeed Lenin – politicians. Along with Gary Becker, Sartre was one of the first to understand the economic concept of scarcity in a very broad sense.

now become one who fought for the right to life of their political opponents.²⁰

Confirming the basic tenor in *On a raison de se révolter* and in *Sartre parle des maos*, a third interview was published in the German magazine *Der Spiegel* in Feb. 73 under the title “Popular Front no better than Gaullists” (VNBG 84):

There has been [since May 1968] a great movement for the legitimacy of an anti-hierarchical order, a movement that advocates complete freedom – I don’t mean that in the anarchist sense – for the freedom of women or homosexuals, for example.

Sartre’s hope for the withering away of the state also goes hand in hand with his advocacy of an anti-hierarchical-libertarian society. The idea of socialism based on the conquest of state power by socialists or communists was now more clearly abhorrent to him than at any time since 1941. He did not rule out that a state in which the communists and socialists held power would be even worse than a Gaullist rule.²¹ He did not think much of nationalisations, because they only led to state capitalism (VNBG 88).

Sartre had already consistently rejected the *Programme commun* of communists, socialists and radicals, which envisaged extensive nationalisations, in the summer of 72. And in an article in the

²⁰ Anyone who reads Sartre’s earlier statements carefully can see that Sartre was usually more lucid in his statements than his one-sided political support would suggest: the colonialist was not only an oppressor, but an oppressed himself (VE 152); the manager is even more alienated than the worker (HJ 252). Similarly in 1975: the woman is in some ways freer than the man (ME 178f.). Sartre not only spoke of dialectics, he also applied them.

²¹ Sartre always had reservations about idealised notions of a communist society. In the *Cahiers pour une morale*, he equates communist society not only in Marx’s sense with the end of (pre-)history, but also with death (EM 254). Life for him obviously means a life of contradictions. In *On a raison de se révolter*, Pierre Victor echoes Sartre’s statement that “revolution [was] possible, but presumably a scarcely less detestable society would emerge from it.” (IAR 57).

January 1973 issue of *TM*, he rejected participation in the upcoming parliamentary elections in March 73. What he considered elections to be, he already stated expressively in the title: “Elections, piège à cons”: Elections, idiot traps (cf. WI). Once again, Sartre’s reservations about the state, its institutions and especially the parties, which had already distinguished him in his first proto-anarchist period, were clearly evident. As Sartre said in *On a raison de se révolter*, everything institutionalised must be called into question (IAR 36). Politicians were cynics for him (IAR 219). Only rarely (for example, in 1956) did Sartre take part in elections. And whenever he did vote, he regretted it afterwards. In *Ein Betriebstribunal* (engl.: *A Factory Tribunal* 1971), Sartre stated: “Elections = betrayal” (BT 403). If Sartre supported the Trotskyist Alain Krivine in the first round of elections in 1969 and Piaget, the animator of the struggles for Lip, as presidential candidates²² in 1974, it was not out of conviction regarding the sense of state elections, but because he hoped for a propaganda effect.

With the collapse of the Gauche Prolétarienne in Oct. 73, Sartre and Beauvoir, who had been a couple not only philosophically but also politically for over forty years, were faced with the question *quo vadis?* The Leftists had degenerated into insignificance. What remained on the left were the communists and socialists. The (ex-)Trotskyists were still meaningless at that time. While Beauvoir took a significant step in the direction of social democracy and supported Mitterrand as presidential candidate in the second round of the 1974 elections, Sartre vehemently rejected him and returned to

²² Krivine was a candidate of the Trotskyist Ligue Communiste (1969-73), which continued in the Front communiste révolutionnaire (1974) and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (1974-2009) and later dissolved in the Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste (2009-). Piaget was to be the candidate of the PSU, but the majority of the latter joined Mitterrand. Krivine originally wanted to support Piaget, but then ran independently (without Sartre’s support) as the candidate of a minority of the PSU and the Trotskyists of the Front communiste révolutionnaire and L’Alliance marxiste révolutionnaire (1969-74).

be love, or an agreement on political ideas, on professional ideas. [TRANS. A.B.]

With fraternity as a basis, Sartre clearly distances himself from the Marxist view that production, i.e. the economy, is the primary and social relations as a superstructure are only the secondary:

[BUG 44] Only I do not hold that the primary relation would be the relation of production. [...] The deepest relationship of people lies in what unites them beyond the relation of production. In that which leads to one being something other than producers for the other. They are⁵⁵ human beings. [...] The whole distinction of the superstructure, as Marx made it, is a beautiful piece of work, only it is completely wrong, because the primary relation, the relation of man to man, is something else, and that is what we have to find out today.

In contrast to the Marxists and similar to the anarchists⁵⁶, Sartre did not see in the superstructure, and especially in the state, simply a product of the conditions at the base. Convinced of the autonomy

⁵⁵ Sartre here radicalises the liberal critique of the state, as already found in Aristotle, Tocqueville, J. St. Mill, Schumpeter, Hayek or the *Public Choice Theory* (Downs, Niskanen, Olson, Becker), according to which minorities use the state and its means for their own benefit. Sartre thus stands in opposition to philosophers who advocate the state, such as Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau and Kant, as well as Marx and, as a consequence, the socialists and communists, but also (almost) all modern political philosophers (liberals such as Rawls, Dworkin, communitarians such as Taylor, Walzer, or representatives of deliberative democracy such as Habermas).

⁵⁶ Apart from organisational questions (party, centralism), the question of the relationship between the economy and the state in particular formed the central issue of dispute between anarchists and Marxists. The Marxists rejected the anarchists’ view that the state should die off immediately after the revolution, but rather wanted to use the means of the state to change conditions in the economy.

The democracy that we want to find in its true form is not, as I long believed, the total freedom of the person, but rather ours, that is, the reciprocal freedom, the freedom of persons, insofar as they are connected with each other, to act and think by saying “we”. [TRANS. A.B.]

Sartre’s new concept of fraternity is a consistent further development of that first step he had taken in the *Critique* by introducing the third, the step from the conflictual two, the dyad, in *L’Être et le néant*, to the cooperative group, the triad, subject to a common oath.

In their perfect form, the new interpersonal relations based on fraternity involve total mutual transparency (AM 367):

Giving up power means nothing other than approaching total transparency. [...] Transparency is synonymous with love, it is the complete, conscious knowledge of the thought and action of the person who lives by our side.

