Felipe Corrêa
Anarchist Theory and History in Global Perspective
2016

Original article: “Teoría e Historia Anarquista en Perspectiva Global.” Firstly published at the records of the I Congreso Internacional de Investigadorxs sobre Anarquismo(Buenos Aires, Argentina, October 2016).
Translated by Enrique Guerrero-López.

**theanarchistlibrary.org**

# Anarchist Theory and History in Global Perspective

Felipe Corrêa

2016

First, reference studies on anarchism have significant theoretical-methodological problems: the basis of data (historical and geographic) with which they work; the way to situate anarchism in history and to read history; the definitions of anarchism that are developed and adopted; the conclusions drawn from their analyzes. Such problems make research difficult and do not allow us to adequately define anarchism, its debates, its currents and understand its historical development.

Second, an approach based on a historical method and a broad data set, which interacts with notions of totality and interdependence, allows for solving the problems of reference studies and conducting appropriate research on anarchism.

Third, it is asserted that anarchism is a coherent ideology, a type of revolutionary socialism that can be described with a precise set of principles, and that it carries a rational development of fundamental criticisms, proposals and strategies, in relation to which its two currents are established: mass anarchism and insurrectionary anarchism. In addition, it should be noted that anarchism has had a wide popular impact among workers and peasants, in urban and rural areas, and a permanent and global historical development from its emergence in the second half of the nineteenth century to the present.



# Contents

chism, while Severino di Giovanni, Émile Henry, Ravachol, Luigi Galleani, Clément Duval, Bartolomeo Vanzetti and many others would be representatives of insurrectionary anarchism. Kropotkin and Malatesta, depending on the time of their lives, belonged to one or the other current.

However, it is essential to emphasize that this association that constitutes the foundation of the currents (organizationism + possibilism + simultaneous and derived violence; anti-organizationism + impossibility + violence as a trigger) was not a constant. Analyzing particular contexts, the aforementioned debates may appear or not, whether or not they are related to each other. It seems clear that such a redefinition does not apply to all contexts and should not be used as a "straitjacket" to force a fit with real and concrete history. But at the same time, these debates and this redefinition of currents can function as hypotheses and offer elements for analysis of particular contexts.

For example, in the case of anarchism in the First Brazilian Republic (1889–1930), taking this model as a hypothesis, it is validated, based on the historiographical production of Alexandre Samis, that there is no complete adaptation to it. But the debates on display allow us to identify which were the most consistently significant differences among the anarchists of that context, which revolved around the question of organization. Thus, organizationists and anti-organizationists were the two main currents. Also, among the organizationists there was another relevant debate between revolutionary syndicalists (inspired by the French CGT) and anarcho-syndicalists (inspired by the Argentine FORA).

## Final Considerations

In sum, the contributions of *Bandeira Negra* reinforce the three theses that were outlined in this article.

In the traditional distinction between anarcho-communism and anarcho-syndicalism, for example, communism refers to the form of distribution of the fruits of labor and syndicalism generally refers to a strategy. Neno Vasco, who advocated the organization of unions as means and communism as an end, presents very clear differences with Luigi Galleani, an anti-organizationist in terms of his path of struggle, but also communist in his perspective on the future. Would they both be "anarcho-communists"? Would Neno Vasco be an "anarcho-communist" and an "anarcho-syndicalist" at the same time? You could offer an endless number of examples derived from this problem.

To get out of this quagmire, it is necessary to return not only to the redefinition of anarchism, but also to the discussion on the great debates among anarchists and their historical and geographical relevance. As has been argued, there are three issues that distill the most important debates: *organization*, *reforms* and *violence*. Moreover, it can be seen, in global terms and from 1860 to the present, that there have been many circumstances in which positions on these issues have converged. Thus, it has been very common for organizationiststo champion possibilist positions and the need for derivative and simultaneous violence, and for anti-organizationists to defend anti-possibilist positions and violence as a trigger.

Based on this, *Bandeira Negra* argues that these two groups, constituted by the historical positions with respect to the three aforementioned questions, form the foundation for the redefinition of anarchist currents. The first group (organizationism + possibilism + simultaneous and derived violence) constitutes *mass anarchism*, historically the majority current of anarchism. The second group (anti-organizationism + impossibilism + violence as a trigger) constitutes *insurrectionary anarchism*, historically a minority, but still quite considerable. Known anarchists such as Lucy Parsons, Mikhail Bakunin, Neno Vasco, Thibedi, José Oiticica and Ba Jin, among many others, would be representatives of mass anar-



The objective of this article is to present a summary of research carried out for some years, which culminated in the publication of the book *Bandeira Negra: rediscutindo o anarquismo* [Black Flag: Rediscussing Anarchism]. As part of a collective process of global research on anarchism, developed by researchers from different parts of the world within the Institute for Anarchist Theory and History (IATH), this book has a general objective: to answer the following question in depth, *what is anarchism?*

To this end, *Bandeira Negra* is developed on three fundamental fronts:

1. Critical assessment of reference studies on anarchism (in Spanish, Portuguese, English and French).

2. Proposal for a new theoretical-methodological approach for studies on anarchism.

3. Redefinition of anarchism, complemented by the exposition of its great historical debates and trends, based on the written production of more than eighty anarchist authors and organizations and the global history of anarchism in its almost one hundred and fifty years of existence.

