

THE DISSENTING VIEW. STATE, SOCIETY, ANARCHISM

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1. Preamble.

Anarchy is an ancient lemma meaning not only and not so much disorder, but the absence of government¹, as far as this is considered an institution imposed from “above”. Out of any historical context, anarchism has been defined the expression of «an effervescence of the social unconscious that goes back, under countless different names, to the first struggles of humanity against domination and authority»². By the way, the formulation of an anarchist theory goes no longer back to the nineteenth century, or, at least, to the end of the eighteenth century of European history³, when civil society, «essentially understood as a sphere of economic relations»⁴, breaks free from the grip of the State, claiming autonomy and primacy over it.

Since Charles Fourier, anarchists have variously attributed the degenerative process of society to the act of appropriation, as the foundation of private property. In the first instance, the element of oppression - inherent in the consolidation, conservation and exercise of public power - would originate from the economic dominance of a preeminent social group to the detriment of the so-called “internal enemy”: «the political apparatus, from an organ of defense and offense against the external enemy, is transformed, under certain historical circumstances characterized by the unfolding of the phenomenon of economic enslavement and the consequent

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¹ Aristotele, *Politica*, V, 3, 1302 b. For a historical introduction to the theme, see also L. Valiani, *La genesi dell'anarchismo*, in *Anarchici e anarchia nel mondo contemporaneo*, Atti del Convegno promosso dalla Fondazione Luigi Einaudi (Torino 5, 6 e 7 dicembre 1969), Torino 1971, p 17 ss.

² Cf. M. Bookchin, *Al di là della scarsità* (1971), Milano 1986, p. 293.

³ This is not the context for analyzing an evolution of anarchist ideology in a post-modern sense, aimed at reflecting on the formation of the new “techno-bureaucratic” power over society. Among the recent re-readings of anarchism as a reaction to the process of political and economic centralization, I could only mention G. Woodcock (*Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (1962), Milano 1966); N. Chomsky (*Conoscenza e libertà*, Torino 1973; *La società globale. Educazione, mercato, democrazia* (with H. Dieterich), Celleno 1997); D. Friedman (*L'ingranaggio della libertà* (1973), Macerata 2005); M. Rothbard (*L'etica della libertà* (1983), edited by L.M. Bassani, Macerata 2008).

⁴ See C. Curcio, *Anarchia (ad vocem)*, in *Novissimo Digesto Italiano*, t. I, Torino 1957-1987, pp. 612-613.

flare-up of the class struggle, into an organ of defense and offense of the privileged classes against the internal enemy, identified as the class opponent: in an organ that is institutionally delegated to the use of force against the exploited classes»⁵.

A common thread links the exasperated proto-romantic individualism⁶ to the denial of tyranny in any of its forms, in the name of freedom as an absolute principle. By the way, it is the illuminist culture that provides anarchists with tenacious faith in progress, the conception of politics becoming an exercise of critical reason. According to rational schemes, the prospect of reality itself demonstrates how every compulsory apparatus is unfair. Moreover, an equally important element is the «mysticism of work as a vehicle of brotherhood and peace», starting with Saint Simon, to whom Pierre Joseph Proudhon would have attributed the merit of «having revived the revolutionary idea of the necessary end of all government at the beginning of the nineteenth century, based on a philosophy of history that signaled the disappearance of relations of domination in modern industrial society, replacing them with relationships of collaboration and association based on the evidence of scientifically founded norms»⁷.

Nonetheless, anarchism is synonymous with socialism: «the anarchist is, in the first place, a socialist who aims to abolish the exploitation of man by man»⁸, although the label they have imposed on themselves has often figured out anarchists as a “foreign body” even in the socialist family.

In this sense, anarchy can be discussed with reference to the “State / power” hendiadys, in the configuration of the “institutionalized entity”, that is denied by anarchists on the level of its legitimacy and considering the “authority / freedom” relationship.

This leads to the controversy against popular sovereignty and its “noble father”, Rousseau. Considered by some as the progenitor of the egalitarian instance, admired for his positive conception of human nature and above all for the recognized mystification of representative system⁹, the Genevan theorist has more often been criticized as a supporter of totalitarian democracy, for its conception of State as the ultimate condition of citizens’ ethical life. Just think again of Proudhon, according to whom the “rousseauvian” social contract is nothing more than «a theoretical device

⁵ See M. Larizza, *I presupposti teoretici dell’anarchismo di Charles Fourier*, in *Anarchici e anarchia nel mondo contemporaneo*, Atti del Convegno promosso dalla Fondazione Luigi Einaudi (Torino, 5-7 dicembre 1969), Torino 1971, pp. 331, 341-343).

⁶ See P. Alvazzi Del Frate, *Individuo e società. Considerazioni storico-giuridiche sull’individualismo*, Torino 2020, p. 52 and *passim*.

⁷ Cf. M. Larizza Lolli, *Stato e potere nell’anarchismo* (edited by M. Ceretta), Milano 2018, p. 27.

⁸ D. Guerin, *L’anarchismo dalla dottrina all’azione* (1965), Roma 1969, p. 9.

⁹ See C. Metelli Di Lallo, *Componenti anarchiche nella concezione politica di J.J. Rousseau*, in *Anarchici e anarchia*, cit., p. 362 ss.

of justification of authority»¹⁰. In any case, beyond the different currents¹¹, anarchist is first a rebel: «he gets rid, says Max Stirner, of all that is sacred. It carries out an immense desecration»¹².

2. The dissenting view.

Among the exponents of anarchist thought, Jean Meslier is one of the first to advocate the equal need for all men to enjoy the products of the earth¹³. This can be done through a “communist” system of small agrarian, autonomous organizations, which should replace State as it is based on the false values of hierarchy and inequality. These are specular elements of a false religious belief, as religion is the result of man’s invention; also, it is unfair, legitimating the Christian concept of eschatological pain which, ultimately, ends up justifying social injustice as an inevitable human condition¹⁴.

Meslier traces the very close link between religion and politics: as religious passion is subsumed in the new political confession, the fideism of modernity is ideology¹⁵. But it’s up to William Godwin to justify the end of State by challenging its legitimacy, because it prevaricates human freedom¹⁶. Known as one of the first exponents of the “tradition of dissent”, consisting in the affirmation of individual

¹⁰ See M. La Torre, *Nostra legge è la libertà. Anarchismo dei moderni*, Roma 2017, p. 86.