Already in *Sartre. Un film*, Sartre had spoken of the goal of total transparency to be striven for – albeit with the admission that he did not fully adhere to it, especially with regard to his sexual and erotic relationships (SF 187, 189). The road to total transparency and thus also to an anarchist life in small communities based on fraternity is a long one. In an interview with Catherine Clément, Sartre expressed himself as follows (GDE 5):

Man is not transparent, but there are elements that allow us to hope that he will be. [...] [Transparency] will be possible if there is a social degree of existence of man for man, such that the relationship between two men is one of plenitude of what one has to what one gives. This is not the case, by the way. ... It can

his anarchist stance of the time before the Second World War. Neither for the person of Mitterrand (see VNBG 88) nor for the statist policies of the socialists and communists could Sartre feel attracted. This led to the political break between Sartre and Beauvoir.²³ Sartre, who at that time was still in a transitional phase from Marxist to anarchist, from a theory of society and the state that, like that of the (Soviet) Communists, was more oriented towards the state, to one that, like that of the anarchists, hoped for the withering away of the state, answered the question of the order to be striven for as follows (VNBG 86):

What is called direct democracy, in workplaces and in all assemblies where people of equal interest meet. [...] *SPIEGEL*: Workers’ councils, like those that emerged in Germany immediately after the First World War? SARTRE: Yes, or in Russia after 1905. Before 1917 there were real soviets²⁴ in Russia,

²³ In the book *La Cérémonie des adieux*, published in 1981, which contains a large interview conducted by Beauvoir with Sartre in the summer of 74, there is Sartre’s very strange statement that he ends up as a socialist-communist (socialiste-communiste) (ZA 480). It is a statement that is not confirmed by others from the same period. In fact, it is the only time Sartre referred to himself as a socialist-communist. In all likelihood, Beauvoir put this commitment to socialism-communism in Sartre’s mouth. The statement only makes sense if it is understood in retrospect of the political rift between Sartre and Beauvoir and the subsequent disputes in Sartre’s family. While Lévy, Arlette Sartre-Elkaïm, Contat and Rybalka had great sympathy for Sartre’s more anarchist statements of the last eight years of his life, Beauvoir in particular, but also Jacques Bost and Claude Lanzmann, no longer accepted the new Sartre. Beauvoir had an eminent interest in a Sartre who saw himself as a socialist-communist.

²⁴ The first soviets were formed at the time of the Russian Revolution in 1905-07. The heyday of the soviets was between the February Revolution in 1917 and the October Revolution in the same year. From 1919 onwards there were already tendencies away from soviets towards individual leadership, which intensified with the suppression of the Kronstadt uprising in 1921, the elimination of the workers’ opposition (with Alexandra Kollontai) in 1922 and the official introduction of individual leadership in industrial enterprises in 1929. See also Sartre’s

which were assemblies that could be called “direct democracy”. Later they were replaced by delegates of the authorities, that is, the party.

Sartre takes positions here that were on the one hand compatible with those in Marx’s *The Civil War in France* (about the Paris Commune), but on the other hand also corresponded to anarchist or anarcho-syndicalist ideas. In doing so, he followed up on earlier statements in an interview with the magazine *Pardon* 1970 (“Kein Erbarmen mit den Linken”; in English: “No Mercy with the Left”; Interview with Alice Schwarzer)²⁵ and in that with Claude Kiejman in 1971 “Ein Betriebstribunal” (A Factory Tribunal)²⁶. However, due to the change from the Marxist model of society with classes defined by position in the economy to an open model with the New Social Movements, Sartre expanded the model of direct democracy in the interview with *SPIEGEL*. Instead of a model of direct democracy based on workplaces, he now advocates an expanded model of democracy in “all assemblies where people of equal interest meet”, i.e. also places of residence and associations.²⁷

Linked to the shift from a Marxist model of society and history based on revolutionary violence to a libertarian, anarchist one is also the relativisation of the meaning of violence. In his preface to

account of the struggle between two power blocs, the democratic one of the soviets and the centralist-authoritarian one of the party under Lenin in IAR 36f. (A.B.).

²⁵ “Question: You plead for a social democracy. What do you understand by that? Sartre: A democracy based on labour, in fact on the soviets, the councils. The ones that the USSR wanted and that circumstances made it miss.” (KEML 445).

²⁶ “For the left radicals, it is about forming self-responsible workers’ assemblies in a factory. These assemblies are to delegate people from their ranks who are not from the unions – who may be in the union but not delegated as its officials – to talk to the employer. In other words, they want direct democracy and thereby eliminate the union, because by now you know how to do that with it.” (BT 411).

²⁷ This indirectly means a rejection of anarcho-syndicalism, which wanted to organise the whole of society exclusively on the basis of trade unions.

Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Tocqueville, J. St. Mill as well as the representatives of modernity with Rawls, Dworkin, Taylor and Habermas – have never questioned the model of large states and the associated concepts of rule and power. Even in a society that followed Rawls’ *Theory of Justice* or Habermas’ concept of deliberative democracy, oppression of the minority by the majority would be inevitable. It is Sartre who counters all these advocates of large states with a social model of small communities, because only in small communities can human beings live freely, i.e. free from power and domination.

For Sartre, the goal of such a society based on fraternity is (BUG 22f.),

to create a truly constituted association in which each person is a human being and the collectivities are also human.

Fraternity means living in group relationships (BUG 53):

For a morality, one must extend the idea of fraternity to become the only and evidential relationship between all human beings, this relationship being first and foremost a group relationship, in the real sense the relationship of small groups bound in one way or another to an idea of the family.

Contrary to what most Sartrians think, the model of siblinghood does not represent a surprising turn in Sartre’s thinking, but rather a consistent development of older ideas. Already in the interview *Pouvoir et liberté* published in *Libération*, Sartre spoke of how he and Lévy, thinking in terms of two individual selves (“je”), arrived at the common we (“nous”) (PL 11):

ical scientist Paul Hirst, for Sartre they are *communities of choice* and not *communities of fate*.⁵⁴ Sartre's small anarchist communities are communities of choice based on the same origin and common purpose. To use the terminology from the *Critique* period, it is similar constitution and similar personalisation that form the basis of these communities. The key determinant is the similar project. Individuals join together who have similar or at least compatible fundamental choices.

