

# **The Question of Neoplatformism**

**Critiques, Mystifications, Solutions**

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Having recently read the last part of the article, “Between Platform and Party”<sup>1</sup> by Patrick Rossineri, recently published by the comrades of the *Grupo Libertad*<sup>2</sup> in Buenos Aires, I felt the need to air some opinions that, like the conclusions and essays referred to at the end of Rossineri’s text<sup>3</sup>, must be viewed primarily in the context of contemporary platformism or, more strictly speaking, *neoplatformism*.

I think that the texts referred to above merit serious consideration on the political plane, since they naturally affect—now and perhaps also over the long term—relations between groups. Such a careful reading is surely an obvious task for those situated specifically within the anarchist movement, especially for those who identify with the two opposite extremes mentioned in the article’s title, but it should also be read by all those who understand the need for revolutionary regroupment. Neither the problems and solutions posed by platformism, nor the discussions within organized anarchism, are processes or events that can be explained by ideological or party reasons, but must be understood as elements of the historical movement of the class struggle and of the attempts on the part of the proletariat to constitute itself as an autonomous subject.

The current members of the ICAC (International Circle of Anti-Bolshevik Communists)—Ricardo Fuego and myself—have maintained or are now maintaining relations with two groups that support platformism, but whose positions and attitudes are strikingly distinct: the Libertarian Communist Alliance of Mexico, with whom we have engaged in a heated polemic exchange over the issue of the party<sup>4</sup>, and the Libertarian Socialist Group of Mexico<sup>5</sup>, with whom we have had good relations for some time (although this has not caused us to overlook our political and theoretical differences). Our differences with respect to the question of autonomous proletarian liberation, which has been a major part of the polemic within the anarchist movement since the publication of the Platform, were addressed some time ago in an appendix to my article, “Against Political Fetishism”, published in October 2006. In that article, however, I approached the problem more from a theoretical and historical than from a political and contemporary perspective, and when I did refer to the latter point of view I took as my reference point what may be called dogmatic, conservative and regressive neoplatformism, like that of the Mexican Libertarian Communist Alliance and similar groups. I will therefore now attempt to correct this shortcoming. I shall also devote some attention to an error that I think Patrick’s article also exhibits, that is, an identification of the original platformism with neoplatformism.

Doctrinal unanimity has never defined the politics of any movement or current. This was even true of Leninism, where doctrinal uniformity was considered to be an essential value and its preservation was frequently the object of disciplinary measures. Despite all efforts to the contrary, each individual or collective of the proletarian class develops his or its consciousness on the basis of practical experience rather than programmatic documents or intellectual works, which can only give shape to and orient reflection and the mental representation of experience, which always contains all kinds of unique aspects. We must therefore constantly take into ac-

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Rossineri, “Entre la Plataforma y el Partido: las tendencias autoritarias y el anarquismo” [“Between the Platform and the Party: Authoritarian Tendencies and Anarchism”]. Published in *Libertad!*, a publication of the Grupo Anarquista Libertad, Buenos Aires, Nos. 45 (Nov.-Dec. 2007) to 49 (Sept.-Oct. 2008).

<sup>2</sup> [www.geocities.com/libertad@yahoo.com.ar](http://www.geocities.com/libertad@yahoo.com.ar)

<sup>3</sup> I am referring to *Algunas reflexiones sobre el extravío teórico ideológico en el pensamiento acrata contemporáneo*, by Gustavo Rodríguez (Dec. 2007) and *Los sediciosos despertares de la anarquía*, by Daniel Barret.

<sup>4</sup> See: Roi Ferreiro, “Contra todos los partidos, por la autoemancipación de la clase” [“Against All Parties, For the Self-Emancipation of the Class”], August 2005.

<sup>5</sup> [webgsl.wordpress.com](http://webgsl.wordpress.com)

count the distance that always stands between theoretical generalizations and concrete historical praxis.

## I

It is upon the basis of the last-mentioned perspective that I believe contemporary platformism must be understood. Therefore, although I concur with the most widely shared critiques of platformism, I think that the articles referred to above (Patrick, Daniel and Gustavo) adopt a predominantly abstract approach. This prevents them from recognizing the positive historical reasons behind the re-emergence of platformism as well as concentrating on the search for solutions to the practical problems at hand. I did not specifically address these problems in “Against Political Fetishism”, but this was primarily because these problems were essentially the same ones that were identified and dealt with long before in relation to the supersession of the forms of the traditional workers movement (including the still dominant anarchism and bolshevism). This has already been done in specific documents<sup>6</sup>, so I saw no reason to spend more time on that topic in that article. It was, however, pointed out that, at a historical-political level:

“the current existence of certain platformist nuclei in some Latin American countries is linked to the reductionist and backward character of the platformist positions on the vanguard-masses relation and on the organization of the vanguard, which fits in well with a historically less mature workers movement and a situation of a heightening of class conflict on an underdeveloped capitalist base.”