Below are the main arguments of the book, arranged according to the three aforementioned fronts.

## Critical Assessment of Reference Studies

Reference studies on anarchism were considered to be those that frequently appeared in the bibliographies of works used in the development of *Bandeira Negra*, and were identified by means of a bibliometric analysis made with Google Scholar. Through this procedure, seven main studies were found, which are cited below chronologically, with the title translated into English and with the year

of publication of the original text: *Anarchism*, by Paul Eltzbacher (1900); *Anarchy Through the Times*, by Max Nettlau (1934); *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, by George Woodcock (1962); *Anarchists and Anarchism,* by James Joll (1964); *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice*, by Daniel Guérin (1965); *Demanding the Impossible: a History of Anarchism*, by Peter Marshall (1991); *An Anarchist FAQ*, by Iain McKay (collective project started in 1995 on the Internet and published as a printed book in 2008).

A considerable part of these studies — sympathetic to anarchism, it must be said — were of outstanding importance at the time. In this regard, the work of Max Nettlau should be particularly mentioned. These authors did not enjoy the possibilities and resources that exist today. It should also be noted that almost all of these studies, although some more than others, have relevant contributions for our time. However, it is necessary to critique them, generously and without disqualifying them, and at the same time seek to solve the problems derived from constantly repeated incorrect claims. A more in-depth and critical analysis allows for the identification of shortcomings and drawbacks that must be corrected and complemented in order to advance research and raise the level of understanding on anarchism.

In terms of historiographic methodology, the focus on "great men" generally predominates in these studies, based on what could be called "history from above." In terms of geographic scope, an almost exclusive focus predominates on Western Europe or the North Atlantic axis, diminishing or completely ignoring authors and episodes from other parts of the world. These studies frequently operate with a fairly restricted set of authors and episodes, often making generalizations from a limited dataset.

Eltzbacher approaches anarchism through a study of the "seven sages," mostly European (William Godwin, Max Stirner, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, Pyotr Kropotkin, Leo Tolstoy and Benjamin Tucker), and does not present historical episodes in which anarchism was involved. Nettlau escapes this rule a bit,



## Anarchist Currents

Discussing anarchist currents implies, as in the case of the definition of anarchism, rethinking the whole issue. The reference studies on anarchism and others present an enormous set of anarchist currents. As much as it is common to talk about anarcho-individualism, anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho-communism, there are a host of other currents: pacifist anarchism, cultural anarchism, anarcho-collectivism, mutualism, terrorist anarchism, social anarchism, anarchism without adjectives, peasant anarchism, green anarchism, anarcho-feminism, reformist anarchism, utilitarian, conspiratorial, lifestyle, etc. The list is immense.

These terms carry various problems. Beyond the names created to define the theory of a great sage ("anarcho-pacifism" for Tolstoy, for example), there is, as in this case of anarcho-pacifism, problems of understanding and definition of anarchism: pacifism (opposition to violence in all cases), reformism (reforms understood as an end in themselves) and individualism (pursuit of individual emancipation far from a project of collective liberation) are not even part of the historical anarchist principles. We already solved this problem before, with the relatively precise redefinition of anarchism.

There are also problems with the criteria chosen for the establishment of these currents, since, because of their overlap, they cannot be compared. There are criteria relative to the distribution of fruits of labor in the future society: communism or collectivism. There are other criteria based on strategies of struggle: individual or collective interventions; unions, neighborhoods or cooperatives; violent or peaceful; economic, political or cultural. There are also positions on reforms, on the model of anarchist organization, on the classes and subjects capable of propelling the process of change. And there are also criteria that refer to political-philosophical elements, such as spiritualism and religion, the conception of individual freedom or environmentalist and feminist struggles.

effect, strengthening workers for a revolutionary project. On the contrary, those who believe that *reforms should be rejected in general*, such as Alessandro Cerchiai, Luigi Galleani and Émile Henry, argue that reforms generally strengthen the system rather than weaken or destroy it, and therefore they think that strikes are not useful for a revolutionary project; the eventual conquests against the bosses would be neutralized with the increase in the prices of products that the workers themselves consume, and conquests against the State would only result in strengthening it and continuing its process of domination.

Finally, a third debate focused on the strategic role of violence. Some, like Nestor Makhno and Pierre Besnard, understood *revolutionary violence as a concomitant and derivative element of mass movements*, essential for revolutionary transformation, and recommended that it be used to strengthen popular movements in the class struggle, and not as a simple spark to promote the creation of these movements, nor as an exclusive means of effective propaganda. Others, on the other hand, such as Severino di Giovanni and Ravachol, conceived of *violence as a trigger and a mobilizing element*, beyond the question of popular revenge, as a propaganda element capable of involving workers in more radicalized processes of struggle.

