

The Specific Organisation

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This is an English translation of the text produced by Jaime Cubero in São Paulo, Brazil. It deals with the concept of individual and collective responsibility within the specific anarchist organisation.

The specific organisation of the anarchist movement is an instance of how it is implicit in the designation, with peculiarities that define basic principles, on whose practice its existence depends.

The revolutionary project extolling libertarian socialism demands an organisation in which it defines strategies and, similarly, alternatives for all instances, at the same time as its practice is an anticipated exercise of the project. Therefore, freedom, responsibility, ethics, federalism, solidarity, self-management, etc. do not only have to be concepts of a theoretical discourse, but that which defines the practice and behavior of anarchists in the organisation. Thus as the individuals are the cellular unit of the organisation, the groups and collectives are its basic nucleus.

The affinity groups are constituted by militants whose relationship, established on peculiar interests, is so much more intense in the measure in which it is nourished by revolutionary ideas and practices. Each group has a limited number of participants that guarantees a greater degree of intimacy between its members. They are autonomous, where its members can be reorganised both individually and socially. They function as catalysts of the movement providing initiative and conscientisation. The union or separation of each group is determined by circumstance and interests, and not by any centralised decision. The adhesions or departures are made spontaneously and freely, without pressure of any nature. During periods of political repression the affinity groups are very resistant. Due to the high degree of cohesion that exists between the participants it becomes difficult to penetrate the group, and also under the most difficult conditions, the affinity groups manage to maintain contact. Nothing hinders the groups from working together at whatever level made necessary. They can join with local, regional and national groups, in a permanent or fortuitous form for the formulation of common plans. Each group looks to congregate the resources neces-

sary to function with maximum autonomy.

The union of interests with common objectives, without the breaking of autonomy, is the basic characteristic of federalism. In this way the local unions are regionally organised, and regions nationally, up to the international confederation. Everything said in respect to each instance is exclusively decided, from the individual up to the federation, in a proper forum of an autonomous and free form. Only when interest encloses common objectives, either from group to group, or from one country to another, then the agreement and compromise appears, and here they agree to something in respect of freedom and responsibility.

What is freedom? Subject of great controversies throughout history. Is it free-will or determinism? Do we practice our actions by choice or not? Are we directed only by our interior impulses, which we

do not control? It happens

that the human being is a rational animal: a truth that everyone accepts. To be rational is to be capable of choice, capable to prefer, to weigh, to compare this or that solution, to understand the possibilities of possibilities. The human is able to foresee the consequences of its actions.

Able to imagine that if it proceeds in this way, it will be able to succeed in this or that. Such an action will have such and such a consequence. And because it is able to judge, able to compare,

able to measure, able to choose. If the human was only an automaton, it would not have a notion of the future. Having notion of the future demonstrates independence, capacity to choose in succeeding what supervenes. It is because of this that the human is an independent being and knows freedom. When we have an impulse for a definitive act and we reflect on its consequences, when if thinking about it discloses to us a series of possibilities that we are going to analyse rationally. We restrain the impulse, we beat the desire and decide not to do what we had desired. To deny this practical fact that we verify in our life would practically



also be to deny all the power of education. Our biggest obstacles against which we have to struggle are justifiably the proclamations and the belief that we are only able to resolve the great social and economic problems at the cost of freedom. But freedom is much more. And it is through the conquest of proper freedom that we can guarantee the solution that we are searching for to these problems. The way of freedom is the one of practical freedom. It is with the practice of freedom that we form free beings.

Responsibility is the obligation to answer for actions, to somebody, or for that which was entrusted to them. Nobody can be responsible without being free. Responsibility has two aspects: individual and collective. Individual responsibility compels a person to answer only for their actions or for something entrusted to them. Collective responsibility compels one to answer not only for their actions, but also for other people's actions, when speaking about deliberate, accepted actions, determined freely by a group of individuals associated to carry through a common task. Each and everyone, in this case, are individually and collectively responsible and their freedom is determined by the double character of responsibility. Individual responsibility, the obligation to answer for one's actions or of things to which one has been entrusted cannot be eluded by any individual that is in normal possession of their mental faculties. There are three types of anarchists: a) the individualists, adversaries of all forms of organisation; b) the individualist supporters of free and momentary association, but against organisation; c) the supporters of methodological and permanent organisation. Defenders of the last position, we will not speak of the first two. The conception of individual responsibility, inside the organisation, part of the coexistence of the individual and of society as a basic necessity, whose reality is previous to its existence. Part of the principle of solidarity extolled for an anarchist society and that extends itself to all categories of human beings that share its conceptions and fight for the same end. Bound by an agreement of interests, they are responsible for all the actions of their life that have a social character, their consequences, good or bad, able to influence the conditions of existence, of security and of well being of their fellow creatures. Actions that harm friends must be prevented. The examples are endless and multiply when the struggle intensifies, as in the case of strikes, when the collective responsibility sediments itself in the individual responsibility and is fundamental.

