

Anarchy: Theory and Practice

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“All Nature’s elements are common rights,
The light, the air, the ocean and the soil:
Who’s cheated of his rights can owe no duties;
Him whom no law protects, no law can bind; –
The social compact was not made for him;
And just resistance is the right of slaves.”
HEIGHTON¹

I

Anarchy! That dreadful word. What can it mean? Well, if we take the literal description of all the common place chatters of Church and State; if we listen to the logic of the hypocritical hirelings of the pulpit, platform and press, Anarchy is but another name for social chaos and the annihilation of civilisation. But let one of our side speak, and give the reasons for the faith that is in us; and, although we do not expect to be received with open arms as the saviours of society, we *do* think that the popular instinct of justice will not condemn us unheard, – and in seeking the sympathy of all those who love justice and liberty with all their hearts, we do not hesitate to declare our demands.

The political theory of Anarchy is absolute individual liberty – its economic substance is that of socialism. We contend that the individual has two distinct spheres of life; one in which he is entirely independent of others, and can preserve his autonomy intact: the other, in which he is compelled, by the present circumstances of his capacities and needs, to enter into an understanding with his fellows, and in which he unites his interests and aims to those which correspond his own. This latter sphere can only constitute the nature of a CONTRACT, and the conditions of a contract are essentially *free*; otherwise there is no contract. The province of politics, then, which is the science of government properly speaking, and which is incompatible with freedom, is outside of and diametrically opposed to the true constitution of society. The “social compact” can only be equitably established on the conditions of voluntary co-operation, and not, as we see today, on conditions of class antagonism and political supremacy. Anarchy, therefore, is the condition of the social contract, which implies the utter negation of all assumed and usurped authority, all political government, all man-made, that is, class-made laws. Government, resting ultimately on the right of the majority to rule, is consequently, both in theory and practice, the denial of the rights of man.

We have seen that Anarchy is synonymous with liberty alone. We affirm that anything short of *individual* liberty is only a conventional restriction of liberty, that is to say, slavery is disguise, the worst of all slaveries. But how far may human action be said to be compatible with individual liberty? To what extent is the limit of liberty? What is the gravitating centre between one individual’s liberty and another?

The only limitation to the sphere of the individual’s liberty action set up by nature and necessity is the *equal* recognition of every individual’s claim to the same right. In fine, liberty must be curtailed only just where personal liberties clash, in which case, equity demands a recognition of an equality of rights.

¹ Editor’s note: Probably Philadelphia journalist and labour activist William Heighton (1800-1873).

Society has ever been the enemy of liberty, although existing professedly in its defence. Every individual is a distinct organism, and the indispensable condition of happiness – the goal of civilization and life, – is liberty; the eradication of the laws and all those artificial obstacles that prevent the individual achieving his highest development, and fulfilling his destiny in entire accordance with his particular individual conditions.

As I have already remarked, the political theory of Anarchy is absolute individual freedom; its social and economic doctrine that of equality of rights. That is to say, where possible, unlimited liberty shall prevail; but where the demarcation line between the individual's personal and social relations commences, then *not* government, which is inequality and despotism, but EQUALITY shall constitute the only condition of social order.

Government and slavery are the same in purpose and effect. Grotius denied that human power was ever established for the benefit of the governed; but he cited slavery as proof. The claim of government is no other than the claim of the superior right of the strongest. In the sphere of social science this claim is inadmissible. It is the claim of the unintelligent and irresponsible brute, which is outside the social scale. It is but the password of privilege. For what kind of right is it which perishes with the force that gives it existence? If it be necessary to submit to superior force, obedience is by no means a duty.

Anarchy is the affirmation of equality. But by equality we do not mean an artificial "leveling" of natural capacities or any such absurdity as that, which political charlatans incessantly endeavour to fasten upon us to their own ulterior and dishonest interest. Equality, of course, in a social sense, simply means equal *rights*. And equal rights means the abolition of monopolies. No wonder the monopolists and their hirelings and dupes have discoursed so long and loudly on the "impossibilities of equality". Equality is the death warrant of a society of thieves.

Monopoly is due to the exclusive enjoyment of those natural resources of life which are legitimately the patrimony of all. The only natural objects of ownership are labor-products – the only equitable title to ownership is labor. The legal institution of Property entirely ignores ethics as a basis, and formulates monopoly as its cardinal principle. Property, therefore, as Proudhon said, is an equivalent of robbery.

