

# **Against The Tide**

**The dilemmas of the contemporary «anarchist movement» versus the instituting character of the «social movements.»**

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*«Vulgarly it is held that the «great mass» could not remain without religion; the communists extend that claim.»*

**Max Stirner, *My Enjoyment of Myself, in The Only One and His Property.***

*«To see what we have in front of our noses requires a constant struggle.»*

**George Orwell, *In front of your nose.***

Contrary to what all the verbal diarrhea of post-modern neo-Leninism claims about the so-called «social movements»,<sup>1</sup> the novelty of these movements does not lie in the replacement of trade unions and traditional political parties, but in the motivational structure of the subjects involved; That is, in the convergence of perceptions around multiple factors (economic-socio-cultural) that nourish the collective longing for the welfare state and the labor society and, through processes of social mobilization, constitute a new institutional force that serves as a platform for the different fascisms -whether black, brown, red or whatever color they are given in order to persuade the «masses»- and paves the way for populist leaders.

Meanwhile, the social scientists (neo-Marxians and/or proto-populists) juggle a thousand and one times to semantically accommodate «institutionalization», giving the concept a one hundred and eighty degree turn so that it is grammatically instrumental for them; that is, hiding the intentions of co-optation of the struggles and forced integration to the «new» domination.

In this way, they reconceptualize «institutionalization» and define it as a «mediation» (between the so-called civil society and the regime) that redesigns the forms of participation, the mechanisms of representation and the devices of legitimization, enhancing the «transforming» character of social mobilization in total «recreation of the movementist tradition».<sup>2</sup> In the words of the merolico mayor Boaventura de Souza Santos: showing the emancipatory horizons that they recreate as agents of social change, by participating in the construction of hegemonic ideas that drive the politicization of reality.<sup>3</sup>

Despite this evidence, the critique of the instituting maneuver of «social movements» has been mute in our tents. The shameless silences in the face of these instituting vessels -which suffocate individual breathing in the forced gasps of the movementist ritual-, have contributed to the theoretical-practical confusion that today plagues our circles, facilitating the imposition of alien programs and the adoption of the logic of the enemy (diametrically opposed to our desires for total emancipation). Instead of drawing a crucial dividing line, which establishes the definitive separation of the instituting struggles and punctuates the consistent action of contemporary anarchic grammar, an ambiguous discourse, loaded with vague expositions and excess of positivity, has been encouraged.

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<sup>1</sup> In order to support this contribution, I will use contemporary Latin America as a reference, even though the issues I intend to explore also currently affect several regions of the world. However, I will not delve into the particularities of the current situation of Latin American territories recently «shaken» by social mobilization; instead, I will address some of its characteristics from the perspective of the defining components of the political grammars that dominate social movementism and impose on it (invariably) an informally instituting stamp, oriented towards the seizure of power.

<sup>2</sup> Such are the tricks implemented by the Collective Action and Social Protest Group of the Gino Germani Research Institute at the University of Buenos Aires, led by Germán Pérez and Ana Natalucci, at the service of Kirchnerist neo-Peronism. For further information, please consult the book *Vamos las bandas. Organizaciones y militancia kirchnerista*, Nueva Trilce, Buenos Aires, 2012, co-edited by Germán Pérez and Ana Natalucci.

<sup>3</sup> Santos, B. De Souza, *De la mano de Alicia. Lo social y lo político en la posmodernidad*, Ediciones Uniandes, Bogotá, 2006.

## THE SPECIFICITY OF THE ANARCHIC GRAMMAR

During the turn of the century, «social movements» burst onto the scene as a «socio-political event». This advent was framed in the context of the reaffirmation of «excluded identities» and the heterogeneization (in the sense of great «diversity») of demands; assuming itself as an active form of contestation that took shape in the face of specific contexts of domination through the «transversal linking» of struggles, delimiting its margins of action through assembly and consensus.

It was in this period of «movementist irruption» that this instituting strategy came to drastically influence sectors of our tents closer to autonomous theorizations than to anarchist praxis but, also in proven comrades who turned out to be obnubilated by the «grammar of mobilization».<sup>4</sup> These influences on anarchism, although they began to register a few decades earlier under the influence of Marxism sixtiesayochoero (read situationism, marcuseanismo, dauvéismo, etc.. ), would be more palpable from the mobilization against «globalization» in Seattle (1999), the counter-summit of Genoa (2001) and the subsequent reproduction ad infinitum of the «alterglobalist social forums», manipulated by Leninism (which was barely executing the necessary metamorphosis in order to chameleonicly place itself in the new scenario) and, social democracy, by means of cover such as the International Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for Aid to the Citizen (ATTAC), Global Exchange, etc.

