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Voluntary Insubordination

Individualist Anarchism during the Dictatorship
and the Second Republic (1923–1938)

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April 2006

Retrieved on June 18, 2013 from web.archive.org

Original translation.

usa.anarchistlibraries.net

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itly present in the rest of an anarchist movement characterized by its wide diversity and flexibility. But individualism existed, beyond the concrete individualists, as a current that could influence with greater or lesser intensity among the hundreds of thousands of Spaniards who placed themselves, more or less, in the orbit of anarchy.

Anarchy, especially in its most individualistic tendency, constituted a space of dissidence with respect to the established order. A continuous criticism of a world full of deficiencies and injustices, of inequalities and limited and guarded freedoms, of a shortage of fraternity and an excess of violence. Faced with this, from an ideological level, but also from the spheres of individual daily life, many tried to fight it, or at least, they tried not to resign themselves to the voluntary servitude offered by contemporary societies. The arguable advantage that we historians have over the actors about whom we write is that we know in advance the ending of the movie. And this was an unhappy ending. They did not submit to the tide of history. They tried to jump off the script, becoming voluntary refuseniks in a society that was sailing irremediably towards the heart of darkness.

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of purification, of integral self-improvement. But in addition, their commitment to nudism, during the Second Republic, can be understood as an act of defiance against social conventions, a challenge against those who still have a morality laden with prejudices, a torpedo to the waterline of a Church attacked by a society in the process of secularization.

Conclusions

It is conventionally accepted that the FAI was a coordination of dispersed anarchist groups. Given the great diversity of character and referents of each of these groups of more or less informal organizations, of affinity groups, more or less unstable, the author of this article would propose to consider it as a coordinator of utopias. It is evident that each organization, each group, even each individual kept in his mind his ideal world, his own representation of how society should be organized, his own imaginary, both collective and individual. And it is evident that various environmental conditioning factors could influence one's own personal and group utopia. But, undoubtedly, beyond the concrete situation of each person, his class, his profession, his sex, it is also the readings, the ideas that define the architecture of his dreams.

Individualist anarchism existed in Spain, with an interesting theoretical body, although it has been little known by current historiography. It existed although weak and marginalized. With ideas that, from the extension of its own literature, could influence far beyond the few related nuclei that could feel comfortable behind that label. It had its organs of expression, few in number and with precarious lives, but with a certain continuity between the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera and the Second Republic, although some of its concepts and main theoreticians and defenders collaborated in other media of greater diffusion. In fact, individualist conceptions were often implic-

(1836–1936),³⁶ naturopathic physician, author of the paper on libertarian communism approved by the Confederal Congress of Zaragoza in 1936, or of Félix Martí Ibáñez (1911–1972)³⁷ specialist in psychology, animator of an important psycho-sexual clinic in the magazine *Estudios*³⁸ and author of the first abortion law promulgated by the Republic during the Civil War, were undoubtedly of the first order.

Parallel to all these aspects of individualism, there were some incursions into foreign ideas or movements, although related. As individualists, there is presence and participation in the internationalist and pacifist movement, of great importance in European societies between the wars, although this, in Spain, without the shadow of the war caused by the conflict of 1914, is not particularly active. There is a strongly anti-militarist attitude. There is also a hostile attitude towards nationalism and a certain attraction to the idea of communities without frontiers. In fact, individualistic anarchism itself acts as a network in which, despite ideomatic differences and cultural references, there is an awareness of belonging to a single community. Even the interest in international languages, especially Ido, a simplified variant of Esperanto, manifests this attitude. There is also a great interest in naturism from the anarchist point of view, that is, the concern to keep healthy the body, the spirit, but also society, understood as an organism that requires regeneration, and this is only possible from the search for equilibrium that only the values of anarchy can provide. In fact, the editors of *Ética e Iniciales* will be anarcho-naturists, anarchists who practice naturism as an experience

³⁶ Miguel Íñiguez y Juan Gómez, *Isaac Puente. Médico rural, divulgador científico y revolucionario* (Papeles de Zabalandia, Vitoria 1996).

³⁷ José Vicente Martí Boscà y Antonio Rey González, “Félix Martí Ibáñez: aportación biográfica a su etapa española (1911–1939)”: *Medicina & Historia* 2 (2001).

³⁸ Ignacio Vidal, *Consultorio Psíquico-Sexual. Dr. Félix Martí Ibáñez* (Tusquets, Barcelona 1975). F. J. Navarro, *El paraís ...* 117–127.

From an ideological point of view, the end of the 20th century was a useless posthumous victory for anarchism. Faced with the great mass movements of its time, notably fascism and communism, it came out morally more than successful by placing the value of freedom above all else, by proposing independence over submission, and by not reducing its liberalism to a simple question of free trade. He has tried to remain faithful to encyclopaedic rationalism in the midst of the darkness of the century’s irrationalism, but he does not seem to have emerged unscathed from all these confrontations. It is possible that he has been mistaken in his assessment of the human condition.

The philosopher Hanna Arendt, who also suffered the vicissitudes of a hard time for those who had a room of their own in their thinking, spent the second half of her life trying to understand precisely the polyhedrism of this human condition. Arendt, a German Jew, a brilliant pupil who at the age of eighteen became the lover of Martin Heidegger, who later tried to give philosophical respectability to Nazism, was repeatedly betrayed politically and personally. On the basis of her bitter experiences, her persecutions, her exiles, and the indifference with which she was received by those who were supposedly her own — the Jewish community, left-wing intellectuals, academic circles — she began a theoretical work in which she tried to analyse all the factors that had led to her physical and intellectual extermination. Her books *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), *The Human Condition* (1958) and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963) bear witness to an era that is difficult to interpret superficially, but her analyses go far beyond the concrete facts.

For Arendt, the mass society created by the industrial revolution generated a profound sense of alienation among individuals. At a stroke, it seemed as if the people of the industrialised countries had lost all decision-making power over their lives, as if they had been dispossessed of their place in the sun, reduced to the anonymous condition of a number, just another

cog in the complexity of the immense assembly line of the capitalist society so masterfully parodied by Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times*. Faced with such a situation, the mass ideologies, fascism and communism, whose uniforms and hierarchies made it possible to recognise oneself as part of a whole, which through large demonstrations and parades made active participation possible (albeit passively), which managed to annul the intimate feeling of personal loneliness through blind and collective obedience to a leader, managed to manipulate the fears of the European middle and lower classes in favour of a new order as opposed to the old one, and in the face of the uncertainties of the future. It is evident that in all these circumstances, individuals very easily renounced their sovereignty and independence, and in their great parades, veritable autos de fe where the cult of divinity was sublimated towards the leaders, where psalms were permuted into revolutionary slogans, they became collective declarations of, in Étienne de La Boétie's expression, "voluntary servitude".

Much of the consideration, by the academic, political and philosophical canon, of anarchist thought as intellectual heterodoxy, can be attributed to its obstinacy in not submitting to these servitudes, in refusing to renounce the triad of liberal values of equality, fraternity and, especially, liberty. But perhaps also because, as an object of study, it is too elusive. The forms in which it has presented itself are a reflection of its restless and dynamic spirit. And, in fact, we should not even speak properly of anarchist thought or movement. Despite many initiatives and attempts, there is no programme, there are no absolute leaders or ideologues, there is no straight line of approach. There are anarchisms in their great diversity, there are no closed dogmas, there are multiple winding roads in not very good condition to try to approach the diverse and dispersed places that could be grouped under that name.

In this whole context, the Western landscape, both from the administration of the ideological canon and from its academic

L'en dehors, published from Orléans, he took several initiatives, among them, a confidential list, known only to associates, of people scattered throughout the European geography who wished to participate in love-loving exchanges. The aforementioned association had meticulous statutes that regulated down to the last detail how long guests could stay in the host's home or the reasons why members could refuse sexual contact. This model, known as pluralidad amorosa, would form part of what would be a "union of egoists" that the Spanish individualists wanted to imitate, and which probably motivated the interest in forging an association or federation of individualists.³⁴ But this question will not be without controversy. There would be staunch defenders, such as Mariano Gallardo, and others who might be horrified by this trivialization of sex, such as the Brazilian freethinking journalist Maria Lacerda de Moura.