The monopoly of land and capital, which constitutes the legal theory of property, is maintained by the law alone. Law, to be sure, is the generic term for all the various factors of politic administration which enable the few to secure those special privileges and artificially fostered advantages that enslave the many. Having an exclusive possession of the means of production and exchange, the monopolists are able to dictate terms to the many who, in a state of semi-civilization, have to submit to ensure and perpetuate a miserable existence in common with the lowest type of beast of burden, these terms being of course that they (the monopolists) shall be permitted to revel in a life of luxury and extravagance without having to perform any labor at all. The law in its relation to property, with its hypocritical pretensions unmasked, then, may be said to constitute solely the civil and military hirelings of the State. Thus, the workers are taxed up to about three-fourths of their earnings to support a comparative handful of thieves (and labor alone is capable of being taxed), as well as a huge army of other parasites maintained expressly to terrorize labor into submission and prevent their righteous repudiation of those infamous obligations which have been imposed upon them without their consent. Of course it will not be conceded by the capitalists that a soldier's occupation is not the national defence, or that modern patriotism, from a statesman's point of view, has anything in common with an interested purpose to collect interest on bonds. The national defence is the everlasting subterfuge. But were

all governments engaged in their own defence, the defence, obviously enough, would be totally and superfluously unnecessary.

The conditions of the so-called contract which monopoly imposes are known as Rent, Interest, Profit and Taxes. Now, land being naturally free to all comers, occupancy is a right against any privilege of property – all having an equal right of occupancy, possession thus varies with the number of possessors – monopoly, that is, property therefore fails to establish itself. Rent of land is consequently a tax on the right to live.

Interest, such as house-rent, rent for the use of machinery, use of money, etc., naturally arises out of the monopoly of the land. No sane person would hire a house or let himself out on hire to another were it not for the fact of his being prevented from becoming a proprietor himself through the imposition of the rent of land. For in rent and wages he is fleeced of a hundred times the value, during the average life-time, of the house he lives in, and the machinery he uses solely for his employer's benefit. Give to all the right of free and natural access to the soil, and none would want for the needs of the hour.

As to money, it only assumes the representation of wealth; money can therefore possess no right beyond the quality of which it stands as exponent, and having no inherent power of increase, interest is extortion, because it is the *rent* of money, which should be as free as any other element or condition of commerce.

Now concerning profit: labor alone (excepting, of course, bequest, following from a labor title) constituting the only equitable title to labor-products, capital, which has no more inherent power of increase than has money (money being, in fact, an element of capital), it follows that *profit*, which is derived through the legal, that is, arbitrary and artificial monopoly of the markets as well as the means of production, is plunder, pure and simple. With free land, free labor, and free competition, there would be little left of the monopolies and injustices that rest on human laws alone for their actual existence and support.

In the majority of instances, even where Anarchy has only been received as a disagreeable doctrine, *taxes* are collected by open terrorism if not paid under protest. Taxes are undisguised blackmail. The suggestion, offered to any but children that the State renders anything like an equivalent in return for what it takes, never fails to provoke a smile. All are conscious of the fact, if too cowardly or contemptible to confess it, that taxes are but the bribes and fees with which the workers are forced to feed the institution on the State, whose sole function is to torture or exterminate those brave and rebellious spirits who object to be bled by and righteously resist the leeches of Rent, Interest and Profit.

By the law, then, monopoly is maintained.

II

We have seen the irreconcilable conditions of freedom and slavery, of riches and poverty, are entirely due, not to individual thriftiness, laziness, and the like (which are merely aggravations of unjust conditions), but to the very conditions of the organization of society itself. We may now consider the *solution* of the social problem.

We have seen that the law is the rivet that binds the workers to the monopolists; that Anarchy, the negation of law and the expression of equal liberty, is the only rational remedy. Let us consider, then, how the remedy may be applied; how Anarchy can be put into practice.

I will first incidentally dispose of an objection which has done good service in arresting the revolutionary aspirations of the people. It is the time-worn cry that if the privileged order becomes startled by manifestations of rebellion and turbulency on the part of the toilers in opposition to the iron grip of their despoilers, all capital will refuse to invest and will be driven out of the country to find new fields or enterprise and exploitation, thereby reducing the workers to a condition of absolute destitution and despair. Now, nothing could serve the true interest of the social revolution better than to sufficiently scare the capitalists clean out of the country, and off the face of the earth, for the matter of that. It is a fraudulent fiction that *capital* would go with them; or capital, or rather, such capital (namely free capital) as would be requisite to work an equitable organisation of Society, would be naught else but labor alone. Capital, under all circumstances, is merely the result and the creation of labor, and the idea of the productivity of capital *per se* is a delusion and a sham.

You remind me of the necessity of machinery, do you? Ah, if you would cease to eternally trouble your head about what little you know of the laws of necessity, and devote a simple, common-sense thought to ECONOMY, you might perceive that machinery (until the workers could save sufficient to possess their own machinery, it then being a clear gain to them) is *not* a necessity at all, excepting under the *capitalistic* process of production, where it is necessary to pile up pyramids of wealth and wickedness out of the misery of the masses for the will and whim of a parasitic race of Shylocks whose selfish independence can point to no better claim or title than that of insatiable avarice and greed.

We have realised that the ballot (which can at most merely be the tool of the majority) is useless; that the rule of the majority must necessarily be opposed to the only real liberty, individual liberty. Political methods, therefore, are out of the question. And revolutionary methods are alone in order, because the only alternative left to us.

