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The following is S.E. Parker's contribution to a little volume published in the early 1980s celebrating the centennial of Benjamin R. Tucker's well-known publication, *Liberty*. The title of the volume is, *Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of Liberty: A Centenary Anthology*.

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After Tucker had stopped publishing *Liberty* and settled permanently in France, he did not stop all his propaganda activities. For nine months, from June 1913 to March 1914, he was a regular contributor to *The New Freewoman* — later *The Egoist* — edited by Dora Marsden and published in London, England.

Dora Marsden was born in 1882 and died in 1960. Her close friend, Harriet Shaw Weaver, described her as "remarkable person, a genius and very beautiful to look upon. She had a hard bringing up, had won a scholarship for Manchester University, taken a degree in arts, been a teacher for a few years, thrown that up to join the Woman's Militant Suffrage Society; had thrown that up before long, finding the leaders too autocratic, in order to start a paper, *The Freewoman*."

The Freewoman , which first appeared in the winter of 1911, was denounced as an "immoral paper" by Lord Percy in *The Morning Telegraph*, no doubt because it allowed space to such subjects as lesbianism, one of the great "unmentionables" of the pre-1914 world. Despite Lord Percy, its editor was undaunted and *The Freewoman* continued to appear until October 1912

when its proprietor withdrew his support. By June 1913, however, Dora Marsden had gathered fresh support, and it reappeared as *The New Freewoman* whose purpose was "to expound a doctrine of philosophical individualism…[and] continue *The Freewoman* policy of ignoring in its discussion all existing tabus in the realm of morality and religion." By the time the third number had appeared, Dora Marsden had declared herself an egoist and her views at that period were clearly influenced by those of Max Stirner.

It was not surprising, therefore, that Tucker saw in *The New Freewoman* a suitable vehicle for his ideas, and his first article was published in the issue for June 15, 1913. But although he contributed frequently, most of his contributions consisted of translations from the French press, often under the general heading of *Paris Notes* or *Lego and Penso*. From time to time he wrote a short piece of his own — either a comment on a news item or a reply to a critic. One curious piece concerned the contrast between the will of the banker J. Peirpont Morgan and the last letter of A. Monier-Simentof, one of the Bonnot Gang of "anarchist-illegalists" who was guillotined in 1913. Tucker wrote:

> "One need not be an advocate of 'individual resumption,' of 'propaganda by deed,' or even of 'direct action,' in order to prefer the petty bandit who, having a social ideal, seeks to further it by an isolated act of violence, though knowing thereby he bares his neck to the knife, to the giant bandit who, believing in society as it is, and having no ideal but his own aggrandizement, realizes it by forging and wielding the mighty weapon of legal monopoly to despoil a whole people of their products and their liberties, and who, wolfish devourer of the flock, continues, even after his death, to bathe in the Blood of the Lamb."

liefs could be more properly ascribed to "clerico-libertarians" like Godwin, Kropotkin, and Tolstoy. Nonetheless, even if she had not fully understood Tucker's anarchism, Dora Marsden had put her finger on the curious blindness regarding Stirner's view of Proudhon that afflicted Tucker and his associates — including even the usually perspicacious James L. Walker, author of that admirable complement to *The Ego and His Own*, *The Philosophy of Egoism*. For it was not simply the "surplussage of words" referred to by Tucker that Stirner found unacceptable about Proudhon. Stirner's case against Proudhon was that his doctrine was shot through and through with a moralism that only differed from Christianity in the name given to its "supreme being." All this is made very clear in *The Ego and His Own*, wherein Proudhon is shown to be a moral fanatic opposed to egoism and believing in such nonsensical abstractions as "sacred duties" and "eternal laws."

It would have been interesting to see what would have happened had not Tucker withdrawn from the debate before it had run its course. Perhaps he sensed that it might have confronted him with the failure of his attempt to synthesize the "prolix pathos" of Proudhon with the tough-minded clarity of Stirner — a synthesis which was and is impossible, as Marsden realized.

