Daniel Colson : Anarchism is Extremely Realistic

(An Interview with Ballast Review)

Daniel Colson

02 Feburary 2015

To open the ball, Daniel Colson, sociologist, essayist (one thinks of course of his Petit lexique philosophique de l'anarchisme, de Proudhon à Deleuze), specialist of the labor movement and bookseller.

You put forward the idea that anarchism is not a way of life, a state of mind, but a real ontology. What do you mean by this?

To speak of ontology is to speak of what is, of things, of facts - domination for example, hierarchy, exploitation, oppression, sadness (to stick to negative facts - but it is true that there are many). Contrary to what is often believed (including by some libertarians), anarchism is not an ideal or a utopia, "nice ideas" that we would see every day how unrealizable they are. Anarchism is extremely realistic. It speaks of things as they are: chaos, accidents, life and death, joy, but also pain and suffering, stress, relationships of force and power, the chance and necessity of our existence as well as of the world and the universe which are ours. In short, the "anarchy" of what is. Idealism and

utopia are not on the side of anarchism, but on the side of the order, of the appearances and of the so-called realistic formulations whose main realities are those of constraint and domination. Idealism and utopia are on the side of "laws", "religions", "States" and systems (including scientific ones) which pretend to put order and sense in the chaos, to bend it to their particular logic, at the price of a lot of sufferings, denials, of violence and obligations - while these laws, these religions, these States and these systems in fierce struggle for the hegemony of their lies and their pretensions are themselves the most visible (but also blinding) sign of what they claim to fight and to bend to their particular laws.

Do you have a concrete example?

Yes, I have been a member of a libertarian bookstore, La Gryffe, for many years. Like all associations - "collective beings" as Proudhon would say -, the Gryffe has known and knows many conflicts, during its long history: a multitude of small conflicts or localized tensions, on a day-to-day basis; but also general (or overall) conflicts, more or less dramatic, in the form of periodic crises around the orientations and the functioning of the bookshop, the appropriation of the "collective force" (Proudhon) that "results" from any cooperation, group or association. These tensions and these crises often produced a deep discouragement among the members of the Gryffe as well as among those who observed them from outside. How? Even a libertarian project like Gryffe's (and I'm not saying anything about libertarian movements as a whole) can't avoid friction, leaders and "power" struggles? What would it be like in a larger framework? How can we believe in the anarchist project when the least of its manifestations and attempts fail to function without jolts, stresses, splits, departures, impotence and clashes (sometimes violent, as the history of Spanish anarchism shows)?

There are obviously reasons to be discouraged. But, from a libertarian point of view, they are not the ones we think. These

commitments proper to the parties, to the Churches and to the "sects" (which the Charter of Amiens challenges).

We have recently seen, in Spain, some anarchists being extremely hostile and virulent against a movement like Podemos, and in particular its spokesman Pablo Iglesias: isn't there a kind of purism and sectarianism, in the anarchist movement, which condemns it to the chapel, to the minority, to speak far away from "the masses", to use a word that you don't like very much?

I don't know the nature of the anarchist criticism of Podemos, and from experience I'm a little wary of it, but what we've discussed above makes it possible to understand this criticism. In terms of anarchism, Podemos has two closely related and equally unacceptable characteristics: 1) a political solution, winning elections, conquering state power; 2) basing its action and this victory (of opinion) on numbers, on a "multitude" of individual-voters-citizens, no less pathetic than the "balls-of-the-billions-consumers" denounced by Gilles Châtelet, expressing themselves only through scarves or caps of the same color, candles and torchlight retreats ; while waiting for the eventual and great choreographies of "mass" that sometimes follow and codify the initial mobilization of the "multitudes". On the other way, libertarian, of the great mobilizations of these last ten years, I allow myself to refer to an article published in the magazine Réfractions: "Les brèches de l'histoire" (n° 28, spring 2012).

A question, perhaps the most difficult one, to finish: if you had to give only one, and brief, definition of anarchism?