One may or may not agree with this analysis, but it has nothing whatsoever to do with Eurocentrism. It suffices to say that the national context of my country, Galicia, is not above that level, as well as that my experience gives me a pretty practical and vivid idea of what I am talking about. So, elaborating on an implicit aspect of this assessment, I think that it is erroneous to compare the Latin American situation with that of Europe, such as implicitly takes place when one reports on the presence of neoplatformist groups in the world. A different social situation must lead to groups of distinct character, despite doctrinal similarities. And although the highly developed countries of Europe may have a context characterized by the more advanced development of the subsumption of life to capital, and thus a more subtle and profound degree of alienation and the rule of capital over the proletariat, it must also be pointed out that relatively less degrading exploitation and material living conditions still give the ruling class a good cushion against social rebellions. The example of France and *Alternative Libertaire* cited by Patrick seems apt to me.<sup>7</sup> Either this group is of the moral witness type and has no political presence, or it does have a political presence because its real praxis is subsumed in reformism. The Latin American case is totally different. Although social experience takes place there in the context of a less mature capitalism with respect to its forms of alienation and domination—it is nonetheless true that these tendencies are perceptible in every country today, at least for the urban population, thanks to the internationalization of capital, and class conflict is generally much more intense and lively, due to the more dependent nature of their economies, the damage caused by the international

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<sup>6</sup> For precise contributions on this topic, see: Cooperación Obreira, *Proyecto de programa*, 2001–2003; Grupo de Comunistas de Consejos de Galiza, *La Red de Grupos Obreros (R-GGOO)*, 2006; R. Ferreiro/R. Fuego, *El reagrupamiento revolucionario hoy*, 2006. Or, the *Propuesta Práctica*, by the International Circle of Anti-Bolshevik Communists.

<sup>7</sup> Generally speaking, the situation of the French working class, including the marginalized immigrant sectors, is comparatively better than, for example, that of the average worker in Spain.

division of labor and its combination with the tendency towards decline of capitalism on a world scale. This is why neoplatformism has emerged there as a force to reckon with and, furthermore, whatever it may mean, it cannot be interpreted in an ideological manner. To insist on doing so would imply a general lack of understanding of the tendencies or currents of proletarian praxis as historical expressions of a determinate social-material context.

Although I could certainly indulge in a good old-fashioned lambasting of the semi-bolshevik notions of platformism, this does not lead me to overlook the fact that the greater part of today's anarchist movement is dominated by currents of reformist praxis, however much its habitual ideological radicalism may at times conceal this. For the most part it presents a conservative character, manifested for example by the fact that the more active radical currents sustain a minority or isolated status (which is in turn obscured by the apparent diversity of the tendencies that claim to be anarchist<sup>8</sup>). It could not be otherwise: the majority tendencies of a social or social-political movement, in a situation that is neither revolutionary nor pre-revolutionary—and is not even close to such a situation—are always reformists. In such a context, where radical tendencies have relevance it is only in isolated circumstances or amidst an emerging conflict favorable to a general radicalization. And such a context inhibits its development and maturation, which explains why they can retain superannuated forms.

Therefore, my statement quoted above does not mean that neoplatformism is “in and of itself” absolutely regressive—even if, in the abstract, we presuppose an absolute identity between original doctrine and concrete praxis. The progressive or regressive nature of a current or group must be evaluated on the basis of the way it inserts itself into the concrete historical-social dynamic—which also obliges one to consider national or local differences:

“Faced with a more powerful and resistant rule, faced with a class composition that is vastly more complex than it was only 30 years ago, faced with a whole series of practical and theoretical incoherencies, as well as gaps, within their own groups, the forms of activity and thought of the past are totally impotent, and the best proof of this is the fact that they do not succeed in growing even when favorable conditions obtain, or when they do grow, they do so at the cost of a progressive renunciation of their original revolutionary intentions. It is true that this intellectual and practical legacy is a starting point for revolutionary thought, but it cannot be either the point from which its attacks are launched against capitalist power or its crowning achievement. To treat it in this manner would amount to a practical demonstration that we are not dealing with effectively revolutionary thinking, but conservative thinking. It would in addition be idealist thinking by adopting the belief that certain forms from the past could preserve their revolutionary essence in an abstract way, as if it was an immanent quality of ideas to represent such forms and that it is through ideas that these forms have been passed down to us today. With this fetishistic transposition one immediately loses sight of the perspective of concrete analysis and one falls back into the practical idealism that, unlike and in opposition to theoretical idealism, proclaims as a mystifying justification a materialist perspective. And as if this were not enough, by doing all these things, a group, a fraction, or an organization thereby demonstrates that it has not emerged as an expression of the vanguard, that is, as a sector in advance of the rest of the class movement which is capable of driving the latter forward, but is a regressive sector, which

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<sup>8</sup> Some of which are not an active part of the proletarian movement and are disconnected from the class struggle. Others are only superficially different and their praxis totally converges with the prevailing model.

has arisen not from the most mature and profound creativity of the class as a whole, but from desperation and confusion, and that it is not the bearer of new energies for progress.”

“The case could also arise, however, of a real expression of the vanguard which is still immature in a context of major generalized retreat, whose theoretical, organizational and practical forms of activity still assume characteristics from the past; this would then bear contradictions that would have to be overcome in order to be able to act as a revolutionary vanguard and not, in every case, as a reformist vanguard.”