Beyond the more controversial aspects, on which there is no unanimity, there is consensus when it comes to desacralizing sexuality, campaigning against moral, cultural or religious prejudices that mediate sexual relations, calling for sex education without inhibitions of any kind and even a commitment to relative tolerance of sexual options other than the majority, such as homosexuality.³⁵ The cult of virginity, prostitution and the consideration of marriage as the only tolerated route to sexuality are criticized. The use of contraceptives and the right to abortion, without restrictions, are defended, and it is considered that every individual has the right to freely enjoy his or her body, without conditioning of any kind. Without being explicitly individualist, the contributions of Dr. Isaac Puente

³⁴ X. Díez, *El anarquismo individualista...* 252–258.

³⁵ Richard Cleminson, *Anarquismo y homosexualidad* (Huerga y Fierro, Madrid 1995). From this same author, the unpublished article "Science and Sympathy or Sexual Subversion on a Human Basis? Anarchists in Spain and the WLSR" (Bradford 2002).

Saxon sphere, in the face of the demographic explosion of the industrial era, especially among the proletariat, consider that unbridled growth poses a serious danger to the social order. The French internationalist pedagogue Paul Robin (1837–1912) took up this discourse and adapted it to anarchism, and thus considered that the restriction of the birth rate could be a revolutionary weapon. If the proletariat ceases to reproduce, or reproduces less, the bourgeoisie will not have labor or cannon fodder to exploit, by virtue of the law of the market, living conditions, work and wages should improve, and in turn, working families can devote greater efforts to have better fed and educated offspring, therefore, stronger and more prepared for the revolution. All these ideas were introduced in Spain by Robin himself, who spent time in Barcelona, but also by Pedro Valina (1879–1970), Mateo Morral (1880–1906) and, in particular, by Luis Bulffi (1867-?), who wrote a successful pamphlet on the subject: *Huelga de Ventres*, a compendium of neo-Malthusian doctrines that was a great success, with hundreds of thousands of copies sold. In 1904, Bulffi himself opened a family planning center in the Catalan capital, the second in Europe after the one in Amsterdam.³³ The main contribution of this neo-Malthusian movement was to disassociate sex from procreation, to give women an active role in sexuality, and to lay the foundations of the discourse to desacralize sex and offer it a more playful role in human relations, a fact that will undoubtedly be linked to the ideology of individualist anarchism in its sense of subverting the moral order of society.

From France, the individualist Armand, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, had participated in libertarian communes in which he put into practice (or tried to do so) his principles of loving comradeship, i.e. promiscuity among its members. But all his attempts culminated in failure. So, from the individualistic organ he directed, the magazine

³³ E. Masjuán, *La ecología humana...* 260–274.

institutions, has relegated anarchism to a status akin to a mere anecdote in history, a footnote, a side road leading nowhere, unlike the Fukuyama-driven highway of global capitalism that leads inexorably to the end of history, or the old locomotive designed by Marx and Lenin, which was supposed to take us to the socialist paradise, and which ended up, instead, forgotten in a junkyard. But ideas and social movements need not have a fixed place to lead us collectively. Indeed, each individual probably has different views on where they would like to go, or may even decide in the course of our lives to change direction or not want to stop forever at one destination station either. Perhaps that is because often, as the Portuguese poet Miguel Torga said, the important thing is to leave, not to arrive. Anarchism, then, is not easy to investigate. Its many nuances, contradictions, paradoxes, tendencies and representations impose difficulties on anyone who, devoid of prejudice, intends to approach it with a desire for rigour and depth. But if, from the ideological point of view, knowledge of anarchism entails serious epistemological problems, from the material point of view it represents an unadvisable option.

Anarchism has no one to write for it, or at least, in the precarious Spanish intellectual landscape, it has no one to subsidise it. That is, from an academic point of view, it can be considered almost marginal, far removed from historiographical fashions and official aid. Moreover, those who dedicate themselves to it can be viewed with suspicion, as if the fact of researching a history that has been so conscientiously silenced were to be suspected of trying to bring the dead back to life. Perhaps it is because in our present, forged from the opaque process of our Transition, we have left too many corpses forgotten in the cupboard or in the gutter.

Even so, despite all the problems and difficulties, anarchism, as a historiographical subject, which had its moments of glory in the 1960s and 1970s, as Pere Gabriel observed in the introduc-

tion to the *Historia documental del anarquismo español*,¹ and despite all the pains, seems to be emerging once again. Buried under tons of oblivion, indifference and silence, there are now quite a few of us who are beginning to unearth it, not to glorify or vindicate it, not to use it for purposes that transcend the discipline, but to try to know and understand its role in the convulsive society that saw it develop. Although we are also diverse, with different orientations and opinions, perhaps we have in common the idea that the pact of silence on our recent past was not signed by us, and therefore we are not obliged to respect it. Together, we are contributing to the recovery of a silenced memory.

In addition to the studies carried out two and three decades ago, which were particularly concerned with the question of anarchosyndicalism, the press and the relationship between politics and violence, new research is now mainly concerned with showing anarchism in all its complexity from a multifaceted perspective. Little by little, on the basis of rigorous research, the clichés that assimilated anarchism to terrorism,² to irrational revolutionary syndicalism or, as Hobsbawm would say, to primitive rebels,³ are being destroyed. Little by little,

¹ Pere Gabriel, “Vigencias y marginaciones en los estudios de historia del anarquismo en España”, en Francisco Madrid y Claudio Venza, *Antología documental del anarquismo español 1* (Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo, Madrid 2001) 11–14. Other recent reflections of great interest on the new interpretative paradigms of anarchism are those by Susanna Tavera, “La historia del anarquismo español: una encrucijada interpretativa nueva”: *Ayer* 45 (2002) 12–38, or Claudio Venza, “Una reflexión sobre la historiografía del anarquismo español” published in a homage to Ramon Álvarez “Ramonín” in Oviedo. The author of this article also plans to publish on this issue, “Noves perspectives per a una nova historiografia de l’anarquisme espan-yol”: *El Contemporani* 26 (pendiente de publicación a finales de 2002).

² F. Madrid, *Antología ...* 69–72.

³ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Rebeldes primitivos* (Ariel, Barcelona 1968). About this polemical question, S. Tavera, “La historia...” 21–23. But also from a radically opposite position, it is very interesting the introduction that, with the title “Una parte de la historia”, edited by Dolores Marín in the book *Clandestinos*.

communist thinking, hostility against the Soviet Union and all that it represents, will be a tendency that will be accentuated, especially as the Civil War drags on.

From this point of view, then, there will be a vindication of “egoism”. Not selfishness understood as the conventional meaning that a dictionary may indicate, but as a healthy feeling of independence that can prevent being manipulated by third parties, for the benefit of others, as experience usually shows. Individualists do not pretend to save the world, nor to defend the proletariat. Liberation, according to Stirnerian thought, must not come from anyone or anything. It must be led by oneself. Sacrifice, an idea more proper to the realm of theology or psychological pathology than to that of politics or sociology, makes no sense, since there can be no freedom if the individual does not wish to be liberated, not only from his material chains, but also from the immaterial chains of prejudices, conventions or ideas that annul his will or independence. Ideas, concepts, theories, aesthetics or movements, must serve the individual, not the other way around, as is usually the case.

Given the influence of French individualism, the debate around sexuality will have considerable prominence. For Spanish individualists, especially for those closest to the *Iniciales* group, sexuality, more than a mechanism for obtaining legitimate pleasure, acquires, following the philosophical guidelines elaborated by Armand, a role as a metaphor for individual liberation. Free love, for the anarcho-individualists, becomes the symbolic representation of the rupture with the dominant social conventions and moral prejudices. Promiscuity will be a way to create more fraternal bonds among the community of individualists.

But the idea of sexual liberation did not begin with Armand and French individualism in the 1920s. Since the beginning of the century there has been an important neo-Malthusian substratum in Spain. The neo-Malthusians, a movement with scientific pretensions and academic roots, coming from the Anglo-

ousness. All this is accentuated from the moment in which the mass movements are acquiring prominence, and its aesthetics gaining followers in the Europe of the twenties and thirties. And all this is expressed through various practices that distinguish them from the rest of the anarchist tendencies. Although for the libertarian movement, culture and education represent an important part of their lives, for the individualists it will be a real obsession, even with some transcendental overtones, such as their interest in some mystical philosophies such as those offered in Ryner's readings. Or even by his interest in practices such as naturism, vegetarianism, nudism, Esperanticism and his concern for not consuming tobacco or alcoholic beverages, as opposed to hundreds of thousands of anarcho-syndicalist militants less sensitive to these issues. But also their disinhibition of sexuality and their defense of promiscuity will mark their distance from the rest of society, based on their awareness of belonging to an ethical vanguard. Evidently, the social context in which they move will be considered openly hostile to their beliefs and representations, and for this reason they will experience their relationship with society as markedly conflictive. Thus, the title *Al Margen*, as we have seen, of one of the individualist magazines, will be very significant with respect to their social worldview.