It is Deleuze (and Guattari) who, in a seemingly enigmatic way, gives the best definition of it: Anarchy, "a strange unity that only says itself of the multiple". I hope the above helps to clarify this definition.

reasons are not due to the weakness or the utopia of an ideal functioning which would run up against the hard reality of a world where acting like an angel most often leads to behaving like beasts unable to escape their instincts, their passions, their desires and their emotional and irrational behaviors. Far from being astonished or discouraged by this reality, anarchists should on the contrary, not rejoice in it, but notice in what tensions, conflicts, passions, rivalries and violence everywhere observed are precisely the most telling proof of the ontology they defend: the anarchy of what is, that one can observe everywhere without the slightest exception, under the veneer of religions, of States, of politeness and appearances, of hypocritical and lying arrangements always restarted - while waiting for a new crisis, a new explosion or demonstration of the anarchic and uncontrollable character of reality. The discouragement of the libertarians is not therefore in the diagnosis of this anarchic reality that they affirm elsewhere. It is rather in the difficulty to get rid of the weight of the idealistic representations, in the way that many anarchists transform the realism of their project in abstract and ideological principles comparable to all the other ideologies, religious, moral or state - and that, new Sisyphes, they vainly try, with shouts and fury, to apply to the reality, with all the more difficulties or impotence that this anarchist project, transformed in program and in ideal, doesn't even have the principles and the authoritarian and hierarchical institutions (Churches, divine laws, conformisms…) that could, as for all the others, give it the appearances of reality.

Philosophy occupies a central place in your thinking. And you like to refer to Nietzsche (an "emancipatory" Nietzsche, you even write in Three Essays on Anarchist Philosophy), whose hostility towards socialists and anarchists is well known. What do you draw from him ? In what way can he nourish the libertarian thought-action ?

It would be too long to explain in detail how Nietzsche contributes to thinking and giving substance to the libertarian project, but we can say a few words about how his thought (and his life) fits into a much larger set of authors and events: Proudhon, Deleuze, Spinoza, Foucault, for example (and as far as authors are concerned), but also people seemingly far removed from anarchism - like Gabriel Tarde or Leibniz, for example. Anarchism is not in Nietzsche, but it is Nietzsche, or an important part of Nietzsche, that is in anarchism, in a project, a movement and a thought that took shape (and meaning) in the middle of the nineteenth century, dragging with them a great number of people and above all of present and past practices and "facts" that had until now (and still have from other points of view) a completely different meaning or no meaning at all: Spartacus, the peasant revolts of Chinese Taoism, the sophists and pre-Socratics, certain aspects of religious mysticism, art, but also the very difficult living conditions of the working classes of industrial capitalism, the companionships, the worker poets, the monadology of Leibniz and Gabriel Tarde, etc.

The starting point of the conception of the world proper to the anarchism does not reside in the philosophy nor in the head of some thinkers like Proudhon or Bakounine. Bakunin "becomes" an "anarchist" late, in contact with others, under the effect of events, of his sensitive and concrete meeting with the watchmakers of the Swiss Jura for example. Proudhon's thought, at first very marked by the professional experience (printing) of the beginning of his life, is mainly due to the events of 1848, which profoundly transformed, if not what he was, at least what he thought and what he never stopped thinking. For my part (much more modest, obviously), I did not start with philosophy, but with events as well (those of May 68, this time) that changed my life, but also with long and sharp historical researches on the labor movement. I had become an anarchist from the inside, in the heat of the events

in nature between the "individual" and the "group". As Proudhon underlines it, "the individual is a group", a "compound of powers", themselves composed of other compound powers, to the infinity. The "individual is a group" and any "group is an individual", an "individuation", a "being", a "subjectivity", an "absolute" each time singular and astonishing of which only a long collective experience can hope to seize the sources and the effects, in good as in bad, under the double report of the domination and the emancipation.

You question the relevance of the notions of right and left, as an "illusion" used to fool citizen-voters. Do you think it is necessary, as Castoriadis suggested, to go beyond this divide, which in his eyes is inoperative, in order to understand our era? But some will tell you that this is "neither right nor left", a formula of the FN...