¹¹ That of predominantly rationalistic origin, which through Fourier and some of the Saint-Simonians, culminates in Proudhon; the English sensist, deriving from Godwin; the voluntarist and materialistic one, partly of Feuerbachian origin, which had its main representative in Max Stirner; the idealistic one, of essentially Fichtian and Hegelian inspiration, of which Michail Bakunin was the main interpreter; finally - without mentioning certain degradations of romanticism, sometimes collimating with exasperated theories of the aristocracy - mystical tendencies, of which Tolstoj was the most seductive apostle (see C. Curcio, *Anarchia*, cit., p. 612).

¹² D. Guerin, *L’anarchismo dalla dottrina all’azione* (1965), Roma 1969, p. 9.

¹³ *Memoria dei pensieri e delle opinioni di Jean Meslier, prete, curato di Étrépigny e di Balaives, su una parte degli errori e degli abusi del comportamento e del governo degli uomini da cui si dimostrano in modo chiaro ed evidente le vanità e le falsità di tutte le divinità e di tutte le religioni del mondo, affinché sia diretto ai suoi parrocchiani dopo la sua morte e per essere usata da loro e da tutti i loro simili quale testimonianza di verità*, also in Id., *Œuvres complètes. Mémoire des pensées et des sentiments de Jean Meslier. Préfaces et notes par Jean Deprun, Roland Desné et Albert Soboul*, Parigi 1970, p. XXXII.

¹⁴ See I.O. Wade, *The Manuscripts of Jean Meslier’s “Testament” and Voltaire’s Printed “Extrait”*, *Modern Philology* (1933), 30/4, pp. 381-398; C. Andreoni, *Il comunismo ateo di Jean Meslier*, in «*Rivista critica di storia della filosofia*» (1977), 32/4, pp. 360-400.

¹⁵ See G. Berti, *Introduzione* a M. Larizza Lolli, *Stato e potere nell’anarchismo* (edited by M. Ceretta), Milano 2018, p. 13. On the topic, see G.M. Bravo, *Anarchismo (ad vocem)*, in *Dizionario di Politica*, I, Novara 2006, p. 28.

¹⁶ See W. Godwin, *An enquiry concerning political justice and its influence on general virtue and happiness* (1793), Dublin 2018.

independence¹⁷, Godwin contests any religious or political dogmatism, condemning any form of power because of the harmful effects of authority over individuality.

First, it is necessary to distinguish between society and government (synonymous, for the theorist, with State). If society originates from the “natural” need for mutual assistances, State results from a *de facto* process: the necessary function of controlling the associates, to avoid them engaging in behaviors that damage their respective spheres of autonomy: «maintaining this limitation, the task of ensuring that no one goes beyond their own field of action is the first duty of government. Its authority in this regard represents the set of individuals’ faculties for the mutual control of excesses»¹⁸.

All this, at least, at an early stage. After, the intrinsic defect of every government emerges in the moment of its stabilization: far from respecting its purpose of addressing the community, it immediately becomes despotic due to its essential attribute: the monopoly of force. In Godwin’s opinion, this presupposition of legal positivism - which would represent the instrument of guaranteeing freedom “inside” the State -, consists of the worst threat to individual autonomy: the leveling through the imposition of behavioral patterns «accepted uncritically or, even worse, accepted for cowardice under threat of punishment»¹⁹. The invasion of authority is, moreover, programmatic, aimed at the annihilation of the critical spirit and the homologation of free minds. The conformism of thought is considered functional to the perpetuation of power.

Progress, which is optimistically configured as intellectual²⁰, is antithetical to immobility. According to Godwin’s ideas, the truth responds to reason, which is dynamic and elastic, even when contradictory. Therefore, it is incompatible with institution - and with law, that is its expression - which “binds” and “stops”. Thus, the

¹⁷ Pietro Adamo highlighted the peculiar intersection between Illuminism and British Dissent: «il primo fornisce l’indispensabile strumento della *raison* come criterio discriminante dell’attività umana “giusta” e moralmente giustificabile, entro una prospettiva materialistica e sensistica che punta nella direzione del deismo e – più audacemente – dell’ateismo. Del secondo – nei cui ambienti Godwin nasce e si forma – sono i tratti materiali costitutivi dell’argomentare del testo: giudizio privato e morale, verità e fallibilità, virtù e progresso. E soprattutto, dalla cultura del *Dissent* e dal suo radicarsi nella civiltà protestante si trae l’avversione per il principio di autorità, che modella, nella sua mescola con il tema della benevolenza universale, il tema anarchico dello “smontaggio” dello Stato e dell’avvento della società libera» (P. Adamo, *William Godwin e la società libera*, in P. Chiarella (edited by), *Diritto e potere nel pensiero anarchico*, Milano 2019, p. 15). See also M. Fitzpatrick, *William Godwin and the Rational Dissenters*, Price–Priestley Newsletter, 3 (1979), pp. 4-28.

¹⁸ W. Godwin, *An enquiry*, cit., III, Chap. IV (see M. Larilla Lolli, *Stato*, cit., p. 35).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁰ Man performs voluntary actions that correspond to principles of justice, recognizable through reason: «una sorta di eudemonismo utilitaristico, quindi, che si traduce in benevolenza universale [...]. La ragione esercita quindi una purificazione totale, scindendo le persone da relazioni, ambienti, affetti, costumi, tradizioni» (P. Adamo, *William Godwin*, cit., p. 11).

social contract that legitimizes State (the cornerstone of natural law) comes to question. There can be no “stasis” in the face of personal and free decision; neither a decision imposed from “above”, nor from the “other”. As Godwin says: «there is only one power to which I can grant sincere obedience: the decision of my intellect, the precepts of my conscience»²¹.

Any other form of obedience corresponds to acquiescence in the face of brutal force, whatever its source. This idea leads to a critique of the democratic system and the tyranny of “numbers”²². The individualist abhors the power of the masses, since the collective decision, in its essentially emotional value, is more unpredictable and irrational than that of the individual. The denunciation of the limits of political participation in too broad associative contexts does not spare even the political parties, which place “partisan” interest before the collective one. Also, parties represent organizations that coerce opinions under the banner of dogmatism and conformism.