At that time, the camouflages of postmodern Leninism assumed the tonalities demanded by the political «climate» of each region, designing tailor-made uniforms in accordance with the theater of operations and imposing new «political grammars» (alter-globalization, neo-Zapatistas, autonomists, anti-fascists, communists and many other «istas» that appeared as the occasion required) that renewed their repertoires of action and activated devices of legitimacy; introducing a pragmatic twist at the time that allowed them to «accumulate forces» towards the realization of their objective: the seizure of power through the institutionalization of social movements.

The grammar of mobilization is going to articulate a motley set of antagonistic actions — each one with its own language-, forming a bouquet of discourses and modalities of confrontation that, in reality, respond to the motivations of those involved («work for all», «decent housing», «free education» or, in the case of the most «politicized», «socialization of the economy», «end of neoliberalism», to cite some agglutinating examples); being subsumed in a generic destituting substratum («Movimiento piquetero» in Argentina, «Movimiento de los indignados» in the Spanish State, «Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional» in Mexico, «Black Lives Matter Movement» in America or, «Mouvement des gilets jaunes» in France, Belgium and the Netherlands) which subsumes them in a generic destituting substratum, Belgium and the Netherlands) that traps them in the daily dynamics of the internal construction of mobilization and prevents them from establishing differences between the various grammars and, deepening the incompatibility of organizational styles, methods of struggle and, in the end, of objectives. With this pragmatic

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<sup>4</sup> The use of the notion of «grammars» evidently points to the work of the linguist and mathematician Ludwig Wittgenstein in the philosophy of language, while the concept of «grammars of mobilization» has been developed by the sociologist Danny Trom, based on the contributions of the «pragmatics of action» of Charles Wright Mills and its application to the study of the domain of mobilization. The Millsian theory, inspired by American pragmatist philosophers, «places motivation at the center of the articulation between the present of the action and the situation». Vid, Trom, Danny, *Grammaire de la mobilisation et vocabulaires de motifs* (Grammar of mobilization and vocabularies of motives). Available at: [books.openedition.org](http://books.openedition.org) (Accessed 1/7/2021).

perspective, the movementist melting pot is imprisoned -in the forms of political construction and the modes of distribution of power – in three grammars: classist, populist and autonomist. All of them alien to the contemporary anarchic grammar, indissolubly linked to the implacable exercise of our desires for total liberation and destruction of the existing.

The specificity of the anarchic grammar far exceeds the movementist grammar – and therefore, the classist, populist and autonomist grammars – by not being reduced to forms of political construction and not being limited to public interventions aimed at «transforming» or «ratifying» (as the case may be<sup>5</sup>) domination.

The contemporary anarchic grammar -with its spontaneous emulsions-, must be conceived as the praxis that constitutes us as anarchists and confers us our distinctive and non-transferable personality in the radical and unwavering confrontation of the system of domination, endowing our daily actions with intelligibility; This makes clear the tension that embodies the concreteness of praxis in the processes of elaboration of a critical assumption that ratifies the lines of escape and the necessary ruptures with the hegemonic social discourses that try to delimit the specificity of our struggle.

In spite of the fact that some outdated tendencies within our tents (anarcho-syndicalists and anarcho-communists), share the economicist optics of the class grammar and, bet on the concretion of a Social Revolution that reorganizes the relations between classes and transforms - through the «direct management of the means of production»<sup>6</sup> – the regime of capitalist accumulation into a productive system at the service of the dispossessed, this grammar lacks points of encounter with the contemporary anarchist grammar which has definitively broken with the utopian vision of anarchism and has assumed Anarchy as a dis-utopian tension, putting into practice its destructive will.

The class grammar, starting from determinist structuralism, assumes the dogma of the inexorable development of the «class struggle», positioning itself as the «revolutionary vanguard of the exploited class», which it assures to be called to lead to victory. Its obsession with «class consciousness» has led it to subsume, without regard, the rest of the struggles, obstinate in demonstrating the veracity of the communist program.

For its part, the populist grammar – which inexplicably also has fans in the most retrograde sectors of our tents – has taken on a leading role in recent decades as a «grammar of articulation» or «integration» within the grammar of mobilization, promoting the (re)construction of the «popular political subject» under the premise of «the inclusion of the excluded in the social order», the defense of «popular sovereignty» and the production of «hope». The populist grammar, in turn, is identified with the nationalist ideology and its cultural, ethnic, class and/or religious claims, aimed at the construction of «identity»; which favors the development of charismatic leaderships that invoke the emotionality of the masses and promote the strengthening of such «identity» as a vehicle for the transformation of the social order.