As a final assessment, it can be affirmed that these three great debates on strategy —*organizationism* versus *anti-organizationism*, *possibilism* versus *impossibilism*, *simultaneous and derivative violence* versus *violence as a trigger*— are highlighted in *Bandeira Negra* as those that have the greatest relevance, that is, that most divided and that continue to divide anarchists around the world. And it is precisely on the basis of these three debates that a redefinition of anarchist currents is proposed.



since he works, beyond the great thinkers, with a broad set of initiatives and movements; even so, he mainly deals with Western Europe, Russia and the United States, and less than 10% of his work deals with the rest of the world.

Woodcock dedicates almost the entire theoretical part of his study to six great thinkers, all European; they are the same as Eltzbacher but without considering Benjamin Tucker. In the part dedicated to the practice of anarchism, 60% corresponds to an analysis of France, Spain, Italy, Russia, and only some pages to Latin America and the United States. Joll bases the theory part of his work almost exclusively on Proudhon and Bakunin; on the practical side, it focuses on European debates on the so-called "propaganda by the deed" and syndicalism, as well as on the study of the Russian and Spanish revolutions. Guérin dedicates his theoretical section to basically three authors: Stirner, Proudhon and Bakunin, and in the practical section he reviews the Russian Revolution, Italian Factory Councils and the Spanish Revolution.

Marshall employs more than two hundred pages of his theoretical reflection on an analysis of ten authors: the six of Woodcock, adding Élisée Reclus, Errico Malatesta, Emma Goldman and Mahatma Gandhi. In all its volume, over eight hundred pages, less than 10% is dedicated to Asia and Latin America, while Africa and Oceania are not even mentioned.McKay mobilizes a larger set of authors than most others studies, but European and North American classics still predominate.

Thus, the approach that predominates in the reference studies tends to boil anarchism down to its "great classics" and a few historical episodes, which are usually chosen arbitrarily. Likewise, it is common not to consider, in most works, what we have called "social vectors" of anarchism: mass expressions in which the positions of anarchists were decisive or hegemonic in strategic terms.

In *Bandeira Negra* it is argued that anarchism should be studied, when it comes to theory and history, as a global phenomenon of practically one hundred and fifty years of existence. Regarding the

classics, it maintains that there is a need to develop an appropriate method to define what they are and relate them to the movements of their time and to the anonymous people who allowed for the real existence of anarchism. Regarding historical episodes, it signals the need to study the initiatives in which anarchists were involved and establish, also through an appropriate method, which were the great episodes of anarchism in the world. In this process, it is essential to carefully observe the aforementioned social vectors, without which anarchism cannot be understood, especially syndicalism (revolutionary syndicalism and anarcho-syndicalism). For the classics as well as for the episodes and social vectors, *Bandeira Negra* points out that, beyond the axis of the North Atlantic, it is essential to look at Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceania.

Furthermore, reference studies on anarchism frequently make use of ahistorical approaches, such as the argument that anarchism has always existed, or broad definitions, such as those that say that anarchism is synonymous with the struggle against authority, with anti-statism, with defense of freedom. Among other things, as Lucien van der Walt argues, these approaches, beyond the innumerable logical inconsistencies, are not in a position to explain why anarchism arises and develops in some contexts and not in others, nor to differentiate anarchism from other ideologies; some even commonly operate with too great a gap between theory and history.

Marshall maintains—according to the argument that anarchism always existed—that "the first anarchist was the first person who felt the oppression of another and rebelled against it."Nettlau and Woodcock walk in a similar direction, as do other influential studies, like the book *Anarcho-Syndicalism* by Rudolf Rocker and, especially, the article "Anarchism" by Kropotkin, who present anarchism as a universal feature of humanity. In a broad definition, Eltzbacher concludes that "anarchist teachings have in common only this, that they negate the State for ourfuture." Broad and im-



*syndicalists*, such as the Argentine Regional Workers' Federation [Federación Obrera Regional Argentina](FORA) and the National Confederation of Labour[Confederación Nacional del Trabajo] (CNT), which were linked, the first since 1905 and the second since 1919, to anarchism (or libertarian communism) as an official doctrine programmatically and explicitly promoted among its members.

And finally, there was a third point of disagreement regarding specific anarchist organizations. On the one hand, defenders of a *programmatic (homogeneous) organization*, such as Juan Carlos Mechoso and the Uruguayan Anarchist Federation [Federación Anarquista Uruguaya], and Ida Mett and the Organizational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists, advocated a strong organization model, with broad affinity among members and focused on influence within mass struggle. These self-managing organizations would work with a well-defined organization, relationship of rights and duties, self-discipline, responsibility and unity between thought and action, and seeking consensus but opting for majority vote if necessary. On the other hand, defenders of a *flexible (heterogeneous) organization*, such as Volin and Sébastien Faure, for the purpose of ending conflicts between anarchists, advocated a federalist model of organization, but with limited organizational structure, the possibility of participation by all anarchists, a high degree of autonomy for individuals and groups, without unity of action (without obligation to adhere to majority positions in case of divergences) and accepting a broad diversity in theoretical, ideological, strategic and practical terms.

