

Albert Libertad

Freedom

Many think that it is a simple dispute over words that makes some declare themselves libertarians and others anarchist. I have an entirely different opinion.

I am an anarchist and I hold to the label not for the sake of a vain garnishing of words, but because it means a philosophy, a different method than that of the libertarian.

The libertarian, as the word indicates, is an adorer of liberty. For him, it is the beginning and end of all things. To become a cult of liberty, to write its name on all the walls, to erect statues illuminating the world, to talk about it in season and out, to declare oneself free of hereditary determinism when its atavistic and encompassing movements make you a slave. . . this is the achievement of the libertarian.

The anarchist, referring simply to etymology, is against authority. That's exact. He doesn't make liberty the causality but rather the finality of the evolution of his Self. He doesn't say, even when it concerns merest of his acts. "I am free." but "I want to be free". For him, freedom is not an entity, a quality, something that one has or doesn't have, but is a result that he obtains to the degree that he obtains power.

He doesn't make freedom into a right that existed before him, before human beings but a science that he acquires, that humans acquire, day after day, to free themselves of ignorance, abolishing the shackles of tyranny and property.

Man is not free to act or not to act, by his will alone. He learns to do or not to do when he has exercised his judgement, enlightened his ignorance, or destroyed the obstacles that stand in his way. So if we take the position of a libertarian, without musical knowledge in the front of his piano, is he free to play? NO! He won't have this freedom until he has learned music and to play the instrument. This is what the anarchists say. He also struggles against the authority that prevents him from developing his musical aptitudes — when he has them — or he who withholds the pianos. To have the freedom to play, he has to have the power to know and the power to have a piano at his disposition. Freedom is a force that one must know how to develop within the individual; no one can grant it.

When the Republic takes its famous slogan: "*Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite*", does it make us free, equal or brothers? She tells us "You are free" these are vain words since we do not have the power to be free. And why don't we have this power? Principally because we do not know how to acquire the proper knowledge. We take the mirage for reality.

We always await the freedom of a State, of a Redeemer, of a Revolution, we never work to develop it within each individual. What is the magic wand that transforms the current generation born of centuries of servitude and resignation into a generation of human beings deserving of freedom, because they are strong enough to conquer it?

This transformation will come from the awareness that men will have of not having freedom of consciousness, that freedom is not in them, that they don't have the right to be free, that they are not all born free and equal . . . and that it is nevertheless impossible to have happiness without freedom. The day that they have this consciousness they will stop at nothing to obtain freedom. This is why anarchists struggle with such strength against the libertarian current that makes one take the shadow for substance.

To obtain this power, it is necessary for us to struggle against two currents that threaten the conquest of our liberty: it is necessary to defend it against others and against oneself, against external and internal forces.

To go towards freedom, it becomes necessary to develop our individuality. When I say: to go towards freedom, I mean for each of us to go toward the most complete development of our Self. We are not therefore free to take any which road, it is necessary to force ourselves to take the correct path. We are not free to yield to excessive and lawless desires, we are obliged to satisfy them. We are not free to put ourselves in a state of inebriation making our personality lose the use of its will, placing us at the mercy of anything; let's say rather that we endure the tyranny of a passion that misery of luxury has given us. True freedom would consist of an act of authority upon this habit, to liberate oneself from its tyranny and its corollaries.

I said, an act of authority, because I don't have the passion of liberty considered *a priori*. I am not a libertarian. If I want to acquire liberty, I don't adore it. I don't amuse myself refusing the act of authority that will make me overcome the adversary that attacks me, nor do I refuse the act of authority that will make me attack the adversary. I know that every act of force is an act of authority. I would like to never have to use force, authority against other men, but I live in the 20th century and I am not free of from the direction of my movements to acquire liberty.