An alternative to established power is therefore conceivable, only on condition that the conventional principles of civil coexistence are overturned. Small, decentralized communities are preferable to the monolithic State because they allow the individual to express his reasons for social utility against the manipulative modules of centralization. In these sort of cooperative societies, public opinion appears to be fundamental²³. Nevertheless, the transition to self-management must take place gradually and moderately, in accordance with the intellectual acclaim of individuals. According to Godwin, the reform «must be carried out with slow, almost insensitive steps, and by the right degrees. First, it is necessary to enlighten the public spirit and then public sentiment will have to lose all ambiguity; there will be a grandiose and magnificent harmony, which will expand throughout the entire community». Beware, therefore, when «his banner is explained by demagogues or smeared and disfigured with human blood by murderers». To conclude: «no man can

²¹ W. Godwin, *An enquiry*, cit., III, Chap. III (cf. M. Larizza Lolli, *Stato*, cit., p. 37).

²² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 40

²³ The influence of Hume’s *Idea of a perfect Commonwealth* is evident. The philosopher already describes the possible subdivision of the country into counties and parishes, also admitting that every county “is a kind of Republic” within its borders (D. Hume, now in *Idea di uno Stato perfetto*, in Id., *Saggi e trattati*, (edited by M. Dal Pra, E. Ronchetti), Torino 1974, p. 708). As well as independent congregationism, the confession in which Godwin grew up and which sees freedom «in the form of the moral and political autonomy of the individual». On the relationship between the ecclesiastical scheme and political practice, see W. Stafford, *Dissenting religion translated into Politics: Godwin’s political justice*, in «History of Political Thought» (1980), I / 2, p. 294 ff. Ultimately, the two cornerstones of Godwin’s anarchism are the districts and the national assembly, in reciprocal relationship, where the latter has only consultative power and its representatives are elected on special and always revocable occasions. The explicit reference to theological or religious schemes, however, indicates only a «practice of sociality», in a secularized perspective (see P. Adamo, *William Godwin*, cit., pp. 54-55).

deprecate scenes of disorder and tumult more fervently than the present author»²⁴. Ultimately, Godwin fails to completely disregard the social utility of the institutional apparatus, stopping at the acceptance of a minimum government «in the perspective of its euthanasia»²⁵.

3. Anarchism and nihilism.

The relationship within the individual and religion or, more specifically, with the “sacred”, which translates into “other than oneself”, is mentioned by Max Stirner²⁶. The realization of “the One” is accomplished through the rejection of all dimensions «where the centrality of the individual is denied»²⁷.

Stirner celebrates selfishness as a natural connotation of man, starting from a mere factual observation: once he has become aware of his “Ego”, the individual belongs exclusively to himself, towards whom he only has duties. This means questioning the theory of the spontaneous sociality of human being starting with Aristotle²⁸. If the individual is a “Unique”, society is an abstract, unreal entity that «exists only for the fact that it exercises dominion over individuals»²⁹. There is nothing outside of individual reality. It follows the definition of “sacred”, which is everything that has the characteristics of extraneousness from the individual: «every object - whether true or presumed to be so, does not matter - that the individual considers absolutely distinct from him, with its own specific identity which prevents him from bringing him back into the sphere of his availability»³⁰.

Whether it is God or Humanity in a categorical sense; or State, or society and law as well as morality, the criticism focuses on everything that the individual considers superior to himself, to which he can adapt or submit and, at least, in which to “cancel himself”³¹. But any entity extraneous to the “Unique” is nothing more than the result

²⁴ W. Godwin, *Considerations on Lord Grenville’s and Mr. Pitt’s bills, concerning treasonable and seditious practices, and unlawful assemblies. By a lover of order*, London 1795, pp. 17-18.

²⁵ Cf. M. Larizza Lolli, *Stato*, cit., p. 34.

²⁶ On the relationship between anarchist individualism and nihilism, see P. Alvazzi Del Frate, *Individuo e società*, cit., p. 53 ff.

²⁷ E. Ferri, *Egoismo e giustizia ne L’unico e la sua proprietà*, in P. Chiarella, (edited by), *Diritto*, cit., p. 76.

²⁸ See *Etica nicomachea*, V, 1130^o, 4-6.

²⁹ M. Stirner, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (1845) in Italian translation *L’unico e la sua proprietà*, Milano 2011, p. 196.

³⁰ Cf. E. Ferri, *Egoismo*, cit., p. 78.

³¹ According to Stirner, even more than to Nietzsche or Heidegger, the death of God «is total and definitive» (see G. Penzo, *Max Stirner. La rivolta esistenziale*, Torino 1971, p. 206; F. Bazzani, *Stirner come segno della cesura nel paradigma della ragione moderna*, in *Individuo e insurrezione. Stirner e le culture della rivolta*, Atti del Convegno promosso dalla Libera Associazione di Studi Anarchici, Firenze, 12-13 december 1992, Bologna 1993, p. 196 ss.).

of a conceptual elaboration. God is only a binding idea: “being bound” is, for Stirner, the very definition of religion. Even more than Church, State - and the juridical system on which it is founded - is a «dominant principle»³², because «it unites the religious vocation with the secular possibility, so that the State form is more universal than the ecclesial form»³³. Furthermore, each State is totalitarian in reference to its limiting and subordinating dimension to the individual, due to its «instinct for conservation»³⁴. In the same way, there is no concept of justice as *virtus ad alterum*³⁵ which would assume an interdependence in the name of general interest, whereas selfish interests are not “cumulative”, but all equally absolute.

Basically, law has nothing to do with freedom, as it is only a concession by the authority; therefore, it is also extraneous (and therefore sacred) to the individual: «the idea of law is originally my idea, that is, it has its origin in me. But from me, who was its origin, it detached itself, it manifested itself as a “word” and thus “it became flesh”, it became a fixed idea [...]. Here is the absolute right, that is *absolutum*, detached from me»³⁶. Consequently, its authentic nature is dominion, behind which the dynamics of oppression are hidden: «State exercises its “power”, the individual cannot do it. State’s behavior is an expression of its power, of its violence, but he calls this “right”, that of a single “crime” »³⁷. From the view of selfishness, crime, like sin, is represented by those actions through which the individual regains his autonomy: «master and creator of my law, I recognize no other source of law than [...] myself, not God, not State, not nature and not even man himself with his “eternal human rights”, nor divine right or human right»³⁸.

Property, as a hypostatized category, also falls into bourgeois logic. Furthermore, attributing a juridical importance to what is really a mere faculty of appropriation would also mean bringing this institution back into the sphere of religiosity, where it should be characterized by a function, or rather a purpose to be achieved, to tend and

³² M. Stirner, *L'unico*, cit., p. 236.

