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The Political Thought of Errico Malatesta

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This text is divided into four main parts for the presentation of Malatesta's political thought: a.) a brief description of the author's life, the political environment in which he found himself and his main interlocutors; b.) a theoretical-epistemological discussion, which differentiates science from doctrine/ideology and, therefore, the methods of analysis and social theories of anarchism. A notion that will be applied to the discussion of Malatestan thought itself; c.) theoretical-methodological elements for social analysis; d.) conception of anarchism and strategic positions.

> *"Errico Malatesta remains alive and integrally present in our spirits and memories"*
>
> – Luigi Fabbri

Introduction

To deal with the political thought of Errico Malatesta is not a simple task and is something that must be carried out with necessary caution. It is relevant to bear in mind three fundamental questions that run throughout any more careful analysis of his work: 1.) He was an anarchist for more than 60 years of his life; 2.) His complete works are not available, not even in Italian; 3.) He never was, nor intended to be, a great theorist; he was essentially a propagandist and organiser.

This means that general readings, like that which it is intended to realise here, should take into account that there is no uniformity regarding his positions in those 60 years, some of which vary significantly. They must also take into account that, as an important part of his work is not known, one can not point to exceedingly definitive conclusions. Finally, they should take into account that although the larger part of his works are composed from texts for the exposure and dissemination of anarchism, and that, although the author does not have the breadth of other libertarian thinkers, he makes relevant contributions, which will be taken up briefly.

Malatesta's political thought will be resumed in continuation, taking into account these methodological precautions and aiming to uncover continuities and constancies in his thought throughout this long period of production, which extends from the 1870s to the 1930s. To this end, the text is divided into four main parts: a.) a brief description of the author's life, the political environment in which he found himself and his main interlocutors; b.) a theoretical-epistemological discussion, which differentiates science from doctrine/ideology and, therefore, the methods of analysis and social theories of anarchism. A notion that will be applied to the discussion of Malatestan thought itself; c.) theoretical-methodological elements for social analysis; d.) conception of anarchism and strategic positions.

Thus, it is hoped to give the reader a relatively deep idea of the political thought of the author; in case of interest, one can continue with the studies from the bibliography at the end of the text.

Biographical information and political environment

Errico Malatesta (1853–1932) was an important Italian anarchist that contributed, in theory and practice, to the trajectory of anarchism in a lot of countries; he organised in different places in Europe, in the Americas and in Africa. Based on some studies about the author (Fabbri, 2010; Nettlau, 2008, 2012; Richards, 2007) one can outline some of his biographical data and briefly characterise the political environment in which he lived.

Son of a merchant family with access to some resources, he studied at the *Lycée de Santa Maria Capua Vetere*, the town of his birth, later joining the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Naples. The setbacks, in part of a political nature, made him abandon the course and to live, from then on, doing odd jobs including in the mechanical and electrical trades. While still young he believed, for

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a while, in the republicanism of Giuseppe Mazzini but soon abandoned it, being converted to anarchism between 1871 and 1872 – process in which Mikhail Bakunin was crucial – a doctrine that he championed until his death in Rome.

Of the nearly 80 years of his life, Malatesta was an anarchist for more than 60 of them. He accompanied, therefore, a large period of the trajectory of this ideology in different places, the ebbs and flows of popular movements and of anarchism itself, as well as different hegemonic ideas and practices that occurred during this period.

He participated, with Bakunin, in the Alliance of Socialist Democracy in 1872 and an attempt at the recomposition of this political organisation in 1877, headed by Piotr Kroptotkin; created and brought to life the Anarchist Socialist Revolutionary Party of 1891, the Anarchist Party of Ancona of 1913 and the Italian Anarchist Communist Union/ Italian Anarchist Union of 1919/20. He was a member of the Italian section of the First International from 1871; founded the first revolutionary unions in Argentina in the late 1880s; participated in strikes in Belgium in 1893 and in protests against rising bread prices in Italy in 1898; contributed to the Italian Syndicalist Union (USI); participated in the general strike and the Red Week of 1914, in Italy; articulated the anti-fascist left in the Labour Alliance in the early 1920s. He participated, weapons at hand, in the insurrections of Apulia, in 1874, of Benevento, in 1877, and was arrested more than a dozen times.

Luigi Fabbri, in a biography about Malatesta, emphasises a few of his characteristics as an anarchist, showing his militant fullness:

> "His active life as an anarchist was a monolith of humanity: the unity of thought and action, a balance between sentiments and reason, coherence between preaching and doing, the connection of unyielding energy for struggle with human kindness, the fusion of an attractive sweetness with the most rigid strength

> of character, agreement between the most complete fidelity to his banners and a mental swiftness that escaped all dogmatism. […] He was a complete anarchist." (Fabbri, 2010)

This quality of reconciling fundamental characteristics for anarchist militancy also involved, again according to Fabbri, the permanent quest for reconciliation between ends and means and for the establishment of healthy relationships with the oppressed masses.

> "Use of the necessary means for victory remained, in what he said and did, in constant relation to the libertarian ends at which it is proposed to arrive, the excitement and fury of the moment never caused him to lose sight of future needs, passion and common sense, destruction and creation, always harmonised in his words and in his example; this harmony, so indispensable to fertilising results, impossible to be dictated from above, he carried out among the people, mingling with them, without worrying that this could cause his personal work to disappear in the vast and wavy ocean of the anonymous masses." (Fabbri, 2010)

Such characteristics were demonstrated in the broad context of Malatesta's militancy, both in historic and geographic terms. They were noted in his relations with different interlocutors, anarchist or not, and in his involvement in the most diverse debates. A significant part of his political thought was formulated amid these dialogues and debates, against a background of notable episodes.

As in the entire trajectory of anarchism, a common sense insisted in relating anarchism to disorder, to confusion and chaos, and the ideological and doctrinal disputes, especially with the Social Democratic and Bolshevik derivations of Marxism, ended up reinforcing, by effort of these political adversaries and without

the grassroots with the egalitarian and horizontal participation of its members, embodying self-managed forms of struggle. Malatesta argues the combativeness of these movements, in the struggle for reforms and for the revolution, to be fundamental.

Even defending the need for short-term struggles, for reforms, Malatesta does not cease to be a revolutionary. He considers to be necessary, for anarchist objectives to be reached, the conquest of reforms and the pedagogy of these struggles. He affirms, in defence of combative struggles for reforms: "We will take or conquer eventual reforms in the same spirit as that which forces the enemy off the terrain he occupies bit by bit, to advance increasingly more." (Malatesta, 1989i: 146) For him, "a small improvement, snatched with the appropriate force, is worth more for its moral effect and, more broadly, even for its material effects, than a large reform given by the government or the capitalists with cunning ends, or even pure and simply as benevolence." (Malatesta, 2008: 78) That is, reforms, being snatched from the bosses and governments, can contribute, depending on the way in which they were obtained, to the strengthening of the revolutionary project of the oppressed classes. However, struggles for reforms do not necessarily lead to revolutionary struggles; anarchists must carry out their interventions in the direction of strengthening this process. In the case of union struggle, Malatesta (1998: 210) recommends: "The role of the anarchists is to awaken the unions to this ideal, gradually orienting them to the social revolution, even if, in so doing, they run the risk of undermining the 'immediate benefits' that seem to please them so much."