The distinction right/left as the "neither right, nor left" are political and political notions; even if, historically, they benefit and act from an old imaginary background that overflows the only political devices. Anarchism rejects politics as a death trap for a revolutionary project that embraces the totality of what is, that starts from this totality, from all its components. To the "political revolution" (a new State, new leaders, a new constitution) anarchism opposes very early on an economic and social revolution ("the Social") that is radically different from the simple and old political revolution, a revolution that starts from all things, a revolution of long duration that implies all of them in an equal way, "the universal independence", "the independence of the world" of the old workers' songs of the 19th century. Thus, in the emancipatory logic of the trade union type, the "revolutionaries" never ask their many comrades in battle whether they are socialists, right-wingers, Christians or Buddhists. The dynamics and the emancipatory logic, on the field of work in this case, but on any other field as well (patriarchy, prostitution and sexuality, artistic creation...) are entirely sufficient to themselves, without ever requiring the ideological

of the anarchist "communists" (Fontenis was a pure product of the republican school), "communism" and "individualism" being finally only the product of a free choice, not of the model of such or such brand of washing machine, but of a program, of a mode of organization and of rules chosen supposedly freely, through the glasses or the dashboards of a permanent and universal human "subject".

For the vast movements that gave body and meaning to worker anarchism as for the most lively movements of contemporary anarchism, the relation between individual and collective is posed in radically different terms and in a horizon of thought and action. In these movements (past and present), the "personal" affirmation, as Proudhon would say, has nothing liberal about it and does not refer to the modern fiction of an individual or a transcendent subject, existing outside things, situations and events. The immense majority of revolutionary militants, organically linked to mass movements (mainly trade unionism) can be qualified as "individualists" or strong "personalities", but an individualism and a personality that have meaning and existence only in collective movements, in collective "subjectivities" of which they are both the product and one of the components. In the manner of Pelloutier, the secretary of the Federation of Labor Exchanges, whose famous formula we never tire of repeating.

There have been many "individualists" like Pelloutier in the revolutionary libertarian movements, and of all kinds - but, apart from the name (which is particularly misleading), without much connection with what this word generally covers in the representations and injunctions of modernity. One last remark, of a theoretical nature, and with which we could have begun: what the practices of the movements of a libertarian character allow us to grasp empirically, massively, in the facts, the most radical and most operative libertarian thought also affirms it, with such a clearness that it should dispense with having to always justify itself. For anarchism, there is no difference

of May '68, but it was through contact with the history of the workers that I suddenly understood the breadth and depth of the libertarian project, its way of holding on to things and to the most immediate and material life, the breadth and radicality of the revolution that it implies. The miracle (or the good encounter, as Spinoza would say) is that after spending several years in the dusty archives, and publishing a very historical book, everything I had done came into line with philosophy, at least some philosophers - Deleuze and Proudhon, mainly.

In the vocabulary of contemporary philosophy, one could say that anarchism constitutes a horizon of thought or, more broadly, a "plane of consistency", would say Deleuze. Something "takes" which starts to associate and to proliferate from a great number of more or less heterogeneous entities - practices, theories, techniques, expressions, temperaments, personalities, modes of being, concepts, gestures, ideas, aesthetics, etc. - and which is not only the result of a "plan of consistency", but also the result of a "plan". Proudhon proposes a special concept to think this "catch" between different facts and forces: that of "homology", which Spinoza also uses when he explains (roughly) that there is more in common between a plough horse and an ox than between a plough horse and a race horse. Thus, realities as different as the history of the labor movement, as I had been able to grasp it, became associated (for me) with Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-oedipus, but also with a whole dimension of Nietzsche's thought and life, and, with him, a whole world of brothers, sisters and (sometimes very distant) cousins: Spinoza, Leibniz, Simondon, Tarde and many others. It is thus that one can understand the concept of positive anarchy of Proudhon, a "taking" of body and sense, not in the sense where the concrete "takes" for example (in the manner of the religious fascism of the Islamic fundamentalism), but in the sense of a jazz improvisation, of modality of association of radically different and singular entities which

recompose the world without ever ceasing to be different, to possess a reality, a mode of being and a point of view radically irreducible to all others. Bundles of autonomies" (Proudhon), "free associations of free forces" (Bakunin), the "free union [...] of the unique" (Stirner and Landauer), modes of association that imply the absolute autonomy of the associated forces.