So, I consider the Revolution as an act of authority of some against others, individual revolt as an act of authority of some against others. And therefore I find these means logical, but I want to exactly determine the intention. I find them logical and I am ready to cooperate, if these acts of temporary authority have the removing of a stable authority and giving more freedom as their goal; I find them illogical and I thwart them if their goal isn't removing an authority. By these acts, authority gains power: she hasn't done anything but change name, even that which one has chosen for the occasion of its modification.

Libertarians make a dogma of liberty; anarchists make it an end. Libertarians think that man is born free and that society makes him a slave. Anarchists realize that man is born into the most complete of subordinations, the greatest of servitudes and that civilization leads him to the path of liberty.

That which the anarchists reproach is the association of men-society — which is obstructing the road after having guided our first steps. Society delivers hunger, malignant fever, ferocious beasts — evidently not in all cases, but generally — but she makes humanity prey to misery, overwork, and governments. She puts humanity between a rock and a hard place. She makes the child forget the authority of nature to place him under the authority of men.

The anarchist intervenes. He does not ask for liberty as a good that one has taken from him, but as a good that one prevents him from acquiring. He observes the present society and he declares that it is a bad instrument, a bad way to call individuals to their complete development.

The anarchist sees society surround men with a lattice of laws, a net of rules, and an atmosphere of morality and prejudices without doing anything to bring them out of the night of ignorance. He doesn't have the libertarian religion, liberal one could say but more and more he wants liberty for himself like he wants pure air for his lungs. He decides then to work by all means to tear apart the threads of the lattice, the stitches of the net and endeavors to open up free thought.

The anarchist's desire is to be able to exercise his faculties with the greatest possible intensity. the more he improves himself, the more experience he takes in, the more he destroys obstacles, as much intellectual and moral as material, the more he takes an open field, the more he allows his individuality to expand, the more he becomes free to evolve and the more he proceeds towards the realization of his desire.

But I won't allow myself to get carried away and I'll return more precisely to the subject.

The libertarian who doesn't have the power to carry through an explanation, a critique which he recognizes as well founded or that he doesn't even want to discuss, he responds "I am *free* to act like this." The anarchist says: "I think that I am right to act like this but come on." And if the critique made is about a passion which he doesn't have the strength to free himself from, he will add: "I am under the slavery of this atavism and this habit." This simple declaration won't be without cost. It will carry its own force, maybe for the individual attacked, but surely for the individual that made it, and for those who are less attacked by the passion in question.

The anarchist is not mistaken about the domain gained. He does not say "I am *free* to marry my daughter if that pleases me — I have the *right* to wear a high style hat if it suits me" because he knows that this liberty, this right are a tribute paid to the morality of the milieu, to the conventions of the world; they are imposed by the outside against all desires, against all internal determinism of the individual.

The anarchist acts thus not due to modesty, or the spirit of contradiction, but because he holds a conception which is completely different from that of the libertarian. He doesn't believe in innate liberty, but in liberty that is acquired. And because he knows that he doesn't possess all liberties, he has a greater will to acquire the power of liberty.

Words do not have a power in themselves. They have a meaning that one must know well, to state precisely in order to allow oneself to be taken by their magic. The great Revolution has made a fool of us with its slogan: "*Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite*" the liberals have sung us above all the tune of their "*laisser-faire*" with the refrain of the freedom of work; Libertarians delude themselves with a belief in a pre-established liberty and they make critiques in its honor. . . Anarchists should not want the word but the thing. They are against authority, government, economic religious and moral power, knowing the more authority is diminished the more liberty is increased.

It is a relation between the power of the group and the power of the individual. The more the first term of this relation is diminished, the more authority is diminished, the more liberty is increased.

What does the anarchist want? To reach a state in which these two powers are balanced, where the individual has real freedom of movement without ever hindering the liberty of movement of another. The anarchist does not want to reverse the relation so that his freedom is made of the slavery of others, because he knows that authority is bad in itself, as much for he who submits to it as for he who gives it.

To truly know freedom, one must develop the human being until one makes sure that no authority has the possibility of existing.

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