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Such a position is inadequate, according to the author, because this syndicalism-anarchism bond splits the organisation of the oppressed classes and weakens the popular movement. Corroborating this thesis, Malatesta (1998: 208) emphasises: "I am not demanding anarchist unions, which would immediately result in the emergence of social-democratic, republican, monarchist and many other unions and would end up launching, more than ever, the working class against itself." Popular organisations should, therefore, be based on association around concrete demands of struggle, independent of the doctrinal and ideological, or even religious, positions of those that comprise them.

Besides the need for this unity in the struggles of the oppressed classes the author recommends other positions that should be supported by anarchists in the movements in which they participate:

> "Anarchists in the unions should struggle such that they remain open to all workers, whatever their opinion and party may be, with the only condition of forging solidarity in the struggle against the bosses; they should oppose the corporatist spirit and any pretension to monopoly of the organisation and work. They should prevent the unions from serving as an instrument of politics for electoral ends or for other authoritarian parties and practice and promote direct action, decentralisation, autonomy, free initiative; they should strive such that those organised learn to participate directly in the life of the organisation and not to create the need for leaders and permanent functionaries." (Malatesta, 2011)

In these statements he is pointing to the need to overcome the sectionalism/corporatism of struggles; of acting independently and autonomously in relation to the dominant classes, the state, party-political and electoral interests; of promoting political practice outside of the state end even against it; of building the movement from

any historic foundation, visions that anarchism would be petty-bourgeois, liberal, idealist, individualist, *spontaneist*, against organisation and essentially attached to the peasants and artisans of the "backward world" in decline. (Corrêa and Silva, 2013; Silva, 2013)

In socialism in general, fruit of the debate of the previous generation, there was a period of widespread acceptance regarding methods of analysis and social theories of evolutionist (teleological) theories, of determinisms of economic and/or structural order, of positions derived from positivism and from scientism. These conceptions, combatted by Malatesta, emphasised among other things that society would move necessarily towards socialism, that the structure of society (mainly of economic base) would determine its political and cultural aspects and that the social sciences should be modelled on natural sciences. The author also fought positions that sought to merge socialism and science through the concepts of "scientific socialism" and even of "scientific anarchism".

Among the debates that permeated the anarchist camp some can be highlighted. Firstly, the most relevant historic debates between anarchists about organisation, reforms and violence: the necessity or not for the organisation of anarchists and, in such a case, the best way to organise; the possibility of struggles for reforms leading to a revolutionary process; the role of violence in the revolutionary process. (Corrêa, 2012: 159–186) The context of the 1880s and 1890s in Europe, marked by the period after the Paris Commune and much repression, contributed to the insurrectionist positions of so-called "propaganda by the deed", predominant on the continent in this period and corroborated by the resolutions of the 1881 Congress, which led to the short-lived Black International.

As much as Malatesta has defended, for the most part of his life, organisational dualism, the struggle for reforms as the way to revolution and violence in support of the organised workers' movement – three positions that, according to Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt (2009), characterise "mass anarchism" from an historical perspective – there was a period, particularly

in the two decades mentioned, in which he was influenced by classical positions of "insurrectionist anarchism", especially when investing in insurrections without a significant popular base, such as that of Benevento, in 1887, and by believing that violence detached from organised workers' movements could serve as a catalyst for mobilisation. (Pernicone, 2009) Still, the author fought, throughout his life, against anarchist anti-organisationism – which was strong in Italy, among other reasons due to the positions of Luigi Galleani – and the "bourgeois influences on anarchism", in Fabbri's (2001) terms, that stemmed from the liberal individualism with which some anarchists flirted, particularly in Europe and the United States.

The decisive participation of anarchists in revolutionary unionism (revolutionary syndicalism and anarcho-syndicalism) was also accompanied by Malatesta, both in the Americas and in Europe; in the latter case the foundation of the General Confederation of Labour (CGT), in France in 1895, ended up constituting a milestone because it marked the passage from insurrectionist hegemony to mass anarchism in the region. In the majority of cases the anarchists dissolved themselves into the union organisations; in many cases they advocated "union neutrality", in the case of revolutionary syndicalism; in others, such as in the Argentine Regional Workers' Federation (FORA), from 1905, and in the National Confederation of Labour (CNT), from 1919, they advocated anarcho-syndicalism, programmatically linking the unions to anarchism and making this their official doctrine. In both cases, however, this model of unionism showed itself to be class-struggle oriented, combative, autonomous/independent of the enemy classes and institutions, democratic (with rank and file, self-managed and federated organisation) and revolutionary. Malatesta positioned himself on the relationship between anarchism and unionism in different circumstances, such as in the

risks do not mean that anarchists should abandon them; it is necessary, therefore, to reach a middle ground: participating in these movements – creating and strengthening them – and promoting, as anarchists, certain criteria and programmatic elements that counteract this tendency and promote anarchist objectives. The author states: "I lamented, in the past, that comrades isolated themselves from the labour movement. I lament today that, falling at the extreme opposite, many among us let themselves be swallowed by the movement". If, one the one hand, the withdrawal of anarchists in relation to the popular movements seems an error, to dissolve oneself in these movements also doesn't seem right. "Within the unions", he continues, "it is necessary for us to remain anarchists"; for him, "organisation of the working class, the strike, direct action, boycott, sabotage and armed insurrection itself are only means; anarchy is the end". One should, thus, consider that popular movements and their actions do not constitute the ends of anarchism, but possible means for anarchists to promote their objectives. (Malatesta, 1998: 208, 212)

Creating and strengthening mass movements, according to Malatesta, should support a set of positions.

Among them is the idea that popular movements can not be programmatically linked to any doctrine/ideology, even anarchism. It can be said that, in his strategy for the level of the masses, Malatesta (2011) advocates positions that are closer to "revolutionary unionism" than "anarcho-syndicalism".[9] For this reason, he criticises cases of anarcho-syndicalist organisations such as the Spanish CNT and Argentine FORA that end up, through their resolutions, adopting anarchism as their official doctrine/ideology: "There are a lot of comrades that would like to unify the labour movement and the anarchist movement because, in so doing, it would be possible to give the labour organisations a clearly anarchist programme, as happens in Spain and Argentina."

[9] To learn more about this differentiation, cf. Corrêa, 2011, 2012.