Skepticism with respect to any conventional revolution, that is, to any revolution that implies the absolute transformation of the social framework through the subversion of the political order by means of the use of violence, will also distinguish them with respect to the rest of the tendencies. The only possible revolution, from their point of view, will be the one that takes place in their consciences, starting from a permanent process of self-education and experimentation. In the same way as Stirner, they believe that the seizure of winter palaces not only does not change anything, or does not mean an improvement of the human condition, but can sometimes make the individual fall into an even worse oppression. Anti-

things are falling into place, and so anarchisms are being presented for what they were: thoughts, works, cultures, expressions, strategies and a long etcetera of global alternatives to what was offered by official or unofficial society. The latest research is revealing that those who may have felt comfortable under the name of anarchists, or may have felt uncomfortable despite their elective affinities, were not exclusively concerned with storming winter palaces and imposing their political system. They certainly went beyond that. They were trying to generate their own global culture (in the broadest sense of the term), valid in itself, with its own aesthetics, its own artistic and literary genres, its own channels of dissemination. To experience specific formulas of sociability, often very different from those established by social conventions. To generate their own moral references, even in aspects as intimate and personal as sexuality and reproduction. To experiment with new formulas both in terms of economic models and models of everyday life. To create, in short, a global and alternative universe to that which contemporary society could offer. Or rather, global and alternative universes, taking into account the great heterogeneity and ideological and personal eclecticism among those who can be comfortably labelled as anarchists.

But did individualist anarchism ever exist?

If we go through the textbooks that today's secondary school students have to consult, even the bibliographies recommended in university courses, one would begin to doubt that anarchism ever really existed. Superficial visions, tangential strolls through a few acronyms, names and concepts with definitions hastily made up. This writer, who studied history between the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s at

El maquis contra el franquismo, 1934-1975 (Plaza y Janés, Barcelona 2002) 11-28.

a prestigious Catalan university, barely managed to hear a few brief references, small pin-pricks with which it was difficult to make a more or less reliable cartography of one of the phenomena that most influenced our (increasingly less) recent history. At least for those of us who showed great interest in finding out what our grandparents had felt, dreamt and realised, this curiosity was seldom reciprocated. We usually came up against walls of silence. Few were the teachers who knew the subject in any depth. Few were the books that dealt with the issue with a minimum of rigour, and few were the subjects that were devoted, more or less directly or covertly, to it. For all these reasons, the few of us who began to dive into archives and libraries soon felt like explorers in a rather unknown land, with mountains of unpublished material, immense gaps and, all of this, with an imprecise cartography. In short, with a history yet to be written. Although it is also true that many of us can feel like lone explorers with scarce food and resources.

Quite a few years ago, when the writer of this article began to look for materials to research anarchist sexual discourse, Pere Gabriel, undoubtedly one of the most valuable pioneers of historiography on anarchism, put me on the trail of a trend that was little, if at all, known. Having studied the controversy between the two main currents: collectivist anarchism inspired by Bakun and libertarian communism inspired by Kropotkin, and having carried out a great deal of research on anarcho-syndicalism and its main institutions, the references to individualist anarchism were obvious. But this was a region into which few had ventured.

Anarchism of an individualist tendency seemed to have had some kind of presence during the end of the 19th century, but it was during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera and the Second Republic that its nuclei of affinity, normally organised around specific publications, made their presence felt and made their specificities known. Individuals who could

the limitations of all kinds that submission to the dominant moral principles entails, takes precedence over anything else. Precisely the search for pleasure and satisfaction is the legitimate and fundamental objective of all existence.

In the face of sacrifice, pleasure, in the face of sobriety, hedonism. In this sense, despite the fact that the circumstances surrounding each person are not always particularly propitious, especially if they belong to the proletariat, anarcho-individualism, with an important influence with respect to Ryner's thought and his ideas close to orientalism, considers that it is possible to live on the margins of society, mentally isolating oneself from the negative factors that prevent one from living a life to the fullest. *Carpe diem* could be a good motto to define this section, even if it is limited to an introspective level. In this vitalism, the one who must have the responsibility to improve the existence is oneself, starting from a self-washing of the conscience, which eliminates the stains created by dogmas and prejudices assumed throughout life. He must not wait for any revolution to liberate him. It must be he himself who, within himself, takes his own bastille. Everyone must keep an open mind, without limitations of any kind, except those marked by individual sovereignty.

Given the obvious minority character of the individualist tendency in Spanish anarchism, the conflict between individual and society will be a question dealt with extensively. In fact, this conflict, masterfully portrayed by the Norwegian playwright Ibsen in many of his plays, well appreciated among an anarchist public, will represent a concern expressed well before individualism, as a movement, maintains an explicit presence. As a minority, many individualists believe they possess moral superiority over a majority which, they claim, does not understand them, or from an elitist point of view, does not measure up to them. They exhibit a certain feeling of purity with respect to the masses, who, in their opinion, are loaded with prejudices, of independence with respect to common gregari-

logue the reprint carried out by his own publishing house in 1937. This does not exclude, however, the influence of French individualist anarchism, although in this case, the sexual question plays a secondary role. Where there is an important debate will be on the question of the “union of egoists” and the “union of egoists”. “union of egoists” and the association between anarchists, a fact that responds to the interest of its director to federate the dispersed nuclei, but they are also dedicated to reflect on education, political system, and the very idea of revolution, criticized from a purely individualistic point of view.

The bases of the discourse of Spanish anarcho-individualism

As we have seen in the preceding paragraphs, anarchist individualism in Spain presents its own specificities, exposed from its different propaganda organs. Although, on the other hand, the individualist influence goes far beyond the specific groups and their magazines, permeating with its ideology other foreign and more general channels of communication, in publications such as *La Revista Blanca*, *Generación Consciente*, *Estudios* or so many others. In any case, among so many similarities and differences, we can speak of a more or less homogeneous set of ideas and concepts that bring together a defined theoretical body, which we could divide into several sections. In the first place, in its general principles, we can see an idea of individualistic morality. A morality distant from social conventions. Although Stirner denies any ethical code and Nietzsche denounces rationalism and Judeo-Christian morality, Spanish individualists do not always break with everything, nor do they always present themselves as iconoclasts. Although their greatest efforts are aimed at destroying the existing moral bases, respect for one’s own freedom and that of others, the right to pleasure, to intensely enjoy one’s existence with respect to

contribute to the National Confederation of Labour, who were on the Saler beach when the Iberian Anarchist Federation was founded, who sent contributions to the anarchist cultural press, could present a personal and intellectual evolution towards ideological orientations different from other militant comrades. Naturist nuclei, Esperantists or informal groups who tried to theorise and put into practice their own concept of free love. Isolated individuals who tried to find ways of thinking different from what their environment could offer them. All of them could be included in a specific tendency, and as we have explained, little known and less defined. But they had their own ideological heritage, common points of reference and a political perception that differed from that of other groups.

In this sense, if it is difficult for the intellectual community to recognise anarchism as an original and complex thought, and therefore valid in itself, despite being considered as a heterodox element, one of its least known and most reviled tendencies even within the libertarian camp itself, anarcho-individualism, perhaps has the rare honour of representing a kind of heterodoxy within heterodoxy. But how can it be defined?

Gaetano Manfredonia, who studied the French case in the period 1880–1914, proposes the following principles:

“It is a different way of approaching the individual and collective emancipation of the proletariat from a space outside parties and ideologies.

It is the manifestation of a true autonomous and liberal political tradition, with its own specific vocabulary. An alternative anarchist current which interprets in particular the classics (Proudhon, Bakunin...) with a surprising richness and vitality.

It is a constant within anarchism and one of the components of its theoretical substratum which

distinguishes it from many emancipatory ideologies.

It is an ideology that places the individual at the starting point of all collective emancipation, an alternative to the very concept of social class, party, group, nation or ethnicity.”⁴

The philosophical bases

Anarchism, as José Álvarez Junco (1976) pointed out in his work *La ideología política del anarquismo español (1868–1910)* possesses in itself “an extreme individualism, a radical defence of individual freedom understood as the absolute right to act solely according to the dictates of one’s own conscience and will, and an affirmation that each personality has a unique, irreplaceable value, the expansion of which should not be limited by any external frontier”.⁵ This is not gratuitous. One of the main theoretical foundations of anarchism is to be found in Max Stirner, a contemporary of Marx and Proudhon, author of the landmark work, the bible of individualism: *El Único y su propiedad*.

