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The Joker is Not an Anarchist

In life, we often find ourselves encountering fundamental misunderstandings. Nowhere is this more detrimental to harmony—or more annoying generally—than in the realm of politics.

One such fundamental misunderstanding concerns anarchy. What *is* anarchy? Who exemplifies its advocacy? What does anarchism entail?

Ask different people, and you will get different answers—even among self-described anarchists. But if there is one thing on which I hope all anarchists can agree, it is this: The Joker is *not* an anarchist!

Unfortunately, Mr. Christopher Nolan, director of the 2008 film *The Dark Knight*, does not realise this fact. In the 1 August 2008 copy of *Entertainment Weekly*, Nolan is quoted as saying, “[O]ne of the things we’re very aware of right now is the idea of society breaking down. That’s what we’re doing with the Joker. He’s essentially an anarchist. An agent of chaos. We like to call him that.”

Mr. Nolan is indeed correct that the Joker is an agent of chaos. But I must ask, since when did chaos have anything to do with anarchism?

To be clear, anarchy is not the breakdown of society, nor the adoption of chaos. Quite the contrary, anarchy is, as Proudhon put it, order. (I highly doubt the Joker has spent much time reading Proudhon, Spooner, or Rothbard, despite his professed desire for “anarchy.”)

I can see how one might be confused. The Joker, after all, advocates lawlessness; but lawlessness is hardly anarchy! A distinction is necessary here.

Anarchists are ethical voluntaryists—we don't want any person imposing a coercive hierarchy on any other person.

The Joker, on the other hand, is an ethical nihilist—he doesn't believe that Justice is anything other than an illusion, and clearly holds that might makes no wrong.

Whereas anarchists want to do away with the coercive hierarchy of any person over any person, the Joker wishes to impose upon all a coercive hierarchy of each person over each person. In a very literal sense, the Joker wants what Hobbes called the war of all against all, the entire breakdown of society, the reign of chaos.

It therefore seems appropriate to me that we use a totally different word to describe the goal of the Joker: *omniarchy*.¹

Is that not a far more suitable term?²

¹ I would have went with “panarchy,” since the word would have then been entirely Greek. But, I opted to go with the Latin prefix *omni-* as the word “panarchy” is already in semi-popular use.

² Perhaps an even *more* suitable term would be “anomist.” (I must thank Mr. Tennyson McCalla for bringing this term to my attention.) Whereas *archos* means ruler, *nomos* means rule or law. Thus, anarchy is the absence of rulers while anomie is the absence of rules. Of course, anarchy does not necessarily imply anomie, and anomie does not necessarily imply anarchy; indeed, many anarchists (myself included) would say that anomie is necessarily opposed to true anarchy.

Whereas I would certainly agree with anyone who says that the Joker is an anomist, I do not believe this term alone suffices. For, ultimately, I consider totalitarians (*e.g.* fascists, state communists) to me anomists as well, as they necessarily advocate an infringement upon the natural rights (as dictated by natural law) of whatever subjects they aim to rule. To ignore natural rights is to ignore the natural law that guarantees to each individual his or her natural rights, rights which are themselves *de jure* derived from self-ownership. The only thing that separates the Joker's anomism from that of Hitler is that Hitler's form of anomie is highly collectivist whereas the Joker's form is highly individualistic.