It is necessary, according to what the author says, together with this propaganda and educational work, to invest in organisational and grassroots work:

> "It is necessary, therefore, in normal times to perform extensive and patient preparatory work and popular organisation and not to fall into the illusion of the revolution in the short term, feasible only by the initiative of a few, without sufficient participation of the masses. To this work, provided it can be carried out in an adverse environment, there is, among other things, propaganda, agitation and the organisation of the masses, which should never be ignored." (Malatesta, 2008: 31)

It is important to note that, for the author, it is not about idolising the masses or following them at any cost. Even the workers' movement and unionism, although they have potential for the anarchist project, present risks which must be duly considered. Malatesta (2011) points out that, acting in the "organisations founded to defend their interests, workers acquire consciousness of the oppression in which they find themselves and of the antagonism that separates them from their bosses, begin to aspire to a better life, getting used to collective struggle and solidarity". The oppressed classes, through their participation in the workers' movement and through unionism, elevate their class consciousness and get accustomed to struggles of class character and may even gain significant improvements in their day-to-day life.

Still, popular organisations, particularly unions, "have a certain propensity to turn the means into ends and to consider the parts as if they were the whole", or, they tend to consider isolated struggles for conquests and even the improvement of capitalism as ends in themselves and not as possible paths for a general emancipation. Reformism and corporatism are constant risks that threaten workers' organisations in general and the unions in particular. Such

Amsterdam Anarchist Congress, in 1907, when he polemicised with Pierre Monatte.[1]

In the context of the Second International (1889–1916) there was, besides the expulsion of the anarchists early on in the process, a strengthening of electoral/parliamentary and reformist socialism which took shape in social democracy and in "possibilism", as well as the loss of important anarchists from the first period to this camp, as were the cases of Andrea Costa, Paul Brousse and Benoit Malon. The gap between the Second and Third Internationals was marked, throughout the socialist camp, by the conflicts between those that took sides in the First World War and those that opposed the war and this was no different among the anarchists. A group restricted to 16 anarchists – among which, however, were to be found renowned militants such as Kropotkin and Jean Grave – ended up supporting the allies, thus distancing themselves from the vast majority of anarchists, who remained opposed to the war, as was the case of Malatesta. The Third International (1919–1943) was marked by the global strengthening of Bolshevism, after the Russian Revolution, and the Soviet Bloc itself which, progressively, demonstrated that state "socialism" was nothing more than the dictatorship of a party over the oppressed classes through the machinery of the state. From 1921, this situation became clear to anarchists around the world due to the denunciations of repression and suppression of all socialist and revolutionary currents from countries of the bloc which refused to submit to the dictates of the Communist Party. Malatesta has a significant production critical of the socialists and communists[2] and a few writings about the support of this group of anarchists for the Allies in the war.[3]

Towards the end of his life, the author also witnessed the rise of fascism in Italy and the reemergence of the problem of nationalism,

[1] Cf. Malatesta, 1998.
[2] Cf., for example, Malatesta, 1989a.
[3] Cf. Malatesta, 2007d, 2007e.

with which he had lived in some measure on the occasion of the movements of Garibaldi and Mazzini. He also polemicised with Nestor Makhno and Piotr Arshinov, authors of "The Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists", about the best way of conceiving the specific organisation of anarchists.

Science and doctrine/ideology

To differentiate these categories Malatesta's departure point is the notion of "scientific socialism/anarchism" that, having emerged during the nineteenth century, advanced to the twentieth century both in the camps of Marxism and anarchism. Although the concepts of "scientific socialism" and "scientific anarchism" have substantive differences and are supported by different theoretical and methodological elements, they have a similarity: they intend to give to the political-ideological doctrine of socialism, even if different currents, a scientific character. For Malatesta, this socialism-science link is mistaken:

> "The scientism (I am not saying science) that prevailed in the second half of the nineteenth century produced the tendency to consider as scientific truths, that is, natural laws and, therefore, necessary and fatal, that which was only a concept, corresponding to the diverse interests and diverse aspirations each one had of justice, progress etc., from which was born 'scientific socialism' and, also, 'scientific anarchism' which, even while professed by our great representatives, always seemed to me baroque conceptions that confused things and concepts that are different by their very nature." (Malatesta, 2007a: 39–40)

The ideas of scientific socialism and scientific anarchism present, according to him, a confusion of categories that are distinct and

in the concrete affinity of programmatic positions, in the real agreement of positions: "We would like to be able to be, all of us, in agreement and to unite in a single powerful column all the forces of anarchism. But we don't believe in the soundness of organisations made by the force of compromises and restrictions, where there is no real agreement and sympathy". Union, therefore, must take place on a solid foundation: "It is better to be disunited that poorly united". (Malatesta, 2000c: 62)

Among the functions of the anarchist party are activities of propaganda and education. Malatesta (2007c: 170–172) states in relation to propaganda: "We carry out propaganda to raise the moral level of the masses and to induce them to conquer their emancipation for themselves"; on education, he emphasises: "it is, in short, about educating for freedom, to raise consciousness of one's own strength and the capacity of men that are accustomed to obedience and passivity". It should be noted, however, that these activities should be carried out in an organised, permanent and strategic way: "The terrain is excessively ungrateful for seeds sown in the wind to be able to germinate and establish roots. Constant work is necessary, patient and coordinated, adapted to the different circumstances." It should form part of a programme and contribute to its advance.

Still, propaganda and education are not enough: "We would be wrong to think that propaganda is enough to elevate [men] to the level of intellectual and moral development necessary for the realisation of our ideal"; besides this, the "educationists'" proposal, following the author himself's term, also presents this insufficiency since when they "propagate education", "defend free thought, positive science", "found popular universities and modern schools", they do not manage to transform society since, as seen, this can not be done solely by means of a change in consciousness. (Malatesta, 2000a: 14; 2008: 193)

must be the protagonists of the social revolution; however, anarchist are not only workers, but anarchist workers. As Malatesta pointed out (1989g: 87): "we distinguish ourselves from the mass and are party men". Anarchists have objectives in relation to the masses: "We want to act upon them, impel them on the path we believe to be best; but as our objective is to liberate and not to dominate, we want to habituate them to free initiative and free action." The anarchists' instrument for influencing the masses – without the establishment of any hierarchy or domination in relation to them, promoting libertarian and egalitarian means, and seeking with them complementary relationship – is the "anarchist party".[8]

As defined by Malatesta (2000d: 51), the anarchist party is an "association with a defined objective and with the necessary ways and means to achieve this objective". Its objective is to associate anarchists, publicly or secretly, to promote the anarchist programme among the masses and to potentialise its force in this process. The anarchist party unites members around certain criteria, among which is to be found grassroots construction – that is, the processes of decision-making are shared from the bottom up, self-managed and federalist – and revolutionary discipline: "revolutionary discipline is consistency with the accepted ideas, loyalty to commitments assumed, it is to feel obliged to share the work and the risks with comrades of the struggle." (Malatesta, 1989h: 24) Another important criteria for union is a certain unity of positions among members; association, therefore, is not based solely on the fact that a person claims to be anarchist, but