What determines the size of the group is the similar project. When Sartre assumes groups of the size of ten to fifty members, he probably considered this to be the maximum size of groups that can be formed from members with sufficiently compatible projects and thus values and needs for a longer-term coexistence in a group. Fundamentally, as we already know from *L'Être et le néant*, interpersonal relationships are conflictual. They are conflictual – especially in modern society – because it is not the similarity but the opposition of fundamental choices that dominates the coexistence of subjects. If subjects want to live together without conflict and thus without domination – as far as this is possible at all – then this possibility only exists in small communities. Only in such communities can human beings live in freedom according to their project. As soon as the communities become larger, conflicts arise between the different projects. In order to avoid this Hobbesian state of nature and to make possible a peaceful coexistence of people with different projects, either domination and power establishing domination or correspondingly small communities are needed. Almost all of the modern political philosophers since Hobbes – the classics

⁵⁴ While race, people, nation, mother tongue, and kinship are primarily *communities of fate*, – friendships, marriages, place of residence, place of work, and clubs are to be understood primarily as *communities of choice* – “primarily” because these are ideal-typical classifications and the transitions can be quite fluid (e.g., in the case of the concept of citizenship). Characteristic for *communities of fate* are the two criteria formulated by Seyla Benhabib: *voluntary self-ascription and freedom of exit and association*.

Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la terre* (Engl: *The Damned of the Earth*), Sartre had given the use of violence an almost unlimited free pass. Sartre's supporters and opponents alike usually generously overlooked the relativisations it contained. Even in 1968-71, Sartre adopted a largely positive attitude towards violence. In *A Factory Tribunal* (BT) he had still told the interviewer:

[BT 411] Violence is not an end, but a means. I personally am not violent ... But capitalist society – we know that – cannot be turned around in a friendly way through reforms. [...; 412] Violence is something absolutely necessary. [...; 413] Certainly, regrettable incidents occur, and one should define, if you like, a kind of “good violence”. But violence is always bad, there is no question about that. Only it is indispensable and good where it is popular violence. [...; 414] A kidnapping is neither good nor bad. It is politically valid under certain circumstances and according to its effectiveness.

In an interview with Alice Schweizer for *Pardon* in 1970, he also approved of the murder of the German ambassador Karl Graf von Spreti in Guatemala and the kidnapping of his colleague Ehrenfried von Holleben in Brazil (both in 1970). In “Popular Front No Better Than the Gaullists” (1973), Sartre now put these forms of violence into perspective. He no longer considered assassinations and kidnappings to be appropriate (VNBG 93):

SPIEGEL: What role does direct violence, terror, play in the liberation of people? *SARTRE*: An enormous role. [...] Suppose someone were to kill Nixon tomorrow [who escalated the war in Vietnam at that time and extended it to Cambodia, A.B.]. I would rub my hands together because Nixon is a man I consider

deeply harmful. But then the men who support him would still be alive and nothing would be different. *SPIEGEL*: And when insurgents kidnap ambassadors of a capitalist country to force the release of prisoners, as happened in 1970 with the West German ambassador to Guatemala, Count Spredi? SARTRE: At the beginning it brought results, for example in Brazil, but not any more.

In the interview “Terrible Situation”, published by Alice Schwarzer in December 1974 on the occasion of the visit to Baader, Sartre was even more explicit in his opposition to terrorist actions:

[SS 166] QUESTION: Does this mean that you, as a leftist, feel solidarity with the RAF in the struggle against repression, but not with the RAF’s actions and its strategy, which aims to trigger a people’s war by means of urban guerrillas? SARTRE: Correct. I do not agree with these actions. [...] That is, I am not a priori against all armed struggle. [...] I do not believe in the possibility of liberating a country through elections. I believe that the overthrow of the bourgeois powers which dehumanise man will be violent. [..., SS 167] A small group can make a coup, but not a revolution.

Asked about the assassination of the President of the Berlin Court of Appeal, Günter von Drenkmann, he clearly stated in the same interview (SS 166):

From what I know, this deed seems to me not only clumsy, but more: a crime!

primary relationship? J.-P. S.: It is the fact that birth is as much the same phenomenon for everyone as it is for the neighbour, that two people who speak to each other have, as it were, the same mother. [...] To be of the same kind is, in a sense, to have the same parents. In that sense, we are brothers. And that, by the way, is how people define the human race, not so much by biological characteristics, but by a certain relationship. [49; ...] what then is this relationship between one human being and another, which will be called brotherhood? [...] It is primarily an affective, practical relationship. [...] The relationship of man to his neighbour is called brotherhood because they feel they are of the same origin. They have the same origin, and, in the future, the common purpose. Common origin and common purpose, that constitutes their brotherhood. B.L.: Is that a true, a conceivable experience? J.-P.S.: In my view, the total, the truly conceivable experience will exist when the purpose that all human beings have within themselves, when the⁵³ *human being* will be realised.

What is decisive for Sartre’s small communities is that they are self-selected. Or, to put it in the terms of the book *Associative Democracy*, published in 1993 by the British sociologist and polit-

vidualist anarchism, Sartre’s conception of the essentially social (in the factual, not moral sense) character of man, however, forbids understanding him as an individualist anarchist.

⁵³ While race, people, nation, mother tongue, and kinship are primarily *communities of fate*, – friendships, marriages, place of residence, place of work, and clubs are to be understood primarily as *communities of choice* – “primarily” because these are ideal-typical classifications and the transitions can be quite fluid (e.g., in the case of the concept of citizenship). Characteristic for *communities of fate* are the two criteria formulated by Seyla Benhabib: *voluntary self-ascription and freedom of exit and association*.

The notion of an anarchic life in small groups is echoed in *L'Espoir maintenant* as a life of fraternity⁴⁹. The inclusion of the concept of fraternity as a central theme of his late political philosophy was both a consequence of his decades-long engagement with the French Revolution⁵⁰ and his own concrete way of life. As early as 1974, in “Terrible Situation”, Sartre had answered Alice Schwarzer’s question about the balance of his four years of concrete engagement on the side of the Gauchists (SS 169):

The existence of fraternal relations between people.
And that the old formula of the French Revolution,
liberty – equality – fraternity, is still valid.⁵¹

Sartre defined fraternity as the primary, affective relationship that two people have, based on a common idea, even if they are not siblings in the biological sense.

