

# 160 Years of Libertarian

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## 160 Years of Libertarian

Many men, I know, speak of liberty without understanding it; they know neither the science of it, nor even the sentiment. They see in the demolition of reigning Authority nothing but a substitution of names or persons; they don't imagine that a society could function without masters or servants, without chiefs and soldiers; in this they are like those reactionaries who say: 'There are always rich and poor, and there always will be. What would become of the poor without the rich? They would die of hunger!'

Joseph Déjacque (*Down with the Bosses!*, 5)

In 2008, we marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the use of the “libertarian” by anarchists (“150 Years of Libertarian,” *Freedom* 69, 23-4). It recounted how, between 1858 and 1861, French exile and communist-anarchist Joseph Déjacque published the journal *La Libertaire, Journal du Mouvement Social* in New York. (Max Nettlau, *A Short History of Anarchism*, 75-6) It also sketched anarchist use of the term from that date onwards.

However, the previous year – 1857 – saw the first actual use of the word in the modern sense – *libertaire* – in an Open Letter he wrote to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the first person to self-proclaim as an anarchist in 1840's seminal *What is Property?*. It is of note beyond the coining of *libertarian*. First, Déjacque's challenging of Proudhon's sexism and his argument that support for patriarchy is in contradiction to Proudhon's own stated principles. Second, the extension of Proudhon's critique of property beyond his market socialism to communist conclusions, predating the rise of anarchist-communism in the First International by over twenty years.

Unfortunately, in the United States “libertarian” has become associated with the far right, by supporters of “free-market” capitalism. That defenders of the hierarchy associated with private property seek to associate the word with their authoritarian system is both unfortunate and unbelievable to any genuine libertarian. Worse, thanks to the power of money and the relative small size of the anarchist movement in America, this appropriation of the term has become, to a large extent, the default meaning there. Somewhat ironically, this results in some right-wing “libertarians” complaining that we genuine libertarians have “stolen” their name in order to associate our socialist ideas with it!

Here we expand on our previous account and discuss why the right-wing appropriation of the word is wrong not only because of its history but also according to their own ideology. In doing so we show why the left should reclaim *libertarian* and why the right should refuse to use it. We also indicate that latter is optimistic at best despite it being consistent with their own ideology.

### Joseph Déjacque: “Be frankly, fully anarchist”

Joseph Déjacque (1821-1864) wrote in response to Proudhon’s attack on the French feminist Jenny d’Héricourt (1809-1875) and entitled his 1857 critique *De l’être-humain mâle et femelle (On the Male and Female Human Being)*. He is one of those figures who deserves better than just a passing mention or relegated to a footnote in the histories of anarchism for he was a precursor of anarchist-communism whose fiery rhetoric and fierce logic remains largely unknown in the English-language movement.

Déjacque rightly denounced Proudhon for his repulsive sexism and showed how Proudhon’s position was at odds with his own principles. He invited him to become “frankly and completely an anarchist” by giving up *all* forms of authority and property – and so demonstrated that he was a much more astute reader of Proudhon than many others, then and since. The word libertarian was used to describe this consistent anarchism which rejected *all* private and public hierarchies along with property in the products of labour as well as the means of production.

To fully appreciate Déjacque’s critique we must sketch Proudhon’s ideas.

Proudhon is best known for 1840’s *What is Property?* and this book laid the foundations for his subsequent works as well as all forms of modern anarchism. As is well known, this work concluded that “property is theft.” This is for two reasons. First, the common heritage of humanity – the land, the means of production – is appropriated by the few. Second, this results in a situation where the worker “has sold and surrendered his liberty” to the property-owner who acquires “the products of his employees’ labour” and “unjustly” profits from their collective toil. If the “worker is proprietor of the value which he creates” then this does not occur under capitalism and to achieve it “all accumulated capital being social property, no one can be its exclusive proprietor.” So all workers “are proprietors of their products” while “not one is proprietor of the means of production”. If the “right to product is exclusive” then “the right to means is common” for “[i]f the right of life is equal, the right of labour is equal, and so is the right of occupancy”. (*Property is Theft!*, 117-8, 112, 95)

Less well known is the second conclusion, that “property is despotism.” Property “violates equality by the rights of exclusion and increase, and freedom by despotism” and proprietor was “synonymous” with “sovereign” for he “imposes his will as law, and suffers neither contradiction nor control” for “each proprietor is sovereign lord within the sphere of his property”. Anarchy, in contrast, was “the absence of a master, of a sovereign”. As he put it in 1846: “property, which should make us free, makes us prisoners. What am I saying? It degrades us, by making us servants and tyrants to one another.” (133, 132, 135, 248)

Thus property is rejected for two interlinked reasons – it produces oppressive and exploitative relationships between people. The “*abolition of man’s exploitation of his fellow-man and abolition of man’s government of his fellow-man*” were “one and the

same proposition” for “what, in politics, goes under the name of *Authority* is analogous to and synonymous with what is termed, in political economy, *Property*”. These “two notions overlap one with the other and are identical”. The “principle of AUTHORITY [was] articulated through property and through the State” and so “an attack upon one is an attack upon the other.” Association had to replace both otherwise people “would remain related as subordinates and superiors, and there would ensue two industrial castes of masters and wage-workers, which is repugnant to a free and democratic society.” (503-6, 583)

Déjacque took aim at the great contradiction in Proudhon’s ideas, namely his vigorous defence of patriarchy. Here was an association – the family – in which there would remain “subordinates and superiors,” masters and servants. In contrast to his penetrating critique of property and State, this specific subordinate relationship was based on, and defended by, the crudest sexism.

As can be seen from his Open Letter, Déjacque is very familiar with Proudhon’s work – and what would annoy him. His starts with an obvious reference to the masthead of Proudhon paper from the 1848 revolution, *Le Representant du Peuple* (“What is the Producer? Nothing. What should he be? Everything!”) before proclaiming Proudhon a moderate (“*juste-milieu*”) anarchist, “a *liberal*” rather than a “real anarchist” or “LIBERTARIAN” knowing that *juste milieu* (“middle way” or “happy medium”) was used to describe centrist political philosophies that try to find a balance between extremes. It was associated with the French July Monarchy (1830–1848) which ostensibly tried to strike a balance between autocracy and democracy: “We will attempt to remain in a *juste milieu*, in an equal distance from the excesses of popular power and the abuses of royal power” (in the words of King Louis-Philippe).

So just as the tensions between monarchical principles and republican ideals was unsustainable and the regime was overthrown in the 1848 Revolution, so Déjacque hoped that the obvious contradictions between Proudhon’s anarchy for the community and the workplace but patriarchy for the home would likewise be rejected in favour of a *consistent* anarchy. The notion that the family should be excluded from free and equal association was untenable, an affront to both logic and liberty. Hence *libertarian* – to place liberty within any association we may freely decide to join at the forefront.

His other innovation was to extend Proudhon’s critique of property from the instruments of labour to the products of labour. While recognising that Proudhon’s market socialism – worker co-operatives selling their products to other workers – may be required immediately after a revolution, he argued twenty years before Kropotkin and Reclus that this was not the best we could aim for. Deeds do not reflect needs and freedom was best defended by free access to both the means of life and the products created using them. As he put it in “Exchange” which appeared in *Le Libéraire* during 1858:

“In principle, should the labourers have the produce of their labour?”

“I do not hesitate to say: No! although I know that a multitude of workers will cry out. Look, proletarians, cry out, shout as much as you like, but then listen to me:

“No, it is not the product of their labours to which the workers have a right. It is the satisfaction of their needs, whatever the nature of those needs.

“To have the possession of the product of our labour is not to have *possession* of that which is proper to us, it is to have *property* in a product made by our hands, and which could be proper to others and not to us. And isn't all property theft?” (15)

As would be expected with a short letter, his critique needs to be developed. His sketch of communist-anarchism is too dependent on harmonic coincidences in terms of equating production and consumption even if it does highlight an important issue – needs and deeds do not equate. Proudhon recognised that freedom required that the ownership of the means of life (workplace, land, sea) had to be common to avoid hierarchical relationships, Déjacque went further to argue that for a full life the products also had to be.