[8] The discussion about the "anarchist party" in Malatesta, i.e., the question of anarchist political organisation, is not uniformly presented during the author's life. As we pointed out on another occassion (Corrêa and Silva, 2013b), if at some times Malatesta advocates a more programmatic model of organisation, which to some extent approaches the positions of the "Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists", at others Malatesta advocates more flexible positions, which approach the "Anarchist Synthesis" model, developed by Volin and Sebastien Faure. In this text Malatesta's more programmatic positions will be prioritised.

can not be treated as if they were one. In a lot of cases, Malatesta argues (2007a: 39), scientific notion, fused to socialism/anarchism, would only be "the scientific coating with which some like to cover their wishes and desires"; use of the adjective "scientific" would constitute, in most cases, nothing more than a basis for attempts at self-legitimation.

Based on this critique, the author argues for the need to define and distinguish two fundamental categories that, although related, can not be reduced to one alone.

> "Science is the compilation and systematisation of what is known and what is believed to be known; it states the fact and tries to discover its law, that is, the conditions under which the fact occurs and is necessarily repeated. [...] The task of science is to discover and formulate the conditions under which the fact necessarily produces and repeats itself: that is, it is to say what is and what must necessarily be.
>
> Anarchism is, by contrast, a human aspiration which is not based on any real or supposedly real natural necessity, but that could be implemented following human will. Taking advantage of the means that science provides man in the struggle against nature and against contrasting wills; one can take advantage of the progresses of philosophical thought when they serve to teach men to reason better and to more accurately distinguish real from fantasy; but you may not confuse it, without falling into absurdity, either with science or any philosophical system." (Malatesta, 2007a: 41–43)

When reflecting on anarchism Malatesta, in fact, addresses an element that is part of something larger and can be defined by the categories of doctrine and/or ideology, addressed here by means of a synthesis category: doctrine/ideology. Therefore, when discussing

science and anarchism Malatesta differentiates the categories of science and doctrine/ideology more broadly.[4]

The Malatestan conception of science implies a notion that its objective is in the past and in the present; that which was and/or is. It is based on phenomena involving natural and social life, from a theoretic and/or historic point of view, structural and/or contextual, and paves the way for an expression of these phenomena. The ability to generalise, that is, to explain a phenomenon or a group of phenomena is one of its central aspects. Science never has the future as an objective; it can, at most, make predictions about that which, based on the analysis of that which was and that which is, necessarily will be as a result of this interpretation of the past and present.

Differently, doctrine/ideology provides a framework based on a set of values and on an ethical notion that provides tools for the analysis of the past and present reality, structural and contextual, but which also allows one to judge this reality; offering elements in order to think, starting from what was and what is, about what should be. That is, doctrine/ideology offers an evaluative basis which allows one to judge and direct political positions, ideas and actions in the direction of maintaining or modifying the status quo in a normative sense.

Malatesta considers anarchism a doctrine/ideology that, based on human aspirations, affirms what society should be, an ethical-evaluative position of a becoming that is beyond the scientific camp. Capitalism and state must be destroyed, giving rise to a society without classes, exploitation or domination not because, through a scientific analysis of the current system of domination it can be seen that this is the natural order of evolution of society towards a known end, but because, according to ethical values and notions and from a normative position, it is considered that

[4] For an elaboration on the conception/distinction between science and doctrine/ideology in Malatesta, cf. Corrêa, 2013b.

Malatesta (2000d: 49) points out this need: "the organisation of popular forces" and the "organisation of the anarchist party".

The author opposed anti-organisationism, a position that although historically a minority among anarchists had its importance. For him, organisation not only underlies the foundations of society but lies behind the very bodies capable of catalysing social force in order to drive a revolutionary process.

> "Now we repeat: without organisation, free or imposed, there can be no society; without conscious and desired organisation, there can be neither liberty nor guarantee that the interests of those living in society be respected. And whoever does not organise themselves, whoever does not seek the cooperation of others and does not offer theirs, under conditions of reciprocity and solidarity, puts themselves necessarily in a state of inferiority and remains an unconscious gear in the social mechanism that others drive in their own way, and to their own advantage." (Malatesta, 2000b: 39)

Malatesta (2000c: 55) maintains that organisation is not only not contrary to anarchism but is a basic foundation for the accumulation of social force; without it, changing society becomes an impossible task: "To remain isolated means condemning oneself to weakness, wasting one's energy on small ineffectual acts, quickly losing faith in the objective and falling into complete inaction." It is relevant, therefore, taking as a basis this organisational principle, to devise the best way of linking up with others in order to multiply individual forces and be able to carry out a collective process of radical change in society.

To do so, Malatesta (2000b: 41) emphasises: "Favouring popular organisations of all types is the logical consequence of our fundamental ideas and, thus, should be an integral part of out programme." As noted, it is these popular mass organisations that

139), masks the fact that a "dictatorship [...] in the name of the 'proletariat' puts all the power and the whole life of the workers in the hands of creatures from a so-called communist party, who will keep themselves in power and will end up reconstructing capitalism for their own benefit".

From the perspective of the need for consistency between means and ends, the seizure of the state is a strategic inconsistency since, by means of domination, it seeks to promote freedom and equality; this path, taken in a reformist or revolutionary way, from a strategic point of view can only point to the strengthening of domination.

A coherent strategy for reaching the objectives mentioned must be based on the protagonism of the masses; the revolutionary subjects – which are also not given a priori, like a structural determination – need to be built in the processes of the struggle of the oppressed classes, among workers in the cities and the country, peasants and the poor in general. As the revolution must be the work of the masses that make up this broad group of oppressed subjects, anarchists must "get close to them, accept them as they are and, as part of the masses, make them go as far as possible." Anarchism, as the author points out, proposes to propel class struggle processes of social transformation that guarantee the protagonism of the masses; this does not mean, therefore, that anarchists should emancipate the workers: "We do not want to emancipate the people", he affirms, "we want the people to emancipate themselves". (Malatesta, 1989c: 55; 2000b: 40)

In one of the most important debates among anarchists, on the question of organisation, Malatesta positions himself in favour of organisation dualism. That is, he recognises the need for the simultaneous organisation of anarchists, as workers, in their mass popular movements, and as anarchists, in their specific anarchist political organisations. Besides "organisation in general, as a principle and condition of social life, today and in the future society",

society could be better and more just than it currently is and that human action, even within structural limits, should be used to propel a revolutionary transformation of that society.

This objective, which could be called "final", does not arise from a necessary prediction of that which necessarily must be, nor does it constitute the real need of a normal consequence of the development of the current system of domination; it is about a desired possibility, of something that is considered better and more just than that which is given.