[BUG 45] [J.-P.S...] people would have to have a certain primary relationship, the relationship of fraternity. [...] the family relationship is primary to any other⁵² B.L.: How do you understand this

⁴⁹ Sartre’s concept of *fraternité* is usually translated as brotherhood or fraternity. However, I prefer the translation as *siblinghood*, since Sartre on the one hand advocated gender equality and on the other hand distanced himself from bourgeois abstract humanism, with which the concept of fraternity is closely associated.

⁵⁰ See footnote 35.

⁵¹ However, the central concepts of the French Revolution were *liberté* and *égalité* alone. These two concepts are indispensable components of the constitutions and the Declaration of Human Rights from the time of the French Revolution. The concept of *fraternité* only became a fixed element of the triad so commonly used today during the 19th century (Revolution of 1848, Paris Commune 1871). It was not until 1880 that it was declared mandatory for public buildings. At the time of the French Revolution, instead of *fraternité*, property or security was rather listed as the third element after liberty and equality.

⁵² As much as certain statements by Sartre and especially certain interpretations of *L'Être et le néant* suggest a closeness to (above all philosophical) indi-

This was a long way Sartre had come since his preface for *Les Damnés de la terre*.²⁸²⁹

Power and freedom

The first phase of Sartre’s anarchist period, in which he saw himself as a member of the anti-hierarchical-libertarian movement, was dominated by his commitment to various New Social Movements. The stroke in March 73 and the subsequent blindness radically changed the situation. Sartre could no longer read or write. He expressed himself slowly, with pauses – which frustrated a fast thinker and speaker like Beauvoir to no end. But the resulting distance from political actuality gave Sartre the opportunity to approach political philosophy from a fundamental point of view, largely apart from any concrete political commitment and the tactical considerations involved.

In this second phase, the focus was on a book project with Bény Lévy entitled *Pouvoir et liberté*, Power and Freedom. At its core, this book project meant a return to the approaches of *L'Être et le néant*. The starting point was once again the individual subject, the subject in its ontological freedom, acting on the basis of

²⁸ In the interview with *Newsweek* two years later, published under the lurid title “Terrorism Can Be Justified” (cf. TCBJ), Sartre seemed to have recanted his position. The published text, however, is only an excerpt from the conversation as a whole. Moreover, Sartre was an outspoken softy, i.e. he always adapted his statements to his interview partners and potential readers. Since the statement in the *Newsweek* interview, in its absoluteness and its brevity (abbreviation? Where is the emphasis, on *can* or on *justified?*), fits neither Sartre’s previous nor his subsequent statements on violence, I will neglect it. Incidentally, in WSTL, another interview Sartre gave for an American magazine, we find a similar case. In this interview, published in 1972 (WSTL 208), Sartre described himself as a communist, for which there is also no evidence in the French media.

²⁹ On the one hand, this implies a rejection of terrorist anarchism in the decades before and after 1900. On the other hand, Sartre is certainly not among the representatives of anarcho-pacifism.

its fundamental choice. The implicit return to ontological freedom may seem an anachronism, but even in his Marxist period Sartre had never abandoned the concept of ontological freedom. That this also applies to slavery is not only in *L'Être et le néant*, but also in the *Critique* (SN 944, KDVI 612). It is the subject that is the creator – whether alone or, more often than not, in groups – of all practico-inert and also of hexis as a degenerate form of praxis. As Sartre noted in 1946 in *Matérialisme et révolution*, even a communist revolution depends on the active subject as revolutionary and thus implicitly presupposes its ontological freedom. Sartre also accused the structuralists of neglecting the individual in his 1966 critique in the journal *L'Arc* (SR). They could not explain the change in structures because they only recognised the structures, but no longer the acting subjects who could change the structures in the first place.

In yet another respect Sartre returned, in the phase of *Pouvoir et liberté*, to his first great philosophical work. The opponent of the subject is no longer the “En-soi”³⁰ as it was in the *Critique*, but, as in *L'Être et le néant*, the Other, albeit not as an arbitrary Other, but as the Other in the form of power. Instead of alienation³¹ as in the *Critique*, Sartre is now more interested in power and oppression.

Sartre does not define what he means by power³². But his definition is probably very close to that of Max Weber, for whom power is “the chance that an individual in a social relationship can achieve his or her own will even against the resistance of others, regardless of what this chance is based on”.³³ As with Weber, power is the ba-

³⁰ Although Sartre rarely uses the concept of the “en- soi” in and around the time of the *Critique*, it still exists as an umbrella term that encompasses the practico-inert as well as the physical-chemical world.

³¹ In the *Critique*, alienation is an expression of the distance between the subject on the one hand and the practico-inert and the hexis on the other.

³² Being a nominalist, Sartre in general hardly gives definitions.

³³ Incidentally, there are other similarities with Max Weber, such as the differentiation between explaining (*expliquer*) and understanding (*comprendre*), which forms an important part of Sartre’s methodology and to which he added

At the moment, then, it has to be about creating opportunities for people to live freely, and to do so together with others, because, after all, one cannot be free alone.

It sounds similar in the interview with Rupert Neudeck:

[MFSL 1217] So if a society is to be based on the real freedom of people, it cannot organise itself within the framework of the state, of bourgeois democracy [...] which imposes restrictions on freedom because laws have to be respected. People have to come together in groups in their workplaces or places of residence. [...] In reality, there would then no longer be a government, but only decisions that come from the individual groups and represent the group. The group has sent me to a centre where all the groups and persons of the same order are gathered, who, by the way, are not free persons and decide entirely according to their freedom, but have a clearly defined mandate and must carry out this mandate that the group has given them. This is a completely different method from that according to which someone is sent to a parliamentary chamber, where people are sent who can make beautiful speeches in front of an assembly and explain a plan that has not come directly from the will of that group [1218] [...] This is the direction in which I try to imagine politics in a direct democracy.

Even though Sartre assumes very small communities of ten to fifty people here, the circle expands to at least a three-digit number through membership of various communities – from the self-chosen “family” as the basic unit of private life, to the place of work, to religious communities and associations.

Betancourt, Mario Casañas and Alfredo Gómez-Muller, Sartre laid out in almost two pages how he envisioned an anarchist society. This anarchist conception of a society is confirmed by two other sources, the interview by Rupert Neudeck and in particular the conversation with Benny Lévy, which appeared in French in 1980 shortly before Sartre's death under the title *L'Espoir maintenant* and later in German as *Brüderlichkeit und Gewalt*.