³³ Cf. G. Berti, *Il pensiero anarchico dal Settecento al Novecento*, Manduria-Bari-Roma 1998, p. 129.

³⁴ Cf. D. Guerin, *L'anarchismo*, cit., p. 11.

³⁵ On Thomas Aquinas's comment on the Aristotelian phrase, see G. Fassò, *Storia della filosofia del diritto*, I, Bologna 1966, p. 85.

³⁶ M. Stirner, *L'unico*, cit., p. 216.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 207. In Stirner's opinion, Law is «una dimensione *ineliminabile* di ogni società umana, che si ritrova fondata su quel particolare rapporto di forza assunto nella *pre-potenza*, cioè in un momento che esiste *prima* del costituirsi collettivo della società e in un ambito che sta *fuori* una volta che questa si è costituita. Il diritto è dunque la legittimazione del dominio» (G. Berti, *Il pensiero anarchico*, cit., pp. 119-120).

³⁸ M. Stirner, *L'unico*, cit., p. 205.

conform to³⁹. Instead, «only my power is truly mine, not this tree, but the power to dispose of it»⁴⁰.

All this does not mean that individuals cannot live in communion, but that this must be their free choice. It is necessary to favor the conditions for a «generalized individual self-development»⁴¹. If all men are animated by the same selfish nature and consider the neighbor in order to mutual benefit, it is possible to figure out a cooperation, in the form of free associations simply defined *Verein* (or *Unions*), fluid, without life on their own, which depend only on the will of individuals to bind themselves and as long as they have an interest in remaining within the association itself: «in *union* you bring with you all your power, your faculty, you assert yourself, in society you are used with your workforce [...]. To society you owe everything you have and you are obliged to [...]; *union*, on the other hand, you use it and you detach from it, as soon as you can no longer take advantage of it, since you have no obligation of loyalty. If society is more than you, it is something higher for you; *union* is only your tool [...], it exists for you and thanks to you; society, on the other hand, demands a lot from you and exists even without you; in short, society is sacred, *union* is yours»⁴².

Verein's dynamism must be safeguarded to avoid the risk that it crystallizes like the political society. The “snare of individuality” marks the difference between association and State: «there is a huge difference between a society that only limits my freedom, and a society that undermines my individuality. The first is a *union*, an “association”; the second is a “power for itself” that overpowers me; a power that is inaccessible to me, that I can admire, honor, respect, adore, but never dominate or use, since in front of it I must give up and resign myself»⁴³.

In these terms, State is also different from nation, in order to which it is possible to figure out the features of a federation, on the model of ancient Germans' free organizational forms, as those people did not know political bonds, but unite themselves, for a short period, under a duke⁴⁴. Even in this case, it would be a form of spontaneous communion, in which to recognize oneself beyond the artificial

³⁹ Stirner also rejects the Proudhonian conception of property as belonging to society, of which individuals are owners or usufructuaries: «la proprietà non sarà mai reale fino a quando si riconoscerà allo Stato di intervenire su di essa [...]. Stirner è contro la beneficenza, contro l'interventismo statale, contro la parcellizzazione della terra, contro la proprietà collettiva, contro l'organizzazione del lavoro: quello che gli sta a cuore è il principio della gara, dello scontro continuo, nel quale “l'uomo si pone a diretto confronto con l'uomo”» (cfr. C. Cesa, *Le idee politiche di Max Stirner*, in *Anarchici e anarchia*, cit., p. 316).

⁴⁰ M. Stirner *L'unico*, cit., p. 289.

⁴¹ E. Ferri, *Egoismo*, cit., p. 84.

⁴² M. Stirner, *L'unico*, cit., p. 327.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁴⁴ Once again, the reference is to Hegel (*Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (1848), Leipzig 1923, pp. 782-783). See C. Cesa, *Le idee politiche*, cit., p. 315.

constraints of legal system. In conclusion, freedom is completely unrelated to institutions: «seeking a solution outside the corporeal and “selfish” individual is equivalent not only to preserving “religion” in new forms, but also to increasing, in fact, the servitude of “man” »⁴⁵.

3. Social constitution versus political constitution.

Unlike Stirner, Pierre Joseph Proudhon believes that society exists and «walks by itself»⁴⁶. Community results as a correspondence to the mutual commitment of individuals, but it is true that «l’homme n’est homme que par la société»⁴⁷. This leads to the criticism of State, «because such is, for modern societies, the true tyranny, which could not be better defined than with this formula: absorption of local sovereignties into a central authority»⁴⁸. From a historical analysis, the centralization process took place constantly according to two dynamics: bureaucratization, or the parasitic interference of institutional power in the ganglia of society; consequently, annihilation of spontaneous self-regulation of community. Administrative centralization makes use of taxation and judicial system⁴⁹, through which power inspects itself within the “nation”, an adjective that Proudhon, like Stirner already⁵⁰, uses to define the corporate component, unlike the institutional government apparatus: «in spite of the principles that attribute sovereignty to nation, sovereign is power, which claims to act and be respected as such, which in its capacity as sovereign reluctant to examine, control, report and discuss»⁵¹.

Given the distinction between “social constitution” and “political constitution”, the contractual principle does not disappear, giving rise to a relationship of equality between individuals (or groups), as well as to a “synthetic” collectivity, irreducible to

⁴⁵ M. Stirner, *L’unico*, cit., p. 313.

⁴⁶ P.J. Proudhon, *De la Justice dans la revolution et dans l’église* (1858), Paris 1930, II, p. 246. For a historical overview, see P. Costa, *Civitas. Storia della cittadinanza in Europa*, III, Roma-Bari 2002, pp. 339 and *passim*.

⁴⁷ P.J. Proudhon, *Qu’est-ce la propriété? Ou recherches sur le principe du droit et du gouvernement. Premier Mémoire* (1840), Paris 1926, p. 310.

⁴⁸ P.J. Proudhon, *Contradictions politiques: théorie du mouvement constitutionnel au XIX siècle* (1870), Paris 1952, p. 264.

⁴⁹ It is through the tax system, a formidable instrument of inquisitorial control over the activity of citizens, that the collusion between government and economic power takes place. Hence the criticism of taxation as “legalized theft” and the exhortation to evade the tax obligation. As for the judicial system, its partiality and instrumentality to the needs of power are highlighted (on the subject, which cannot be dealt more fully here, see the considerations by M. Larizza Lolli, *Stato*, cit., pp. 44-45).