The author's conceptual distinction between the categories of science and doctrine/ideology could support criticisms that he would advocate a separation between theory and practice – the neutrality of science and/or the scientist – among other criticisms that are often addressed to thinkers contrary to the link between science and doctrine/ideology. Malatesta was a man much more dedicated to political practice than to theoretical-scientific production. He started and participated in anarchist organisations, mass movements, insurrections and initiatives that involved oral and written propaganda. Arrested several times, he spent almost 10 years of his life in prison.

It can not be said that, by defending this distinction between the categories of science and doctrine/ideology, Malatesta was promoting any kind of "separation between theory and practice"; his positions were developed precisely in order to provide a better understanding of reality in order, from there, to conceive the best ways to intervene, promoting the advancement of the anarchist programme toward the goals established by it. It should also be added that the author did not support the neutrality of science or any position that allows it to approach positivism.[5]

Malatesta has a clear idea of the relationship between science and doctrine/ideology and demonstrates it in his reflections on

[5] For an elaboration on Malatesta's epistemological notions, cf. Corrêa, 2014.

the scientific knowledge of social reality and anarchism. For him, methods of analysis and social theories belong to the scientific camp: they seek to support a knowledge of reality as it is; starting from these considerations, anarchism establishes its final objectives, which the author called "anarchy", proposing how reality should be and devising strategies and tactics in order to transform society in this direction.

In short, it can be said that the theoretic-conceptual distinction proposed by Malatesta is made, in fact, to enhance anarchist political practice; such is the manner found by him to reconcile theory and practice.

This distinction will now be applied to the exposure of the author's own political thought; then his basic notions of social theory for the analysis of society will be presented and then his conception of anarchism and his strategic positions.

Social theory

Knowing the prevailing scientific positions of his time and articulating a part of them with his own original elaborations, Malatesta ended up developing a relatively innovative and effective tool for social analysis that seems, even today, to offer possibilities.[6]

Malatesta (2008: 101) sees the process of socialisation, the relationship between individuals and society, through an indissoluble connection between one another: "The human individual is not a being independent from society, but its product." The individual, in this way, can only be conceived within and as a part of society; not only suffering its effects, but participating actively in its conformation. For Malatesta (2008: 202), "there is a reciprocal action between man and the social environment. Men make society what it is, just like society makes men what they are." It is, therefore,

[6] For an elaboration on Malatesta's method of analysis and social theory, cf. Corrêa, 2014.

oppression – is not an adequate way for the social revolution and libertarian socialism, even if those who use it don't agree with this. (Malatesta, 2007l: 69; 1989d: 6)

The Malatestan criticism of the strategy of seizing the state for the establishment of a new anti-capitalist and anti-statist society, defended by reformist socialists and revolutionary communists, relies on this notion. For the author, the state is a dominating institution; in addition to supporting and promoting capitalism, political-bureaucratic domination (monopoly of decisions) and coercion (physical violence) are key components thereof. Even if you were to nationalise the means of production the existence of a minority in command of the state (bureaucracy) would imply a new dominant class. The Soviet case, even in the 1920s, contributed to the affirmation of this notion in Malatesta.

It was based on this argument that the author criticised socialist strategies of seizing the state, both through elections – in the reformist model, the majority in the Second International – and through revolution – in the revolutionary model, the majority in the Third International. Malatesta (1989e: 32) affirms: "We are firmly opposed to any participation in electoral struggles and to all collaboration with the dominant class; we want to deepen the chasm that separates the proletariat from the bosses and make the class struggle increasingly acute." The political dispute of the workers, as he conceives it, should take place outside of the – essentially oppressive – institutions of the state and deepen the class struggle, favouring the spaces built by the oppressed themselves. To act in the state would be, for him, to play in the enemy camp. Malatesta (1989f: 14) sees in the programme and strategy of parliamentary socialists "the germ of a new oppression". "If they were to one day triumph", he argues, "the principle of government that they retain would destroy the principle of social equality and would open up a new era of class struggles." This argument could in the same way be used with the revolutionary communists, whose notion of "dictatorship of the proletariat", still according to Malatesta (2007f:

tives do not result from the current society; "anarchy" needs to be achieved by the action of men and women. General Malatestan strategy relies on the permanent search for the accumulation of popular power and in the consistency between means and ends.

Anarchists, according to Malatesta (2008: 94), must "work to awaken in the oppressed the living desire for radical social transformation and persuade them that, by uniting, they have the necessary strength to win". The social force of the oppressed classes has the potential to confront and defeat the enemy forces but, to do so, it must address the three spheres. The author continues, affirming: "we must propagate our ideal and prepare the moral and material forces needed to defeat the enemy forces and organise the new society". This new society can only be built with victory over the dominant classes. However, anarchists don't believe that to achieve this strength and this victory anything goes; their principles, which establish ethical limits on the process, demand that, among other things, the ends determine the means, that is, a coherence between each other.

This question stands out in anarchism in general, and in Malatesta in particular. For him, as for theorists of strategy, tactics are subordinate to strategy and this to the objective, that is, the means are subordinate to the ends: "the end one wishes to reach established, by will or by need, life's great problem consists of finding the means which, according to the circumstances, leads most safely and most economically to the established end". Thus, tactics and strategies should seek the approximation of the objective in the most effective way possible. The author argues in this sense: "the ends and the means are intimately linked, without a doubt, even though to each end corresponds, preferably, such a means, instead of to another; so too, every means tends to realise what is natural to it, including outside of the will of those who employ this means, and against it. That is, for him, libertarian and egalitarian ends must be grounded in libertarian and egalitarian means. Domination – even if embodied in new forms of exploitation and

about a relationship of interdependence between individual and society in which the parties rely on each other and whose trajectories are directly intertwined. Human action in society involves the individual and society and, at the same time, connects each and every one.

It is considered that social reality can be divided analytically into three spheres: economic, political/juridical/military and cultural/ideological. The way that Malatesta understands the relationship between these three spheres can be interpreted in the key of the Theory of the Interdependency of Spheres, which contends that the social is a totality constituted from the result of the interdependent relationship between these three spheres. (Rocha, 2009; FAU-FAG, 2007) This interdependence can be seen in Malatestan work both in critical-destructive and propositional-constructive terms, demonstrating consistency between strategy and social analysis.