In the interview with Fornet-Betancourt and his two colleagues, published under the title *Anarchie et morale*, Sartre recorded:

[AM 365] But what does that mean, a society in which there is no more power? [366] We must look at the problem from three different angles: 1. First, we must examine what form of society can be built without power at all, or at least without any state power. 2. We must understand that we are infinitely far from such a society. There are forms of power which exist everywhere as collective, juridical ones, and which exert pressure on every single human being. It would be necessary to build communities in which one can live as freely as possible – as anarchists would wish to live – communities of 25 or 50, or 10 or 30 people, who realise authentic, completely authority-free [p. 367] relationships among themselves; communities based on love, but not necessarily on sexual love, but rather on the love of a child, the love of a mother, the love between two companions. [...] In Germany and France, small communities of this type exist, where people live together, work together and love each other freely. [...] Anarchist action seeks to build up not parties but – without any hierarchical structure – masses in which, although some may reflect more than others on certain questions, the decisions will be social, that is, taken together as a social one.

sis of domination for Sartre (CRDII 130). Possessing power is the prerequisite for forcing another to behave in a certain way and thus restricting their freedom.

The first concrete reference to Sartre and Lévy's project of *Pouvoir et liberté* is found in the interview Sartre granted the philosopher Leo Fretz in November 1976, published in Flemish, an interview that was unfortunately only translated into English four years later and thus made accessible to a wider public (IS 266):

Yes, I am in the process of writing a book on power and freedom with a friend [Benny Lévy, A.B.]. [...] And I will try to show that morality and politics can only make sense from that moment when the concept and reality of power are truly eliminated. A society without power begins to become a moral society because a new form of freedom is created, a freedom of reciprocal relations of persons in the form of a "we". [TRANS. A.B.]

The official, albeit very brief, announcement of the book *Pouvoir et liberté* was made on 6.1.1977 in the newspaper *Libération*.³⁴ The book, in the form of dialogues between Sartre and Lévy, was to focus on their views on morality and politics and thus on a normative political philosophy. Their source material was texts on the French Revolution, with which Sartre returned to material in which he had already been interested in the 1950s³⁵.

the third type of comprehending (intelliger) in the *Critique*. On understanding and explaining and the connections with Karl Jaspers, Max Weber and Raymond Aron, see *Science and Philosophy in Jaspers and Sartre*.

³⁴ See the interview by Sicard (EEP 14f.) in 1977/78 (published in 1979).

³⁵ Around 1955, Sartre worked on a film scenario about Joseph Le Bon, the Jacobin and activist of the French Revolution. He had already worked intensively on this subject in the years before, as the manuscripts *Mai-juin 1789. Manuscrit sur la naissance de l'Assemblée nationale* and *Liberté – Égalité. Manuscrit sur la genèse de l'idéologie bourgeoise*, published in *Études Sartriennes* No. 12 in 2008, show.

At the forefront of the discussions was the theme of reciprocal freedom (PL 11):

The democracy that we want to find in its true form is not, as I have long believed, the total freedom of the person, but rather ours, that is, the reciprocal freedom, the freedom of persons, insofar as they are connected to each other, to act and think while they can say “we”.
[TRANS. A.B.]

It is not a question of the ontological freedom of a solipsistic subject, but of how subjects can act, think and live together with their respective subjective ontological freedom. This is already a reference to the subsequent third phase of fraternity, when the theme of the “we” came to play a much more significant role compared to the phase of power and freedom.

At the centre of Sartre’s thinking in the years 1975 to 1979, however, was the question of how power and freedom fundamentally fit together. A first fundamental statement was made in an interview with *Lotta Continua* in September 77, which appeared under the title “Libertà e potere non vanno in coppia” (LPNV)³⁶ and

³⁶ The conversation in *Lotta Continua* also contains a hefty condemnation of the *nouveaux philosophes* because, as former Maoists, they had switched from the extreme left to the right. André Glucksmann, former leading member of the Gauche Prolétarienne, had published the book *La Cuisinière et le mangeur d’hommes, réflexions sur l’État, le marxisme et les camps de concentration* in 1975, in which he strongly condemned the totalitarianism of the Soviet system. Bernard-Henri Lévy wrote an eulogy on this and, shortly before Sartre’s interview, published a work of his entitled *La Barbarie à visage humain*. The critique of totalitarianism from the left and thus of communist ideology was in full bloom and since then it has been impossible to imagine the French intellectual world without it (see Stéphane Courtois’ *Le Livre noir du communisme* from 1997). Sartre and the *nouveaux philosophes* were largely united in their critique of the Soviet Union. But Sartre wanted a critique of the Soviet Union from the left. The thesis that Sartre’s development towards anarchism is his specific response to the *nouveaux philosophes*’ critique of totalitarianism cannot be supported by facts, but the question may certainly be asked.

in *Critique I* the various forms of collectivity of subjects, from the series to the sworn group, formed the centre of Sartre’s philosophical anthropology, in the phase of fraternity it is the life of man in the group that forms part of his political philosophy.

For Sartre, man has always been essentially a social creature.⁴⁸ Even in *L’Être et le néant*, the major part of the book is devoted to social relations – however dysfunctional they may appear. Orest from *Les Mouches* (Eng: *The Flies*), in the role of a terrorist individualist anarchist from the end of the 19th century, actually forms an exceptional figure. Garcin, Ines and Estelle from *Huis clos* (Eng: *No Exit*), who cannot escape social relations with each other, are the more typical representatives of the human race. That for Sartre a committed positive life in and for society was not considered a possibility of existence only since his explicitly Marxist phase is shown by his 1940 play *Bariona*, in which the eponymous main character places himself fully at the service of society. Sartre’s last phase, in which he advocated life in small communities and fraternity, is a logical continuation of *Pouvoir et liberté*. Sartre’s political philosophy was never one of individual anarchism in the style of Henry David Thoreau and his retreat into the woods.