Before discussing the subsequent use of *libertaire*, we must note that for all his justified onslaught against Proudhon's sexism, his defence of d'Héricourt was not completely free of it. Most obviously, it is marked by an ever-so-gallant desire to protect someone who could and did put Proudhon in his place by herself – d'Héricourt was a leading socialist of the Cabet faction, feminist activist, writer, a physician-midwife, a participant (like Déjacque and Proudhon) of the Revolution of 1848 who wrote replies to the sexist essays of Proudhon, amongst others.

#### After Déjacque: “Libertarian or Anarchist?”

Eleven years after Déjacque issued his challenge to Proudhon, André Léo, a feminist libertarian and future Communard, also pointed out the obvious contradiction to his French followers:

“These so-called lovers of liberty, if they are unable to take part in the direction of the state, at least they will be able to have a little monarchy for their personal use, each in his own home [...] Order in the family without hierarchy seems impossible to them – well then, what about in the state?”  
(quoted by Carolyn J. Eichner, 75)

So like Déjacque, Léo argued that Proudhon's critique of wage-labour and the State was equally applicable to *family* relations. Anarchists, to be consistent, cannot be blind to social (“private”) hierarchies while denouncing economic and political ones. Unsurprisingly, almost all subsequent anarchists (including Bakunin and Kropotkin)

recognised the need for consistency and so followed the Déjacque and Léo in applying Proudhon's principles against his own contradictory application.

They also sought to apply their ideas within areas Proudhon likewise opposed, namely in the union movement. Thus we find Eugène Varlin as well as “advocat[ing] equal rights for women” also arguing that “the workers’ own trade union organisations and strike activity” were “necessary to abolish capitalism” and these “societies of resistance and solidarity ‘form the natural elements of the social structure of the future.’” (Robert Graham, *We do not Fear Anarchy, we invoke it*, 77, 128) These ideas were championed by Bakunin in the International Workers’ Association and “now developed what may be described as *modern anarchism*” based on “promot[ing] their ideas directly amongst the labour organisations and to induc[ing] these unions to a direct struggle against capital, without placing their faith in parliamentary legislation.” (Kropotkin, *Direct Struggle Against Capital*, 170, 165)

The next recorded use of “libertarian” was by a French regional anarchist Congress at Le Havre (16-22 November 1880) which used the term “libertarian communism” while January the following year saw a French manifesto issued on “Libertarian or Anarchist Communism.” The term “libertarian” quickly became an alternative to anarchist. In 1895 leading anarchists Sébastien Faure and Louise Michel published the newspaper *La Libertaire* in France. (Nettlau, 145, 162) Kropotkin the following year stated that “I cannot help believing that modern Socialism is forced to make a step towards libertarian communism”. (*L’Anarchie: sa Philosophie, son Idéal*, 31) This pamphlet was translated into English the following year and published in Britain and America. In Italy, Malatesta noted the same year that “the name *libertarians*” is one “accepted and used by all anarchists” and among those “who seek the abolition of capitalism” there are those who think “a new government needs to be formed – and these are the democratic or authoritarian socialists” and those “who want the new organisation to arise from the action of free associations – and these are the anarchist or libertarian socialists.” (*Complete Works* 3: 57, 252) In 1897 we also find Benjamin Tucker (a leading individualist anarchist) discussing “libertarian solutions” to land use in contrast to the capitalist “land monopoly” and looked forward to a time when “the libertarian principle to the tenure of land” was actually applied, based on occupancy and use. (*Liberty* 350: 5)

By 1899 the British anarchist Henry Glasse was discussing the issue, noting that the “term ‘Libertarian’ in place of ‘Anarchist’ seems to be used with increasing frequency” and concluded that the “newer term pleases me better.” (“Libertarian or Anarchist?”, *Freedom*, January 1899) In 1913 Kropotkin was again using “*libertarian Communism*” to describe his ideas and goals as well as noting that this was how anarchist-communism “was named originally in France”. (*La Science Moderne et Anarchie*, 134, 140) The same year saw him argue in “The Anarchist Principle” that there is “the authoritarian current and the libertarian current – that is to say, the Anarchists and, in direct opposition to them, all the other political movements, whatever name they give themselves.” (*Direct*, 199)

So by the start of the twentieth century libertarian as an alternative to anarchist was well-established and in the 1920s communist-anarchist Bartolomeo Vanzetti was stating the obvious:

“After all we are socialists as the social-democrats, the socialists, the communists, and the I.W.W. are all Socialists. The difference – the fundamental one – between us and all the other is that they are authoritarian while we are libertarian; they believe in a State or Government of their own; we believe in no State or Government.” (Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, *The Letters of Sacco and Vanzetti*, 274)

The most famous use of “libertarian communism” must be by the world’s largest anarchist movement, the anarcho-syndicalist CNT in Spain. After proclaiming its aim to be “libertarian communism” in 1919, the CNT held its national congress of May 1936 in Zaragoza, with 649 delegates representing 982 unions with a membership of over 550,000. One of the resolutions passed was “The Confederal Conception of Libertarian Communism” (José Peirats, *The CNT in the Spanish Revolution 1*: 103-10) This resolution on libertarian communism was largely the work of Isaac Puente, author of the widely reprinted and translated pamphlet entitled *Libertarian Communism* first published four years previously. That year, 1932, also saw the founding by anarchists of the *Federación Ibérica de Juventudes Libertarias (Iberian Federation of Libertarian Youth)* in Madrid.

George Woodcock, in his history of anarchism written in 1962, indicated the use of the libertarian by anarchists and its origins in Déjacque and Faure (*Anarchism*, 233) and his account –which has the subtitle “*A History of libertarian ideas and movements*” – makes no mention of right-wing use of the word. More recently, Robert Graham states that Déjacque’s act made “him the first person to use the word ‘libertarian’ as synonymous with ‘anarchist’” while Faure and Michel were “popularising the use of the word ‘libertarian’ as a synonym for ‘anarchist.’” (*Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas 1*: 60, 231)

Libertarian, though, has been used by more than just anarchists. For example, in the late 1890s the ex-anarchist Francesco Saverio Merlino proclaimed himself a “libertarian socialist” during his attempts to convince anarchists to embrace parliamentarianism (Malatesta, 290-1). In Britain between 1960 and 1992 the group *Solidarity* saw themselves as providing a “libertarian-socialist alternative” to “authoritarian class society” and as “part of a revolutionary libertarian tradition” they recognised that to “be meaningful the revolution to come will have to be profoundly libertarian”. (Maurice Brinton, *For Workers’ Power*, 157, 294, 377) Influenced by the French *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group and Cornelius Castoriadis, their self-managed socialism is hard to distinguish from anarchism and the group included anarchists, Marxists and those who eschewed both labels. Likewise, the expression “libertarian Marxist” is often used to describe dissident Marxists such as council communists

(like Anton Pannekoek and Paul Mattick) who have come to conclusions similar to revolutionary anarchism.

So while “libertarian” did become broader than anarchist, it was still used by people on the left. Given this underlying similarity, anarchists were happy to share the term with other socialists and those – civil libertarians – who sought an increase in personal liberty and a reduction in social hierarchies and their power. Thus while all anarchists were libertarians, not all libertarians were anarchists – but they all refused to tolerate private hierarchies and their restrictions on individual liberty. The matter becomes different when “libertarian” is used to defend these private hierarchies.