What do I mean by revolutionary methods? Well, the word carries its own meaning, implying a radical or fundamental change in constitution. It is not necessarily a resort to isolated or universal violence, because the ballot and political tactics generally have produced unavailing. Force is or never need be more than incident to revolution. It is no necessary counterpart of it. In fact, aggressive revolution is only political method disguised. It would be suicidal to employ the "resources of civilization" unless the effective majority of the people were sympathetic with such agencies of deliverance, for the first attack would crush nothing but the popular aspiration and reduce it to reaction. And yet, when the time arrived that popular sympathy sided with rebellion through the agency of economic education, there would exist no need for the employment of such tactics at all, for the popular sympathy alone would suffice to render the revolution an accomplishment.

We must, then, henceforth guard against the errors and failures of history, and look to education and to the organisation and development of economic revolution for the realisation of our millennium.

In the evolution of economic revolution, what methods are in the order of progress? The first move in the direction of Anarchy would naturally assume the shape of an Organization of CREDIT, LABOR and EXCHANGE. This will have to be initiated by a considerable number of individuals who are willing to co-operate their labor, and to produce for themselves. They will thus obviate the necessity of having to submit to the monopoly of the market in the regulation of their productions and prices, putting an end to profit, the full price going to the producer as wages. Producing for themselves in this way, they also obviate the need of using a currency monopolised

by law, adopting a recognised currency of their own issued as required and guaranteed secure by the Organization. This means the wind-up of interest, because it would be a FREE CURRENCY. Further, this would promote instead of obstruct trade as the State currency does today.

The next step would be an organised resistance to the landlord, – a flat refusal to pay rent. If this is done on a sufficiently grand scale, the State would collapse of itself. The State, that is, the taxes, existing only in the capitalistic interest, would no longer have a reason for existence, and the abolition thereof would be brought about by the simple agencies of absolute free trade.

Administration of Anarchy

It is often contended that the average individual is not fit to live in a state of society without the policeman's club as its emblem, and that, until he is sufficiently civilised, there would be needed an organised defence of individual liberty. Against which we do not demur.

Protection against invasion of liberty and the legitimate rights and advantages that naturally accrue from recognition thereof, may be secured in a much more effective and cheaper way by a voluntary co-operative organisation of Insurance than could be possible under the administration of government, with its constitutional antagonism of interests. It is proverbial that the laws create more crime than they prevent; in truth, all the crime that exists is but the product of laws.

All experience testifies that there has been a diminution of crime in the corresponding degree in which freedom has been permitted to prevail. Crime, as defined by the laws, is merely violation of the laws, not of freedom, the laws themselves being the generator of the disorders that exist in society, and which would be totally eradicated were the laws themselves abolished, that is, the influence of the greater evil than good which they unquestionably exert. For every law, that ostensibly exists to punish a given crime, has its logical counterpart in some other law which makes criminal a social necessity. Abolish one, or a certain set of laws, and the necessity for the rest remain. Abolish them all, and no need for any will exist.

The demand of the hour, we must conclude, consists in the establishment of an association or institution, local, national or cosmopolitan, which can ensure the benefits of protection minus the disadvantages and evils that are inseparably connected with the administration of political government. Government has failed, and must forever fail to administer justice (which is simply the theoretical and practical recognition of Anarchy), its own existence being due to a disregard and flagrant denial of justice. Government is the enemy of liberty and order – the eternal enemy of all except the privileged class of the people.

The first experiment in the initiation of an Organization of Protection to Person and Property (the word property does not correctly define my meaning, but a consideration of the context will enable me to be understood) might rationally assume the shape of a non-profit-making Insurance Company, to the working capital of which its members (those who need, and are willing to pay a fair equivalent for, protection – competition with these associations reducing cost to zero, and patronage being ensured only by effectiveness) would contribute a periodical premium, the expenditure thereof supporting a commercial, not a political, police (whose powers would only extend as far as voluntary consent allowed); and to form a fund out of which property stolen could be replenished in the same way that Fire Insurance societies replenish property that is destroyed by fire. The guard against fraud would consist in the fact that the organisation would be a non-profit-making concern, each member thereby having an interest in individually prevent-

ing fraud as well as open theft, for the greater gain of the lesser expenditure of the public, or rather, of the corporate capital, each member being a partner in the enterprise. An admirable illustration wherein honesty can be made to *pay*. A clear gain over government, the state absorbing at least nine-tenths more of wealth than a voluntary association could demand, for which it (the State) never refunds anything at all; unless in the shape of prison-houses; where again more crime and insanity is nurtured and developed than could be possible without them. Prevention of crime (crime being an invasion of Anarchy, and nothing else) is the one right and the one duty. Punishment is a crime itself.

Have I succeeded, reader, in setting you to think?

Will you longer listen to the plausible promises of the political demagogue who always has designs on your liberty and independence?

Or have these few pages been printed in vain?

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