Based on statements Sartre made in an interview with Rupert Neudeck (MFSL 1213), he and Lévy ended the project of the book entitled *Pouvoir et liberté* in 1979. In its place came a new project, that of a dialogue in which they tried to find out where “ethics begins and where it ends” (MFSL 1213). It was the project of a normative political philosophy that culminated in the publication of *L’Espoir maintenant* shortly before Sartre’s death. At the heart of this project was Sartre’s commitment to the ideals of an anarchist society with small communities. In conversation with Raúl Fornet-

⁴⁸ As much as certain statements by Sartre and especially certain interpretations of *L’Être et le néant* suggest a closeness to (above all philosophical) individualist anarchism, Sartre’s conception of the essentially social (in the factual, not moral sense) character of man, however, forbids understanding him as an individualist anarchist.

racy, but freedom in a metaphysical sense. This is the reality of man, his way of acting. [1221; ...] And I say that one must destroy the institutions that are against true democracy. And one must try to act for those who are most threatened and marginalised in the present situation [...] A state in which some people are more elevated than others, in which a minority can say to the majority: Do this and do that – is not a democracy. That is an authoritarian state, not a totalitarian one, but an authoritarian one. [...] one cannot arrive at this valuable, human society within institutions, only in action, in the action [1222] of everyone, a moral action, by the way, because activity for the other is always a moral act.

Power and freedom are a total contradiction. If man wants to live in freedom, the state with its institutions must be abolished.⁴⁷ This was the core statement of his project “Power and Freedom”, on which he worked between (at the latest) 1976 and 1979.

Fraternity, a new form of society

While in *Pouvoir et liberté* [Power and Freedom] the relationship of the subject to power was the focus of Sartre’s political philosophy, in the third phase it was fraternity. A parallel to the development between *L’Être et le néant* and *Critique* is obvious. While

⁴⁷ Sartre here radicalises the liberal critique of the state, as already found in Aristotle, Tocqueville, J. St. Mill, Schumpeter, Hayek or the *Public Choice Theory* (Downs, Niskanen, Olson, Becker), according to which minorities use the state and its means for their own benefit. Sartre thus stands in opposition to philosophers who advocate the state, such as Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau and Kant, as well as Marx and, as a consequence, the socialists and communists, but also (almost) all modern political philosophers (liberals such as Rawls, Dworkin, communitarians such as Taylor, Walzer, or representatives of deliberative democracy such as Habermas).

whose summary is already given in the title: Freedom and power do not go together:

The theme of our current work is: power and freedom. [...] Accordingly, there is a force of revolt here that is the origin of freedom. And therefore we have to look at the whole relationship between the masses and the state. This is a first part of our work, where we want to study things along some centuries since the French Revolution. From here we would like to move to the second point, a study of the current situation: the society of today and within it the tendencies towards a solidification of the state, which you yourself have pointed out so precisely. [...] We think that there is a tendency towards the progressive dismantling of power. This is one of the essential elements of the new revolution that will take place. Because freedom does not go together with power: there is a clear contradiction between these. [TRANS. A.B.]³⁷

In mid-1978, Sartre was interviewed again on topical issues, this time by the Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo. The interview appeared in the newspaper *El País* on 11 June 1978. Continuing his thoughts from the interview with *Lotta Continua*, he called for the abolition of power. For Sartre, socialism meant that people were free and no one had power over the other (CCJPS VI):

The fundamental problem today is to decide what we mean by socialism: to create a new movement, a project of socialism analysed in the light of its

³⁷ By “solidification of the state” was meant that at that time in Western Europe, following the German model, an authoritarian regression of the state was taking place. The reason was the struggle of the states, and especially Germany under Chancellor Schmidt, against the extreme left, which led to restrictions on personal freedoms and rights.

relations to the idea of power. Are people allowed to have power over others? To allow, to conceive of these powers, i.e. authority that imposes itself from the top down and restricts the freedom of those below through orders from above, is this not already a way of making a human society that is not worth living in? Doesn't making an inequality already mean making a society that is not worthy of human beings?

I am currently working with my friend Pierre Victor on the topic of "Power and Freedom", in a book whose editing and conclusion will still take a lot of time. In this book I would have liked to present the totality of my political ideas and to specify with clarity that for me the essential thing is the abolition of the power of some over others; that a society cannot be free – and therefore, in this respect, cannot exist a humane society – if in it certain people arrogate power over others: in a word, if governments do not cease to exist in their current form and the form of the state itself is destroyed. [TRANS. A.B.]

As in the interview with *Lotta Continua*, Sartre argued that cultural workers and intellectuals should not bow to the rule of the state or the parties. He saw a struggle between two directions, as it already existed at the beginning of the 20th century, the struggle between a direction representing blindness, censorship and intransigence, associated with the communist parties and the parties as a whole, and one that stands for democracy, not bourgeois democracy, but true democracy.

Although the emphasis on the opposition between power and freedom is a significant innovation, in terms of content the phase of *Pouvoir et liberté* represented a consistent continuation of the anti-hierarchical-libertarian one in its basic orientation. This continuity is evidenced by the conversations between Sartre, Lévy, Gavi,

Sartre always had great reservations about the state and its means of coercion, reservations that he expressed only in a weakened form during his Marxist period – after all, the communists and socialists, his political allies, were notorious admirers of a strong state. With his statements in the interview with Rupert Neudeck, published in the December 1979 issue of *Merkur* magazine under the title "Man muss für sich selbst und für die anderen leben" [You have to live for yourself and for others], Sartre returned to his old radical critique of the state:

[MFSL 1216] Man as he is, that is, as a free man, is not to be governed in any [1217] way at all by a power that does not come from him. That was what was agreed upon when democracy was founded. But democracy as we know it today means that power is exercised by a very small group over the overwhelming majority of people. So this democracy is a form of breaking the people, just as kingship and aristocracy were. A certain way of life and existence is imposed on the people, they have to be this way or that way, under threat of punishment. One is obliged to do what the institutions demand. [...] Under these conditions, [the institutions] are apparatuses of oppression [...] And society remains a coercive association as long as these institutions exist, which are founded and determined by a minority.⁴⁶ [...] This means, then: a society that wants to be free and in which every member of this society should be free must not develop in this direction. And this concept of freedom does not mean the freedom of democ-

_____ cording to his performance" with communal ownership of means of production) or those of Kropotkin's communism (on the basis of "each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs" with communal ownership also of consumer goods).

⁴⁶ Here Sartre is very much reminiscent of Proudhon in *Idée générale de la révolution au dix-neuvième siècle* (S. 341) von 1851.

entially pluralist one. There is a multiplicity of value attitudes in society: all are ultimately equally unfounded and thus equally justified.

However, since man is not a solipsistic being, but one who is always neighbour to the other and presupposes this, the realisation of one's own fundamental choice is only possible in community with others. The basis of this realisation is individual freedom. However, this is opposed by the power in the state, society and the economy. Still in the interview with Sicard in 1977/78, Sartre's concept of power was a broad one. When Sartre said at that time that he was thinking of social powers and not necessarily of the state (EEP 14f.), he meant economic as well as social, cultural or political power. A little later, however, there was a remarkable change. Sartre placed more and more emphasis on the significance of state power in contrast to social or economic power. For him, the state was the apparatus of oppression par excellence. Ideas such as that of self-government, for example, lost their significance accordingly.