Although *The Egoist* continued publication until 1919, Tucker never resumed his collaboration. Some of his friends, like Stephen T. Byington, continued to cross intellectual swords with the editor for a while, but the honeymoon of the Tuckerians with *The Egoist* had clearly ended. Unfortunately, Dora Marsden later lost her way among the metaphysical puerilities of "christian gnosticism," about which she wrote several obscure books after the end of World War I. Had she kept her head, and developed the approach she displayed in her joust with Tucker, she could have become an egoist philosopher of the first rank. But that would have been another story…

Tucker's preference for someone who robbed banks to someone who used banks to rob, reads rather strangely in view of his violent denunciation, some 25 years earlier, of certain followers of Johann Most who sought to further their "social ideal" by insuring houses and then setting fire to them. Even stranger was his use of this term, "social ideal," to justify his preference, for such a moralistic evaluation hardly squared with his claim to be Stirnerian egoist.

In another comment Tucker replied tartly and more consistently to a Columbia University professor who had complimented suffragettes on their "fibre" in taking the consequences of their "crimes":

> "To say that a rebel is bound in honour to take the consequences is to declare the victim the tyrant's debtor, and is superstition pure and simple! A rebel against the State is contemptible if he complains of the consequences of his rebellion, but certainly he is entitled to avoid them if he can, and, in doing so, he shows not lack of fibre, but possession of wit."

Dora Marsden made no comment on these early contributions, but given her own Stirnerian approach it was only a matter of time before the "social idealist" in Tucker provoked her into a debate with him. And Tucker did just this in an article published in the issue for October 1, 1913, entitled, *Proudhon and Royalism*.

In this article, Tucker attacked the French royalists gathered around Leon Daudet's paper *L'Action Francaise*. These "neoroyalists" had enrolled Proudhon in the ranks of their precursors and had founded a *Cercle Proudhon* which published a bi-monthly review, *Cahiers du Cercle Proudhon*. According to Tucker these "impudent young rascals" wanted a restored monarchy to institute "a regime of decentralization that shall guarantee numerous individual liberties now more and more

endangered by democracy and socialism." Although he thought that the neo-royalists appropriation of Proudhon would lead people to read the latter's works, Tucker protested strongly against what he saw as their one-sided presentation of Proudhon's ideas. "Democracy," he wrote, "is an easy mark for this new party, and it finds its chief delight in pounding the philosopher of democracy, Rousseau. Now, nobody ever pounded Rousseau as effectively as Proudhon did, and in that fact the *Cercle Proudhon* finds its excuse. But it is not to be inferred that, because Proudhon destroyed Rousseau's theory of the social contract, he did not believe in the advisability of a social contract, or would uphold a monarchy in exacting an oath of allegiance." Proudhon "found fault with existing society" because it was not based on a "social contract." Tucker wanted to "expose the fraud" of the French royalists' championing of Proudhon and he sought to do so by quoting a long extract from *The General Idea of the Revolution in the 19th Century*, the conclusion of which read:

"The law is clear, the sanction still more so. Three articles, which make but one — that is the whole social contract. Instead of making oath to God and his prince, the citizen swears upon his conscience, before his brothers and before Humanity. Between the two oaths there is the same difference as between slavery and liberty, usury and labour, government and economy, God and man."

As if anticipating sharp rejoinders from Stirnerians, Tucker remarked of the extract as a whole: "Leaving out the words 'good,' 'wicked,' 'brute,' and 'Humanity,' which are mere surplussage here, this extract, I think, would have been acceptable even to Max Stirner as a charter for his Union of the Free.'"

Dora Marsden, however, was not convinced. In the following issue, that for October 15, she wrote that Proudhon's "outlined Social Contract" is "a very dragon, big and very impossible in everything except words. If we outlined a scheme for building a block of flats as high as St. Paul's, with lily-stalks for

Marsden declared herself in favour of anarchism if it meant the abolition of the State, but not if it meant to substitute for the State "the subtle and far more repressive agency of Conscience with its windy words and ideas." The trouble with the "clerico-libertarians" is that they want "the self to 'rule' but it must first *change itself*." She was not for such an idealized and illusionary "self," but for "vulgar simple satisfaction according to taste — a tub for Diogenes: a continent for Napoleon: control of a trust for a Rockefeller: all that I desire for me: *if we can get them*."

