

What is Anarchy

José Llunas Pujols

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The anarchist movement in Spain developed out of the Spanish sections of the First International, which sided with the anti-authoritarian wing following the split in the International in 1872. The Spanish government attempted to suppress the International but by 1881 the Spanish sections were revived under a new name, the Workers' Federation of the Spanish Region. While some members of the Federation tried to avoid the anarchist label, speaking instead of "autonomy," others were more direct. In August 1882, in a passage translated by Paul Sharkey, several sections declared:

Our Anarchy is not disorder nor is it chaos as our foes maliciously imagine. The word Anarchy signifies non-government, for which reason we anarchists support the abolition of the political and juridical States currently in existence and seek to replace them with a free federation of free associations of free producers. In our organization, we already practice the anarchist principle, the most graphic expression of Freedom and Autonomy. Every individual is free and autonomous within his Section. The latter is free and autonomous within the Local Federation and within its Union, and the Local Federations are free and autonomous within the Region; just as the Spanish Region is free and autonomous with regard to other regions where the federated workers are, as we are, sensible of the great need for our emancipation, the abolition of frontiers, and for the world, for humanity, to cease being divided into classes, all of which will melt back into that of the free producers.

Jose Llunas Pujols (1850–1905), a veteran of the International active in the revived Federation, advocated a collectivist form of anarchism, based on direct democracy. The following excerpts, translated by Paul Sharkey, are taken from two of Llunas' 1882 essays, "What is Anarchy" and "Collectivism."

What is Anarchy

What, then, is anarchy in practice? The whole organization of society stripped of power, domination or the authority of some over others.

According to this definition, we shall have this: hierarchies not existing in a society organized along anarchist lines, the system being founded upon the free will of all its individuals...

[Administration is] the only thing required by and indispensable in any civilized society, or, to put it at its plainest, in any collective body.

And in order to carry out the Administration in a manner whereby no one abdicates his rights or his autonomy, commissions or delegations are elected as the collective deems useful.

...Since a collective as a whole cannot write a letter or forward a sum of money, or do an infinity of tasks which only individuals can perform, it follows that delegating these tasks to the most qualified person subject to a code of conduct prescribed in advance, is not only not an abdication of freedom but rather the accomplishment of the most sacred duty of anarchy, which is the organization of Administration.

Let us suppose that a workers' body is set up without a steering committee or any hierarchical office; that it meets in a general assembly once a week or more often, at which everything pertinent to its operations is decided; that it chooses receivers, a treasurer, a bookkeeper, an archivist, a secretary, etc. to collect dues, retain its funds, audit its accounts, handle its archives and correspondence, etc., or appoints a commission with exclusively administrative functions and with a

defined code of conduct or Imperative Mandate: the organization of that society would be perfectly anarchist...

Then let us take a look at the municipality of the future, organized along anarchist lines...the unit of organization would still be the trades section in each locality.

...[I]n order to organize an anarchist municipality, each unit (trades section) would delegate one or more persons with purely administrative powers or with an imperative mandate so that they could form a municipal or local administrative commission. These persons, subject to replacement and recall at any time through the ongoing suffrage of those who have given them their mandates, could never set themselves up as dictators...

All commissions or delegations appointed in an anarchist society should at all times be liable to replacement and recall through ongoing balloting of the Section or Sections by which they have been elected, thereby making it impossible for anybody to stake a claim to even the slightest bit of authority.

...[A]narchy is the abolition of all of the existing powers that be, political and religious, and of what is miscalled economic authority; but it is more than just the abolition, being also the replacement, not of some authorities by some others...but of one social order by another, of one social organization...by another...founded upon the consent of all its associates. The political State and theology would thus be supplanted by Administration and Science.

...[A]s anarchists we want knowledge to be accessible to all, we want the most comprehensively rounded education for every individual, so that in creating a society of free men, we might also be making one of intelligent beings.

Thus by making education the cornerstone of the anarchist system, we have...the finest and most wholesome barrier against harmful passions; whereas authority uses punishment in order to repress, knowledge makes [us] moral through persuasion and by making this understood: that every human entitlement carries within itself an imprescriptible obligation to respect others.

In short, we have seen what anarchy is: abolition of all the existing powers that be and their replacement by the labour body in its various manifestations...

What we mean by collectivism is a society organized on the basis of collective ownership, economic federation and the complete emancipation of the human being...

[In the collectivist society] the individual will be required to work in order to meet his needs as is presently the case and will also be the case tomorrow. Combination is the only option if more and better is to be produced. From which it follows that, of their own volition, people will organize themselves into producer associations and federations that will oversee the exchange of products with one another at cost.

Thus the factory corporation will oversee the administration of the factories where all their members will be working; the shoemakers their workshops; the type-setters their presses; the farmworkers the land; the miners their mines, the seamen their vessels, etc., etc.

All citizens, assembled in a local congress, will look into and determine the educational establishments and organize the staffing of assistance and security, public works, hygiene, statistics, etc., which organizational set-up may at any time be revised by congresses, on the advice of groups or of commissions elected for that very purpose...

In each of the regions that will naturally be formed—in that many of the current political boundaries are arbitrary—the Trades Federations and Communal Federations will set up purely administrative federal commissions, and, as the body liaising between all the Unions, Federations and Communes, will look after all regional public services...as well as all roads, railways,

telegraphs, canals, general statistics, etc. The Commission] of one Region will oversee the maintenance of relations with the other regional commissions for the sake of solidarity and universal harmony, as well as for all matters of an international or cosmopolitan character.

...[M]an will be free in the productive society; every worker group will be free within the Local and Trades Federation; the localities will be free within their Counties or Regions, and the Regions free within the entire human family which will finally have achieved its complete redemption (reprinted in Max Nettlau, *La Premiere Internationale en Espagne, 1868-1888*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1969).

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