The second major area of debate relative to paths of change pits *possibility* against *impossibility.* Supporters of r*eforms as a possible way to reach the revolution*, such as Ôsugi Sakae, Ba Jin and Sam Dolgoff, have argued that struggles for immediate conquests can serve to exercise a certain kind of revolutionary gymnastics, and that the reforms conquered, by making life less hard for workers, improve conditions for mobilization and have a pedagogical

intermediate positions, which attributed a relevant role, but without radicalisms tending to economism or extreme culturalism. In accordance with all of this, *Bandeira Negra*argues that the four debates related to the defense of self-management may be considered relevant, but not for marking permanent differences between anarchists in historical and geographical terms.

Regarding debates around strategy—pathways of change—there has historically been a contrast between positions favorable to organization, such as those of José Oiticica and Lucy Parsons, who advocated the need for organization of anarchists at the social, mass, and/or political-ideological level (specifically anarchist), and positions contrary to organization, such as those of Alfredo Bonanno and Luigi Galleani, which warned that formal and structured organizations of mass mobilization carry risks of bureaucratization and recommended acting individually or in small groups or informal networks.

Among the advocates of organization, or *organizationists*, there have also been considerable differences, among which three stand out. In one, they contrasted, on the one hand, exclusive *syndicalism or communalism*, defended among others by Pierre Monatte, who argued that the organization of anarchists would be necessary only at the social, mass level, and that anarchist organizations would be somewhat redundant, since popular movements would have proper conditions to promote anarchist strategy, and, on the other hand, *organizational dualism*, proposed by authors such as Errico Malatesta and Amedée Dunois, who argued that, beyond massive social organizations, specific anarchist organizations would also be necessary to promote their positions more consistently among workers.

Another point of discrepancy among supporters of mass social organizations opposed *revolutionary syndicalists*, such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the General Confederation of Labour [Confédération Générale du Travail](CGT), which had no explicit programmatic link to anarchism, to *anarcho-*



precise definitions are also present in studies by Nettlau, Woodcock and Marshall, as well as others, such as *The Anarchists*, by Roderick Kedward, and *The Black Flag of Anarchy*, by Corinne Jacker.

Two methods further complicate the problem of ahistorical approaches and broad and imprecise definitions. First, the decontextualized use of etymological analysis of the term anarchy and its derivatives. Although Guérin and McKay appeal to the etymological meaning, it is Woodcock and Marshall who do it in a decontextualized way and consider it as something relevant in their definitions of anarchism, without escaping the complications of breadth and imprecision. Without contextualization, this method necessarily points to a definition of anarchism as opposed to authority, Government and the State. This definition, beyond the omission of the history that it supposes, does not allow for, among other things, knowledge of the constructive aspects of anarchism.

Second of all is the decontextualized use of self-identification as anarchists. The inclusion of Proudhon in the anarchist canon, for example, is based on, in an important part of these studies, and as Woodcock argues, the "positive meaning" that the Frenchmen gave to the term anarchy in his work *What is Property?*, from 1840. Another example is found in McKay's study which, although he does not work with this criteria in an absolute way, encompasses individualists such as Susan Brown, Benjamin Tucker or the newspaper *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, and primitivists such as John Zerzan or the newspaper *Green Anarchy*; these authors and publications, beyond the fact of considering themselves anarchists, do not have much in common with what has been the historical anarchist tradition.

*Bandeira Negra* argues that it is essential to make use of a historical method and an adequate relationship between theory and history. For this reason, it proposes abandoning ahistorical approaches to anarchism, widely fed by anarchists who followed in the footsteps of Kropotkin. By defending the timeless universality of anarchism, instead of developing its history, this approach

gave rise to the creation of a "legitimizing myth," a "metahistory" that, consciously or unconsciously, sought to strengthen its own ideology with an argument that could refute the commonsense, according to which anarchism is incompatible with human nature. Instead, *Bandeira Negra*argues that anarchism has a history, related to a context; its emergence and development, successes and failures, ebbs and flows, can only be understood and explained in historical terms. In addition, it proposes that it is essential to operate with a definition of anarchism that is not only historical but also precise, in a way that allows for, among other things, ruling out absurdities such as the idea of anarcho-capitalism—which derives from an understanding of anarchism as a synonym for anti-statism—and differentiates anarchism from other ideologies, including liberalism and Marxism.

From the aforementioned problematic approaches derive various mistaken conclusions, which can be found in reference studies and also in other works. Among them are some that are highlighted below.

Eltzbacher, Woodcock and Joll emphasize that *anarchism constitutes an incoherent ideology*. For the latter, "it is the clash between these two types of temperament, the religious and the rationalist, the apocalyptic and the humanist, which has made so much of anarchist doctrine seem contradictory." Marshall, McKay and Guérin, although they validate such contradictions, believe they are positive, that they derive from anarchist anti dogmatism and can be reconciled with each other. The validation of incoherence even allowed authors such as Caio T. Costa and Ricardo Rugai to speak of the existence of *anarchisms*.