You spoke of positive anarchy. Can this Proudhonian notion be echoed in your books with your insistence on the deleterious character of resentment and negativity, which are all too often present in protesting circles? How to fight without hatred, basically?

I had not thought of the meaning you give to the word "positive" in "positive anarchy". It seemed to me that in Proudhon it was used above all to distinguish a kind of primary anarchy, in the traditional and privative sense of "an-archy", of chaos, and a secondary sense, the self-organization within this chaos, the self-organization of this chaos itself, by a whole process of selection of forces, of putting them in opposition and in equilibrium, etc. But linked to Proudhon or not, your question remains full and complete. Closely associated, at the time of its birth, with the violence of the class struggle of the beginnings of industrial capitalism, anarchism has not escaped the effects of hatred, resentment and revenge that this violence induced. But common to many other movements, this hatred and resentment are not at all what strikes one when studying the history of anarchism, and more particularly of that workers' anarchism which first served as its cradle and horizon. As the organization of the "Knights of Labor" indicates, for example, but also the content of the speeches of the leaders of the workers' movements inveighing against their public and denouncing their attitude of slaves or sheep, workers' anarchism asserts itself as a movement of "masters" - in the sense that Nietzsche gives to this word. The "masters" of the trades where anarchism finds a great number of its militants, the "masters" cobblers of Father Peinard, chasing the bosses with their belts. There

sexuality, for example) suffers from two redhibitory characteristics, for us, at the present time, but also in the past, within the vast deployments of workers' anarchism. We have just seen the first one: the inscription of the anarchist individualism in the representations and the practices or the "desires" of the capitalist liberalism imposing its hegemony. The second characteristic derives from it and goes beyond the only individualism - not only the representations and the practices of the capitalist economic and political liberalism and individualism, but the whole of the "modern" representations which accompanied their hegemony: the dualism of the body and the spirit, of the freedom and the determinism, of the science and the "superstitions", etc.; but also and mainly the exorbitant belief in the primary and self-founding existence of a transcendental "subject", master of his choices and decisions; a belief and an extremely powerful postulate, in practical life (educational, wage-earning, judicial...) as well as in the field of philosophy, from Descartes to Sartre, through Kant, Husserl and many others.

Historically, anarchist individualism "à la française", which spread throughout the first and vast libertarian movements, is closely linked to the development of the state school, secular and compulsory, charged with inculcating in workers the beliefs and elementary knowledge necessary for capitalism. It is linked to the republican school of the Third Republic - where, according to Monatte's formula, by learning to read the workers had unlearned to "discern". A small remark in passing. These deceptive and totalitarian representations of the "individual" and the "subject", necessary to the capitalist development and hegemony - from the school for the people to the democratic rules and the fossilization/codification of the ideology (so badly called) "of the Enlightenment" -, are obviously not peculiar to the defunct "anarchist individualism" (which, fortunately, was not completely lacking in lunatics and creators). One finds them as well in this narrow minority

trappings and travesties of liberalism, to the injunction to consume ever more objects or commodities as diverse as a lawnmower, a new model of smartphone, or medically assisted procreation. For anarchism, "desires" are not those of capitalist consumption and its individual artifices, these "units of covetousness" of which Gilles Châtelet speaks, "pathetic billiard balls" "that each effort to differentiate themselves bogs down even more in a great equivalence". For the anarchism, the desires are singular material forces which imply and mobilize each time the totality of what is under a certain point of view, according to a certain arrangement, an oppressive or emancipating way of being. "Desires", "forces", "wills of power" (but also "conatus", "entelechies", and many other notions) are so many concepts affirming, each in its own way, the same reality, the material reality of what is. Indeed, to the scientism of Marxism (the "objective situations" decreed and imposed by the Party) anarchism does not oppose a morality, moral principles, but an "ethics", in the sense that Spinoza gives to this word. An ethics which is first of all an ethology, a logic of behaviors and affects, a practical sense, taken in things, events and situations.

