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What Ought to be the Anarchist Attitude Towards the Machine
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placed. Toil for one's own needs gives one self-expression and joy. It is the exploitation of toil that is the only cure mankind suffers from.

The machine to me is an attempt to mechanise life. As an Anarchist I oppose such an unnatural anti-Anarchist approach towards the solution of our present enslavement. I am struggling and hoping for the dawn of that day when man shall at last come into his own; a natural, self-reliant, intuitive, colourful, handicraft creator of all those needs and things that will give us joy – the joy of the free life in a liberated society.

It is true that the greater part of the Anarchist movement holds an opposite view to the one I have expressed in the Anarchist press since 1925. The group that entrusted me with the editing of MAN! knew this fact very well. Upon receiving the dissenting attitude of Comrade Ziano, as also that of a few others, I raised the issue before the Group. I stated that, in dealing with various subjects, I cannot express them any differently from what I think about them, even when such opinions should happen to be at variance with the generally accepted attitude of our movement. After a thorough discussion the Group expressed its unanimous support of my right to express myself as I think on any social subject that arises.

Comrade Ziano's main line of disagreement is based upon the general conception, accepted by the Anarchist movement, as expressed by Peter Kropotkin in "Modern Science and Anarchism." In that study Kropotkin accepts the machine as an instrument that will prove an aid to man's liberation, when placed at the service of mankind.

I think that the future will prove that Kropotkin, from an Anarchist point of view, has, in accepting thus the machine, made one of the gravest errors. Such an attitude was perfectly logical for the Marxian school of thought, but certainly not for the anarchist.

In reality, man will never be able to master the machine without the sacrifice of endangering human life. Why? Because man will always remain a human being whose very vibration of life is motivated by innumerable emotions, habits, intuitions, and impressions. It is perfectly all right for inventors to conceive safety devices of all sorts, and for aspiring socialist and communist politicians to promise the dawn of a day when the entire world will become such an accident-proof straitjacket that man will be enabled to control every sort of machine through the mere pressing of this or that button. But for an Anarchist – who aspires to unloosen wide and afar man's ingenuity, initiative and independence – to think likewise is, to put it mildly, quite a contradiction.

To illustrate why I contend that there can never dawn that day when the machine will not jeopardise human life. In 1931 New York City had one of its "usual" subway tragedies. The man who handles the lever that throws the switching line for the different lines under the Time Square station had pulled the wrong lever. The result was about fifty human

beings killed, and twice that many wounded. The man was perfectly sane and sober. No one could even conceive of his having done such a thing willfully. Perhaps he was over-worked or fatigued. He could have been. But it might have been something else, too. He might have been dreaming of sunshine up above, or of his close relations and friends. Who knows? He is a human being. But he has been entrusted with an inhuman job: to hold in his hands the fate of hundreds, nay thousands of people. The "best" ruler over any people sooner or later becomes despotic by the very fact of having power in his hands. As Anarchists we are unequivocally opposed to any sort of rulership or exploitation of man over man. Why then turn around and give one the same sort of power over to any man in the use of the machine which at all times endangers the lives of others and often that of the wielder himself?

Hundreds of thousands of workers own some sort of automobile. And how many fatal accidents transpire every moment of their use? Certainly no one can vouchsafe the assertion that machine drivers intentionally get into accidents that sometimes cost their own lives. At the end of 1933 the State of Pennsylvania announced that there have been "officially" recorded in that state no less than *three million accidents!*

All such facts should be of very grave concern to each and all of us Anarchists. For human life is to us the most sacred thing; we wish not only to achieve liberty for those that live, *but also to safeguard the right of every living soul not to be sacrificed upon the false alter of a false god – to wit, the machine.*

As an Anarchist I am in favour of the destruction of every power on earth that tends to hinder the liberation of mankind from all forms of oppression and rulership. But I am just as emphatically opposed to the endangering or destruction of a single human life in the name of a new devouring monster now preying upon mankind – the machine. Anarchy, to me, means an ethical conception of life. Liberty without encroachment upon anyone else's freedom, least of all, anyone else's life. *To forget that Anarchy is an ethical approach towards life in all the domains which tend to create happiness for each and all alike is to forget the fundamental and basic principles of anarchy.*

Since Comrade Ziano grants that the machine has so far brought only misery to mankind, I have only this to add: Most of the capitalists are

preferring the employment of all sorts of safety devices (especially is this true of the Bolshevik government of Russia), but still, the toll in human life by the use of the machine is not decreasing but growing in proportion to its increasing use.

Comrade Ziano thinks that my opposition to the machine as an instrument for mankind's liberation is harming the cause. Now this is taking for granted a little too much. No one has ever condoned in the pages of MAN! The present thieves who control the machines. Perhaps, in the final end, my anti-machine attitude may prove as much of a contributing factor towards the disintegrating breakdown of slavery as Comrade Ziano's pro-machine attitude. As Anarchists we hold the right to suggest *new and different* methods of combat in the struggle for freedom. It can only become harmful to our ideal to suggest compromising methods at the expense of the ultimate aim: *freedom.*

Comrade Ziano has therefor no more ground to conclude that my anti-machine attitude is harming the cause than I would have to assert that his pro-machine attitude tends to do the same thing.

The assertion that primitive man got tired of his sort of life and chose the machine as a substitute is far from correct. In examining any of the historical facts dealing with the manner in which the machine is adopted in any of the still primitive countries, it will be found that commercialism, signifying, of course, exploitation and rulership, is at the helm in fostering the machine in all such instances. One only has to listen to the wailings of the American exploiters, of the unwillingness of the primitive Mexicans or Negroes in the South to work at all, least of all to endanger their lives by use of machines.

Comrade Ziano does not speak of the joy (that fountain from which mankind is still drinking – all the great philosophies, musical creations, sculptures, paintings, poetry, novels and drama) which has all been conceived and created in the period of mankind when the machine monster was yet an unknown thing. And what has mankind contributed towards the intellect ever since this monstrous machine has come into more and more vogue? One great line of zeros along any branch of art spoken at the beginning of this paragraph.

The machine, as a saviour of man, is also associated with the hatred toward toil no prevailing everywhere. But this is another error wrongly