According to Irving Horowitz, *anarchism did not have a significant popular impact*, and he spoke of its "virtual disappearance [...] as an organized social movement." Kedwardwent even further in saying that "the ideal of anarchy was never popular" and that it "encountered opposition from all classes and from all ages."



among others, who argued that unions should be responsible for social reorganization and the decisions of society, since they would be the privileged meeting spaces of workers. Other anarchists, such as Lucien van der Walt, uphold mixed formations, which politically link places of residence and workplaces.

A fourth debate involved the question of the limits and possibilities of culture in a future society. Some, such as Bakunin and the Federation of Anarchist Communists [Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici] (FdCA), claimed that *culture is secondary*, since they believed that culture and all that it implies —ethics, values, propaganda, communication, leisure, etc.— is extremely limited by political and, above all, economic elements. Others, such as Wu Zhihui and Élisée Reclus, argued that *culture is absolutely central*, since they believed that it has a determining role in the development of economic and political self-management. Defenders of the first position commonly prioritized militancy in unions and/or cooperatives and those of the second prioritized education and propaganda. There were also innumerable intermediate positions, with many militants trying to reconcile both positions and initiatives.

Let's take stock of the debates on self-management. The *market*versus *planning* debate did not have a considerable historical and geographical impact and the positions in defense of the market were very insignificant. The *collectivism* versus *communism* debate was relevant in Europe from the 1870s to the early twentieth century, but then communism took on a completely hegemonic position, largely due to the influence of Kropotkin, and the intermediate positions, who saw this problem as secondary, were also strengthened. The debate around *politics and decisions carried out by place of residence* versus by *workplace* did not imply great polarizations, since strict defenders of community and municipal politics were completely marginalized and there was a prevalent conciliatory position, at least in practice, of formations between unions and neighborhoods, places of work and residence. The *culture as secondary* versus *central* debate tended to concentrate on

Regarding the functioning of the future society, there was an economic debate between, on the one hand, the defense of a *self-managed market*, as in the case of Abraham Guillén, who argued that the market is not necessarily capitalist, but rather an environment of circulation and distribution, a space where there is data on supply and demand, and that planning would not be possible given the complexity of modern societies, and, on the other hand, the defense of democratic planning, as in the case of Alexander Berkman and Kôtoku Shûsui, who upheld the need for planning done by producers and consumers and for consumption without the use of money.

Along the axis of debate on self-management, there was another controversy around the form of distribution of the fruits of labor. On the one hand, *collectivism*, advocated by Bakunin, among others, believed that remuneration should be in accordance with the work performed (logically, there would be a general equivalent, wages and a power structure that would be self-managed and would control this process). On the other hand, *communism*, championed by authors such as Shifu, Carlo Cafiero and Kropotkin, were in favor of remuneration according to needs (logically, there would be no money, wages, etc.). It must be said that anarchists like James Guillaume, ErricoMalatesta and Neno Vasco maintained intermediate positions, stating that, depending on the case or the moment in question, one could vary between collectivism and communism or you could opt for coexistence.

A third debate on self-management contrasted two ideas about where political decisions should be made. On the one hand, the idea that *politics should be carried out exclusively from a place of residence* was defended by Murray Bookchin, who advocated formations developed by communities and municipalities, which would be the proper places of direct democracy and minimize the threats of economism and corporatism. And, on the other hand, the idea that *politics should be carried out exclusively from the workplace* was a position defended by Rudolf Rocker and Diego Abad de Santillán,



Woodcock, although over time he slightly modified his position, argued that *anarchism practically ended after the Spanish Revolution (1936–1939)*. He thus established "the end of this history of anarchism in the year 1939," a moment that "marks the true death" of the "historical anarchist movement." Guérin, in agreement with this, pointed out that "the defeat of the Spanish Revolution deprived anarchism of its only stronghold in the world," since "from this experience, the anarchist movement was crushed." Broadly speaking, such an argument is close to that which maintains that *this revolution constitutes an exception in anarchist history, having been one of the few cases in which anarchism became a broad mass movement.*

Joll and Woodcock argue, like many Marxist authors (Hobsbawm for example), that *anarchism mobilized a limited class base, restricting itself to decaying peasants and artisans, and failed to adapt to industrial capitalism.*

Other conclusions that studies support are that anarchism is founded on the basis of idealism, spontaneity, individualism,and youth. Interestingly, these conclusions are close to Leninist critiques of anarchism (for example, Kolpinsky), which are not at all scientific; they are only ideological assertions, without historical basis, designed to self-promote at the expense of an adversary.

## New Theoretical-Methodological Approach

*Bandeira Negra* proposes a new methodological and theoretical approach for the study of anarchism, which allows for not only a more adequate focus on this object, but also demonstrates the confusion of previously presented conclusions.