⁵⁰ Regarding the similarities between Proudhon and Stirner, see also M. La Torre, *Nostra legge*, cit., p. 82.

⁵¹ Cf. P.J. Proudhon, *La capacità politica delle classi operaie*, III, Chap: VI (see M. Larizza Lolli, *Stato*, cit., p. 43).

the sum of the parts. To be reconsidered is the myth of “law of nature”, since the concepts of “contract” and “authority” appear to be antinomic. Social contract does not create a new subject endowed with power; men always remain the ultimate decision makers of an «acte» through which «se reconnaissent réciproquement et au même titre souverains»⁵². This can happen because of a mutual guarantee according to the sense of Justice: a commutative, balancing nature, «involving connection and solidarity»⁵³.

Proudhon stigmatizes the hierarchical principle centered on command, that is law: society «ce n'est pas un système»⁵⁴. Against any form of sovereignty, even of a democratic type, he rather considers an antinomian totality, «plural unity mainly thought of as relationality»⁵⁵. As mentioned, the political process goes in the opposite sense to natural law. In a first stage of civil organization, political power seems functional to establish order and education within a forum dominated by selfishness, to which it is ascribable (unlike Stirner) the sense of private and, consequently, the inequality and the concept of ownership⁵⁶. As far as reason represents an instrument of freedom against domination, the advancement of intellectual progress gradually leads from the “State-form” - based on authority, class division, centralization - to the polycentric collectivity, based on the separation of functions, respecting the different individual skills. This collective entity, in consideration of the «autonomy and personality of the masses»⁵⁷, is «multiple in its elements»⁵⁸.

Given the “mythical” character of political institutions - due to the emotional factor which marks the order -, their role can only be transitory. The result is anarchy as a «condition of existence of adult societies, just as hierarchy is the condition of existence of primitive ones»⁵⁹.

⁵² P.J. Proudhon, *De la Justice*, cit., I, p. 419.

⁵³ Conceived in opposition to distributive justice, itself identical to the political idea (see D. Andreatta, *Giustizia e potere in Proudhon*, in P. Chiarella (edited by), *Diritto*, cit., p. 63).

⁵⁴ P.J. Proudhon, *De la Justice*, cit., III, p. 255.

⁵⁵ Cf. D. Andreatta, *Giustizia*, cit., p. 64.

⁵⁶ For Proudhon, property and authority are synonymous: «what is called authority in politics is analogous, equivalent to what is called property in political economy; these two ideas are identical and adequate to each other» (cf. P.J. Proudhon, *Mélanges*, Paris 1870, III, p. 53).

⁵⁷ Cf. P.J. Proudhon, *Idée générale de la révolution au XIX siècle* (1851), Paris 1923, p. 369.

⁵⁸ Cf. D. Colson, *Petit lexique philosophique de l'anarchisme. De Proudhon à Deleuze*, Paris 2011, p. 310.

⁵⁹ Cf. P.J. Proudhon, *Controversy against P. Leroux and L. Blanc. Resistance to the revolution*, art. II, recalled by M. Larizza Lolli, which highlights the transition from a military and feudal regime to an industrial and scientific one in which, the ancient hierarchical relationships, are replaced by ties of collaboration, the logic of antagonism is replaced by that of solidarity. «Si rende con ciò superflua la funzione mediatrice dello Stato, il lavoro emergendo come il più possente veicolo dell'integrazione sociale» (*Stato*, cit., p. 49).

The outcome is *Principe fédératif*, starting from the requisites of reciprocity and equality, within the contractual category⁶⁰: «si chaque faculté, puissance, force, porte son droit avec elle-même, les forces, dans l'homme et dans la société, doivent se balancer, non s'anéantir [...]. Dans une société bien ordonnée, les forces ne luttent un moment que pour se reconnaître, se contrôler, se confirmer et se classer [...]. L'opposition des forces a donc pour fin leur harmonie»⁶¹.

The multiplicity of initiative centers guarantees freedom through self-government. To the division of workers into manuals and intellectuals, typical of hierarchical society, Proudhon opposes the libertarian and egalitarian conception of an economic and self-managed society, composed of autonomous and equal producers: «society must be considered not as a hierarchy of functions and faculties, but as a system of balances between free forms, in which everyone is guaranteed to achieve the same rights as long as undergoes to the same duties, to obtain the same advantages in return for the same services, this essentially egalitarian system is»⁶².

As noted, federal pact prohibits «the replication of the mechanism of alienation» and invalidates «the logic of construction-legitimation of a sovereign power»⁶³. A dynamic balance of forces takes place against domination which is a static principle, (according to Godwin); the perspective of a “practical” and egalitarian justice consists of a series of pacts (or contracts) that are continuously renewable in a system of mutual recognition⁶⁴. From another point of view, the same dynamics that exist between capital and labor take shape in politics: «just as there is an economic surplus value, there is also a State surplus value, in the sense of a permanent usurpation of social power». Therefore, it is necessary to re-establish political society on «relations of commutation, of exchange [...], multiplying in function of these»⁶⁵. This means that the foundations of collective force are “neutral”: «collective force is neither structurally authoritarian, nor structurally libertarian. It is available for different outcomes, depending on the plurality of ways in which it is managed and organized».

⁶⁰ See P.J. Proudhon, *Du principe fédératif et de la nécessité de reconstituer le parti de la révolution* (1863), Paris 1989, p. 96 ss.

⁶¹ P.J. Proudhon, *La guerre et la paix. Recherches sur le principe et la constitution de droit des gens* (1861), I, Paris 1869, p. 163.

⁶² Cf. P.J. Proudhon, *De la capacité politique des classes ouvrières*, Paris 1865, p. 124.

⁶³ Cf. D. Andreatta, *Giustizia*, cit., p. 68.

⁶⁴ «Assunta la reciprocità a fondamento della libertà, questa finisce per equivalere all'uguaglianza. Solo così, mediante questo concetto di bilanciamento, si crede sia possibile riconciliare (senza fonderli in un'istanza superiore) le due qualità costitutive dell'individuo e della società: rispettivamente la libertà e l'uguaglianza» (M. La Torre, *Nostra legge*, cit., p. 84).

⁶⁵ See G. Berti, *Il pensiero*, cit., pp. 182-183.

Since the antinomies cannot be overcome but only balanced, social action, penetrating «the set of material and intellectual levels», is in «constant mobility»⁶⁶.