By analysing the society of his time, the author criticised domination in the three spheres. The different types of domination – exploitation, political-bureaucratic domination, coercion and cultural alienation – embody a generalised domination, of systemic character, each reinforcing the another. This interdependent conformation constitutes a system of domination in which the different parts are dynamically related. If domination is articulated and reinforced in this way emancipatory projects, the author argues, should also be carried out in an interdependent manner: "moral emancipation, political emancipation and economic emancipation are inseparable". (Malatesta, 1989b: 141)

By not establishing in advance a mandatory and necessary determination between the three spheres, Malatesta relativises other socialists' positions which argue, albeit in differentiated bases and levels, a determination, even if in the last instance, of the economic sphere in relation to others. For the author, in the social dynamic the economy certainly has the ability to influence the other spheres and, in many cases, it does influence them. However, one can not consider this process in a determinist or mechanic way in the infra-

and superstructure key; the other spheres also have – and at the same time – the ability to influence the economy and, also, in many cases, they do influence it. For Malatesta, the social constitutes an interdependent totality and should be evaluated as such. It is about sustaining a multi-causality that can only be understood in its entirely and according to the notion of interdependence, without the *a priori* adoption of monocausal frames of reference.

If on one hand Malatesta breaks definitively with the idealism that sought to explain society according to teleological and/or metaphysical bases, he also beaks, somehow, with the classical distinction of nineteenth century socialists between materialism and "idealism"; proposing, as stated, a reconciliation between the totality of the three spheres and recognising, together with the relevance of facts in relation to ideas, the importance of ideas in relation to facts. In criticising extreme positions that prioritise, in advance, the influence and determinism of one sphere in relation to others, Malatesta emphasises:

> "A few years ago, everyone was a 'materialist'. In the name of a 'science' that, definitively, made dogmas out of the general principles extracted from very incomplete positive knowledge, they made the pretension of explaining all of human psychology and the whole troubled history of mankind by simple basic material needs. [...] Today, the fashion has changed. Today, everyone is an 'idealist': everyone [...] treats man as if he were a pure spirit for whom to eat, to dress, to satisfy their physiological needs were negligible things." (Malatesta, 1989b: 138–139)

Besides calling into question the scientific generalisations elaborated on restricted bases, Malatesta criticises reductionist explanations; both those that deduce all material needs as well as those that ignore them completely. On the contrary, one should take into ac-

products in short supply – and a remuneration according to need (communism) when socialism is well established or with an abundance of production. However, the principle that one should not compromise "is that everyone has [access to] the instruments of production in order to be able to work without submitting to capitalist exploitation, big or small". A similar position is adopted in relation to the collectivisation of properties in the country; since there is no private property and exploitation peasants must be able to choose whether to work collectively or under the management of their own families on small holdings. "Forced communism", the author says, "would be the most odious tyranny that a human mind could conceive".

This process of socialisation, as pointed out, not only promotes a transformation of economic, but also political bases. Malatesta (2007i: 154) predicts that it will be necessary, "during the insurrection itself," to oppose "the constitution of any government, of any authoritarian centre" and, thus, put an end to the apparatus of political domination, the state. Decisions must be shared, made and executed by those concerned, who would coordinate themselves in self-managed bodies and would link up geographically in a federalist manner, with control from the base. This, he says, will be:

> "the work of volunteers, of various kinds of committees, of local, inter-communal, regional and national congresses that would provide the coordination of social life, taking the necessary decisions, advising and carrying out what they think will be useful but without having any right or means to impose their will by force and trusting, in order to find support, only in the services provided and in the needs of the situation as recognised by those concerned." (Malatesta, 2007j: 159)

To replace statist capitalism with self-managed/federalist socialism a coherent strategy is needed because, as noted, these objec-

tribution, the reorganisation of production according to the needs and desires of the various regions, the various communes and the various groups". The owners of the means of production must be expropriated and the property must be socialised, collectively managed according to the populations' needs.

> "We wanted that the workers of the land [...] would follow and intensify their work on their own account, establishing direct relations with the workers in industry and transport for the exchange of their products; that the industrial workers [...] would take possession of the factories and would continue and intensify work on their own account and that of the collectivity, thus transforming all factories [...] into producers of things that are urgent to meet the needs of the public; that the railway workers would continue conducting the trains, but in service of the community; that committees of volunteers or people elected by the population would take possession, under direct control of the masses, of all available facilities to accommodate in the best way possible at the time the most needy; that other committees, always under the direct control of the masses, could provide the supply and distribution of consumer goods." (Malatesta, 2008: 152)

Discussing the best way to resolve the question of the distribution of the products of labour, Malatesta (2007k: 101–102) does not strictly adopt collectivism or communism, but proposes a compromise: "Probably [...] all modes of sharing of products will be tested together [...] and will be interwoven and combined in various ways, until practice teaches which is the best way or which are the best ways." This means permitting a remuneration according to the work done (collectivism) in some circumstances – perhaps in the early stages of the process of socialisation or in relation to

count the inextricable relationship between the three spheres, between facts and ideas, and the determinations in different directions, according to different contexts, embodying totalities of systemic character. These systems, although they can be modified or transformed, have this character by permanently and dynamically relating their parts and by what happens in each one of their parts impacting the whole. Thus, society constitutes a system and the spheres its parts.

For Malatesta (2000a: 8), society is characterised by the different conflicts that give it structure; social reality always corresponds to a determined position of the forces that are at play. He considers that "the present society is the result of the secular struggles that men waged among themselves"; these struggles, these conflicts, are the most defining traits in shaping society. Therefore, Malatestan positions differ enormously from those that tend to minimise the role of conflicts in society and don't explain social change and transformation adequately.

However, for the author these conflicts, which exist permanently in any society, are not always necessarily class conflicts.

> "Conflicts of interests and passions exist and will always exist since, even if you were to manage to eliminate those in existence to the point of reaching an automatic agreement between men, other conflicts would present themselves to each new idea that might germinate in a human brain." (Malatesta, 2008: 102)

These social conflicts – which may involve classes, groups and individuals – are promoted by dynamic social forces which are constantly in motion, in relation, in contrast. For Malatesta (2008: 72), "history will move, as always, according to the resultant of forces"; that is, history is the history of social conflicts, of the relationships between the different social forces at play. It should be stressed that social force, in this sense, goes beyond the notion of brute

force, coercion and violence and includes elements from the three spheres.

It is, therefore, the dynamic conflicts between various social forces that shape a given reality; from a historic perspective, it is these conflicts that establish power relations, that shape dominant, hierarchical and subservient relations between classes, groups and individuals. Those who have the capacity to mobilise the greatest social force in these conflicts are able to impose themselves on others; it is an ongoing battle. (Malatesta, 2008: 52)

Understanding society as this dynamic and conflictive group of different social forces implies, for Malatesta (2008: 30), the abandonment of evolutionism and teleologism – both widely supported in the nineteenth century among socialists in general: "There is no natural law that compels evolution in a progressive instead of regressive direction: in nature there are progresses and regresses." The correlation of forces in society is permanently dynamic and, following normative evaluations, can be considered as progress or regress. This idea also supports the position already stated that capitalism and the state do not destroy themselves and that socialism is not a historic necessity generated, automatically and necessarily, by the contradictions of the state/capitalist system itself. (Malatesta, 2008: 75)

His position on the interdependence of spheres also seems to guide his conception of the relationship between social structure and human action/agency. Malatesta opposes mechanistic and structuralist approaches, which do not allow room for human will and according to which:

> "will – creative power whose nature and origin we can not understand […] – which contributes a little or a lot to the determination of the conduct of individuals and of society does not exist, it is no more than an illusion. Everything that was, is and will be, from the course of the stars to the birth and decadence of a civilisation,

2000a: 26) As the author argues, only anarchism offers adequate objectives and strategies for this transformation.