The reasoning behind this is probably that whatever social or economic power is involved, it can somehow be escaped. Only the state, the Leviathan, to speak with Hobbes, has the necessary sovereignty, the monopoly on the use of force, the necessary means of coercion up to and including the deprivation of liberty to force a subject to behave in a certain way. It is easy to escape one's superior by resignation, one's spouse by divorce, the state at best by emigration – and even this possibility is not always guaranteed.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Sartre was generally little interested in the economy, but all the more interested in the superstructure. There are no notable ideas from him regarding the organisation of the economy. This also applies to his anarchist period, in which it is not clear whether an economy should rather follow the ideas of Proudhon's mutualism (market economy with free contracts between cooperatives), those of Bakunin's collectivism (on the basis of "each according to his abilities, to each ac-

Serge July and Beauvoir about Portugal that appeared in *Libération* in April 75. In the first half of April, Sartre had travelled to Portugal with Lévy and Beauvoir to find out about the state of the Carnation Revolution³⁸. Sartre stood out in the talks above all because, against the power of the institutions, i.e. the army and the parties, he relied on the power of labour and the people. More pronounced than Lévy, he was interested in self-government. These were considerations that correspond very well with the basic ideas of *Pouvoir et liberté*. This insight is of great importance for understanding Sartre's development, because it documents that the basic idea of the contradiction between power and freedom was not based on a kind of old man's seduction by Lévy, but rather Sartre himself was the driving force.

Behind the opposition of power and freedom was Sartre's return to the appreciation of the human being as an individual and a subject, as was the basis of *L'Être et le néant* in particular. Sartre's concept of the individual had always differed fundamentally from the abstract subject of the Enlightenment, from Kant's transcendental subject, behind which only the white, Christian and heterosexual man hides as a member of the bourgeoisie. In his Marxist period, however, the concrete individual disappeared behind the Marxist concept of class: the individual was – despite all the relativisation of the concept of class – above all a member of a class. The softening at the beginning of the 1970s, when Sartre understood the individual as a member of a group that was (possibly) engaged in a New Social Movement, was a first step towards a return to the old understanding of the individual. In the phase of "Power and Freedom", Sartre was even more concerned with the concrete individual in his contingent situation – even if the individual remained

³⁸ The Carnation Revolution in April 74 overthrew Portugal's authoritarian regime. Left-wing to extreme left-wing officers played a leading role in this revolution. The Carnation Revolution is the foremother of the colour revolutions of the following decades (Orange Revolution in Ukraine, Cedar Revolution in Lebanon, Saffron Revolution in Myanmar, Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, etc.).

a potential member of a New Social Movement, as his statements about women and feminism to Neudeck and Catherine Clément, his interview to the gay magazine *Le Gai Pied* in 1980 or his interest in the autonomy movements in Spain in the interview with Goytisolo show. The focus was on the individual, as contingent as the root of the chestnut tree in *La Nausée*, the individuated human being, the human being in his concrete form as an acting human being (GDE 5):

The philosopher is basically the one who investigates what the human being is. There is no other definition of philosophy. [...] I think that the question that more or less obfuscates itself to everyone is still this: “What is man?” That is, in practical terms, “What can I, man, do?” [TRANS. A.B.]³⁹

In *L’Espoir maintenant*, Sartre can state accordingly:

[BUG 22] First of all, for me, as you know, there is no a priori being; so what a person is is not yet fixed at all. [...] our aim is to create a truly constituted association in which⁴⁰ every person is a human being and the collectivities are also human.

³⁹ According to Sartre’s understanding of philosophy, his biographies of Baudelaire, Genet and Flaubert (but not his autobiography *Les Mots*) are to be classified as philosophical and not as works of literary history.

⁴⁰ In the book *La Cérémonie des adieux*, published in 1981, which contains a large interview conducted by Beauvoir with Sartre in the summer of 74, there is Sartre’s very strange statement that he ends up as a socialist-communist (socialiste-communiste) (ZA 480). It is a statement that is not confirmed by others from the same period. In fact, it is the only time Sartre referred to himself as a socialist-communist. In all likelihood, Beauvoir put this commitment to socialism-communism in Sartre’s mouth. The statement only makes sense if it is understood in retrospect of the political rift between Sartre and Beauvoir and the subsequent disputes in Sartre’s family. While Lévy, Arlette Sartre-Elkaïm, Contat and Rybalka had great sympathy for Sartre’s more anarchist statements of the last eight years of his life, Beauvoir in particular, but also Jacques Bost and Claude Lanz-

a means is morally justifiable must be decided on a case-by-case basis.⁴²

These statements by Sartre on freedom, power, the state and violence are of great interest in several respects. The individual is now accorded absolute primacy. The individual does not stand for an abstract human being as imagined by classical humanism, but for a human being with his very own needs – or, in Sartre’s language from *L’Être et le néant*, with his own fundamental choice. Projects, even those of the Chinese or Indians, are understandable, as Sartre already noted in *L’Existentialisme est un humanisme* (EH 167), but not justifiable. We can discuss values, but these are ultimately not subject to rational arguments,⁴³ as Sartre noted in his metaethical reflections.⁴⁴ Sartre’s understanding of society is therefore an es-

⁴² The break between Sartre and Camus in 1952 was preceded by several years of indirect dialogue in the form of publications on the means-purpose problem: In 1943-45, Camus wrote *Lettres à un ami allemand*; in 1945, Simone de Beauvoir devoted herself to this problem in theoretical terms in the essay *Idéalisme moral et réalisme politique* and dealt with it in literary terms in *Les Bouches inutiles*; this was followed in 1946 by Camus’s *Ni Victimes, ni bourreaux*; in 1947/48, Sartre dealt intensively with the means-purpose problem in his *Cahiers pour une morale* – which, however, was not made accessible until 35 years later; In 1948, Sartre published *L’Engrenage*, a screenplay he had written two years earlier, and *Les Mains sales* premiered in the same year; Camus’s drama *Les Justes* followed in 1949, Sartre’s play *Le Diable et le bon dieu* in 1951, and Camus published *L’Homme révolté* in the same year. On this topic, see my posts *Politics and Morality* in *Jean-Paul Sartre and Truth, Recognition, Understanding and mauvaise foi. Reflections on War and Peace*.