### Property is Theft: On “libertarian” Hypocrisy

So, just as all anarchists are socialists but not all socialists anarchists, by the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Déjacque coining the phrase the situation was that while all anarchists were libertarians, not all libertarians were anarchists – but all were *left-wing*. Over the next 60 years this would change to such a degree that in America – and, to a lesser degree, Britain – “libertarian” now refers to the exact opposite of what it used to mean. Murray Rothbard, a founder of the so-called “libertarian” right, sheds light on how this process started:

“One gratifying aspect of our rise to some prominence [in the late 1950s] is that, for the first time in my memory, we, ‘our side,’ had captured a crucial word from the enemy [...] ‘Libertarians’ [...] had long been simply a polite word for left-wing [sic!] anarchists, that is for anti-private property anarchists, either of the communist or syndicalist variety. But now we had taken it over, and more properly from the view of etymology; since we were proponents of individual liberty and therefore of the individual’s right to his property.” (*The Betrayal of the American Right*, 83)

Let us recall what this “proponent” of “the individual’s right to his property” had to say about names and labels:

“Every individual in the free society has a right to ownership of his own self and to the exclusive use of his own property. Included in his property is his name, the linguistic label which is uniquely his and is identified with him. A name is an essential part of a man’s identity and therefore of his property [...] defense of person and property [...] involves the defense of each person’s particular name or trademark against the fraud of *forgery* or *imposture*.” (*Man, Economy, and State*, 670-1)

This “means the outlawing” of someone taking another’s name and pretending to be them as this would be “abusing the property right” of someone to “his unique name and individuality”. Likewise, “the use by some other chocolate firm of the Hershey label would be an equivalent of an invasive act of fraud and forgery.” This was because a “name, as we have seen, is a unique identifying label for a person (or a group of persons acting co-operatively), and is therefore an attribute of the

person and his energy” and so “*is an attribute of a labour factor.*” (671, 679) If someone “inherited or purchased” something which had been stolen then the thing “properly reverts back” to the original creator “or his descendants *without* compensation to the existing possessor of the criminally-derived ‘title.’ Thus, if a current title to property is criminal in origin, *and* the victim or his heir can be found, then the title should immediately revert to the latter.” (*The Ethics of Liberty*, 56)

The hypocrisy is obvious. According to *his own ideology*, Rothbard admitted to conducting “an invasive act of fraud and forgery” against “the individual’s right to his property.” Thus, if they had *any* actual principles beyond fetishising property and being shrills for the economically powerful, his latter-day followers would stop using the term they stole and let the modern descendants of Joseph Déjacque – “anti-private property anarchists, either of the communist or syndicalist variety” – use what is rightly theirs.

It could be objected that anarchists do not accept Rothbard’s views of property. True, we advocate *use* rights rather than *property* rights: and we were still *using* the term “libertarian” – in America, for example, the communist-anarchist *Libertarian League* was active between 1954 and 1965 (Sam Dolgoff, *Fragments*, 74, 89). Yet Rothbard considers his prejudices and desires as a “natural law” and inherent in our “nature” as human beings. So, presumably like gravity, his “natural law” applies even *if we do not believe in it* – unless he views, as those expropriating native tribes did, socialists as somehow less than human (but, then, his “natural law” – unlike gravity – needs private police to enforce it....).

So we know when and why the term “libertarian” was appropriated by the right – they saw it being used by the left and simply decided to steal it. Originally, this theft was on the fringes of political discourse but the appropriated usage has mostly displaced the original one in the United States – for example, Sam Dolgoff helped found the *Libertarian Labor Review* in 1986 but by 1999 this was renamed to *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* to avoid its sellers having to continuously explain the origins and real meaning of libertarian!

How did they succeed in turning “libertarian” into its exact opposite? Partly, by the funding received by Big Business keen to secure its position, power and privileges in wider society: wealth skews the outcome in the so-called “marketplace of ideas” as in any capitalist market. Partly, by that most un-libertarian of tactics: the creation of a political party – the Libertarian Party – seeking to be elected to political office.

So if, for genuine anarchists, property is theft for Rothbard theft is apparently property – just as he made an exception for the expropriation of the land from native peoples, so he made an exception for the term he wished to call his ideology. We should not be surprised by this hypocrisy for it mirrors the *real* history of capitalism – unlike Rothbard’s just-so stories of his imaginary idealised capitalism which has existed nowhere other than inside his fevered brow.

## Property is Despotism: On “libertarian” Tyranny

If “libertarians” took their ideology *seriously* they would stop using the term “libertarian” – but of course they will not. Property rights are just for those who stole the commons, not for those who were using it. In this they reflect the reality rather than the rhetoric of the capitalism they worship. But what of Rothbard’s other claim, that “from the view of etymology” he and colleagues were entitled to steal the term from its creators and users? Are “libertarians” actually libertarian?

The short answer is no. To prove this we could turn to anarchist thinkers who have long indicated the authoritarian relationships – the private hierarchies – that inequalities of wealth produce. However, we do not need to do this as Rothbard himself presents enough evidence to show the authoritarian nature of capitalism.

Thus we find Rothbard proclaim that the state “arrogates to itself a monopoly of force, of ultimate decision-making power, over a given territorial area.” Then, buried in the chapter’s end notes, he quietly admits that “[o]bviously, in a free society, Smith has the ultimate decision-making power over his own just property, Jones over his, etc.” (*Ethics*, 170, 173) Such is the power of “private property” for it can turn the bad (“ultimate decision-making power” over a given area) into the good (“ultimate decision-making power” over a given area). Indeed, Rothbard indicates the *identical* social relationships that anarchists argue mark the State and property:

“If the State may be said to properly *own* its territory, then it is proper for it to make rules for everyone who presumes to live in that area. It can legitimately seize or control private property because there *is* no private property in its area, because it really owns the entire land surface. *So long* as the State permits its subjects to leave its territory, then, it can be said to act as does any other owner who sets down rules for people living on his property.” (170)

Rothbard is not against authoritarianism *as such* for if the state were a legitimate landlord or capitalist then its authoritarian nature would be fine. Indeed, we read in growing amazement how this “libertarian” quickly eliminates all freedoms worthy of the name because there are “no human rights which are not also property rights”. Thus “a person does not have a ‘right to freedom of speech’; what he *does* have is the right to hire a hall and address the people who enter the premise.” He “has no *right* to speak but only a request” that the owner “must decide upon”. In terms of freedom of assembly, owners “have the right to decide who shall have access to those streets” and “have the absolute right to decide on whether picketers could use their street” while “the employer can fire” a worker who joins a union “forth-with.” In short, no rights “beyond the property rights that person may have in any given case.” (113-6, 118, 132, 114) Yet the “freedom” of the boss to force all his employees to watch anti-union propaganda and fire those expressing their liberties of speech, assembly and organisation is hardly that: it is power, authority, *archy*.

Ironically, Rothbard himself shows that this is the case when he utilised a hypothetical example of a country whose King, threatened by a rising “libertarian”

movement, responses by “employ[ing] a cunning stratagem,” namely he “proclaims his government to be dissolved, but just before doing so he arbitrarily parcels out the entire land area of his kingdom to the ‘ownership’ of himself and his relatives.” Rather than taxes, people now pay rent and the King can “regulate the lives of all the people who presume to live on” his property as he sees fit. Rothbard then admits people would be “living under a regime no less despotic than the one they had been battling for so long. Perhaps, indeed, *more* despotic, for now the king and his relatives can claim for themselves the libertarians’ very principle of the absolute right of private property, an absoluteness which they might not have dared to claim before.” (54)

While Rothbard rejects this “cunning stratagem” he failed to note how this argument undermines his own claims that capitalism is the only system based upon liberty. As *he himself argues*, not only does the property owner have the same monopoly of power over a given area as the State, it is *more* despotic as it is based on the “absolute right of private property”. Indeed, he proclaims that the theory that the State owns its territory “makes the State, as well as the King in the Middle Ages, a feudal overlord, who at least theoretically *owned* all the land in his domain” (171) without noticing that this makes the capitalist or landlord a feudal overlord within his so-called “libertarian” regime.