4. The devouring abstraction of power.

The concept according to which «State is authority [...], is the ostentation and the infatuation of force» is borrowed from Proudhon by Michail Bakunin⁶⁷. The same is true for the analysis of the mechanisms of religious alienation, in relation to the political phenomenon. Otherwise, Bakunin seems closer to Stirner about his romantic idea of nation, since he recognizes autochthonism as an affirmation of the «creative virtues of people», expressing a spontaneous network of relationships based on conformity to their own nature, as «free federation of individuals»⁶⁸.

The contrast between national identity patriotism and anti-statism is the focus of Bakunin's thought. The logic of power - synonymous with State - is antithetical to the «vital» instance of social order, because of its indifference to social spontaneity: «State is not society, it is only its historical form, as brutal as it is abstract»⁶⁹. His own personal experience led the Russian to convince himself of the absolute co-essentiality between power and repression⁷⁰. Nonetheless, Bakunin identifies the genesis of State in a theoretical «original» conflict of the individual, out of any «social pact». Starting from the tribal organization, up to the modern institutionalization, the «winner-defeated» relationship changes to the «ruler-ruled» one.

Eventually, violence is once again the essence of public power, also due to the partiality of States in the international political panorama. Unlike Stirner, selfishness becomes the negative connotation for individuals as well as for States, in the prefiguration of the «friend / enemy» logic that will later be re-elaborated by Carl Schmitt⁷¹. In the «pluriverse» of international institutions, «each State, on pain of extinction, must try to become the most powerful», that meaning «to enslave, not to be enslaved». If war is State's «existential» law, its organization is the military policy, to which centralization and bureaucratization are aimed. In a «militarized»

⁶⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 177-180. For a summary of the interpretation of Proudhon's thought by contemporary political historiography, see E. Sciacca, *L'attualità di Proudhon*, in *Anarchici*, cit., p. 345 ss.

⁶⁷ On the relationship between Bakunin and Proudhon, see B. Russell, *Socialismo*, cit., p. 70 ss.

⁶⁸ Cf. M. Bakunin, *Federalismo, socialismo e antiteologismo*, reproduced in the version *Federalismo e socialismo* in Id., *Rivolta e libertà* (edited by M. Nejrotti), Roma 1973, p. 105 ff.

⁶⁹ Cf. M. Bakunin, *Dieu et l'Etat*, Preamble to *L'Empire knouto-gérmanique et la révolution sociale*, in J. Guillaume (edited by), Id., *Oeuvres*, Paris 1913, II, p. 283.

⁷⁰ See B. Russell, *Socialismo*, cit., p. 62 ff.

⁷¹ The bibliography would be vast. I could only mention S. Pietropaoli, *Schmitt*, Milano 2012, p. 78 ss.

context, the regimentation of associated life reveals a hierarchical order which brings about working classes' enslavement. State denies human dignity to the enemy, both internal and external; consequently, it refuses society from any instance of autonomy and freedom, so that its members «ceasing to be men are only citizens»⁷².

Since he considers the man-citizen antithesis as the essence of politics⁷³, Bakunin deprecates any form of it, absolutism resulting to him at least not as hypocritical as the representative constitutional regime, for which State despotism is even invested with popular legitimacy. But the focal point is the «systematic mortification of the concrete specificity of individuals», which are sacrificed to «gods, homeland, State power, political rights [...], public interest»: all «devouring abstractions»⁷⁴ that discover the alienating face of Gorgon. It seems to hear Stirnerian echoes again since the birth of power determines the cancellation of social peculiarities in favor of an abstract entity, in the illusion that this «immense slaughterhouse, in the shadow and under the pretext of that abstraction»⁷⁵, protect individual interests.

Again, religion provides politics its conceptual representation, or, in Bakunin's words, the «divine sanction of brutal force and triumphant inequality»⁷⁶. The dogmatic and top-down conception of Christian doctrine insinuates man's distrust of emancipatory reason and consequently places him in a condition of intellectual subjection to the class of priests, mediators of a foreign authority. It is the same «political theology» whereby the cult of State is superimposed on the cult of Church, providing the masses with an elite to govern them⁷⁷. The same goes for legal precept, which, like God, is a product of man's imagination, a fetish that «human spirit creates in its revolt against the existing and which, however, is no longer able to submit to

⁷² Cf. M. Bakunin, *Federalismo*, cit., III, *passim*.

⁷³ See M. Larizza Lolli, *Stato*, cit., p. 65.

⁷⁴ Cf. M. Bakunin, *L'Empire*, cit., f. 34.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Cf. M. Bakunin, *Dieu et l'Etat*, cit., p. 283.

⁷⁷ «Religion of terrestrial absolutism, in which the sovereign takes the place of the good Lord, the bureaucrats are the priests, and the people of course the victim always sacrificed on the altar of the state» (cf. M. Bakunin, *L'Empire*, cit., I, p. 119). And elsewhere: «il mondo oggi, più che in ogni altra epoca, è diviso in due sistemi eternamente opposti: il principio teologico e il principio umanitario, quello dell'autorità e quello della libertà. Il vecchio sistema parte da questa idea fondamentale che l'umanità è cattiva in sé e che per scoprire la verità ha bisogno della rilevazione divina, per scoprire la giustizia ha bisogno delle leggi divine, e per osservarle ha bisogno dell'autorità e delle istituzioni divine, al tempo stesso religiose e politiche della Chiesa e dello Stato» (Id., *Lettera a uno svedese*, Ragusa 1864, p. 29). «Divinità in terra, lo Stato si presenta con tutti gli attributi che la teologia attribuisce all'essere supremo, soprattutto quello di essere Uno, Indivisibile ed Onnipotente» (M. La Torre, *Il fantasma*, cit., pp. 138-139). On the issue of liberation from authority through pedagogy, cf. E. Puglielli, «Tutta la scienza al popolo!» *il pensiero pedagogico di Michail Bakunin*, in F. Bocci, C. Gueli, E. Puglielli (edited by), *Educazione libertaria. Tre saggi su Bakunin, Robin e Lapassade*, Roma 2020, p. 20.

the negation of criticism»⁷⁸, until it separates itself from its own source of production and becomes superior to it.