⁴³ Sartre’s new political philosophy thus stands in contrast to Habermas’s deliberative democracy. Since the fundamental choices are arbitrary, agreement in rational discourse is only possible in exceptional cases. Sartre’s new political philosophy postulates instead that because people cannot agree in discourse, they should live in small communities of their own kind.

⁴⁴ Sartre’s metaethics is based on the pillars of anthropological value ethics (all values are created by human beings and are therefore subjective), dialogue ethics (all values and actions must be justified before others) and situation ethics (the values valid for a concrete action cannot be derived from general values, but must be invented in the concrete situation). See *Sartre and Beauvoir – An Ethics for the 21st Century*.

oppressed social force that has no other means of intervention except violence. It is useless to preach pacifism. [85; Macciocchi: ...] And is it true, as Raymond Aron says, that after the Vietnam and Cambodian wars you would no longer write a preface like the one to Fanon's *The Damned of the Earth*? [SARTRE: ...] On the preface to Fanon, perhaps I would revise something, but hardly anything. I tell you that it is a mistake to think that I have abandoned the idea of violence as an indispensable element of struggle. Certainly, by no means do I think it has the meaning Marxism gives it, "violence as the midwife of history". [...] I would say that even in a modern society like the French, for example, there is a kind of oppression against the masses that subjugates them. Where does the violence come from? There is a violence to which we should turn our backs forever, the aggressive violence, and there is an explosive and defensive violence of people who want to regain their own human dignity, or, as we would say in other societies, who want to achieve the respect of human rights. [...] We still live in a society where there is a violence that liberates, which is what we should strive for, and a violence that oppresses, which justifies the other. [TRANS. A.B.]

Sartre continued to hold to the fundamental view that contemporary society uses violence and probably uses violence to resist change. But he renounced the apotheosis of violence that his preface to Fanon's *Les Damnés de la terre* had been, at least in part, and returned to the position that had already been the basis of the dispute with Camus in 1952. History is a pool of dirt and blood in the middle of which we are caught (AAC 50). Whether violence as

Later in this work, this multiplicity of different people becomes the Human (French: *l'Homme*), the individuated human being, not the abstract man of the Enlightenment, behind which the white, Christian and heterosexual man hides as a member of the bourgeoisie, but the multiplicity of people-in-situation.

[BUG 49] In my view, the total, the really conceivable experience [of brotherhood; A.B.] will exist when the purpose which all men have in themselves, when the⁴¹ Human [trans. corrected, A.B.] will be realised.

The HUMAN stands for Sartre's singular universal, for the personalised constituted. In keeping with his focus on the concrete individual, Sartre now also became involved with people who were among his political opponents. In the interview with Catherine Clément published in November 79 under the title "La Gauche: Le désespoir et l'espoir. Entretien avec Jean-Paul Sartre" published in *Le Matin*, he recorded in relation to the Boat people from Vietnam (GDE 4):

The Vietnamese, for whom we are fighting at this moment, are precisely those who a few years ago were considered traitors, allies of the Americans... The political problem of Vietnam, of its expressions of will, of its actions, has given way to a human problem that concerns people who thought one thing or another,

mann, no longer accepted the new Sartre. Beauvoir had an eminent interest in a Sartre who saw himself as a socialist-communist.

⁴¹ While race, people, nation, mother tongue, and kinship are primarily *communities of fate*, – friendships, marriages, place of residence, place of work, and clubs are to be understood primarily as *communities of choice* – "primarily" because these are ideal-typical classifications and the transitions can be quite fluid (e.g., in the case of the concept of citizenship). Characteristic for *communities of fate* are the two criteria formulated by Seyla Benhabib: *voluntary self-ascription and freedom of exit and association*.

but who are now alone on a boat, on the sea. This is a problem that interests us insofar as they are human beings, exposed to a condition that is not part of the everyday fate of human beings... There is here – as an example – at the same time a new popular suggestion and the idea of accepting these groups and people regardless of their political views. [TRANS.]

In the interview published by Maria Antonietta Macciocchi under the title “Umanesimo e violenza” in the Italian journal *L'Europeo* in the autumn of 79, Sartre also took a position with the same thrust when Macciocchi accused him of having changed his judgement on the Vietnam War (UV 14):

I believed that one must not let people die, even if I think that the majority of these Vietnamese were against the actions we were taking to end the Vietnam War. [...] But now the war is over. They are not prisoners, but human beings for whom we must ensure normal living conditions. [TRANS. A.B.]

Behind this attitude was Sartre's new humanism. When asked what he thought of humanism now, Sartre continued in an interview with Catherine Clément (GDE 5):

I began by saying: humanism, there is no need for it. Then I said that existentialism was a humanism, and then again that it was better not to talk about it. I think that the question that we all face, more or less veiled, is still: “What is the human being?” That is, in practical terms: “What can I do as a human being?” An action imposes itself on me or refuses to do so; what is this, the moral conscience? We can very well call this humanism. In fact, if by humanism we mean taking man

as a natural object superior to others in order to dominate them, then I am not a humanist. Man is not a natural object. But if, on the contrary, we understand it to mean that man as man tries to determine the totality of what we call rights and duties, then I am a humanist. [TRANS. A.B.]

We find parallels to this not only in *L'Espoir maintenant* (BUG 23f.), but also in Macciocchi's interview when she asked about the possibilities of a “humanism from the left”. Sartre considered it possible, but not as a game of concepts, but as a moral value (UV 86):

For me, humanism is not a way of defining man, of making him a wonderful creature, but of recognising in him the neighbour, with all the obligations that this entails and the freedom that such a position implies. The essential thing is that man knows that he is man. In what sense? In the sense that he is the neighbour of another human being who wants to express the same things, and consequently all human beings are equal. [...] Our work today is not only to shape a humanist society, but is also an attempt to limit the role of the state, and the state, the anthropomorphic state, is the creation closest to Manichaeism. [TRANS. A.B.]

This new humanism was also associated with a further relativisation of the permissibility of violence.

[UV 84] If one lives in a Manichaean world, one lives badly and aggressively. Not that one must not be aggressive; more generally, I would say that aggressiveness is a human quality. But we must not start with aggressiveness as a principle. [...] Violence is an instrument of neglected people who come together as an