In short, Rothbard ends up defending extremely authoritarian organisations and relationships. More, these organisations and relationships are recognised as being identical to those created by the State. This is alleged to be “libertarian” because the hierarchies produced by property are “voluntary,” people “consent” to this authority. Yes, no one forces you to work for a specific employer and everyone has the possibility (however remote) of becoming an employer or landlord. Similarly, in a democratic State no one forces you to remain in a specific State and everyone has the possibility (however remote) of becoming a governor or politician. That some may become a (political or economic) ruler does not address the issue – are people free or not? It is a strange ideology that proclaims itself liberty-loving yet embraces factory feudalism and office oligarchy while rejecting the identical subservient relations of Statism,

The context in which people make their decisions is important. Anarchists have long argued that, as a class, workers have little choice but to “consent” to capitalist hierarchy as the alternative is either dire poverty or starvation. Rothbard dismisses this by denying that there is such a thing as economic power (221-2). It is easy to refute such claims – by turning, yet again, to Rothbard’s own arguments. Consider these comments about the abolition of slavery and serfdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

“The *bodies* of the oppressed were freed, but the property which they had worked and eminently deserved to own, remained in the hands of their former oppressors. With economic power thus remaining in their hands, the former lords soon found themselves virtual masters once more of what were now free

tenants or farm labourers. The serfs and slaves had tasted freedom, but had been cruelly deprived of its fruits.” (74)

So if “market forces” (“voluntary exchanges”) result in the few owning most of the property then this is unproblematic and raises no questions about the (lack of) liberty of the working class but if people are placed *in exactly the same situation* as a result of coercion then it is a case of “economic power” and “masters”!

So much for “each [would] enjoy absolute liberty” and rights “to one’s liberty and property must be universal.” (41, 123) That Rothbard manages to refute himself in his own book is a case study in the power of ideology to blind its true believers.

### Liberty or Property?

To talk of “libertarian anarchism” as some do just shows ignorance of the history of both. Yet the issue is deeper than Rothbard. The knots he ties himself up in have their origins in the ideas of English philosopher John Locke which deeply influenced him and most defenders of capitalism.

Space precludes a detailed account of Locke’s ideas beyond noting that on the apparently reasonable assumptions that land is given to humanity in common by God and labour is the property of the worker, he weaves a story which ends up with a few owning the means of life (“Masters”) and the rest having to sell their labour to them (“Servants”). The few then incorporate their property as a joint-stock company to form and run a State whose sole role is to protect property (see C.B. MacPherson’s *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* or Carole Pateman’s *The Problem of Political Obligation*).

That property was not acquired nor States formed in this manner is beside the point – Locke wishes us to accept the current distribution of wealth and power (the outcome of centuries of coercion) by means of a story of what *could* have produced this outcome. He, then, uses *property in the person* to justify (to use his words) “subordinate relations of wife, children, servants, and slaves”. Given that the rationale for all these forms of subjection were justified in liberal theory in the same manner – consent or contractual – Déjacque is right to argue that there was no logical reason to defend patriarchy any more than any other *archy* and so the anarchist critique cannot stop at the front-door of the home.

That property proclaims it is liberty yet produces subordination and authority, proclaims it is based on labour’s reward yet enriches the capitalist and landlord are just two of the contradictions of property exposed in Proudhon’s critique (hence the pressing need for *use rights* – or *possession* – to replace *property* rights rather than, as State socialists do, the State becoming sole proprietor). This does not happen by accident – the more that liberty and labour is proclaimed the “property” of the individual, the more that liberty and labour can be alienated. In this way an ideology which proclaims its support for liberty ends up being the means of denying it:

“Contracts about property in the person inevitably create subordination.” (Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, 153)

This may seem counter-intuitive or contradictory but it is not. It was the aim of the whole theory. Locke was not seeking to undermine traditional hierarchies (beyond absolute monarchy) but rather to reinforce them. He did so by a “just-so” story whose desired conclusions – his favoured socio-economic system, the one he benefited from – are reached by what appear reasonable steps. And here we have the crux of the matter for in Locke’s “just-so” story the State *does* rightfully own its property for it is a joint-stock corporation formed by landlords (servants are *in* civil society but not *of* civil society and have no say, just as employees are part of a company but its owners run it). Rothbard refuses to take this final step but gives no reason to reject this final chapter of the same fictional story. For we must never forget that this is what Locke’s theory is – a “just-so” story. Both Locke and Rothbard seek to defend the inequalities of capitalism by convincing us to believe his story and ignore history.

This is the context of Locke’s invocation of “consent” to justify subordination – all the land has been appropriated by the few and incorporated by them into States. The servant is free because they can change one Master or State for another. Yet it is a particular kind of freedom which is invoked when it can be exemplified in subjection. Locke uses self-ownership and “consent” to justify inequalities in wealth, masters and servants, patriarchy, non-absolute monarchy, government by the wealthy few, contractual life-time slavery (which he termed “drudgery”), actual slavery, hereditary serfdom (in his *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*) – the only thing it did not seem to allow was social relationships *not* rooted in hierarchy.

That Locke himself was a wealthy man is, of course, a coincidence. Just as it is a coincidence that this major investor in the slave trade, while proclaiming that an Englishman could never submit to the slavery produced by absolute monarchy, invented another story – like the one to justify appropriation of land and rationalise master-servant relations – in the form of a “just war.” Slavery could be justified when the victors in a war started by those they have defeated offered the prisoners a choice: become a slave or die. So even absolute chattel slavery, with the power of life and death, is based on consent – and his investments safe *and* ethical.

Nor should we forget that Locke did allow servants to sell themselves to a lifetime of labour to the same Master under the name “drudgery.” This is the logic which ends by “demonstrat[ing] that (civilized) slavery is nothing more than an extended wage-labour contract, and an exemplification, not the denial, of the individual’s freedom” for the “assumption that the individual stands to the property in his person, to his capacities or services, as any owner stands to his material property, enables the opposition between freedom and slavery to be dissolved. Civil slavery becomes nothing more than one example of a legitimate contract. Individual freedom becomes exemplified in slavery.” (Pateman, 72, 66) Hence the traditional anarchist description of capitalism as being marked by *wage-slavery* – Locke’s “drudgery” brings the

nature of the hierarchies he defends into a clear light and, unsurprisingly, is usually passed over in embarrassed silence.

That Locke's system of "freedom" produces private hierarchies is not surprising as it was precisely this which it aimed to justify, rationalise and defend. The same can be said for Rothbard – with the exception that he wrapped this unfree system under the stolen word "libertarian." That both label subjugation as "freedom" is as useful as it is incredulous for it allows Rothbard to claim in all seriousness that a person "cannot alienate [...] his control over his own mind and body" while also asserting "workers can sell their labour service". (*Ethics*, 135, 40) Carole Pateman states the obvious: "the contract in which the worker allegedly sells his labour power is a contract in which, since he cannot be separated from his capacities, he sells command over the use of his body and himself." Selling a "labour service" inherently involves selling control over your mind and body for "what is required is that the worker labours as demanded. The employment contract must, therefore, create a relationship of command and obedience between employer and worker." This "is primarily about away of creating social relationships constituted by subordination, not about exchange." (151, 58) It produces authoritarian, not libertarian, social relationships:

"contract doctrine has proclaimed that subjection to a master – a boss, a husband – is freedom. Moreover, the problem of freedom is misrepresented here. The question central to contract theory does not involve the general liberty to do as you please, but the freedom to subordinate yourself in any manner that you please" (Pateman, 146)

Thus we usually hear the loudest cries for liberty from those with substantial power over others – from landlords over tenants, bosses over wage-workers and husbands over wives who promise to "love, honour and obey" – or the well-paid agents of the think-tanks they fund. This explains the apparently strange sight of "libertarians" associating with conservatives. The latter seek to defend traditional hierarchies (particularly those associated with the private sphere) while the former seeks to defend private hierarchies associated with wealth. These have a significant overlap – and a common basis in subordination rather than freedom. They both defend the freedom of the powerful to rule those subjugated to them and oppose the freedom of the subjugated to resist – whether by direct action or by political action.