Johann Kaspar Schmidt (Bayreuth 1806 – Berlin 1856), whose real identity was hidden under the pseudonym of Max Stirner, a disciple of Hegel, a regular at the philosophical gatherings in Berlin, where he coincided with Marx, Engels and the Bauer brothers, wrote his main work around 1844: *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*. The book, like its author, experienced an intense, if short-lived, scandal until Friedrich

⁴ Gaetano Manfredonia, *L’individualisme anarchiste en France (1880–1914)*, tesis doctoral inédita (Institut d’Études Politiques, Paris 1990) 6–8, extracted and translated by the author of this article. I thank Dominique Petit for her kindness in informing me of the existence of this research and sending me a copy.

⁵ José Álvarez Junco, *La ideología política del anarquismo español (1868–1910)* (Siglo XXI, Madrid 1976) 17.

tion clearly prevailed over the discursive radicalism or propaganda typical of the political press. Even at a formal level, with a university magazine format, sober and relatively extensive, it separates itself from other similar publications. In addition, it intends to become a publishing house, and in fact it has initiated an ambitious project that schedules a list of very interesting titles. As an example, the first of the books will be a reprint of Max Stirner’s *El único y su propiedad*, which they will indeed publish in a luxurious edition, an act that serves as an obvious declaration of principles. Likewise, without materializing their projects, they plan to add to their catalog works by Armand, Ryner, Faure and Anselmo Lorenzo. Its director, Miguel Giménez Igualada (1888–1973), whose real name, according to Miguel Íñiguez, would correspond to Miguel Ramos Giménez,³² would be a theoretician difficult to catalog. He was a salesman, cab driver, sugar industry manager or rationalist teacher, but he stood out as a speaker and lecturer. From the thirties onwards, his thinking began to drift towards individualism, and as a profound Stirnerian he tried to promote a federation of individualists. The magazine, which will have contributors such as Felipe Alaiz, Costa Iscar, Fontaura, Higinio Noja Ruiz, Gonzalo Vidal, Emma Goldman, Isaac Steinberg, Manuel Devaldès, E. Armand and Rudolf Rocker, will be published in the 1930s. Armand and Rudolf Rocker, apart from the numerous contributions of Giménez Igualada himself, will not survive to the sixth number, and will cease to be published at the moment in which the republican front will be split in two, after the counteroffensive of the insurgent army in Teruel.

Nosotros will undoubtedly be the most profoundly Stirnerian magazine, the most orthodoxly individualistic. Undoubtedly, Giménez Igualada was a profound connoisseur of *El único y su propiedad*, and in fact it will be he himself who will pro-

³² Miguel Íñiguez, *Esbozo de una enciclopedia histórica del anarquismo español* (Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo, Madrid 2001) 267.

Al Margen. Publicación quincenal individualista (October 1937 – March 1938). Only six issues were published. Previously, in July 1936, the publishing group had tried to launch it in Santa Pola, Alicante. But the outbreak of the war delayed their plans. The director of the magazine would be Vicente Galindo Cortés (1902–1990), better known as Fontaura and many other pseudonyms, he had worked as a rationalist teacher and libertarian journalist, becoming interim director of *Solidaridad Obrera*. Among the editors and collaborators of *Al Margen*, which will move its editorial office to Elda, in Alicante, we will find Miguel Giménez Igualada, the writer Gonzalo Vidal, or other regulars of the individualist press such as Costa Iscar, Mariano Gallardo or the Brazilian journalist Maria Lacerda de Moura. Galindo Cortés, who had lived several years in France fleeing military service, maintained personal contacts with Sébastien Faure, Armand, Ryner, Lorulot or Lacaze Duthiers, a fact that undoubtedly influenced his ideological orientation. In the same way, he was closely related to the neo-Malthusianism of Barcelona around Luis Bulffi. The magazine was strongly influenced by the war and by the differences of opinion regarding anarchist participation in republican institutions. It will maintain a position of deep distrust and skepticism with respect to these facts and will vindicate its Stirnerian idea that changes should never be inspired by power, but should arise individually, in the ways of thinking and acting of each person. Likewise, the editors of the magazine give high priority to trying to organize the various isolated groups or individuals, akin to their ideological tendency, into a kind of federation of individualists. In fact, *Al Margen* has the vocation of a coordinating organ, with an active and interesting correspondence section for readers.

Nosotros, published in Valencia (October 1937 – February 1938) will be the most theoretical and philosophical of all the individualist magazines. With a vocation for debate and controversy, it had long contributions in which intellectual reflec-

Nietzsche, half a century later, vindicated both as among the most transcendental works and philosophers of the 19th century. Thus, during the last decade of the 19th and the first decade of the 20th, *El Único y su propiedad* was republished, translated and appreciated by various philosophical tendencies, among which anarchism was prominent, especially in France.

Stirner's work, a dense and difficult book, with a tense and challenging, if irregular and reiterative, tone, is based on a revolutionary principle. The death of the absolute. The Bavarian philosopher denies any abstract principle that dares to place itself above the individual. Neither God, nor the Emperor, nor the Revolution can overcome the naturally selfish will of the individual. The individual, therefore, must fight by all means against the imposition of anyone who tries to place himself above his will. He even denies that the process of secularisation and modernisation brought about by the liberal and economic revolutions of the contemporary age has changed anything with respect to feudalism. He points out that, for many, faith in God has been replaced by faith in humanity; obedience to the emperor by submission to the law. In this sense, every attempt at revolutionary transformation, as exemplified by the French Revolution, the replacement of the state society by the modern state, is nothing more than the substitution of one domination by another, even more effective than the previous one. Every revolution, therefore, made in the name of abstract principles such as equality, fraternity, liberty or humanity, pursues the same end: to override the will and sovereignty of the individual in order to dominate him.

In all this dialectic between the individual and absolute principles, a new association appears: power and property. In fact, the very title of Stirner's work points this out. Unlike Proudhon, the Bavarian philosopher gives property positive connotations. Property is not only intrinsically natural, it is also closely linked to existence itself, since it reaffirms it. Property is also

the expression of the individual's power: "My power is my property. My power gives me my freedom".⁶ For Stirner, property is everything that can be owned unconditionally, i.e. in its entirety and without limits of any kind. The state and its institutions, which try to control it, therefore become an enemy to be fought. Freedom, like property, must be won through one's own efforts. Any freedom granted does not cease to represent a partial, incomplete manumission, "like a dog whose master's chain is stretched out".⁷

Much of Stirner's philosophical efforts were aimed at deconstructing the Enlightenment concept of freedom and constructing a different, more ambiguous and relative one. Freedom, like the individual himself, unique and unrepeatable, is characterised by its precariousness. They appear and disappear with their existence, and therefore both possess an anarchic nature, without fixed rules or patterns. In the life of every "unique", every link, regardless of the form in which it is presented, is a chain that conditions, and therefore eliminates, the condition of a free person. This has two consequences: freedom will remain outside any moral category. The latter concept will be left out of Stirner's vocabulary, since both ethics and morality will be two absolute concepts which, as such, cannot be placed above the individual will. Freedom is always lived outside any material or spiritual conditioning, "beyond good and evil", as Nietzsche will state in one of his main works. Collective beliefs, shared prejudices and social conventions will thus be destroyed. The second consequence is that these principles easily lead to nihilism. If there are no natural principles that can limit the egocentric will, one is not far from falling into an attitude of destruction and self-destruction. No wonder, then, that Nietzsche vindicated Stirner and his work.

⁶ Max Stirner, *El ego y su propiedad* (Labor, Barcelona 1970) 144.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

A good part of the editorial team that was able to get out of jail created a new masthead, *Iniciales*, the month after the closure, although with more precarious means reflected in its pages. But, although at the beginning the new title could give the impression that it was the same magazine, it is soon clear that the orientation changes, first slightly, and as the republican period begins, its evolution moves towards greater radicalism. The naturism of anarchist dyes of the previous masthead takes on a role in which nudism is raised as the symbol of self-liberation from prejudices and social conventions. Free love becomes a metaphor for individual liberation, typical of French individualism. And in fact, if *Ética* was a publication in which Ryner's influence was noticeable, *Iniciales* will be above all Armandian. In this sense, their campaigns in favor of contraceptive methods, very much in line with the neo-Malthusian tradition of Barcelona,³⁰ even led them to distribute, either from their own headquarters or by mail, pessaries, condoms or Ogino calendars among their readers. Probably this protagonism and radicalism would be responsible for the repression they had to suffer immediately after the events of October 1934, when their editorial office was destroyed and ransacked by extreme right-wing elements, with the connivance of the forces of public order.³¹ Once the war broke out, the magazine ceased publication once again until it reappeared ephemerally during April and May 1937. The editors then explain that during that time they stopped talking about the revolution and began to make it. Subsequently, *Iniciales*, the most important individualist magazine with the longest trajectory, fell silent forever.