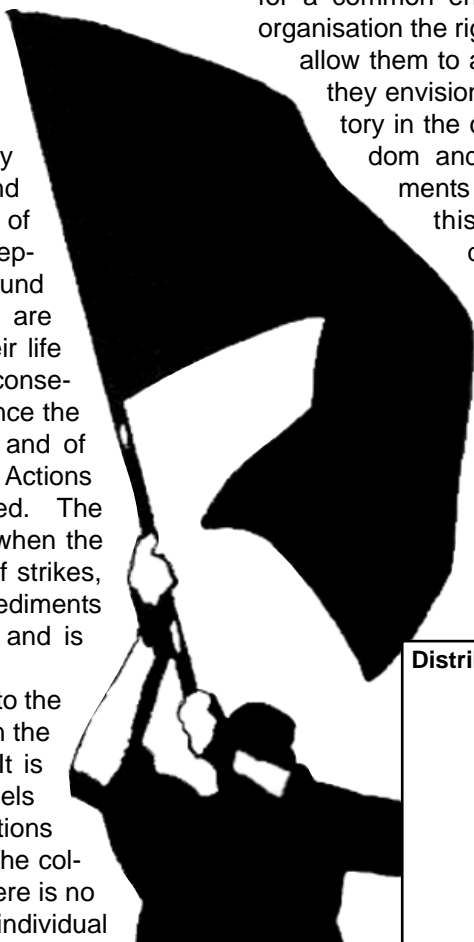
Collective responsibility is proper to the anarchist organisation. It is implicit in the application of federalist principles. It is ascendent and descendent. It compels the individuals to answer for their actions before the collective, and this while the collective answers to the individual. There is no opposition between collective and individual

responsibility. Both are completed and extended from the social point of view. When a group or collective takes a decision that emanates from the practice of its principles, approving the development of an action, none of its members can disassociate, forbear or act in a way that may harm the achievement of its objective. Everyone is co-responsible. The responsibility is collective and social. The decision was collective, the responsibility is collective. The resolution was taken in a form sovereign and free for all. Freedom is not absence of restrictions. It is option, it is free acceptance of social obligations. In the organisation, compromise and responsibility identify themselves. The non-fulfillment of obligation, of commitment, can denote irresponsibility, immaturity, weakness and other aspects that refer to ethics.

All of our actions are liable to judgments of value and ethical connotations. Everything that has been displayed until here has ethical implications. There are hugely vast studies about ethics, from the transcendent (religious) to the ultra-rationalist, amoral, that intend to justify totalitarian positions, of racists, of the state, etc. That which interests us is the inherent ethic, that substantiates the libertarian doctrines, studied and defended by Proudhon, and developed by Kropotkin, with solid bases, that accepts a natural order between human beings, established in the tensions that they form and that they look to conserve, because in reality all ethics are established in these and in the interests for which they were created. Therefore, if society will be organised under simple and natural bases, it will form its ethics naturally, not only as a necessity, but because people know choice. Therefore people, when they join together for a common end, soon know to deduce from their organisation the right (adjusted) rules and principles that allow them to achieve, in the best way, the end that they envision. As one has verified throughout history in the constant of polarization between freedom and authoritarianism, and in all movements that look for social overcoming. In

this form, the anarchist organisation develops its ethics, established on a duty to be proper, as all ethical action is frustrate-able. The unethical action for the anarchist is everything that offends the norm of organisation. And the vigor, the development, the great possibilities of the anarchist project depend fundamentally on the coherence of its ethics.

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