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<sup>5</sup> In the Latin American context, it is worth mentioning Chile, Colombia and Peru, to cite three examples of «transforming» institutional impulse, and Kirchnerism, Evismo and Obradorism, as examples of «ratification» in Argentina, Bolivia and Mexico, respectively.

<sup>6</sup> Undoubtedly, the «mode of production» continues to be confused with the «form of management». Capitalism is a mode of production and this does not change depending on who manages it. That this mode of production is managed (co-managed or self-managed) by capitalists, technocrats, bureaucrats, military, trade unionists or cooperativists, is completely unimportant: it does not interrupt the movement of the law of value.

The autonomist grammar, centered on assembly mechanisms as a «space for deliberation and the search for consensus», is equally incompatible with contemporary anarchic grammar; However, its attachment to «territorial work» linked to the construction of popular power as a «process of accumulation of forces from the bottom up» is attractive to some very peculiar «anarchist» circles (neoplataformists, anarchozapatists and libertarian autonomists), which emphasize the necessary reconstruction of a «social project», extolling «misery» and faith in «those from below» as cardinal ingredients of that grammar of integration with an instituting vocation -opposed to Anarchy-, ignoring that both variables have historically constituted the essence of fascism.

Nothing more alien to the contemporary anarchic grammar than the classist, populist and autonomist grammars. However, we cannot avoid the imminent danger that those symbiotic (residual) elements that inhabit our tents under generic labels («subversives», «rebels», «revolutionaries», «anti-capitalists», «antagonists» and/or «contestants»),<sup>7</sup> end up at the service of the culture of Power, seduced by these instituting grammars.

## TENSIONS AND SLOPES IN CONTEMPORARY ANARCHIC GRAMMARS

Looked at as a whole, and now in perspective, the rupturist tensions that took shape at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century within the contemporary anarchic war, were too many and too deep to remain trapped in the instituting grammars. A new power, decidedly anti-social and anti-civilization, claimed for those years the theoretical-practical projection of its negating essence and its primordial chaos, breaking definitively with a utopian conception of society, of history and of «revolutionary change» excessively tied to the economic notions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and to the constellation of understandings, methodologies, projects, organizations and practices of anarcho-communism.

It was there that we stopped living obsessed in the conservative defense of our past to move on to the transgressive conquest of our present, abandoning the theoretical-ideological order of classical anarchism to undertake the necessary reorientation of the anarchic war in the context in which we have to act, conscious of the need to start from scratch (abandoning the «lineage» and the ballast of tradition), emancipated from the past and, alien to the resuscitating attempts that yearn to repeat to exhaustion the outdated revolutions.

That was the original proposal of the Conspiracy of the Cells of Fire (CCF) in Greece.<sup>8</sup> Resisting to be subsumed in the traditional molds, they not only put an end to the inaction in our tents, but they destined three bullets to anarcho-communism: they gave a coup de grace to all the economic verbiage, another to the populist exaltation and, the third, to the acute organizationism with its assembly methods and its political correctness. In this way, the possibility of building a renewed anarchic paradigm was opening up, making it possible to fluidly and harmoniously bring together new theoretical-practical developments that were beginning to tone up their muscle and invite replication throughout the length and breadth of the planet.

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<sup>7</sup> Here I want to state for the record that I consider conceptually imperfect and little defining all these «classificatory categories», reason why I have called them «generic labels», since they are assumed both by National Socialism and Red Fascism, indistinctly.

<sup>8</sup> And that of their counterparts in Mexico and in the Chilean region.

But, in the midst of this rupturist plot, the occasional recuperators reappeared, wielding the UNITY of struggles and wielding a certain utopian millenarianism that -product of a bad digestion of Furth's approaches<sup>9</sup> and the anachronistic reading of the theories of Joachim de Fiore and/or, the apocalyptic disquisitions of the preacher Thomas Müntzer,<sup>10</sup> bet (and bet) on the fusion of myth and utopia, at this stage of the game.

In this recuperative warp, the unitary grammar resumed its strength and we returned to calling communists «comrades» and, once again, we gave room to those outdated discourses that still observe the world from the bow of the battleship Potemkin and incite to repetition, only now orthodoxy and dogma are promoted in the name of the «new». In such a way, the rupturist imprint that animated «the creative nothingness» and those affinity groups (minimal and ephemeral) has been abandoned and those anarcho-nihilist individualities (furtive and fleeting), were extinguished or were subsumed in an alien grammar that imposes urban guerrilla strategies and proposes pompous Revolutionary Fronts, with certain Stalinist reminiscence.<sup>11</sup> This regrettable regression to the narrowing of the world, to the narrowing of the «new», to the «new», to the «new».