There is an old quarrel in the emancipation movement, in the broad sense: the individual and the collective - anarchists are often accused of despising the latter and communists of sacrificing the former. How do you resolve this tension?

Historically, anarchism has long suffered from a very particular "individualistic" current, and (fortunately) today almost completely disappeared - having become useless insofar as it is capitalism itself that has imposed on everyone the "individualization" of "tastes and colors" that "anarchist" individualism opposed to the new and old communities (churches, unions, professions, nations, families, affinity groups, etc.) This anarchist individualism (which has always been marginal and which is still found here and there, in the field of food, procreation or

is much to be said about the complexity and ambivalence of this attitude of "masters", on the professional terrain but also within working-class families, through the patriarchal model vigorously defended by Proudhon - where the belt is no longer used only to chase away the bosses... This is where we find your second question and what we have seen about the emancipated plans of positive anarchism, as it has been able to assert itself historically.

How to associate the revolt, the autonomy and the "mastery" of the workers in the factories and on the building sites, with the revolt, the autonomy, the dignity and the pride of their companion in front of the patriarchy and the modes of being incorporated for so long in the boys? How to associate all revolts and autonomies, including and especially when they are contradictory in relationships where, whatever our starting identity - woman, man, child, black or white, homo or hetero -, we are always the slave and the master of someone else? I would add one last point so that there is no misunderstanding of the notion of "master". As I have just recalled, the anarchist "master" as well as the Nietzschean "master" both have as a determining characteristic the fact of not having slaves. In the same way that the anarchist messianism described by Michael Löwy has no messiah or that the anarchist monadology implies to get rid radically of God. On this "universal independence" of "masters" in Nietzschean and libertarian thought, it is not necessary to recall here what Nietzsche and Proudhon think of Hegel and his dialectic of master and slave.

The "masters" of Nietzsche and of anarchism are pure affirmations in the revolt and in the interior forces that authorize this revolt, even when it is a revolt as desperate as that of the sonderkommandos of Birkenau or Treblinka. Hence the ambiguity and ambivalence underlined above: the worker dominating his family and finding in this domination, among other things and not among the best, additional reasons to revolt in the factory against the authority of the "foremen" for exam-

ple. Hence, also, a small idea of the way in which libertarian movements unfold, the tensions and contradictions necessary to these unfoldings. From this point of view, it would be necessary, for example, to analyze, in even greater detail, the late and aborted emergence (by the civil war) of the Mujeres libres within the powerful Spanish workers' anarchism. In Nietzsche as in anarchism, we find the same idea of an emancipatory affirmation that escapes all negativity (of the Hegelian and Marxist dialectic for example); a generous affirmation that pretends to drag everything with it, to recompose everything, as the idea of insurrectional general strike shows, the "separatism" that it implies ("the Community by Withdrawal" that Landauer talks about) and that we find in the old worker anarchism, but also in a great number of contemporary movements (we have to read To our friends, the last book of the Invisible Committee!).

You seem to subscribe to Foucault's analysis of power. Can you tell us more about it?

For Foucault, "power" is everywhere: an infinite multitude of small powers or small relations of power that are set in series and that produce and support larger entities (the "resultants" of Proudhon, Bakunin, Reclus...): the States, the Churches, the religious laws, capital, God... From where all these mini relations of power seem to emanate while they are the cause and the support of them. It is regrettable that Foucault did not take more into account libertarian thinking on how the multitude of power relations crystallize into larger entities. But one can also regret that the libertarian movement has been able, not in its practices, but in the representations of many of its organizations and its most ideological militants, to hypostasize the results of the relations of domination; to hypostasize the State, the Capital, the Religions as great enemies; and, double error, to take back to their account, negatively, the way in which these great results believe themselves the source and the origin of the relations of association and of power from which they result and without which they are nothing.

necessarily a very good sign, especially when one knows the logic and the reality of the academic world).