Rather than the abolition of politics, "libertarianism" is the merging of political power with property. The landlord would become the actual lord, the employer's power bolstered by his private police – for this kind of individualist may "begin with a severe criticism of the State but end by recognising its functions in full in order to maintain the monopoly of property, which the State is always the true protector." (Kropotkin, *Science*, 64) That the provision of these functions may be privatised does not change its role for someone "who intends to retain *for himself* the monopoly of any piece of land or property, or any other portion of the social wealth, *will be bound to look for some authority* which could guarantee to him possession [...] to enable him

to compel others to work for him [...] *And then he will NOT be an Anarchist: he will be an authoritarian.*" (Kropotkin, 203)

### "I can neither sell nor alienate my liberty"

As Rothbard himself shows, capitalism offers no guarantee of freedom to anyone except owners of capitalist private property. It was in recognition of this reality that Proudhon argued that "if the liberty of man is sacred, it is equally sacred in all individuals; that, if it needs property for its objective action, that is, for its life, the appropriation of material is equally necessary for all" and so "those who do not possess today are proprietors by the same title as those who do possess; but instead of inferring therefrom that property should be shared by all, I demand, in the name of general security, its entire abolition." (96, 91) Kropotkin states the obvious:

"In today's society, where no one is allowed to use the field, the factory, the instruments of labour, unless he acknowledge himself the inferior, the subject of some Sir – servitude, submission, lack of freedom, the practice of the whip are *imposed* by the very form of society. By contrast, in a communist society which recognises the right of everyone, on an egalitarian basis, to all the instruments of labour and to all the means of existence that society possesses, the only men on their knees in front of others are those who are by their nature voluntary serfs. Each being equal to everyone else as far as the right to well-being is concerned, he does not have to kneel before the will and arrogance of others and so secures equality in all personal relationships with his co-members." (*Science*, 163)

Property results in workers being "*compelled to sell his labour* (and consequently, to a certain degree, his personality)" and so "*staying free* is, for the working man who *has to sell* his labour, an impossibility and it is precisely on account of that impossibility that we are anarchists". (Kropotkin, *Direct*, 203, 160) This is why the French syndicalist Émile Pouget, echoing Proudhon, argued that:

"Property and authority are merely differing manifestations and expressions of one and the same 'principle' which boils down to the enforcement and enshrinement of the servitude of man. Consequently, the only difference between them is one of vantage point: viewed from one angle, slavery appears as a PROPERTY CRIME, whereas, viewed from a different angle, it constitutes an AUTHORITY CRIME." (*No Gods, No Masters*, 427)

This means *how* we organise is what matters for "man in isolation can have no awareness of his liberty. Being free for man means being acknowledged, considered and treated as such by another man. Liberty is therefore a feature not of isolation but of interaction, not of exclusion but rather of connection". (Michael Bakunin, *Selected Works*, 147) So to count as genuinely libertarian, it is necessary but not sufficient for a group to be freely joined – otherwise you end up with such obvious nonsense as voluntary slavery being "libertarian" – it must also be run by all its members, it must be an association and not a hierarchy:

“organisation, that is to say, association for a specific purpose and with the structure and means required to attain it, is a necessary aspect of social life. A man in isolation cannot even live the life of a beast [...] Having therefore to join with other humans [...] he must submit to the will of others (be enslaved) or subject others to his will (be in authority) or live with others in fraternal agreement in the interests of the greatest good of all (be an associate). Nobody can escape from this necessity.” (Errico Malatesta, *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas*, 84-5)

Freedom of association is not enough – freedom within association is just as important for “*it is the ideas of individual freedom which we bring with us to an association which determine the more or less libertarian character of that association.*” (Kropotkin, *Direct*, 639) What specific economic arrangements would exist would vary – on the basis of workers’ control of their workplaces anarchists have supported many different economic systems. Proudhon advocated mutualism (distribution according to deed), others – starting with Déjacque – libertarian communism (distribution according to need) with the “single proviso (which is implicit, since without it anarchy would be impossible)” that “communism be voluntary and so organised to leave scope for other living arrangements.” (Malatesta, *Collected Works* 3, 261) However, the abolition of private hierarchies is required for it to be genuinely libertarian:

“Liberty is inviolable. I can neither sell nor alienate my liberty; every contract, every condition of a contract, which has in view the alienation or suspension of liberty, is null: the slave, when he plants his foot upon the soil of liberty, at that moment becomes a free man. [...] Liberty is the original condition of man; to renounce liberty is to renounce the nature of man: after that, how could we perform the acts of man?” (Proudhon, 92)

Given what libertarian originally meant, its opposition to both public hierarchies (the State) and private hierarchies (property, patriarchy, racism), it is easy to understand why the current situation of “libertarian” being used to describe the ideology anarchism was created fighting – Lockean liberalism – is so deplorable to anarchists. Particularly as Rothbard himself presents more than enough evidence to show that the libertarian critique of capitalism is correct.

The appropriation of “libertarian” by the right is just “primitive accumulation” or “immanent domain” applied to socio-political theory – the current users of, say, land are not using it as others think they should so it must be taken from them by others who will use it better. Locke’s original theory was postulated, in part, to justify the expropriation of native land by western settlers/invasers. Rothbard, likewise, concluded that the people who coined and used the term libertarian were not “really” libertarians, were not using it in the right way, so he and his supporters were justified in taking it over.

Interestingly, Rothbard (in an unpublished and at times extremely inaccurate article entitled “Are Libertarians ‘Anarchists’?” written around the same time he stole the term “libertarian”) stated that we must “conclude that we are *not* anarchists, and that those who call us anarchists are not on firm etymological ground and are being completely unhistorical.” For anarchism “arose in the nineteenth century, and since then the most active and dominant anarchist doctrine has been that of ‘anarchist communism’ an “apt term” for “a doctrine which has also been called ‘collectivist anarchism,’ ‘anarcho-syndicalism,’ and ‘libertarian communism’” and so “it is obvious that the question ‘are libertarians anarchists?’ must be answered unhesitatingly in the negative. We are at completely opposite poles.” As for the individualist anarchists (who also tended to call themselves socialists, incidentally), they “possessed socialistic *economic* doctrines in common” with the others. This was “probably the main reason” why the “genuine libertarians” of this era “never referred to themselves as anarchists” (*Strictly Confidential*, 32, 27, 30, 31) – not that they referred to themselves as libertarians either.

Of course, Rothbard changed his mind and not content with stealing “libertarian” also decided to proclaim his ideology that oxymoron “anarcho-capitalism”. Yet anarchism, regardless of dictionary definitions, was never opposed to just the State. As Kropotkin summarised, the origin of the anarchist idea was “criticism of hierarchical organisations and authoritarian conceptions in general”. (*Science*, 58) Ironically, Rothbard himself shows why a non-socialist “libertarian” theory ends up “contradicting itself, [and] would turn into aristocratism and tyranny” (Malatesta, *Collected Works* 3: 293). To fixate on political authority at the expense of these other – apparently more contractual – ones is ideological fetishism at its worse.

In short, “libertarians” suggest that voluntary subjugation – driven by economic necessity – equals liberty. But subjugation is still unfreedom, voluntary hierarchy still *archy*, consented authoritarian relationships still authority. This is a degradation of our ideas of freedom for it suggests that the only issue with, say, dictatorship and slavery is that they are involuntary. Yet we find Robert Nozick arguing just that – not only can someone “sell himself into slavery” but also “if one starts a private town, on land whose acquisition did not and does not violate the Lockean proviso, persons who chose to move there or later remain there would have no *right* to a say in how the town was run”. (*Anarchy, State and Utopia*, 371, 270) The ease with which “libertarians” can embrace dictatorship and slavery *should* raise questions of over the nature of the liberty they claim to champion (alongside Carole Pateman, David Ellerman is of note – as seen by his *Property and Contract in Economics* – in recognising the true nature of Nozick’s Lockean ideology). That so many *others* were willing to accept the use of “libertarian” by defenders of slavery and dictatorship says much about the state of intellectual discourse in an unequal society.

So right-wing use of libertarian is also “completely unhistoric” and “not on firm etymological ground”. It would be less confusing – and consistent with their own stated principles – if they were to change their name to something more appropriate.

## Libertaire ou Libertarienne?

Now, do not get confused. It is possible to argue that some people *should* rule others, that some people – by some favoured criteria – are just *better* than others and so rightly should govern them, that specific forms of hierarchy are fine, and so on. That can be a consistent, if wrong, ideology. What is not acceptable is to call such a system “anarchist” or “libertarian” – particularly when these terms were coined expressly against the notion that having wealth gives you that right.