If the combination of egoist and archist "has already figured largely in the world's history" it shows that it *works* and if that is so then its analysis will indicate "the reason why the libertarian, humanitarian, idealist cure-alls won't go down: the reason why they won't and the knowledge of what will." It is because socialists, communists and — "in the main" — anarchists, surround the goods of the world with sacred principles and want to make them the "property of all" that things are as they are. "Whereupon the few 'respectless' ones divide up the lot between them. The sooner the poor become 'Archists,' therefore, the better."

The issue of March 16 carried a letter from Tucker accusing Marsden of "a most ludicrous misapprehension of the Anarchist position." He had, however, no intention of setting her right. If she found "Egoism and Anarchism" satisfactory "Against what is *The Egoist* rebelling? Against rebellion? Or, having discovered that you are not an Anarchist, am I now to discover that you are not even a rebel?"

Marsden replied that she refused "to answer to 'Rebel,'" preferred "not to be called 'Pragmatist,'" was quite willing to "not — according to Mr. Tucker — be called 'Anarchist,'" but responded readily to "Egoist."

On that note the debate ended.

Had he also replied Tucker would no doubt have repudiated Marsden's claim that he believed in such "spooks" as "conscience" and "duty," and might have pointed out that such be-

ist and Archist,' that 'combination which has already figured largely in the world's history.' The first thing to be said anent that is, that if it is so we must manage to put up with it. If to be an Archist is what we are, then we prefer Archism to Anarchism which presumably necessitates our being something different."

The point at issue is "whether in Anarchism, which is a negative term, one's attention fixes upon the absence of a State establishment, that is the absence of *one* particular *view of order* supported by armed force with acquiescence as to its continued supremacy held by allowing it a favoured position as to defence in the community among whom it is established; or the absence of every kind of order supported by armed force and maintained by the consent of the community, but the *presence* of that kind of order which obtains when each member of a community *agrees to want only* the kind of order which will not interfere with the kind of order *likely to be wanted* by individuals who compose the rest of the community..The first half is what we should call Egoistic Anarchism which *The Egoist* maintains against all comers. The second, which is that of our correspondent,...has in our opinion no claims at all that are not embedded in a hundred confusions as to the label Anarchism. We should call it rather a sort of Clerico-libertarian-Anarchism...It represents more subtle, more tyrannical power of repression than any the world has yet known, its only distinction being that the Policeman, Judge, and Executioner are ever on the spot, a Trinity of Repression that has a Spy to boot, i.e., 'Conscience,' the 'Sense of Duty'... Compared with the power of egoistic repression the Ego comes up against an ordinary 'State,' that which it meets in the shape of conscience is infinitely more repressive and searching. The Archism which is expressed in the Armies, Courts, Gowns and Wigs, Jailers, Hangsmen and what not, is but light and superficial as compared with our Clerico-libertarian friends."

materials, and carefully went into the joys of living therein, and assessed the penalty for occupants who damaged the joinery, may we say, we should consider we were doing very similar to that which Proudhon does in outlining the social contract. It need not be asserted...that we consider Proudhon was a blazing light in a dark age, but the passage quoted...shows him at his worst. If it were the boyish essay of a youth in his teens, with the instinct of the pedagogue, we should put a pencil through half of it as bombast and fustian. The half left would consist of adjectives and prepositions. It is the kind of thing that overpowers our mental digestion."

Tucker replied in the November 15 issue. Dora Marsden's criticisms "seem to have been directed in part" at Proudhon's "style and in part at his sanity." Regarding his style "the competent of France generally class Proudhon with Michelet and Balzac as prominent among those whom the Academy ignored to its own disgrace." However, "of greater interest and importance would be her contention that it is insane to suppose that people can associate for mutual protection on the basis of a contract defining the protective sphere if it were supported by any reasons. But I find none in her paragraphs." Dora Marsden's mistake lies in the assumption that "our evolution into a society founded on contract involves...the necessity of erecting a new social structure separate from that which now exists...The passage from Proudhon wanted "a dissolution of government into the economic organism" in which the functions of the State would be gradually "lopped off" and those which were "useful and non-invasive would be taken over by voluntary associations of workers."