A few months after the disappearance of *Iniciales* and in the same city of Barcelona, a new individualist publication,

³⁰ Eduard Masjuán, *La ecología humana en el anarquismo ibérico* (Icaria, Barcelona 2000), especially 205–330 y 369–428.

³¹ X. Díez, *Utopía sexual...* 42–43.

managed to operate, with many ups and downs, for more than eight years, bringing out some seventy issues. But the case of *Iniciales* will be quite exceptional. *Nosotros* and *Al Margen* will not exceed half a dozen issues, and *Ética* will manage twenty-four.²⁹

Despite this, the magazines had a variety of contributors, some of them of a certain prestige among anarchists, such as the naturist doctors Isaac Puente and Martínez Novella, libertarian journalists with certain affinities with respect to individualism, such as Felipe Alaiz and García Birla, or libertarian journalists with certain affinities with respect to individualism, such as Felipe Alaiz or García Birlán, the pedagogues Antonia Maymón and Higinio Noja Ruiz, openly individualist writers such as Costa Iscar or the sexual nihilist Mariano Gallardo, and, of course, Armand, Ryner and other French theorists such as André Lorulot, Sébastien Faure or Gerard de Lacaze-Duthiers. Even Federica Montseny, in her early youth, took part in *Ética*, probably because of her personal relationship with Elizalde.

Each of the magazines, however, will have some features that distinguish them. *Ética*, the first of the explicitly individualist magazines, emerged, as we were saying, from the efforts of the Ateneo Naturista Ecléctico and Elizalde, takes a decidedly anarcho-naturalist, educational and avowedly pro-free love orientation, although it is presented as an eclectic and cultural magazine. Taking into account the pressure of censorship and the police, who imprisoned its editor and director towards the end of 1928, it had to moderate its discourse, although the influence of Rynerian individualism was noticeable. In fact, Ryner will be the most important contributor to the magazine, who will always head the cover with several of his philosophical narratives. However, faced with all these problems, and beset by debts, the editorial staff decided to close the magazine.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 111–200.

Finally, and this is an issue that the Bavarian philosopher does not resolve very well, it is clear that, despite all the cult of individual sovereignty, it is necessary and desirable for individuals to cooperate. But the danger of association entails the reproduction, on a different scale, of a society, and it is obvious that in this context, individuals must give up a large part of their sovereignty. Stirner proposes “unions of egoists”, formed by free individuals who can episodically come together to collaborate, but avoid stability or permanence.

All this complex thinking also leads to a terrain shared by all those who consider themselves anarcho-individualists; on the one hand an aversion to all rule and law embodied in the higher principle of the state. There will be an anti-statism not in so far as concrete institutions act to the advantage of some and to the disadvantage of others, but an aversion against the state, against all social construction, *per se*. Secondly, there will be a deep-rooted scepticism about revolutions. There can be no profound transformations from the top down, assaults on winter palaces need not change the basis of domination. Genuine revolutions are experienced in the consciences and in small everyday acts. And this will mean, for many individualists, a relentless hostility to social conventions. They will not mind showing themselves to be heterodox, hence their tendency to take up issues far removed from the moral order, such as sexual subversion, naturism or other aspects that deviate from the established tacit norms. It is also true that much of anarchist sociability, based on affinity groups, can be assimilated to the “unions of egoists” proposed by Stirner.

At the same time, on the other side of the Atlantic, in the different context of a half-baked nation, the United States, other philosophers elaborated a similar individualist thought, albeit with their own specificities. Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), one of the writers close to the transcendentalist philosophy movement, is one of the best known. His most representative work is *Walden*, which appeared in 1854, although it was writ-

ten between 1845 and 1847, when Thoreau decided to settle in the isolation of a cabin in the woods and live in intimate contact with nature, in a life of solitude and sobriety. From this experience, his philosophy tries to convey to us the idea that a respectful return to nature is necessary, and that happiness is above all the fruit of inner wealth and the harmony of individuals with the natural environment. Many have seen in Thoreau one of the forerunners of environmentalism and of the primitivist anarchism represented today by John Zerzan. For George Woodcock,⁸ this attitude may also be motivated by a certain idea of resistance to progress and rejection of the growing materialism that characterised American society in the mid-nineteenth century.

Thoreau is also known for his pamphlet on civil disobedience.⁹ As in the previous case, the writing is closely linked to his life experiences. When the Mexican War broke out (1846–1848), the transcendentalist philosopher was imprisoned for refusing to pay the special tax to defray the cost of the war. In the above-mentioned pamphlet, the author considers the state as an intruder in the harmonious relations between individuals. Opposition and resistance to this institution is therefore a moral obligation. To this end, he believes that civil disobedience and passive resistance can be a good strategy. Finally, Thoreau, like Stirner, whose work he probably did not know, also distrusted mass action. He believes that collective transformations must be based on changes in individual mentalities.

On the other hand, Josiah Warren (1798–1874), a versatile musician, inventor and writer, took part in his youth in the various utopian initiatives organised by Owen and Cabet. From the failures that resulted from these experiments, Warren reflected on the difficulties of transforming society, given the individual

⁸ George Woodcock, *El anarquismo. Historia de las ideas y movimientos libertarios* (Ariel, Barcelona 1979) 440.

⁹ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden. La desobediencia civil* (Ediciones del Cotal, Barcelona 1976).

Individualist press and literature

The role of the press in individualism, as in all other anarchist tendencies, was fundamental. Apart from being an instrument of debate and dissemination of ideas and concepts, newspapers and magazines are an inherent part of the anarchist cultural universe and have their own space as one of the formulas for sociability within the affinity groups and at the same time act as a link between a geographically dispersed and politically close community. In this field of non-professional journalism, it is the affinity groups who are its animators and who carry out most of the editorial work, correspondence, layout, relations with collaborators, administrative tasks and distribution.²⁷ In some cases, such as *La Revista Blanca* or the prestigious *Estudios*, all of this will be carried out with a certain degree of professionalism and complexity. But the latter were magazines that were aimed at a wide readership and had several thousand readers — in the case of the Valencian magazine, several tens of thousands. On the other hand, as far as the strictly individualist publications were concerned, they did not print more than two thousand copies per issue and hardly exceeded a thousand copies sold,²⁸ at least in the case of *Ética* and *Iniciales*, a fact that shows how little individualist anarchism was formally established. On the other hand, beset by endemic economic problems, by pressure from censorship, or by the internal instability of the groups that sponsored them, they would not always have a regular outlet, even though magazines such as *Iniciales*

²⁷ Susanna Tavera, “La premsa anarco-sindicalista (1861–1931)”: *Recerques* 8 (1978) 85–102; id., *Solidaridad Obrera. El fer-se i desfer-se d'un diari* (Col·legi de Periodistes, Barcelona 1992); id. y Enric Ucelay da Cal, “Grupos de afinidad, disciplina bélica y periodismo libertario (1936–1938)”: *Historia Contemporánea* 9 (1994) 167–190; NAVARRO, F. J. Navarro, *El paraíso...* op. cit.

²⁸ X. Díaz, *Utopía Sexual...* 70–72; id., *L'anarquisme individualista a Espanya (1923–1938)*, tesis doctoral inédita (Universitat de Girona, Gerona 2002) 174–175.

the prevailing moral beliefs and prejudices. On the other hand, many tried to plan libertarian colonies, in the manner of communes, where they could put their ways of life into practice without state intervention or authority, and so they showed interest in the experiences described by the French individualist Armand, with whom they had a close relationship; in fact, he was one of their most regular collaborators and there was extensive correspondence between him and the editorial office in Carrer Premià, in the Barcelona neighbourhood of Sants.²⁶ But, aware of the difficulties of putting initiatives of this type into practice, especially when there does not seem to be enough capital to do so, some tried to create networks of people who, although isolated from each other, could set up loving communities.