You criticize the "naive and cynical scientism" of Marxism and praise the ethics of anarchism. What is it? That the means, as Camus said, are already ends in themselves? That, as Malatesta, to whom you have dedicated a book, said, defeat is better than an unprincipled victory?

It seems to me that we should clarify what we mean by "principles". In anarchism, it is not a matter of abstract ideas and laws, codified and set in stone, on the idealistic and prescriptive model denounced above. It is a matter of a determination and judgment internal to each situation, as tiny as it may be, an immediate, practical and largely intuitive, untimely judgment or evaluation, that of the Spanish militiamen deserting the anarchist columns at the moment of their militarization. Camus is right. For anarchism, there are only "ends" and no "means"; immediate and innumerable ends: in short, anarchy, an-arkhe, not the absence of first principles, but an excess of first principles, of "absolutes" as Proudhon said, associated and federated, capable by selection, confrontation, imitation, logic and internal dynamics of reproducing and propagating themselves everywhere and in everything. That's what we should have explained to Bensaïd! And this is what should be explained in more detail. Anarchism is opposed to all instrumental and utilitarian, objective and objectifying logic. Bensaïd is right again: anarchism is indeed a radical subjectivism that embraces everything without exception. For anarchism, there is as much "determination" in the "mode of existence" of a wrench, Simondon would say, as in an affinity group deciding to attack a bank.

Everything is a singular force resulting from a composition of equally singular forces and themselves composed of other singular forces. In speaking of "desire", "caprice", and "desiring subjectivities", Bensaïd is wrong to reduce anarchism to the

before the libertarian movements re-emerged at the end of the 20th century. The call to Marxism is linked to this period, and is inscribed in the debates that inaugurated the "Platform" known as of Archinov in the aftermath of the failure of the Russian Revolution. The libertarian thought and project before the provisional hegemony of the state communism seemed to have failed and to have lost all credibility: there were no more, in the aftermath of the Second World War, practical movements which could have given back body and meaning to this thought and project. The most dynamic libertarians had no other effective perspectives than to act on the only political and ideological ground, through small groups and mini-parties - what remains when one has lost everything. Marxism had become "unsurpassable", as Sartre used to say, and all that remained, on the sole political terrain, was to offer a variant of the program and implementation of socialism, after the seizure of power, from within the state: a libertarian state, as it were. This is why militants like Guerin were able to try to become the inspirers and advisors of Tito's Yugoslavia or the Algerian state. Even in Cuba, it seems to me that there were attempts of this kind...

The concept of self-management was born from this attempt from above, before expressing for some time a completely different dynamic, undeniably libertarian for the time being, from the end of the 1960s. The idea of self-management gave again a name and a flag to a libertarian project which was reborn a little everywhere in the facts, but without having the time to reappropriate a thought and texts forgotten for a long time, hardly accessible, devalued by their form and the still very big prestige of Marxism (Althusser...). A race of speed is engaged between the rediscovery of the libertarian thought and the victorious return - socially, politically and ideologically - of capitalism. And it is far from certain that anarchism has won this race, even if a growing number of researchers and academics are interested in it (but this is not

Anarchism is not born from a previous and negative theory of the State that should be destroyed. Much more concretely, anarchism was born out of the practice and immediate and tiny interactions of the First International, in the way Lorenzo and Robin perceived Marx's relations with his followers, for example. And it is all these small interactions that by accumulating and serialising themselves gave meaning to a more general critique of the State, Capital, Religion, Politics and Parties. In a very significant way, the nascent libertarian movement did not define itself at first as anarchist, but as "anti-authoritarian". Anarchism was born of anti-authoritarian practices and perceptions (the warlike and combative side of the word "libertarian") and it is these practices and perceptions that have continued to give meaning and body to anarchism, working-class anarchism, as well as present-day anarchism in its most living, least ideological components.