In France, where the anarchist movement cannot be so easily ignored as in America or Britain, the free-market right have been forced to call their ideology “libertarianisme” and themselves as “libertariens” – *rien*, of course, being French for “nothing” or “nought” and so suggesting that it has nothing to do with liberty. So rather than a single entry for two distinctly different – nay, opposed – set of ideas with a distinctly different origin and aims as on the English-language Wikipedia, the French site has two entries: one for *libertaire* and one for *libertarianisme*.

It is well beyond time for the same to occur in the English-language. So what would be an appropriate name for these so-called “libertarians” of the right? They could call it voluntarism, a term coined by English liberal Auberon Herbert in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As well as using a term invented by their own ideological tradition, it is more appropriate ideologically as they support all forms of voluntary arrangements regardless of their internal liberties. Yet that raises questions of how “voluntary” an agreement is if a few own the bulk of resources in a society. As Individualist Anarchist Victor Yarros put it:

“A system is voluntary when it is voluntary all round [...] not when certain transactions, regarded from certain points of view, appear voluntary. Are the circumstances which compel the labourer to accept unfair terms law-created, artificial, and subversive of equal liberty? That is the question, and an affirmative answer to it is tantamount to an admission that the present system is not voluntary in the true sense.” (*Liberty* 184: 2)

Yarros denounced those who “want liberty to still further crush and oppress the people; liberty to enjoy their plunder without fear of the State’s interfering with them”, liberty “to summarily deal with impudent tenants who refuse to pay tribute for the privilege of living and working on the soil.” (*Liberty* 102: 4)

Rothbard himself – when discussing the abolition of slavery and serfdom – let the cat out of the bag by admitting that economic power exists when the means of production are appropriated by the few, as under even the capitalism of a “just-so” story. As Rothbard suggested, the Lockean Proviso that land can only be appropriated by labour when “where there is enough, and as good, left in common for others” may “lead to the outlawry of *all* private property of land, since one can always say that the reduction of available land leaves everyone else [...] worse off.” (*Ethics*, 240). So “voluntarians” may not be best as it still leads to awkward questions

about the sanctity of property and the social relationships it generates. Appropriation by the few inevitably leads to the liberty of the many being worse off – which should be the key criteria for an ideology proclaiming itself “libertarian” but is not for the all too obvious reasons we have indicated.

Perhaps we could take a leaf from socialist history for most modern-day “libertarians” of the right (following Rothbard) advocate forming political parties, standing in elections and taking political office to ensure that the State disappears (or, as their ideals rarely appeal, trying to take over existing right-wing ones, such as the British Conservative and American Republican parties, and smuggling in their changes that way). In short, a classical *Marxist* strategy. This leads to an obvious label for their ideology: *marxo-capitalism*. It could be objected that their economic ideas are completely opposed and that they seek to *privatise* not nationalise but that did not stop their appropriation of “libertarian” or “anarchist.” They could explain that marxo-capitalism obviously differs from “classical” Marxism (*marxo-socialism*, if you like) but shares a common desire to utilise “political action” to ensure that the State “withers away” (at least to their own satisfaction, if not to anyone else’s).

Regardless of the obvious accuracy of this label we doubt that it will be viewed favourably and enough on the left would rush to dispute it: unlike for anarchism and libertarian, when Marxists for obvious reasons had no objections to their rivals on the left being associated with the far-right. Carole Pateman suggests “contractarian” for she was well aware of the real history of libertarian:

“I shall refer to [this...] as *contractarian* theory or *contractarianism* (in the United States it is usually called libertarianism, but in Europe and Australia ‘libertarian’ refers to the anarchist wing of the socialist movement; since my discussion owes something to that source I shall maintain un-American usage).” (*The Sexual Contract*, 14)

But contracts take place once property is in place and, moreover, *property* is their core principle – liberty like labour being considered as the property of an individual – so *propertarian* would be best. This has the advantage of warning others of which side they will take in a conflict between liberty and property and so avoid that obvious confusion non-propertarians feel when the propertarian supports authoritarian social relationships and (private) restrictions on fundamental liberties.

Interestingly, Ursula Le Guin used the term in her 1974 classic of anarchist Science-Fiction, *The Dispossessed*. One of the anarchist characters notes that inhabitants of Anarres (the communist-anarchist moon) “want nothing to do with the propertarians” of Urras. Urras is a capitalist world and the anarchist protagonist, Shevek, does discover some people who describe themselves as “libertarian” but these declare themselves close to communist-anarchism (asked whether they are anarchists they reply: “Partly. Syndicalists, libertarians [...] anti-centralists”). (*The Dispossessed*, 70, 245) It should be noted that “archist” and “propertarian” is used pretty much

interchangeably in *The Dispossessed* to describe Urras, showing clear understand of, and links to, Proudhon's argument that property was both "theft" and "despotism."

Yet regardless of the actual name decided upon, they should not call themselves *libertarian* for both historical reasons and "from the view of etymology" – and if the propertarians took their stated principles seriously they would join us in so-doing.

## Conclusion

As Noam Chomsky summarises, "libertarianism" is marked by "dedication to free market capitalism, and has no connection with the rest of the international anarchist movement" which "commonly called themselves libertarian socialists, in a very different sense of the term 'libertarian.'" It is a "quite different thing and different development, in fact [it] has no objection to tyranny as long as it is private tyranny." (*Chomsky on Anarchism*, 235)

Today, 160 years after Déjacque coined the term in its modern sense and from which current (valid and invalid) usages derive, we anarchists and other libertarian socialists should reclaim the word and its original meaning.

Given the origins of the word "libertarian" and their own stated principles, the naïve would think that the right would stop using the term. Yet from Locke onwards, "property" has been used to justify subjugation, exploitation, oppression and the stealing of resources used by others. Worse, the principles of the propertarians – if taken seriously – refute themselves and show why their appropriation of the term is wrong. They should help us reclaim what is rightfully ours and stop using the term Rothbard admitted they stole.

Not only is it wrong, it should be resisted. Writing in the 1980s, Murray Bookchin noted that in the United States the "term 'libertarian' itself, to be sure, raises a problem, notably, the specious identification of an anti-authoritarian ideology with a straggling movement for 'pure capitalism' and 'free trade.' This movement never created the word: it appropriated it from the anarchist movement of the [nineteenth] century. And it should be recovered by those anti-authoritarians [...] who try to speak for dominated people as a whole, not for personal egotists who identify freedom with entrepreneurship and profit." Thus anarchists should "restore in practice a tradition that has been denatured by" the free-market right. (*The Modern Crisis*, 154-5) This necessary task has become harder in the intervening years but that is no reason to raise to the challenge for Déjacque's conclusions are as true as ever:

“– Property is the negation of liberty.

“– Liberty is the negation of property.

“– Social slavery and individual property, this is what authority affirms.

“– Individual liberty and social property, that is the affirmation of anarchy.” (17)

So considered in terms of our political, social and economics ideas it is unsurprising that anarchists have been using the word libertarian for 160 years and regardless of the attempts by others ignorant of both the history of that term and the reality of capitalism to appropriate it for their hierarchical and authoritarian ideology, we will continue to use the term in the original sense of seeking freedom for all and the ending of all hierarchical and authoritarian institutions and social relations.

Iain McKay

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## On the Male and Female Human-Being

Letter to P.J. Proudhon

Joseph Déjacque

(translated by Iain McKay)

What is man? *nothing* – What is woman? *nothing* – What is the human being? –  
EVERYTHING

From the depths of Louisiana, where the ebb and flow of exile deported me, I read in a United States journal, *Revue de l'Ouest*, a fragment of the correspondence between you, P.J. Proudhon, and a woman d'Héricourt.

The few words of Madam d'Hericourt quoted in that paper made me fear the female antagonist does not have the strength — polemically speaking — to struggle with her brutal and male adversary.

I know nothing of Madam d'Hericourt, nor of her writings, if she writes, nor of her position in the world, nor of her person. But to argue well with women, as to argue well with men, spirit is not enough; one must have seen much and reflected much. He should, I believe, have felt his personal passions run into all corners of society; from the caverns of misery to the peaks of fortune; from the silvery summits from which the avalanche of happy vice is shaken in a compact mass, to the bottom of the ravines where sickly debauchery rolls. Then logic, that spark of truth, could spring forth from this human stone thus polished by impact after impact.