First of all, the book develops and recommends a *historical and precise definition of anarchism* that looks at the common aspects of its authors and episodes and allows for differentiating it from other

ideologies, encompassing their continuities and permanence in the long term.

Furthermore, it insists on making a clear *distinction* between two different things: *an historical anarchist tradition and a broader and not necessarily historical libertarian universe*, the first being part of the second. Thus, every anarchist is a libertarian, but not every libertarian is an anarchist. The historical anarchist tradition, according to this conception, involves a set of historical phenomena that develop and spread from a common bases, are explained by the social relations established by different means (face-to-face contacts, letters, books, press, etc.), and present adaptations and modifications depending on the different contexts. The libertarian universe, on the other hand, is not necessarily related in historical terms and includes anti-authoritarian struggles and initiatives, opposed to domination and in defense of egalitarian forms of relationships.

In terms of historiographic methodology and geographic scope, there are some recommendations found in contributions from the new history of labor and global history of labor, as well as in the theoretical-methodological production of anarchist organizations, researchers and militants. This contributes to the development of concepts capable of fortifying studies on anarchism, whose authors, by the way, do not necessarily have to be anarchists. Among these concepts, we can mention those of *totality* and *interdependence*, which are applied, in the case of anarchist studies, to the relationship between theory and history, between thought and action, between authors and episodes, between form and content, anarchism and social struggles, critiques and proposals.

*Bandeira Negra* considers it necessary to operate with a historical method: one that makes use of elements from history from below; that allows for a relationship between the classics and the movements and struggles of their time; that makes a precise relation of anarchism and of anarchists with the context in which they were inserted; that takes into consideration, where necessary,



1940); international organizations of the Syndicalist International (IWA-AIT), strengthened in the decade 1950, and the International Anarchist Federation (IFA), founded in 1968; the Cuban Revolution (1959); militancy around the Uruguayan Anarchist Federation (especially between 1963 and 1973); May 1968 in France. Later, there have been and continue to be other major episodes with anarchist presence and influence. An example is the movement of global resistance in general (known as the 'anti-globalization' movement), and Peoples' Global Action, founded in 1998, in particular.

## Great Debates Between Anarchists

To claim the unity of anarchists around certain principles does not imply saying that there were not (and that there are not) significant differences among them in relation to various issues. *Bandeira Negra*, in its analysis of the most relevant differences that appear between anarchists—and by relevant, it refers to the differences that have historical permanence and that are really significant—presents the following reflections.

If the previously mentioned openness and plurality are assumed for understanding reality, it is not necessary to look for the most important debates on anarchism in the field of method of analysis, social theory, philosophy, etc. —where, it is true, there are great differences and many interesting controversies, but it is not the field that defines anarchism—rather in the aforementioned tripod. Regarding the anarchist critique of domination, there are no relevant debates; the positions are, in general, quite similar. There are four debates related to the anarchist defense of self-management and another three related to fundamental anarchist strategy, which will be described below. It is important to note that, despite the polarizations, in many cases there are intermediate and conciliatory positions.

*and Brief Historical Perspective of Anarchism, 1868–2012*], made in support of *Bandeira Negra*. An evaluation of the episodes with a significant presence and influence on the part of anarchists allows us to affirm that the range and impact of anarchism are broad and go from 1868 to the present in five continents, with ebbs and flows; it also affirms the claim that anarchism has mobilized workers of all kinds: mainly urban proletarians, but also rural proletarians, peasants, and those called "lumpenproletariat" by the Marxist tradition.

Anarchists developed and strengthened distinct initiatives and tools of mobilization and struggle: revolutionary syndicalism, political organizations and affinity groups, urban and rural insurrections, occupations and takeovers of companies and regions, workers' councils, producer and consumer cooperatives, schools and social centers, books, newspapers, propaganda flyers, attacks against authorities, strikes, street demonstrations, etc.

To complement the aforementioned episodes of anarchism in action, one could mention, in a list that is neither definitive nor exhaustive, a wide set of events in which there was a more or less decisive participation of anarchists: the International Workingmen's Association (between 1868 and 1877); the Commune of Lyon (France, 1870); the Paris Commune (France, 1871); the Cantonalistas Revolts (Spain, 1873); the Bologna Insurrection (Italy, 1874); the Benevento Insurrection (Italy, 1877); participation in Confédération Générale du Travail (France, 1895–1914) and in the Industrial Workers of the World (United States, since 1905); the Macedonian Revolt (1903); Mexican Revolution (particularly in 1911); the Ukrainian Revolution (1919–1921); the coordinating committees that involved many countries, such as the East Asian Anarchist Federation (founded in 1928), the Continental American Workers Association (founded in 1929) or the Continental Commission on Anarchist Relations (founded in 1948); the Revolution in Manchuria (Korea, 1929–1932); the militancy around the Federation of Anarcho-Communists of Bulgaria (1920–



global reflections on anarchism, taking into account the wide ranging period from its emergence in the nineteenth century to the present; that identifies the routes for spreading anarchism, through contacts between militants, letters, shared readings, etc., and addresses to what extent the general features of this spreading anarchism were maintained and modified and adapted to local realities, incorporating other traditions of struggle and resistance; that makes it possible to establish the continuities and permanence of anarchism in time and in space, as well as its contextual modifications resulting from social relationships. The book even proposes, whenever possible or desirable, to go beyond the axis of the North Atlantic and encompass the five continents, resorting, also where needed, to comparisons.