This lamentable regression has narrowed the diameter of our arteries in the field of anarchic reflection, which prevents us from confronting the very vastness of our praxis. It is ostensible that, once again, there is no clarity whatsoever in grammar and, therefore, «ideological» exchanges are postponed or, failing that, replaced by disqualification, suspicion and aggravation, in accordance with the old manual of the good Bolshevik.

That is why a reflective debate within the anarchic insurrectional informality is urgently needed. It is urgent to promote a minimum substratum that reaffirms our distinctive and non-transferable specificity; that breaks definitively with foreign grammars and; that helps us to undertake a journey of anarchist confirmation, reorienting the steps of our war. Within the framework of this itinerary, we have to ask ourselves new generative questions but, above all, we will try to give ourselves new answers that answer — from praxis — the needs of contemporary anarchism.

Today, it is not only worrying but obscene to find in «anarchist» stores calls demanding the release from prison of the beloved warrior Gabriel Pombo Da Silva and that of the Stalinist Abdullah Öcalan. With identical shamelessness, here in North America, the release of religious fundamentalist leaders, spies and furious nationalists, to the detriment of our prisoners, is demanded in «anarchist» portals. Or, from Chile, they sell us the motorcycle – as the comrades of the web Anarquía Info<sup>12</sup> inform us – with a list of prisoners that all these years we have taken for «related» and, in reality, among those listed only the comrades Mónica Caballero, Francisco Solar and Joaquín García proudly assume themselves to be liberationists; the others camouflage themselves with generic costumes («subversives», «rebels» and «anti-authoritarians»), but they have

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<sup>9</sup> Vid, Furth, René, *Formas y tendencias del anarquismo*, Campo Abierto Editores, Madrid, May 1977.

<sup>10</sup> See Cohn, Norman, *In Pursuit of the Millennium. Revolucionarios milenaristas y anarquistas místicos de la Edad Media*, Pepitas de calabaza Ed, Logroño, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> As a sign of this Stalinist offensive, the growth of the «Frente Obrero», as reported by comrades in the Spanish state, is worrying. We would not be surprised if under this call for worker-popular unity, sectors of so-called «anti-fascism» and even of «revolutionary syndicalism» come together. Vid., Stalinist Front, in [acracia.org](http://acracia.org)

<sup>12</sup> Available at: [anarquia.info](http://anarquia.info) (Consulted 1/7/2021). I also recommend reading the text entitled ¡Con la Anarquía, más allá de los límites! in the same portal and on the same subject; available at: [anarquia.info](http://anarquia.info) 1/7/2021).

never broken with the Marxian-Leninist principles of the paramilitary organizations in which they militated.

Of course, every time we make these points and such distortions are criticized, there is no lack of disciplining sermons. We are always labeled as «purists» and «sectarians» and, immediately, a flaming finger is pointed at us. Negro Fiorito used to say — and he was right — that every time we are accused of being «purists» or «sectarians» it is because we are reaffirming in words and deeds our anarchic essence, our demand for absolute freedom and the claim for a space where the individual can choose what determines his will. He also affirmed -without the least fear of words-, that we are really «sectarian», «purists», «intransigent» and even «totalitarian», because Anarchy sustains in totalitarian principles (the totality of the attributes and parts of something) its reason for being: the absolute rejection and negation of the State and of any authority (from the most evident to the most tenuous). And this, he declared in the sixties, seventies and eighties of the last century, in the context of what we have called «transitional anarchism»; that is to say, in those years of theoretical confusion and regression of anarchist praxis, fertile in social-democratic and/or Guevarist ravings, where some alleged «anarchists» (in reality, liberals saturated with steroids), kissed the dogma of the «class struggle» embracing Guevarist foquism as a «luminous path» to libertarian Communism and, others, influenced by Arendt, assumed themselves to be «anti-totalitarians».

Today, we must guard against the risks of repetition. It is unacceptable to go back to ignominy. That is why the urgent need to point out a minimum and essential substratum, which enhances our grammar and promotes the widening of Black Anarchy in these days; an objective, a desire or, perhaps, an essential yearning that, at some imprecise but preferably near moment, we would like to share with all those anarchic individualities that show an undeniable theoretical-practical proximity that makes them road companions of an international conspiracy that bases its cause on Nothing. If this were not so, we would no longer have today, nor will we have tomorrow, anything of what we once were. Nothing of what is authentically substantial and defining that constitutes us as anarchists: the radical confrontation to all Authority and to each and every one of the forms and strategies of Power (including the instituting movements).



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