The revolutionary and socialist objectives of anarchism, as Malatesta conceives them, are achieved when there is a transformation of the deepest foundations of society; it is a process driven by the masses that establishes, through violence, economic and political socialisation; puts and end to capitalism, the state, social classes and creates a new society of self-managed, federalist, egalitarian and libertarian structures and establishes new social relations. This involves "modifying the way of living in society", "establishing relations of love and solidarity between men", "achieving the fullness of material, moral and intellectual development, not for an individual, nor for the members of a given class or party but for all human beings". (Malatesta, 2008: 93)

For a social revolution to occur it is necessary to overthrow "though violence, the institutions that keep them [the masses] in slavery"; for the author: "we need the cooperation of the masses to build a material force sufficient to achieve our specific objective, which is the radical change of the social organism thanks to the direct action of the masses". This revolution, therefore, is not the work of a party, but the masses; to carry it out the masses must self-organise independently and autonomously of institutions and individuals that promote other objectives. Their force accumulates in the struggles and emancipatory projects of the three social spheres: union strikes, cooperatives, community demands, armed insurrections, written and oral propaganda, educational projects etc. By means of a radicalisation of these struggles and through an increase in the strength of the oppressed the workers can defeat their enemies and promote the "expropriation of the owners of land and capital for the benefit of all and abolition of government". (Malatesta, 1989c: 55; 2001: 26)

For Malatesta (2007h: 95), "the very act of revolution" must carry out "the expropriation and socialisation of all existing wealth in order to proceed, without wasting time, to the organisation of dis-

nothing to do with individualism, but is the libertarian current of socialism.

This Malatestan anarchist socialism, in strategic and doctrinal/ideological terms, can be characterised by three axes: critique of capitalist and statist society, establishment of revolutionary and socialist objectives, promotion of a coherent strategy to replace the society of domination with freedom and equality.

The critique of capitalist and statist society was addresses when the author critically presented domination in the three spheres – exploitation, political-bureaucratic domination, coercion, cultural alienation – and emphasised the fundamental role of class domination. As noted, in this authoritarian and unequal society dominant classes and dominated classes are protagonists of the class struggle to the detriment of the latter. In relation to this critique, Malatesta emphasises:

> "We are enemies of capitalism which, relying on police and military protection, forces workers to let themselves be exploited by the owners of the means of production, and even to remain idle, or to suffer from hunger when the bosses have no interest in exploiting them. Therefore we are enemies of the state which is the coercive, that is, violent organisation of society." (Malatesta, 2008: 51)

Such a society implies a systemic violence of class character against the workers, who are violated daily; the capitalist/statist system promotes a "perpetual violence that maintains the slavery of the great mass of men". (Malatesta, 2007g: 55) Through the anarchist frame of reference one can consider this society horrible and unjust for the majority of people and that it could be better, as long as transformed through a social revolution that would modify its very foundations. This implies "radically abolishing the domination and exploitation of man by man". (Malatesta,

> from the scent of a rose to a mother's smile, from an earthquake to Newton's thought, from a tyrant's cruelty to the kindness of a saint, everything should, must and will succeed by fatal sequence of mechanical nature, which does not leave any possibility of variation." (Malatesta, 2007b: 256)

In these approaches, human action would be completely determined by social structure; the fate of a society would be established beforehand and any voluntary action would be nothing more than an illusion in accordance with the example of Spinoza cited by Malatesta (2008: 68), in the case of the stone that "on falling, would be aware of its fall and would believe it was falling because it wanted to fall".

Differently, for the author human will and action have significant potential in the shaping of society: "history is made by men", he affirms. And the basis of human action is will; "it is necessary to admit a creative force, independent of the physical world and of mechanic laws and this force is called will". A fundamental element of the cultural/ideological sphere, will drives human action and can inform processes of social change and transformation. It can be, and generally is, influenced by the hegemonic positions (economic, political etc.) present, but is not completely determined by them; there is room for consciousness and for action towards change and social transformation. (Malatesta, 2008:175, 29)

Such positions caused Malatesta to be accused several times of being a complete voluntarist, an "idealist" in the sense of defending a transformation based on a change in consciousness. However, these positions seem misleading. While still recognising the relevance of the cultural/ideological sphere in general, both in processes of domination and of emancipation, and although he defends that, in this processes, will constitutes a central element, Malatesta (2008: 29, 104) recognises its limits: "surely this will is not omnipotent, seeing as though it is conditioned". A process

of transformation does not depend solely on will, but on the established structural limits, not only in the cultural/ideological and political/juridical/military spheres but, principally, in the economic sphere: "Every anarchist, every socialist understands the economic fatalities that limit man today, and every good observer sees that individual rebellion is impotent against the force predominant in the social environment". However, he notes that "it is equally certain that, without the rebellion of the individual – which associates with other rebellions to resist the environment and try to transform it – this environment would never change". Human action, therefore, would explain in large part social changes and transformations.

Malatesta's positions propose a reconciliation between human action and social structure and support both his social analysis and his revolutionary strategies.[7]

Applying these ideas to the analysis of modern capitalist and statist society the author notes that the fundamental aspect of this society is the domination in the three spheres. In the economic sphere, Malatesta (2000a: 17) points out the exploitation embodied by salaried labour: "The oppression that today weighs most directly on the workers [...] is economic oppression", that is, "the exploitation that bosses and traders exert over labour, thanks to the hoarding of all the great means of production and exchange". In the political/juridical/military sphere, Malatesta (2001: 15) notes the political-bureaucratic domination and the coercion caused by the state and which take away from the people "the management of their own affairs, the direction of their own conduct, the care of their own security" entrusting them to "a few individuals that, by usurpation or delegation, find themselves vested with the right to make laws about everything and for everyone, to coerce the people to conform to this, making use of the force of everyone for this purpose". In the cultural/ideological sphere he criticises the cultural

[7] Cf. Malatesta, 2008: 75, 193; 2007c: 170–171; 2000a: 14.

pressed classes a framework for judging capitalist and statist society, particularly during the nineteenth century, for the establishment of revolutionary, socialist and libertarian objectives, and for the conception of strategies and tactics capable of impelling a social transformation in this direction. It is in this way that one can understand Malatesta's statement (2009a: 4) that, "anarchism is the method to achieve anarchy through freedom", that is, it is a doctrine/ideology that offers workers the possibility of reaching a different future society, based on self-management and federalism, through a consistent method.