## Redefinition of Anarchism

Through this new approach, it is clear that anarchism is a type of socialism, characterized by a particular set of principles, which is expressed historically in the modern and contemporary world. Anarchism encompasses in its trajectory an opposition to the State, defense of individual freedom (although dependent and related to collective freedom) and differentiation from Marxism (although sharing some similar positions), but it cannot be summarized as anti-statism, individualism or antithesis of Marxism, instead:

Anarchism is a socialist and revolutionary *ideology* that is founded on specific principles, whose bases are defined by a critique of *domination* and a defense of *self-management*; in structural terms, anarchism advocates a social transformation based on *strategies* which must allow for the substitution of a system of domination by a system of self-management.

To speak of *ideology*, here, does not mean adopting the Marxistmeaning of *false consciousness*, but rather the sense of *praxis*, a combination of thought and action that emerges in the relation-

ship between popular and theoretical movements. *Anarchism is, mainly, a historically shaped praxis that is expressed in a body of political-ideological principles centered on revolutionary social transformation, around which there is a significant unity on the part of anarchists.*

Anarchism is not, then, a homogeneous way of reading reality, a corpus of theory and method. However, it is based on rational analyzes, methods and theories that have elements in common and that cannot be characterized as idealistic, in the sense of theological and/or metaphysical explanations, and neither as a *corpus* that generally prioritizes ideas over facts. *Anarchism has as its constituent feature openness, plurality and anti-dogmatismin terms of theory and method for understanding reality.*

The tripod *critique of domination*, *defense of self-management*and *fundamental strategy* can help to refine the definition. In fact, in *Bandeira Negra*, this is the explanatory core of the concept of anarchism.

The *critique of domination* rests on the critique of hierarchical relationships, in which some decide for many or all and that involve chains of command and obedience. Relationships of domination are at the base of inequalities and social injustices, and there are several types: labor exploitation, physical coercion, political-bureaucratic domination, cultural alienation, oppression based on class, nation, gender, race or ethnicity, etc. Its generalization implies the existence of a system of domination.

*Defense of self-management*, as the antithesis of domination, is characterized by participation in decision-making processes to the extent in which you are affected by them, that is, decisions are made from the bottom up and delegations are rotating and controlled by the base. A self-managed society would be characterized by the socialization of property, having been reconciled with family-owned property in the countryside; by democratic self-government, involving the socialization of politics, managed by associations of workers and rotating delegations with control



canon of its great representatives, as well as several other episodes in its trajectory of struggles.

Thus, for example, according to the approach of *BandeiraNegra*, William Godwin and Max Stirner should not be considered anarchists, not only because of their non-identification with the theoretical-logical definition already mentioned, but mainly because they had no relevance in the period of formation of anarchism, between 1868 and 1886; they were, rather, rescued afterward, in the effort to create the aforementioned "legitimizing myth."

However, on the other hand, *Bandeira Negra* proposes that many other anarchists are included in the canon, alongside Bakunin and Kropotkin: Ricardo Flores Magón (Mexican, 1874–1922); Ida Mett (Russian, 1901–1973); Edgard Leuenroth (Brazilian, 1881–1968); Ba Jin (Chinese, 1904–2005); Mikhail Gerdzhikov (Bulgarian, 1877–1947); He Zhen (Chinese, 1884–1920); T.W. Thibedi (South African, 1888–1960); Kim Jwa-Jin (Korean, 1889–1930); Sam Dolgoff (Russian-American, 1902–1990); Emma Goldman (Lithuanian, 1869–1940); Enrique Roigde San Martín (Cuban, 1843–1889); Constantinos Speras (Greek, 1893–1943); Monty Myler (Australian, 1839–1920); Lucy Parsons (American, 1853–1942), and many others, even recent ones, that had and/or have importance in the field of anarchist thought and/or action.

Another example is that, according to the approach of *BandeiraNegra*, although what happened in Western Europe and the United States is undoubtedly significant, such as the Russian Revolution (1917–1921) and the Spanish Revolution (1936–1939), it is also necessary to look at other episodes from these places and times, as well as from other times and places. The book suggests that many other historical episodes should be included, alongside these, as a prominent part of anarchism in action.

A starting point for the enumeration of these episodes is the bibliographic references found in the online book *Surgimento e Breve Perspectiva Histórica do Anarquismo, 1868–2012*[*Emergence*

through building the struggle from the base, from the bottom up, including direct action.

9. **Social revolution and violence.** In the quest for a social revolution that transforms the current system and power model, violence, understood as an expression of a higher level of confrontation, is accepted, in most cases, as it is considered inevitable. The revolution implies combative struggles and fundamental changes in the three structured spheres of society, and it is not within the framework of the current system of domination—it is beyond capitalism, the State and the dominant institutions.