It is clear that the revolutionary context undoubtedly makes it possible to create communes where libertarian communism can be practised or where a more individualistic orientation can be maintained, especially in rural areas with newly collectivised land, especially in those places taken from the nationalists. In this new turbulent period, two new magazines appeared from Barcelona and Valencia to replace the role played by *Iniciales*. These were *Al Margen* (1937–1938), directed by Vicente Galindo Cortés, under the pseudonym Fontaura, and *Nosotros* (1937–1938), headed by Miguel Giménez Igualada. Both publications were short-lived but were the subject of intense intellectual debate, although they were influenced by the shadow of the war. Once the Teruel front was broken and Catalonia was isolated from the Republic, an individualist silence set in, which would be the prelude to the long winter of defeat and exile that began in 1939.

²⁶ In the Armand Archives, located at the Institut Français d'Histoire Sociale, there are several dozen letters sent from Spain (14 AS 211 (3)), especially from Costa Iscar, the editorial staff of *Iniciales* and *Fontaura*.

problems and the reproduction, in practice, of the authoritarian models into which these experiments easily degenerated. The writer considered that the difficulty of combining collective interests with individual independence was the main reason for the failures in which all such experiments culminated. For Warren, it was society that should serve the individual, not the other way round. On the other hand, everyone has the right to possess everything that is the result of his or her own efforts. This principle, however, is difficult to apply in the complexity of a complex society. So the American individualist theorises the exchange of goods and services on the basis of the calculation of labour time, so that he creates a time bank (“Time Store”) on the basis of the calculation of labour and effort as the basis of exchange.

Throughout his life, Warren will participate in and organise more utopian initiatives, *Utopia*, *Modern Times*, *Trialville*, some of them with relative success. Unlike the previous unsuccessful experiences, the American tried to create societies without rules and regulations, based rather on mutual agreement or tacit consent, communities without meetings or assemblies, with hardly more than occasional meetings with specific functions. This will be an application rather similar to the idea of the “union of egoists” formulated by Stirner, although the German philosopher would probably be unknown to him. In this sense, Warren will be more interested in practice than in theory, and this will mean that some of his initiatives will be a frame of reference for all those who seek to generate individualist experiences in community.

The third of the American individualist theorists was Benjamin R. Tucker (1854–1939). One of the main characteristics of this individualist thinker is that, more than for his originality, he will be known for incorporating the various elements of the tradition of American liberal radicalism, with the inclusion of earlier ideas of Warren and Thoreau, into the libertarian phi-

losophy coming from Europe, especially that of Proudhon, of whom he will be a great connoisseur, and his main translator and introducer in the United States. In this sense, Tucker generated a synthesis between anarchism and individualist liberalism, including some ideas such as free love and anti-statism, which were highly appreciated by the intellectual circles of Eastern North America, in his general theory. At the same time, and starting with his main publication, the newspaper *Liberty* (1881–1907), he sought to make anarchist thought respectable in his country. To this end, he would count on the support of such distinguished collaborators as George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde and Walt Withman, with whom he would become close friends.

The director of *Liberty* will introduce the American public to the Stirnerian philosophy. *El único y su propiedad* would be republished and translated into English during the first decade of the 20th century, in the same way as Bakunin and Nietzsche had been before him. Thus Tucker could be considered, as Gianfranco Berti¹⁰ believes, as a bridge linking the two sides of the Atlantic, since he connects the political-philosophical currents of both sides. Tucker, who would maintain numerous international contacts, would also be known in Europe, especially in France, where he would end up living during the last years of his life.

Unlike Stirner, the American individualist accepted a social ethic that minimally regulated social coexistence. He considered that there are rights and duties that apply to everyone equally and that in no case should the limits of one's own freedom be transgressed. In this sense, he believes in a contractual relationship between individuals based on "live & let live", which is typical of liberalism which implies a common alliance against any person or institution (especially the state)

¹⁰ Gianpietro Berti, *Il pensiero anarchico dal Settecento al Novecento* (Pietro Lacaita Editore, Manduria-Bari-Roma 1998) 731.

clear vocation to bring about the outbreak of social revolution, put into practice methods of revolutionary gymnastics, in the manner of insurrectionary trials, which always ended in failure and were followed by waves of repression. The high level of social conflict and resistance on the part of the ruling classes culminated in an attempted coup d'état, led by General Franco, which, due to its partial failure, led to civil war. In those places where the social and trade union forces helped to crush the military insurrection, such as Madrid and especially in Barcelona, a power vacuum was created from which thousands of militants of the confederate trade union and affinity groups around the FAI and the Juventudes Libertarias started their longed-for revolution on their own account and by their own means. The conversion of the war into a long war in which the national side was supported by the Axis powers while the Republicans were left alone in the face of international indifference led, on the one hand, to the idea of the necessary cooperation between the diverse mosaic of political forces in the republican government, with the participation of organised anarchism in the government, and on the other hand, to the growing material and political dependence on a Soviet Union interested in marginalising groups not in line with its political orthodoxy, among them anarchism.

In all this context, while the 1920s was above all a period of reflection for anarcho-individualism, during the 1930s, in line with the political environment, it was a period of action. From *Iniciales*, which was directed by León Dróvar, an individualist who also participated in the anarchist sector of naturism, a more markedly Stygnerian and Armandian discourse was adopted. The question of sexual liberation, the practice of nudism and the defence of promiscuity became priority themes for the various groups associated with the magazine. The nude figures on the covers, although not a practice exclusive to the individualist media, try to be provocative against the conventions assumed by the majority, to be an attack on the waterline of

anarcho-syndicalist newspaper *Redención*, called *Generación Consciente* (1923–1928), with an avowedly neo-Malthusian orientation, would give rise to the most prestigious and widely distributed cultural journal among those sympathetic to anarchism. Around 1928, under pressure from censorship, the editors were forced to change the title to *Estudios* (1928–1937). As with the Montseny family's publication, without being explicitly individualist, but rather plural and eclectic, it would allow the participation of Spanish and, above all, French individualists, and would also serve to show the public an ethics and aesthetics close to the postulates of Stirner, Ryner and Armand.²⁴

It was not until the beginning of 1927, when the nucleus around the Ateneo Naturista Ecléctico and J. Elizalde, when the first periodical publication declaredly individualist emerged: *Ética* (1927–1929), which would be replaced two years later, with some changes among its editors and collaborators, by *Iniciales* (1929–1937), from the Barcelona neighbourhood of Sants. As we shall see, its pages served as a platform both for the dissemination of its ideas and as a nexus of relations between the diverse and dispersed nuclei of like-minded people scattered throughout Spain and far beyond.²⁵

The arrival of the Second Republic in April 1931 generated high expectations and great social effervescence among the libertarian milieu, which did not correspond to the political evolution of the country, under great social pressures and in a European context characterised by both the economic crisis and the emergence of authoritarianism. The most radical sectors of anarchism, dissatisfied with the situation and with a

²⁴ Sobre *Generación Consciente*, la investigación de José Navarro Moneris, *Generación Consciente. Sexualidad y control de la natalidad en la cultura revolucionaria española* (Alzina, Alicante 1988). Para *Estudios*, Francisco Javier Navarro, *El paraíso de la razón. La revista Estudios (1928–1937) y el mundo cultural anarquista* (Alfons el Magnànim, Valencia 1997).

²⁵ X. Díez, *Utopía sexual...* op. cit.

that poses a threat of invasion of the individual sphere, with simple and tacit rules in order to achieve a minimum of harmony between strongly independent individuals. In this sense, every person can enter into a free association agreement with society. But unlike the Styrnerian union of egoists, this is stable and with a desire for continuity. Like the individualist theorists before him, Tucker is also in favour of the right to property, as long as it has a tangible basis. He would not accept theoretical property: shares, patents, or even ownership of land.

In addition to the anti-statism typical of individualists, the director of *Liberty* also distrusted both mass action and violent revolutions. He believes that any transformation must be gradual and taken up peacefully and personally by the majority. He believes that the sudden subversion of order leads to a power vacuum that easily degenerates into tyranny.

Of all the individualisms, the closest to Spanish anarchism was French anarchism. Apart from geographical proximity, there are other reasons for the intensity of the influences. French, unlike English or German, was a language more familiar to Spanish anarchists. The prestige of French anarchism weighed heavily, especially between the last two decades of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th. Moreover, contacts and personal relations became much closer, especially when political repression, military insubordination or economic necessity forced many to emigrate or go into exile on the other side of the Pyrenees.