But the chance of anarchism, it is that, practical movement, born of the practice, it had right away, with Bakounine and Proudhon mainly, a theory homologous to these practices. A theory of the "collective force" as composed of other collective forces and producing "results" that always risk turning against the forces that produced them. A reversal that is played out in the nature of the relations within the component forces that are themselves results. I know that it is complicated, especially for minds marked by the representations of the dominant order, but it seems to me that anarchists with the guts (this second "brain") or the anarchist spring should make the effort to really read Bakunin, Proudhon, Kropotkin and many others... Proudhon provides a battery of extremely rich and enlightening concepts on the nature of power relations. "Forces", "collective forces", "resultants", "components" and "compositions", "absolutes", "monads", etc. The great originality of the anarchist theory of proudhonian inspiration can be summarized in three points: 1) to give an account, in a concrete way, of all the powers that crush and dominate us, on the economic ground (the-

ory of the value), political (birth and base of the State), ideological and symbolic (Church, God) ; 2) to give meaning to the most immediate and most minute struggles and interactions as "foci" that are homologous to the blinding visibility of the great dominations, where everywhere the war between domination and emancipation is played out; 3) to explicitly inscribe these immediate and global stakes in what Proudhon calls "a new ontology" that founds the theoretical, practical and revolutionary power of anarchism.

We would like to make you react to a comment of Daniel Bensaïd, in In Praise of Profane Politics: "Such is the constitutive paradox of anarchism: the rejection of all authority logically extends to the rejection of the majority democracy in society as in the social movement. Such a rejection can only lead to a form of substitution even more radical than the one sometimes attributed to the notion of vanguard party: each one draws from him alone his own rule, at the risk of believing himself invested with a mission and touched by the grace. The abolition of any principle of representation thus brings back the social relation to a game of whims of the desiring subjectivities."

It is a rather astonishing text where Bensaïd seems to discover - on the narrow ground of politics - the originality of the anarchist project and ontology, but without grasping the reasons for it, starting from a radical misunderstanding or more precisely a complete lack of affinity and homology between the libertarian project and what constitutes him himself (as an activist and at the moment he writes this text). Locked into the hegemonic but very particular modes of representation and philosophy of the present order, Bensaïd does not perceive the way in which the libertarian project overflows and criticizes the exorbitant pretensions of the political, in which it embraces the totality of human realities and, through them, the totality of what is. The anarchist rejection of "majoritarian democracy

in society as in the social movement" is neither a "paradox" nor a "logical extension" of the rejection of all authority, but on the contrary one of its multiple sources and "foci of autonomy" - historically, and on the terrain of social relations and decision-making.

But Bensaïd is right: the enemy of anarchism is indeed "representation", the way in which symbolic entities (parties, churches, states, but also grammar, language and logic) substitute themselves for the beings they "represent", appropriating their forces and realities. The paradox, naive and dishonest, of Bensaïd (but also of all possible dominations), is not only to take the "representation" for the reality, but, against all logic, to accuse the direct action and the effectively radical and immanent autonomy of the collective forces of the "real world" (Bakounine), of being a "substitution". But a "substitution" for what? Bensaïd does not tell us and cannot tell us. Indeed, it cannot be a substitution to oneself, which would be silly. It is indeed a substitution to something else but equally difficult to recognize, a mysterious and transcendent thing, the symbolic reality of symbolic representations: the "line" of the party, for example, with its obedience and self-criticism, the sense of History of which we are more or less conscious agents and which the "scholars" explain to us, the States of all kinds (which transcend and justify the sacrifices, the devotions and the blood spilled), but also and above all the "divine phantom" of which Bakunin speaks, for which one kills and is killed, God, this keystone or this imaginary foundation (but with the effects, unfortunately, very real) of all domination.

Since we are talking about a communist thinker, what do you think of the work of Guérin or Fontenis, for example, aiming to merge the best of the Marxist and anarchist traditions in order to overcome their respective shortcomings?

Guérin and Fontenis acted and thought after the collapse of the great libertarian movements of workers' anarchism and