In reverse, there is a natural law which, far from being “foreign” to man, is the subject of an empirical, deductive survey: «la liberté de l’homme consiste uniquement en ceci, qu’il obéit aux lois naturelles parce qu’il les a reconnues lui-même comme telles, et non parce qu’elles lui ont été extérieurement imposées par une volonté étrangère, divine ou humaine, collective ou individuelle quelconque»⁷⁹. Since freedom is essentially an individuals’ choice, it can only be realized within the spontaneous human consortium, «without determinations». Otherwise, «political society» is a «historically determined authority»⁸⁰, since it limits men by subjecting them to its will. State, in this sense, produces abstraction, which transcends in totalitarianism. Ultimately, freedom consists in equality since it is obtained “through” solidarity: «it must establish itself in the world by means of the spontaneous organization of work and the collective ownership of producer associations freely organized and federated in communities and whereby municipalities’ spontaneous federation, not with State’s supreme and protective action»⁸¹.

As mentioned, these are not dissimilar concepts from those of Proudhon; however, Bakunin’s results change in a negative sense. Since, for the Frenchman, the progress of reason passes through the deterioration of the political until it reaches the development of society, for the Russian reason is the generating principle of oppression and «society is not the point of arrival of an existential vicissitude but its initial moment»⁸². Then freedom, to be realized, requires the demolition of hierarchies: equality is achieved through revolution, whose goal «is the eradication of the principle of authority, however it manifests itself»⁸³. The aim is to destroy the existing to replace «completely opposite forms of life»⁸⁴. From this point of view, Jacobin and Marxist revolutions are both criticized, since they would result in the substitution of one authority for another⁸⁵. Against the Marxist *dogma*, the Russian anarchist rejects the idea of “class” struggle, which, in his opinion, would assume the connotation of the power struggle for State’s redial, although in another form: «class,

⁷⁸ See M. La Torre, *Il fantasma*, cit., p. 140.

⁷⁹ M. Bakunin, *L’Empire*, cit., III, p. 51.

⁸⁰ See G. Berti, *Il pensiero*, cit., p. 267.

⁸¹ Cf. M. Bakunin, *Rivolta*, cit., p. 71.

⁸² See G. Berti, *Il pensiero*, cit., p. 267.

⁸³ Cf. M. Bakunin, *Lettres à un Français sur la crise actuelle*, Paris 1870, p. 58.

⁸⁴ Cf. M. Bakunin, *I principi della rivoluzione* (1870), in A.I. Herzen, *A un vecchio compagno* (edited by V. Strada), Torino 1977, p. 39.

⁸⁵ About Bakunin’s idea of revolution, see, among the others, A. Masters, *Bakunin the father of anarchism*, New York 1974, pp. 161-184; K. Lenk, *Teorie della rivoluzione*, Roma-Bari 1976, pp. 71-94; R. Simoni, *Rivolta e rivoluzione in M. Bakunin*, in «Volontà», XXXII (1978), n. 1, pp. 8-22; R. Pernice, *L’etica della rivoluzione in M. Bakunin*, Roma 1987, pp. 15-26, 37.

power, State are three inseparable terms, each of which necessarily presupposes the other two and can be summarized in the following words: political enslavement and economic exploitation of the masses»⁸⁶.

However, in defining his project, Bakunin is not exempt from some contradictions, starting with the purpose of destroying politics as an institutional system, where however «to favor the deployment of the social it is necessary to activate the political»⁸⁷. Moreover, he refers to an avant-garde's revolution, which the "international brotherhood" really is: «a revolutionary minority which, arousing, organizing and channeling for this purpose the subversive energy of the oppressed masses», is composed of «invisible pilots who lead the revolution, not with open forms of dictatorship, but through the collective dictatorship of all our allies». Finally, insurrection «must be prepared and organized in advance since it will not come into the world by its own spontaneous motion, or by means of discussions, or by means of theoretical disputes, or popular assemblies»⁸⁸.

5. Society stands before and after the State.

Pëtr Kropotkin does not adhere to the "metaphysics" of State nor to a configuration of power in an alienating sense. In contrast to the Hegelian conception⁸⁹ according to which State would still be a meta-historical entity, Kropotkin reports its genesis at the beginning of the Modern age⁹⁰.

Starting from a scientific observation, association appears to be a spontaneous and original "fact" of evolution. Disregarding the contract theory from Hobbes to Rousseau, Kropotkin asserts that men «have been able to live civilly because they have followed their natural sociability, not because they have artificially overcome their ferocity»⁹¹. In short, natural law is more favorable to solidarity than to *bellum omnium contra omnes*⁹².

⁸⁶ Cf. M. Bakunin, *Lettre au journal La Liberté de Bruxelles*, Paris 1872, p. 147.

⁸⁷ Cf. G. Berti, *Il pensiero*, cit., p. 270.

⁸⁸ Cf. M. Bakunin, *Lettre a Albert Richard* (1870), in *Archives bakounine*, VI, Paris 1978, p. 280.

⁸⁹ The critique of Hegelian-Marxist ethics appears in P. Kropotkin, *L'Anarchia: la sua filosofia e il suo ideale* (1896), Ivrea 1973, p. 18 ff.

⁹⁰ See P. Kropotkin, *Lo Stato e il suo ruolo storico* (1896), edited by A. Bonanno, Catania 1981, p. 28.

⁹¹ Cf. G. Berti, *Il pensiero*, cit., p. 309. On the revisitation of Darwinism, cf. P. Kropotkin, *Scienza moderna e anarchia* (1901), Ginevra 1913, pp. 12 and *passim*, for which anarchy would be «the inevitable result of the intellectual movement in the natural sciences», where the absolute primacy of reason in the process of human emancipation arises exclusively in terms of "knowledge", or scientific experimentation.

⁹² Cf. P. Kropotkin, *Il mutuo appoggio. Un fattore dell'evoluzione* (1902), edited by Gian Paolo Prandstraller, Roma 1982, p. 160. The anarchist criticizes Thomas Huxley's *Struggle for existence and its Bearing upon Man* (in «Nineteenth Century», feb. 1888), in *L'Etica* (1922), Catania 1972, p.

According to the Russian anarchist, humanity is governed by universal laws that give rise to the constant alternation of two historical phases: one of creativity, the other of repression. The first phase can also be configured as a vital, libertarian and dynamic moment, always featured by the presence of a community spirit; an example of this is the European municipal civilization of the X-XIV centuries, characterized by autonomy and decentralization. The protagonists of history in its “creative” moment are the masses, for their sense of spontaneous organization⁹³; solidarity between human beings is therefore the true «law of nature and a factor of evolution»⁹⁴. On the other hand, the second phase is that of the affirmation of conflicting and deadly authority; power represents the stagnation of civilization, because it crushes the spontaneous collective solidarity⁹⁵.