10. **Defense of self-management.** Self-management, which is the basis for political practice and anarchist strategy, constitutes the basis for the future society to be built and implies the socialization of property in economic terms, democratic self-government in political terms, and a self-managed culture.

It is easily observed that, defined in this way, anarchism not only challenges the idea that it can be considered a synonym for anti-statism, individualism or antithesis of Marxism, but also refutes the idea that it advocates the negation of politics and even power. *There seems to be no doubt that, depending on how "politics" and "power" are conceptualized, anarchists cannot be considered apolitical and opposed to all kinds of power.*

This way of understanding anarchism, although accused of being restrictive by some authors such as Robert Graham and Nathan Jun, is actually not. As Lucien van der Walt responded to these authors, if on the one hand this conception implies the exclusion of some thinkers and episodes that have been presented as anarchist, on the other hand it allows for the inclusion, with much more methodological coherence, of a myriad of other anarchists in the



by the base; by self-managed culture, supported by a new ethic and in a new libertarian education, communication and leisure. Its generalization implies the existence of a self-managed system.

*Fundamental strategy* is characterized by a set of means and ends—that is, objectives, strategies and tactics—conceived to get out of the system of domination and into the system of self-management, and in which there is subordination of the means to the ends. This set includes the mobilization of dominated classes as a whole—city and country workers, peasants, precarious and marginalized—understanding that social classes go beyond the relations of production or the economic sphere. It also includes the permanent quest for transformation, in three spheres—the economic, political-legal-military and cultural-ideological—, the capacity for action of these classes in concrete social force and, with this, fight for the establishment of a non-dominating self-managing power. It rejects individual or sectoralmobility in capitalism or in the State and it advocates social transformation through self-managed processes of struggle that imply an inevitably violent revolution, which may have a longer or shorter duration.

This tripod can be expressed in a relatively fixed set of ten political-ideological principles that have been accepted continuously and permanently by anarchists. These principles constitute the fundamental bases of this definition of anarchism and allow us to understand where its coherence lies.

1. **Ethics and values.** An ethical conception is advocated, capable of embracing criticism and rational proposals, drawing on the following values: individual and collective freedom; equality in economic, political and social terms; solidarity and mutual aid; permanent encouragement of happiness, motivation and will.

2. **Critique of domination.** It includes the critique of class domination—constituted by exploitation, physical coercion,

political-bureaucratic and cultural-ideological domination—and of other types of domination (gender, race, imperialism, etc.).

3. **Social transformation of the system and of the power model [or mode of power].** This is about recognizing that the systemic structures of the different types of domination constitute the system of domination, and of making the determination, by means of a rational critique, based on the specified ethical values, to transform this system into a system of self-management. This requires the transformation of the current power model, from a dominating power, to a self-managing power. In contemporary societies, this critique of domination implies a clear opposition to capitalism, the state, and other institutions created and sustained for the maintenance of domination.

4. **Classes and class struggle.** In the various systems of domination, with their respective class structures, the identification class domination allows us to conceive the fundamental division of society in two broad global and universal categories, constituted by classes with irreconcilable interests: the ruling classes and the dominated classes. The social conflict between these classes characterizes the class struggle. […] Other dominations must be fought concomitantly with class domination, since the end of the latter does not necessarily mean the end of the former.

5. **Class orientation and social force.** We must understand that social transformation with a class orientation implies a political practice oriented toward intervention in the correlation of forces, which constitutes the basis of existing power relations. The intention is to, in this sense, transform the capacity of the social agents who are members of the dominated classes into a social force, applying it to the class struggle and seeking to increase it permanently. […]

6. **Internationalism.** It advocates a class struggle orientation that is not restricted to national borders, rather it is based on internationalism. Thus, in contexts dominated by imperialist relationships, nationalism is rejected and, at the same time, in struggles for social transformation, the need is asserted for expanding the mobilization of the dominated classes beyond national borders. […]

7. **Strategy.** It consists of the rational conception, for this project of social transformation, of appropriate strategies, that involve an analysis of reality and the establishment of pathways for struggle. […]

8. **Strategic elements.** Although anarchists advocate different strategies, some strategic elements are considered as axial principles: the formation of revolutionary subjects in specific social classes of each place and era—which give shape to the dominated classes—through processes that include the stimulation of class consciousness and the will to transform; the permanent drive to increase the social force of the dominated classes, in a way that allows a revolutionary process of social transformation; the coherence between objectives, strategies and tactics and, therefore, the coherence between means and ends and the construction, in today's practices, of the society that is wanted for tomorrow; the use of self-managed means of struggle that do not imply domination, either among the anarchists themselves or in the anarchists' relationship with other actors; the advocacy of autonomy and class independence, which implies opposition to the relations of domination established by political parties, the State or other institutions or agents, guaranteeing popular leadership from the dominated classes, which must be promoted