I should like to see the question of the emancipation of woman dealt with by a woman who has loved a lot, and loved variedly, and who, by her past life, belonged to the aristocracy and the proletariat, especially to the proletariat: for the woman of the garret is more capable of penetrating by sight and thought into the heart of the formal, or secret, luxurious life of the great lady than a lady of the lounge is able to envisage the life of deprivation, visible or hidden, of the daughter of the people.

However, in the absence of this other Magdalene spreading the fertile tears of her heart at the feet of crucified Humanity and the striving of her soul for a better world; in the absence of this voice of civilised repentance, a believer in Harmony, an anarchic daughter; in the absence of this woman loftily and openly repudiating all the prejudices of sex and race, of law and customs, that still bind us to the previous world; well! I, a human being of the male sex, I will try to discuss with and against you, Aliboron-Proudhon, this question of the emancipation of woman which is none other than the question of the emancipation of human beings of both sexes.

Is it really possible, famed publicist, that under your lion's hide there is so much nonsense?

You who have such powerful revolutionary heartbeats for everything in our societies concerning the labour of the arm and the stomach, you have no less fiery outbursts, but of a complete reactionary stupidity, for everything related to the labour of the heart, the labour of feeling. Your vigorous and uncompromising logic in matters of industrial production and consumption is no more than a frail reed without strength in matters of moral production and consumption. Your virile intellect, complete for everything that relates to man is as though castrated when it comes to woman. Hermaphrodite brain, your thought has the monstrosity of two sexes within the same cranium, the enlightened-sex and the benighted-sex, and twists and turns upon itself in vain without being able to bring forth social truth.

A masculine Joan of Arc who, it is said, has kept your virginity intact for forty years, the pickling of love has ulcerated your heart; rancorous jealousies seep out; you cry out "War on women!" like the Maid of Orleans cried: "War on the English!" – The English burned her alive ... Women have made you a husband, O saintly man, long a virgin and still a martyr!

Hold on, father Proudhon, would you like me to tell you: when you speak of women, you remind me of a schoolboy who talks very loudly and very strongly, willy-nilly, and with impertinence to give himself airs of knowing them and who, like his adolescent listeners, does not have the slightest clue.

After forty years profaning your flesh in solitude, from wet-dream to wet-dream, you have arrived at publicly profaning your intelligence, elaborating its impurities and besmirching woman.

Is this then, Proudhon-Narcissus, what you call manly and honest civility?

I quote your words:

"No, Madame, you know nothing of your sex; you do not know the first thing about the issue that you and your honourable fellow league members agitate about with so much noise and so little success. And if you do not understand this question: if, in the eight pages of replies that you have made to my letter there are forty fallacies, that is as I told you, precisely because of your *sexual infirmity*. I mean by this term, whose exactness is perhaps not beyond reproach, the quality of your understanding which allows you to grasp the relationship between things only so far as we men place it at your fingertips. There is in you, in the brain as well as in the belly, a certain organ incapable by itself of overcoming its native inertia and which the male mind alone is capable of making function, and even then it does not always succeed. Such, madam, is the outcome of my direct and positive observations; I give it to your obstetrical sagacity and leave you to calculate its incalculable consequences for your thesis."

But – old boar who is merely a pig – if it is true, as you say, that woman cannot give birth from the brain as from the belly without the assistance of man – and this is true – it is equally true – the thing is reciprocal – that man cannot produce from the flesh or from the intellect without the assistance of woman. This is logic and good logic master Madelon-Proudhon, that a student, who has always also been a disobedient subject, may well snatch from your own hands and throw back in your face.

The emancipation or non-emancipation of woman, the emancipation or the non-emancipation of man: what is there to say? Can there – naturally – be rights for the one that are not rights for the other? Is the human being not the human being in the plural as in the singular, the feminine as in the masculine? Is it not to change nature to sunder the sexes? And the drops of rain falling from the cloud any less raindrops whether these droplets fall through the air in smaller or larger numbers, whether they are one size or another, this male configuration or that female configuration?

To place the question of the emancipation of woman in line with the question of the emancipation of the proletarian, this man-woman, or, to put it differently, this human-slave – flesh for the harem or flesh for the factory – this is understandable, and it is revolutionary; but to put it opposite and below that of man-privilege, oh! then, from the point of view of social progress, it is meaningless, it is reactionary. To avoid all ambiguity, it is the emancipation of the human being that should be spoken of. In these terms the question is complete; to pose it thus is to solve it: the human being, in its every day rotations, gravitates from revolution to revolution towards its ideal of perfectibility, Liberty.

But man and woman thereby walking with the same step and the same heart, united and fortified by love, towards their natural destiny, the anarchic-community; but all despotism annihilated, all social inequalities levelled; but man and woman thereby entering – arm in arm and face to face – into this social garden of Harmony: but this group of human-beings, dream of happiness achieved, a lively picture of the future; but all these egalitarian murmurings and all these egalitarian radiances jar in your ears and make you blink. Your understanding tormented by petty vanities makes you see the man-statue erected upon woman-pedestal for posterity, as in previous ages the man-patriarch stood over the woman-servant.

Whipper of woman, serf of the absolute man, writer Proudhon-Haynau, who has as a knout the word, like the Croatian executioner, you seem to enjoy all the lubricious lecheries of lust in stripping your beautiful victims of torture on paper and flagellating them with your invectives. Moderate [*juste-milieu*] anarchist, a *liberal* and not a LIBERTARIAN, you want free trade for cotton and candles and you advocate protectionist systems for man against woman in the circulation of human passions; you cry out against the high barons of capital and you wish to rebuild the high barony of the male upon the female vassal; bespectacled logician, you see man through the lens which magnifies objects and woman through the one that diminishes them; myopic thinker, you can only perceive what is poking you in the eye in the present or

in the past and can discover nothing of what is elevated and distant, what anticipates the future: you are a cripple!

Woman, know this, is the mover of man just as man is the mover of woman. There is not an idea in your deformed brain, as in the brains of other men, that has not been fertilised by woman; not an action of your arm nor of your intellect that has not had as its objective attracting the attention of a woman, of pleasing her, even those that seem the most contradictory, even your insults. Everything beautiful that man has made, everything great that man has produced, all the masterpieces of art and industry, the discoveries of science, the titanic ascents into the unknown, all the achievements and all the aspirations of the male genius are attributable to woman who imposes them on him, like the queen of the tournament on a knight in exchange for a favour or a sweet smile. All of the heroism of the male, all his physical and moral worth comes from this love. Without woman, he would still be crawling on his belly or on all fours, he would still be grazing weeds or roots; he would have the same intelligence as the ox, as the beast; he is something higher because woman told him: Be it! It is her will that created him, what he is today, and it is to satisfy the sublime demands of the feminine soul that he has attempted to accomplish the most sublime things!

This is what woman has made of man; let us now see what man has made of woman.

Alas! to please her lord and master she did not need a great expenditure of intellectual and moral strength. Provided that she mimics the monkey in her expressions and mannerisms; that she should fasten beads or trinkets to neck and ears; that she should dress in ridiculous rags and pad her hips like a mother Gigogne or a Hottentot Venus with the aid of crinoline or wicker; provided she could hold a fan or handle the sieve; that she devotes herself to tinkling on a piano or boiling the pot; that is all that her sultan asked of her, all that was needed to put the male soul into jubilation, the alpha and omega of the desires and aspirations of man. That done, woman conquered the handkerchief.

She who, finding such a role and such a success as shameful, wished to show good taste and grace, to join merit to beauty, to provide evidence of her heart and intelligence, was pitilessly stoned by the multitude of Proudhons past and present, pursued by the name blue-stocking or some other imbecilic sneer and forced to withdraw into herself. For this mob of heartless and brainless men, she had sinned by having too much heart and too much intelligence: they stoned her; and very rarely has she met with the man-type who, taking her by the hand, said to her: woman, arise, you are worthy of love and worthy of Liberty.