Anarchism, therefore, is a type of socialism; there is therefore a partial link between one and the other: "Socialism and anarchism are not opposite or equivalent terms, but terms strictly linked to one another, as is the end with its necessary means, and as is the substance with the form in which it is embodied." (Malatesta, 2007f: 142) Anarchism, thus understood, is essentially social and has no ties to the individualism that, according to the author, has bourgeois roots, thus, affirming the idea of individual freedom promotes bourgeois mobility; in many cases, encouraging individuals from the oppressed camp to become new rulers. According to the author, the individualists "do not recoil at the idea of being, in turn, oppressors; they are individuals who feel trapped in the current society and come to despise and hate any kind of society". Acknowledging it to be "absurd to want to live outside the human collectivity, they seek to submit all men, the whole of society to their own will and to the satisfaction of their passions"; "they want 'to live their life'; they ridicule the revolution and any future aspiration: they want to enjoy their life 'here and now', at any price and at the expense of whoever it may be; they would sacrifice the whole of humanity for a single hour of 'intense life'". For him, these individualists "are rebels, but not anarchists. They have the mentality and sentiment of the frustrated bourgeois and, when they can, they effectively transform themselves into bourgeoises and no less dangerous." (Malatesta and Fabbri, 2003: 78) Thus, anarchism has

Anarchism and strategy

For Malatesta, anarchism is a historical doctrine/ideology and not a philosophy or science. Accordingly, he sustains that state and capitalist domination, unfolding in the three spheres, provided a context that allowed the emergence of anarchism – not automatically, but with the action of a considerable section of the oppressed – as part of the socialist movement; supporting the need for the transformation of injustice, exploitation, inequality, coercion, alienation and authoritarianism into a just, egalitarian and libertarian system that he called "anarchy". Thus, anarchism arises in a specific context, when the oppressed classes establish relationships of solidarity with each other, sustaining that injustices are social, not natural or divine, that it is possible to modify them through human action and that the positions of other socialist currents are insufficient or mistaken.

> "Anarchism, in its origins, aspirations and its methods of struggle is not necessarily linked to any philosophical system. Anarchism was born of the moral revolt against social injustice. When men appeared who felt stifled by the social environment in which they were forced to live, who felt the pain of others as if it were their own, and when these men were convinced that a large part of human suffering is not an inevitable consequence of inexorable natural or supernatural laws but, on the contrary, are derived from social realities dependent on human will, and that they can be eliminated by human effort, the way then opened that would lead to anarchism." (Malatesta, 2009a: 4)

As much as anarchists have used, from a historical perspective, different theoretical-methodological tools for understanding reality, one could say that anarchism afforded to a sector of the op-

alienation shaped by religion, by education and by sentiments like patriotism, which reinforce and legitimise dominant interests. Besides the economic and political oppression, he emphasises, it is possible to "oppress men acting on their intelligence and their feelings, which constitutes religious or academic power" (Malatesta, 2001: 23); "the government and dominant classes make use of patriotic sentiment [...] in order to make their power better accepted by the people and to drag the people off to colonial wars and initiatives undertaken for their own benefit".

As previously pointed out, these different types of domination are related, mutually influencing and supporting each other, supporting the system of domination in question through the interdependence of their spheres.

In this society, characterised by conflicts and dynamic forces at play, social classes, although they do not explain everything, are very relevant. For Malatesta, it can not be considered, *a priori*, that in all the social conflicts that constitute a society social classes necessarily constitute the most important category, or even the most appropriate for the explanations; however, in many cases they are. That is, it is, for him, about considering social conflicts the most relevant aspects of society and emphasising that, in many cases, social classes constitute agents of the first order in these conflicts, even though class conflicts should not be treated in a reductionist way with the expectation that, from them, it is possible to deduce all the explanations of other conflicts.

One should nevertheless point out that, in agreement with the notion of interdependency of spheres, social classes, from a Malatestan perspective, do not constitute an exclusively economic category:

> "Via a complicated network of struggles of all kinds, invasions, wars, rebellions, repressions, concessions made and revoked, association of the vanquished, united to defend themselves, and of the winners,

> to attack, the current state of society was reached in which a few men hold the earth and all social wealth hereditarily, while the great mass, deprived of everything, is frustrated and oppressed by a handful of owners.
>
> On this depends the state of misery in which the workers are generally to be found, and all the evils that arise: ignorance, crime, prostitution, physical wasting, moral abjection, premature death. Hence the creation of a special class (government) that, provided the material means of repression, has as its mission to legalise and defend the owners against the demands of the proletariat. It serves, then, as the force that has to arrogate to itself privileges and to submit, if it can do so, to its own supremacy the propertied class. From this follows the formation of another special class (the clergy), which through a series of fables concerning the will of God, future life, etc. seeks to lead the oppressed to docilely support the oppressor, the government, the interests of the owners and their own." (Malatesta, 2000a: 8–9)

In this way the criteria used for the establishment of social classes include ownership of the means of production and economic exploitation, but are not limited to them; ownership of the means of administration, of coercion, of control and of knowledge and, thus, political-bureaucratic domination, cultural alienation and coercion are also fundamental criteria. That is why he places among the dominant classes not only the owners (bourgeoisie) but also the government and clergy. Among the dominated classes he includes not only waged workers from urban industries, but also workers from other sectors of the cities, rural workers, peasants and the poor in general. These two groups of oppressors and oppressed, dominant classes and dominated classes, oppressor classes and oppressed classes, propel the permanent class struggle in society. The class struggle constitutes, according to the positions previously put forward, one of the most relevant characteristics of contemporary societies even though, as also pointed out, it is not possible to reduce all social conflicts to conflicts between classes.

For Malatesta (2008: 120–121), "the totality of individuals who inhabit a territory is divided into different classes that have opposing interest and sentiments and whose antagonism grows as the consciousness of the injustice of which they are victims develops within the submitted classes." Among the ample groups of dominant classes and dominated classes, which encompass the whole group of concrete social classes in each context, there is constant antagonism and the more class consciousness develops, the more this conflict is evident. Class consciousness is, for Malatesta (2008: 197), a fundamental element of the class struggle; it potentiates transformative processes: "the struggle becomes a class struggle", he says, "when a superior morality, an ideal of justice and a greater understanding of the advantages that solidarity can provide to each individual causes all those who find themselves in a similar position to fraternise". Thus, the cultural/ideological elements are added to the economic and political, giving way to the class struggle that unfolds in the three spheres.

The processes of change and transformation, in the Malatestan perspective, depend on the social forces that these groups are able to apply to the conflicts, both for changes – in the case of the conquest of reforms – as well as for transformations – in the case of the social revolution – which reaches the socialisation of the three social spheres.