Among the theoreticians of individualist anarchism, Émile Armand (1872–1963) was the best known and most influential of the Spanish individualists. Armand, a profound connoisseur of both Stirner and American theorists, a participant in many libertarian community experiences, with a rather heterodox theoretical evolution from Christianity to nihilism and a very bad relationship with the main nuclei of French anarchism, adopted, from the first decade of the 20th century, a clearly individualist position. Armand, the pseudonym of Ernest Lucien

Juin, became known above all for his controversial position on the sexual question. For the French individualist, free love, for him equivalent to generalised sexual promiscuity, became the metaphor for individual liberation. The pursuit of pleasure and selfish satisfaction, rather than a legitimate option, represents a moral obligation. Existence must internalise an intense, everyday *carpe diem*. Any idea of sacrifice or self-repression is rather the manifestation of a profound personality anomaly.

Armand, whose ideas would appeal to a large number of young modernists in the world of culture, considered the “I” to be the most important dimension of existence. Any idea or category which, like Stirner’s, sought to place itself above the individual will was therefore to be rejected. No god, law, morality, prejudice, convention or cultural taboo should be imposed on the freedom and sovereignty of the individual. In this sense, the theoretical positions and life experiences of the French individualist are profoundly iconoclastic and scandalous, even among a large part of the libertarian milieu. The vindication of nudist naturism, the extreme defence of contraception, the idea of “unions of egoists” for the exclusive purpose of sexual practice (amorous camaraderie), which he tried to put into practice, not without difficulty, marked his way of thinking and acting, and led to admiration among some and strong rejection among others. But Armand and his philosophy were undoubtedly well known in Spain, especially between the outbreak of the First World War and the end of the Civil War.

For the French individualist, as for Stirner, it must be the individual himself who marks the path of his own liberation. But Armand specifies that this liberation must be multidimensional. No one should be bound to anything: neither to ideas nor to religions, but neither to affections nor to friendships. Nor must he be accountable to anything or anyone. Their liberation must respond to the Stirnerian idea of revolt, a liberation that destroys all prejudices and sweeps away all social or cultural conventions, in a permanent and hedonistic “living for

and was the more or less official translator of Han Ryner, with whom he maintained a close personal relationship.

Although, at first, this promising anarchist, who, as we have already mentioned, was among the founding group of the FAI and became its first secretary for a few months, fell into disgrace. After being arrested and imprisoned in 1928 for his militant activity, while still trying to maintain contact with the anarchist press until 1929–1930, he was accused of being a police informer, unjustly according to Gómez Casas²² and condemned to a kind of civil death among the libertarian milieus. It seems that the accusations were motivated by some controversies with certain sectors of the movement, both because of his critical stance and because of some clashes with the Montseny family over the prisoners’ money and his affiliation to Freemasonry.

It was precisely during this period that the Montseny family began a second period of *La Revista Blanca* (1923–1936), which was led by a young, self-taught Federica Montseny and included contributors such as Elizalde, Han Ryner and E. Armand. Although the Barcelona journal cannot be considered strictly individualist — there was a wide range of theoretical approaches and an excessively personalistic tone with respect to the publishing family — it did disseminate many ideas on this trend and numerous texts that were close to this ideology. Moreover, its collection *La Novela Ideal*, with a long list of more than six hundred titles, often written by non-professional writers with a clearly anarchist orientation, often flaunted values very much in line with the thinking of Stirner or Han Ryner.²³

At the same time, first from Alcoy, then from Valencia, at the beginning of the 1920s, a pamphlet associated with the

²² Juan Gómez Casas, *Historia de la FAI* (Zero, Madrid 1977) 132, y Dolors Marín, *De la llibertat...* 240–241.

²³ Marisa Siguán Bohemer, *Literatura popular libertaria. Trece años de ‘La Novela Ideal’ (1925–1938)* (Península, Barcelona 1981).

of which would be the excursionist group Sol y Vida (Sun and Life). At the same time, J. Elizalde was one of the driving forces behind this group, who, together with some of his collaborators, took part in the founding of the Iberian Anarchist Federation on the Saler beach in Valencia in July 1927.

It was precisely J. Elizalde who played an outstanding and fundamental role in the 1920s in the introduction and propagation of a renewed individualism, influenced by the French. Elizalde was as important a figure for Spanish individualism as he was enigmatic from the point of view of his personal identity. Little information is known about his private life, except for a well-off social background, according to the memoirs of Federica Montseny, who belonged to the well-known family of Basque industrialists of the same surname.²¹ The individualist from Barcelona was the promoter of various initiatives in the cultural field, such as the aforementioned Ateneo Naturista Ecléctico, or as founder and director of the individualist magazine *Ética*, in 1927, of the magazine *Floreal*, aimed at children and distributed among rationalist schools, or of the Idist organ (the simplified variant of Esperanto known as Ido) *Ad-avane*. He was also the promoter and driving force behind a philological institute from which languages were taught, especially French and Ido, the latter by correspondence.

Elizalde, known in libertarian circles for his intellectual and organisational skills, was not, however, a noted theoretician. His signed contributions to the journals he edited or to other publications in which he took part, including *La Revista Blanca*, were rare and tended to be limited to literary commentaries or aesthetic notes. On the other hand, as was already the case with Costa Iscar, translator of Armand, he stood out as an introducer of the French individualists. He had also translated Armand

²¹ Federica Montseny, *Mis primeros cuarenta años* (Plaza y Janés, Barcelona 1987) 56.

the sake of living”, based on a profound transformation of mentalities achieved through an intense process of self-education, of self-liberation from the prejudices that mediate the way of thinking and acting. However, this is an option that many will consider nihilistic, in the sense of being beyond good and evil. And for many, this whole ideology will seem, to say the least, controversial. The social dimension of the individual will not be ignored either, and the Armandian concept of this question will be close to American contractualism. It should not be forgotten that the French individualist would be a great connoisseur of the utopian experiences of the previous century and that he would maintain a long relationship with Benjamin R. Tucker. However, unlike the American one, the Armandian contract of collaboration is, as with Stirner, loose, ephemeral, fragile and flexible, and can be unilaterally undone. Although the exchange relations are based on the idea of reciprocity, Armand seems far from the mutual support formulated by Kropotkin, since it does not have the function of generating a more just society, but is only motivated to improve the possibilities of satisfying purely selfish needs and feelings, and for this purpose, individual and personal property, and even the differences it marks, coherently with Stirner and Tucker, is absolutely legitimate. Taking into account their views, it is obvious that the rejection of any stable associationism, especially in the inter-war period, when mass organisations assume a major social role, entails a certain marginalisation, a living “on the fringes” of institutions and of a certain recognition. In fact, this idea seems to have been consciously taken up by French individualism, which, in parallel with the anarchist movement in that country, entered a period of decline from 1914 onwards.

However, this does not imply that associationism was renounced, but simply that Armand and the French individualists, on the basis of their characteristics and circumstances, proposed and put into practice a different type of sociability, based on the horizontal connectivity, in a network, of different nuclei

of affinity, of modest dimensions, scattered throughout Western geography. This will be a relationship, often at a distance, totally anational and de-territorialised, regardless of origin or language — in fact Esperanto and its simplified variant, *Ido*, will have an extraordinary importance as a mechanism of communication — and often connected through the different press organs of this trend.

From the north of the Pyrenees, another individualist name, rather less controversial, would gain an important ascendancy among Spanish individualists, even among other tendencies of anarchism, namely Han Ryner. A prestigious collaborator, surrounded by a certain aura of a wise and kindly man, the professor of classical languages at various republican *lycées* formulated a subjectivist individualist philosophy through his work, which straddled the line between essay and fiction. Ryner rejects the permanent conflict between the individual and the environment that characterises the conceptions of Stirner or Armand and considers that it must be the individual, the measure of all things, who must seek his own path, his own truth, instead of accepting it from outside authorities. It must be an inner path as a way of liberation from external conditioning that allows one to create a subjective universe which, at the same time, allows one to remain aloof from the hostile context that surrounds the lives of most people. Unlike Armand, who tried to create social environments different from those offered by contemporary society, Ryner argued that it is possible to live in the heart of an unjust society, in everyday hells, while maintaining a psychological independence that allows for self-isolation. And this is only possible through change and personal self-reflection leading to a harmonious and balanced existence. From this point of view, the French subjectivist will admit, from a certain relativity, the validity of a moral code, especially based on tolerance and respect, and will try to distance himself from the ethical nihilism of other individualist orientations. This is a philosophy simultaneously impregnated

ated Spanish anarcho-syndicalism. The violent confrontation between the organised labour movement and the bosses, with the support of their own unions and the government, led to a period of serious conflict and instability that would put an end to the Restoration regime.