No, what man, that is to say he which usurps that name, needs is not a woman in all her physical and moral beauty, a woman of elegant and artistic form, with a haloed face of grace and love, with an active and tender heart, keen thought, with the soul

of a poetic and perfect humanitarian; no, what this simpleton gawker at funfairs needs is a waxwork in rouge and feathers; what this bestial gastronome, in ecstasy before the stalls of the butchers, needs, I tell you, is a haunch of veal decorated with lace! So much so that, satisfied by the man whom she found so moronic, indifferent to the one in whom she searched in vain for the organ of sentiment, woman – it is history that tells us this, I want to believe it is a fable, a tale, a Bible – woman – oh! cover yourselves, chaste eyes and chaste thoughts – woman have gone from biped to quadruped... An ass for an ass, it was natural, after all, that she let herself be seduced by the bigger animal. Then finally, as nature had endowed her with moral faculties too robust to be broken by fasting, she turned away from Humanity and sought in the temples of superstition, in religious aberrations of the mind and the heart, nourishment for the passionate aspirations of her soul. In the absence of the man she has dreamt of, she has given her feelings of love to an imaginary god and, for feelings, the priest has replaced the ass!

Ah! If there are so many abject female creatures in the world and so few women, men whom should we blame? Dandin-Proudhon, what are you complaining about? You wanted it...

And yet you, you personally, I acknowledge, have delivered formidable blows in the service of the Revolution. You have cut deeply to the core of the age-old trunk of property and sent splinters flying into the distance; you have stripped the thing of its bark and you have exposed it in its nakedness to the eyes of the proletarians; on your way, you have snapped and toppled, like so many dried branches or dead leaves, the powerless authoritarian rebuttals, the revamped Greek theories of the constitutional socialists, your own included; you have brought with you, in a breakneck race through the twists and turns of the future, the whole pack of moral and physical appetites. You have blazed a trail, you have made others do likewise; you are weary, you want to rest; but the voice of logic is there to oblige you to pursue your revolutionary deductions, to march forward, always onwards, disdainful of the fateful warning, for fear of feeling the fangs of those who have legs rip into you.

Be frankly, fully anarchist and not one quarter anarchist, one eighth anarchist, one sixteenth anarchist, as one is a quarter, an eighth, one sixteenth partner in trade. Press on to the abolition of contract, the abolition not only of the sword and of capital, but of property and authority in every form. Arrive at the anarchic-community, that is to say, the social state where everyone would be free to produce and to consume at will and according to his fancy, without controlling anybody or being controlled by anyone else; where the balance between production and consumption would naturally be established, not by preventive and arbitrary constraint by the hands of others but through the free circulation of energies and needs of each. The human tide has no use for your dykes; let the free waves be: do they not find their level every day? Do I need, for example, to have a sun for myself, an atmosphere for myself, a river for myself, a forest for myself, all the houses and all the streets in a town for myself? Do I have the right to make myself the exclusive owner, the

proprietor, and to deprive others of them, when I do not need them? And if I do not have this right, do I have any more right to wish, as in the system of contracts, to measure for each one – according to his accidental forces of production – what ought to belong to him from all these things? How many rays of sunlight, cubic metres of air or water, or square metres of forest path he can consume? How many houses or parts of houses he shall have the right to occupy; the number of streets or paving stones in the street where he will be allowed to set foot and the number of streets or paving stones where he will be forbidden to walk? – Will I, with or without contract, consume more of things than my nature or temperament requires? Can I individually absorb all the rays of the sun, all the air in the atmosphere, all the water in the river? Can I then take over and burden my person with all the shade of the forest, all the streets of the town, all the paving stones in the street, all the houses in the town and all the rooms of the house? And is it not the same for all that is for human consumption, whether it be a raw material like air or sunshine, or a finished product, like the street or the house? What then is the good of a contract which can add nothing to my freedom and which may infringe and which would certainly infringe upon it?

And now, as far as production is concerned, is the active principle that is inside me more developed because it has been oppressed, that it has had shackles imposed upon it? It would be absurd to maintain such an assertion. The man called free in current societies, the proletarian, produces far better and much more than the man called negro, the slave. How would it be if he were really and universally free: production would be multiplied a hundredfold. – And the lazy, you will say? The lazy are an expression of our abnormal societies, that is to say that idleness being honoured and labour despised, it is not surprising that men tire of toil that brings them only bitter fruits. But in the state of an anarchic-community with the sciences as they have been developed in our day there could be nothing similar. There would be, as today, beings who are slower to produce than others but as a consequence beings slower to consume, beings quicker than others to produce therefore quicker to consume: the equation is natural. Do you need proof? Take any hundred workers at random and you will see that the greatest consumers amongst them are also the greatest producers. – How can we imagine that the human being, whose organism is composed of so many precious tools and the use of which produces in him a multitude of pleasures, tools of the arms, tools of the heart, tools of the intellect, how can we imagine that he would voluntarily let them be consumed by rust? What! In the state of free nature and of industrial and scientific marvels, in the state of anarchic exuberance in which everything would remind him of activity and every activity of life. What! The human-being can only seek happiness in an imbecilic inactivity? Come on! The contrary is the only possibility.

On this ground of true anarchy, of absolute freedom, there would undoubtedly be as much diversity between beings as there would be people in society, diversity of age, sex, aptitudes: equality is not uniformity. And this diversity in all beings and at all

times is precisely what renders all government, constitutional or contractual, impossible. How can we commit ourselves for a year, for a day, for an hour when in an hour, a day, a year we might think differently than when we committed ourselves? – With radical anarchy, there would therefore be women as there would be men of greater or lesser relative worth; there would be children as there would be old people; but all would be indiscriminately none the less human beings and would also be equally and absolutely free to move in the circle of their natural attractions, free to consume and to produce as they see fit, without any paternal, marital or governmental authority, without any legal or contractive regulations to hinder them.

Society thus understood – and you must understand it so, you, anarchist, who boasts of being logical – what do you have to say now about the *sexual infirmity* of either the female or male human being?

Listen, master Proudhon, do not speak about woman, or, before speaking, study her: go to school. Do not call yourself an anarchist or be an anarchist all the way. Speak to us, if you wish, of the unknown and the known, of God who is evil, of Property which is theft. But when you speak to us about man, do not make him an autocratic divinity, for I will answer you: man is evil! – Do not attribute to him an intellectual capital which only belongs to him by right of conquest, by commerce in love, an usurious wealth which comes to him entirely from woman and which is the product of her own soul, and do not dress in clothes stripped from others, for then I will answer you: property is theft!

On the contrary, raise your voice against this exploitation of woman by man. Tell the world, with that vigour of argument that has made you an athletic agitator, tell it that man can only pull the Revolution out of the mud, drag it from its muddy and bloody rut, with the assistance of woman; that alone he is powerless; that he needs the support of woman's heart and head; that on the path of social Progress they must both walk together, side by side and hand in hand; that man can only reach the goal, overcoming the exertions of the journey, only if he has for support and for strength the glances and caresses of women. Tell man and tell woman that their destinies are to bond and to better understand each other; that they have one and the same name, as they are one and the same being, the human being; that they are, by turns and at the same time, one the right arm and the other the left arm, and that, in human identity, their hearts could form only one heart and their thoughts a single bundle of thoughts. Tell them again that on this condition alone will they be able to shine upon each other, pierce in their luminous march the shadows that separate the present from the future, the civilised society from the harmonic society. Finally tell them that the human being – in its relative proportions and manifestations – the human being is like the glow-worm: it shines only by love and for love!

Say it – Be stronger than your weaknesses, more generous than your resentments: proclaim liberty, equality, fraternity, the indivisibility of the human being. Say it: it is public salvation. Declare Humanity in danger: summon in mass men and women to

throw invading prejudices outside of social boundaries: awaken a Second and Third of September against this masculine high nobility, this aristocracy of sex that would rivet us to the old regime. Say it: you must! Say it with passion, with genius, cast it in bronze, make it thunder... and you will be worthy of others and of yourself.

New Orleans,

May 1857

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