In the same issue Marsden retorted: "We frankly do not understand why Mr. Tucker, an egoist, and Stirner's English publisher, does not see the necessity of cleansing current language of padding as a preliminary of egoistic investigation. It is a task which pioneers of a new branch of science are always faced with. Stirner himself worked like a navvy on the job. As for

Proudhon, we are entirely beyond the reach of the verdict of opinion among 'those who know' and we are not moved by the fact that Proudhon was at the 'zenith of his power' when he wrote *The General Idea*. When he is looking at things as they exist he is a strong searchlight; when he is trying to woo his readers to his solutions, he uses method of cajolery which are positively repellent, and makes style a thing not to be mentioned."

Back came Tucker in the December 15 issue. He claimed that he had succeeded in "having elicited from [Marsden] a new appreciation of Proudhon, which, if still inadequate, is at least more generously specific in its allotment to the credit side of that author's long account." However, "as to the main contention — whether it is crazy to think of voluntary co-operation for defence, in conformity with a voluntary contract fixing the limits of such co-operation, as a possibility of the future — we are no further forward than before; for Miss Marsden still neglects to supply a reason why a person who pursues that ideal will find his proper environment within the confines of a madhouse. Until such is forthcoming, the discussion cannot proceed."

Tucker also introduced a new note into the debate. In the October issue, replying to "some American friends," Marsden had stated that her paper "stands for nothing…It has no 'Cause.' All that we require of it is that it remain flexible and appears with a different air each issue. Should an influence come in to make it rigid, as happens in all other papers, it would drop from our hands immediately." Tucker challenged: "May I ask for an explanation of the sub-title: 'An Individualist Review'? And what did Miss Marsden mean when she said that the paper was 'not for the advancement of woman, but for the empowering of individuals'? My interest in the paper grows out of my belief that it 'stands for' such empowering…If I am wrong; if in truth, *The New Freewoman* is not, or is no longer, a co-ordinated effort toward a definite end, but has become, instead, a mere dumping-

ground for miscellaneous wits, then…my interest will diminish materially and speedily."

It was somewhat late in the day for Tucker to have discovered that *The New Freewoman* was a "miscellaneous" publication, since it had been that from the start, as indeed, had been its predecessor. The reason for such a belated discovery was, I suspect, a need to find an excuse for breaking off collaboration with the paper, the article in which he made the remark being the last he contributed.

Dora Marsden did not return to the debate proper until January 15, 1914, by which time *The New Freewoman* had changed its title to *The Egoist*. "Mr. Tucker," she wrote, "has informed us that the argument cannot proceed until we have explained" why "it is a sign of insanity for people to 'associate for mutual protection, on the basis of a contract defining the protective sphere,' because we said that Proudhon's outline of the Social Contract with the powers and penalties attaching thereto seemed as valuable as a scheme for building flats with lily-stalks." This was not the case. Contracts are as natural to make "as it is for men to laugh, talk, and sigh… But as a matter of fact we had not arrived at the point of considering whether contracts were good or bad. The theatricality of Proudhon's style with its faked matter and pompous manner rendered it impossible… As for the lily-stalks… they were intended to refer to M. Proudhon's assumptions regarding human nature. We meant that the kind of people he describes never walked on earth: figures with no genuine insides, stuffed out with tracts from the Church of Humanity and the Ethical Society."

Outraged by this rough handling of his hero, Tucker wrote a letter to Marsden announcing that he was no longer going to write for *The Egoist*. In the issue for March 3, she took the occasion to develop her attitude towards anarchism. Tucker, she stated, "who is perhaps the best-known living exponent of Anarchism and hitherto an unwearying friend of *The Egoist* has informed us that we are not Anarchist. We are rather 'Ego-