It was precisely during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923–1930) that the most explicit individualism, more or less organised, would appear, especially around his publications. The dictatorial regime, sponsored by a bourgeoisie fearful of revolution, had been very active from the beginning in the persecution of anarcho-syndicalism. Its legal measures and repressive practices had driven the National Confederation of Labour more or less underground. With the unions closed down, with the imprisonment of many of their leaders, with intense police work, with relentless censorship of the anarcho-syndicalist press, the regime was, however, much more tolerant of cultural and educational work akin to anarchism or its more purely ideological side. The athenaeums continued to function despite the constant threat of registration or closure. Magazines continued to be published despite the omnipresent censorship.

New alternative forms of sociability appeared, with a special emphasis on educational and leisure activities, with the athenaeums as their epicentre, with new concerns and new aesthetic tastes different from those of pre-war Europe. Various groups practising hiking, naturism, nudism, sexual emancipation and Esperantism proliferated around informal associations linked in one way or another to anarchism. It was precisely the limitations on workers' associations imposed by the special legislation of the Dictatorship that indirectly encouraged this kind of informal associationism in which the anarchist movement converged with this heterogeneity of practices and tendencies. One of the most prominent groups, which would be the driving force behind the individualist journal *Ética*, would be the Ateneo Naturista Ecléctico, based in Barcelona, with its various sections, the most prominent

journalistic work,¹⁷ the polyhedrism of its athenetic activity¹⁸ or its formal and informal formulas of sociability.¹⁹ But in all this, culture, in capital letters and in the broadest sense of the term, was absolutely central in the mental universe of most militants or those who were sympathetic to libertarian ideas. In this context, in which, moreover, there was a close personal relationship and a wide-ranging correspondence with scattered nuclei in distant geographies, especially France and Latin America, ideas circulated across all borders, and with rapid fluidity.

With the outbreak of the First World War, some of the French anarchists who had opposed their recruitment emigrated to Spain, especially to Barcelona. During this war period, some anarchist militants such as Eugène Humbert, a neo-Malthusian, that is, a radical supporter of birth control and free sexuality, a disciple of Paul Robin, was welcomed in the Barcelona home of Luis Bulffi, the most prominent of the Spanish neo-Malthusians, director of the second family planning centre opened in Europe and president of the Ateneo Enciclopédico Popular, a politically open space, but where there was a significant anarchist presence.²⁰ On the other hand, Armand's imprisonment for his refusal to take part in the war and his anti-war propaganda increased his prestige among Spanish libertarian circles.

But the insurrectionary dynamic that swept through Europe after the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia also perme-

¹⁷ Francisco Madrid, *La prensa...*

¹⁸ Javier Navarro, *Ateneos y grupos ácratas. Vida y actividad cultural de las asociaciones anarquistas valencianas durante la Segunda República y la Guerra Civil* (Generalitat Valenciana, Valencia 2002).

¹⁹ Dolores Marín, *De la llibertat per conèixer al coneixement de la llibertat. L'adquisició de cultura en la tradició llibertària catalana durant la dictadura de Primo de Rivera i la Segona República Espanyola*, tesis doctoral inédita (Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona 1995). También Clandestinos, op. cit.

²⁰ Ferrán Aisa, *Una història de Barcelona. L'Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular 1902–1999* (Virus, Barcelona 2000).

with neo-stoicism and neo-epicureanism, which will be particularly attractive to Spanish anarchists eager to change society in a more just direction, but at the same time aware of the great difficulties of transformation not so much because it is based on power relations, but because of the permeation of values of domination and authority assumed, often unconsciously, by the majority of citizens, even among people close to their political ideas.

Spanish individualist anarchism

Unlike what happened in Berlin, the East Coast of the United States or Paris, no one comparable to Stirner, Thoreau, Warren, Tucker, Armand or Ryner emerged in Spain. There is no reference work comparable to *El único y su propiedad*, and despite the knowledge and affinities of some Hispanic theorists with respect to individualist ideas, despite the echo of the ideas of the theorists listed at the beginning of this paragraph, it does not seem that there were more or less organised and stable individualist bodies until the 1920s.

However, despite the little weight of individualism in the process of the formation of Hispanic anarchism, as Francisco Madrid¹¹ points out in his doctoral thesis and, according to Álvarez Junco,¹² the relative ideological dependence on theorists of foreign origin, it is worth noting that, from the last decade of the 19th century onwards, there were some approximations. Although these came from a field closer to art and literature than to political ideas. Let us not forget that between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century there was a rapprochement between the intellectual world, the “rebellious

¹¹ Francisco Madrid, *La prensa anarquista y anarcosindicalista en España desde la I Internacional hasta el final de la Guerra Civil*, tesis doctoral inédita (Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona 1989) cap. 1.

¹² J. Álvarez Junco, *La ideología...* 9ss.

youth” of ’98 and the young modernists who were attracted by anarchism and its aesthetics, a phenomenon also present north of the Pyrenees.

From the sociological conditioning factors of many of the modernist intellectuals, not all of them from a well-off social background, the ideas of Stirner, of Nietzsche -who, let us remember, claimed the author of *El único y su propiedad*-, but also of the ideology present in the modernist intellectuals, who were not all from a well-off social background, the ideas of Stirner, of Nietzsche -who, let us remember, claimed the author of *El único y su propiedad*, but also the ideology present in the plays of Heinrich Johan Ibsen (1828–1906) and even of the novelist Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy (1828–1910), whose ideas would bear a certain resemblance to those of Thoreau and would give rise to a small current, especially in France, of anarchism, especially in France, of Tolstoyan anarchism or also called Christian anarchism,¹³ will generate a current of thought that will reject social conventions, the profound distrust of mass action, the vindication of the individual and his will against the impositions of collectivity or the exaltation of instinct in the face of oppressive rationality. Many of these elements can be seen in the work of Ricardo Mella¹⁴ in plays by authors such as Felip Cortiella, Ignasi Iglésies, Àngel Guimerà, novelists such as Leopoldo Alas Clarín, poets such as Joan Maragall and essayists such as Pedro Dorado Montero.

It was precisely Dorado Montero, from *La España Moderna*, a prestigious publication around which the names of the most prominent members of the Generation of ’98 appeared, who, in 1901, produced the first translation of Stirner’s work, only a year after it had been translated into French and six years before its translation into English, promoted by Tucker,

¹³ Jean Maitron, *Le mouvement anarchiste en France 2* (François Maspero, París 1975) 183–184.

¹⁴ Ricardo Mella, *Ideario* (Producciones Editoriales, Barcelona 1978) y *Forjando un mundo libre* (La Piqueta, Madrid 1978).

from *Liberty*. Around 1904, the Valencia publisher Sempere produced two new editions with a total of more than 10,000 copies, distributed for the Spanish and Latin American markets, a not inconsiderable figure considering the period and the typology and difficulty of the work.¹⁵ At the same time, the performances of Ibsen’s main plays were a great success, especially in Barcelona, where the audience was, according to the testimonies of the time, of working-class origin, and apparently sympathetic to the anarchist movement.¹⁶ Thus, individualist ideas gradually penetrated an anarchism under permanent construction, especially in magazines such as *La Idea Libre* or the first period of *La Revista Blanca*.

This permeation of individualist concepts in the anarchist universe began to be seen in much of the literature and theatre that people close to individualism would consume, but many of these ideas would also be present in much of the libertarian press of the time. This was an implicit individualism, introduced by the names of writers and ideologues who, like Ricardo Mella and Federico Urales, were familiar with the works and authors of individualist theorists and disseminated them in their press organs. But during the first two decades of the century, when most of the movement took a turn in the direction of anarcho-sindicalist strategies, the ideas that formed the theoretical basis of the individualist tendency were gradually contacted, known and translated in parallel.

In recent years, the new historiography on anarchism has been recovering the immense wealth of the intense cultural activity of this movement, whether from its enormous literary-

¹⁵ Pérez de la Dehesa, estudio preliminar en Federico Urales, *La evolución de la filosofía en España* (Laia, Barcelona 1977) 38–40, y G. Manfredonia, *L’individualisme...* 189

¹⁶ Pérez de la Dehesa, *ibíd.*, 40–43.