Finally, State results from the twist of coercive functions - military, economic, judicial, ideological - at the expense of «individual freedom»⁹⁶. Inside of it, hierarchical structure respects the capitalist mode of production which, in Kropotkin’s opinion, could not have existed outside the State itself, as it is the promoter of large-scale industry and commerce. In other words, the division of labor process diversifies the roles inherent in the productive organization within society and generates the tendency to dominate⁹⁷. Thus, «while the revolutions that followed one another from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century were all aimed at freeing person from the yoke of compulsory labor, State’s reaction has always been aimed at re-establishing the hierarchical structure within the same historical determinations of economy, society and politics»⁹⁸.

But State, contrary to what Proudhon and Bakunin argued, is not an entity separate from individuals’ life; rather, it springs from the individual and collective manifestations it organizes, resolving the social conflict with violence. Consequently, the authoritarian dimension, that is the *altera pars* of sociability, cannot be isolated; therefore, it is not absolute.

13. About Kropotkin’s Ethic, see N. Lebedev, *Introduction a P. Kropotkin, Ethics. Origin and development* (edited by L.S. Friedland, J.R. Piroshnikoff), New York-London 1968, pp. IX-XVI; P. Avrich, *Anarchist portraits*, Princeton 1988, pp. 53-78; G. Woodcock, *Introduction*, in P. Kropotkin, *Ethics*, Montreal 1992, pp. VII-XXI; G.P. Prandstraller, *Kropotkin: il problema dell’etica*, in «Volontà», XXXV (1989), n. 2, pp. 24-33; L. Borghi, *Giustizia e mutuo appoggio*, in «A. Rivista anarchica», XXIII (1993), n. 198, pp. 27-30; M. La Torre, *Dimenticare Kropotkin?*, in «A. Rivista anarchica», XXIII (1993), n. 199, pp. 29-38.

⁹³ See D. Guerin, *L’anarchismo*, cit., p. 35 ff.

⁹⁴ Cf. P. Kropotkin, *Il mutuo appoggio*, cit., p. 55.

⁹⁵ Taking note of these tendencies, Kropotkin rejects the concept of class struggle, which can be relegated to a specific space-time situation; the conflict, on the other hand, is perennial (see G. Berti, *Il pensiero*, cit., p. 313).

⁹⁶ Cf. P. Kropotkin, *La scienza*, cit., p. 164.

⁹⁷ See M. Larizza Lolli, *Stato*, cit., p. 92.

⁹⁸ See G. Berti, *Il pensiero*, cit., p. 320.

If, as mentioned, State's synergistic functions «respond to an objective need of the community»⁹⁹, their affirmation represents the degeneration of the associative phenomenon through the delegation of power: this is the moment of the transition from sociality to politics. Kropotkin as well doesn't neglect the "sacral" aspect about the authoritarian face of law, which «had the purpose of implanting or consolidating the nascent authority of the lord, the soldier, the reunculus and the priest, to strengthen this authority and sanctify it»¹⁰⁰.

In the same perspective, law always has two roles: one of transposing and establishing the principles commonly shared by the community; another one of hierarchical superimposition to the advantage of the dominants: «law, whatever its presumed origin, has never done anything but fix, crystallize into a permanent form, or extend already existing customs. All the ancient codes were nothing more than collections of customs and traditions, carved or written to preserve the letter for future generations. Except that the code, in doing so, always added to already generally adopted customs some new rules made in the interest of minorities of wealthy people armed with weapons and fighting spirit, rules that formulated embryonic customs of inequality and enslavement»¹⁰¹.

Once the principle of authority has been relativized, the principle of freedom is also reduced, becoming «a variable of the opposite biological tendency: mutual support». In any case, freedom would no longer be considered an "individual" prerogative but should be regarded in terms of authentic identification with the natural expressive potential of the community, a sense of duty of people towards people. As noted, «men are free only through the full recognition of their inseparable belonging to the species and therefore of their ineliminable collective dimension»¹⁰². This refers to the concept of justice and, consequently, of ethics, which can be configured as a biological datum: it «is observed for the benefits of mutual support», as the «law of nature and the main factor of progressive evolution»¹⁰³. Without conceding anything to philosophical or even religious morality: «the ant, the bird, the marmot and the wild tchouktche, have not read either Kant, or the Holy Fathers, or even Moses. Yet, they all have the same idea of good and evil»¹⁰⁴. Properly understood, justice is a social law, and therefore «it is nothing other than the recognition of equality among all members of the society in question»¹⁰⁵. All this, in the end, reverberates on the consideration of State, as it is only a historicized political

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. P. Kropotkin, *La scienza*, cit., p. 48.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² See G. Berti, *Il pensiero*, cit., pp. 322-324.

¹⁰³ Cf. P. Kropotkin, *Il mutuo appoggio*, cit., p. 105.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. P. Kropotkin, *La morale anarchica* (1890), Ragusa 1994, p. 32.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. P. Kropotkin, *L'Etica*, cit., p. 204.

form and not an unchangeable outcome of humanity. It is therefore possible to consider a society beyond - or before - it.

Abstract. Il saggio ha per oggetto la messa in discussione del concetto di autorità da parte dei teorici classici dell'anarchismo tra il tardo XVIII e il XIX secolo. Che si parta da posizioni individualiste o socialiste, ad essere criticato è il dogma giusnaturalista, in quanto promotore del potere dispotico. In riferimento ad un diritto di natura inteso in senso opposto al contrattualismo di matrice liberale, lo Stato, che del potere rappresenta l'emblema, viene stigmatizzato per il suo connotato alienante rispetto ad un associazionismo variamente configurabile come spontaneo. Lo Stato risulta storicizzabile e dunque relativizzabile. Di contro, la società esiste a prescindere da ogni istituzionalismo.

Abstract. The essay deals with the concept of authority, as discussed by the theorists of anarchism between the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. The dogma of natural law, which, in anarchists' opinion, paves the way to despotic power, is criticized from both individualist and socialist positions. With reference to a natural law that opposes liberal contractualism, State, the emblem of power, is stigmatized for its alienating connotation compared to an associationism that can be variously configured as spontaneous. State can be historicized and therefore relativized, while society exists regardless of any institutionalism.