This was directed against those who hold any kind of fetishist adherence to the ideological perspective of history. As I said, any emerging current, whether or not it starts from the basis of a very precise prior inheritance, can stagnate and ossify, or it can even go backwards. In the case of neoplatformism as in others, the distinction between regressive and progressive currents or groups is what is pertinent for us when it comes to assessing their role with respect to the general revolutionary progress. On this plane, I think that the categorization of neoplatformist groups with respect to their proximity to Leninism is superfluous. This is because, first, it ignores the developmental tendency of these groups, which is the most important thing. Second, it appears to presuppose that the non-platformist groups represent a more progressive force, which I doubt and will try to explain why in detail below.

## II

As I pointed out in the first paragraph of the long quotation above, from my point of view those who continue to uphold positions identical to those of a past era may appear to be more or less advanced when subjected to an abstract comparison of positions with existing groups or organizations. But this does not tell us where they stand in the context of historical development, because it does not take into account the effective historical coherence of those groups and organizations in question. Thus, upon a more backward doctrinal foundation and a less coherent internal praxis, a collective may engage in activity which responds much better to historical necessities than another collective which, in comparison, starts from a more advanced doctrinal basis and enjoys a more coherent internal praxis. In Spain we have abundant examples of this kind. For example, no one doubts that the CNT is a very assemblyist trade union, but it is also true that there can be no doubt that its actions are not oriented by a revolutionary program and strategy—which is the reason why it still exists within the current socio-political framework and is also the reason why it was not liquidated by the State during the transition from Franco’s dictatorship to the parliamentary monarchy.

When it is a matter of discussing newly emerging or dynamic rather than stagnant groups, their progressive or regressive nature is not directly correlated with their doctrinal points of reference. As I said above, theories provide means of expression for experience; but time, effort and study are required in order to undertake the historical adaptation of an inherited theoretical form and effective practical experience. The choice of one or another theory obviously depends on practical-historical consciousness, that is, on the practical criteria and goals deduced from social experience. For this reason, the formal acceptance of a concrete theory has a great deal to do with the level of social-historical development. But this question of form has no direct relation to the quality of practical consciousness, with what is essential, in the case of the truth of the revolutionary aspiration. Despite the distortions rooted in inadequate representations

and forms of thought, I have no doubt that the workers who, through their example, have been historically defining revolutionary praxis by trying to appropriate their conditions of life, had a true consciousness of what their liberation consisted in, even if the latter was not sufficiently concretized and their praxis, consequently, was not sufficiently coherent and effective. There is an important difference between knowing what one wants and knowing how to achieve it in a given context.

It is therefore normal for people to start by first supporting those theories that give them practical solutions that conform to their praxis within the present situation. Then, from this starting point they will tend to move forward from one theory to another as their experience is enriched and the latter enables them to make distinctions between greater or lesser degrees of effectiveness in relation to practical problems, until they reach a higher level where they recognize that the most relevant quality of a theory is its *intellectual effectiveness* (representational, analytic and prospective) because this developmental journey that I have schematically described will have made it possible for them to evaluate and organize in advance all the contributions of lesser theories.<sup>9</sup> In this way, support for a more or less specific theoretical current does not mean, for those who think for themselves, that this current is always or necessarily the most true such as it has existed until now, but only that it is the one that has proven to be most useful to them for expressing and developing rational understanding. Thus, the polemics for and against Marxism or Anarchism, or in this case platformism—that is, the polemics that reduce the question to “yes or no”, “pro or con”—assume a false starting point, they are self-referential, instead of focusing on promoting the historical-material coherence of praxis with the social context within which it is developing.

Today it is erroneous and impoverishing not only to proclaim the Marxism-anarchism opposition in the abstract, but also to maintain a fundamentalist doctrinal and political distinction between them. History took on the responsibility for liquidating the former abstract opposition, from the moment when the question ceased to be about which theoretical current is to exercise hegemony over the proletarian movement, but what we can do to build a revolutionary movement, for the purposes of which the recipes and analyses of the past carried out by the two great currents of revolutionary thought have proven to be insufficient. It is still useful to discuss their differences and connections, their errors and their virtues, because an acknowledged unitary theory has yet to be developed; but it is an obstacle to this effort to think that either of them can by itself contribute the sufficient foundations for conceiving current praxis. The latter has been made obvious by the spontaneous historical process of the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century. Anarchism and Marxism have mutually permeated one another, a fact that is more evident in their more consistently revolutionary tendencies. It is, of course, true that this has also presupposed an admixture with the historical interpretations dominant at any particular time. This explains the Leninist influence present in platformism, but also the spontaneist and educationist influence that is so evident in the autonomist Marxist milieu.

These defects can be completely overcome by way of historical development. But the “ideological guardians” of either camp or their subdivisions, have always sought to deny the spontaneous

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<sup>9</sup> I am referring to the instrumental value of theory, to theory as a methodology, which does not have a direct relation with the particular representations for which it is put to use, because the creation of representations is determined by practical consciousness. As for the proposed schema which proceeds from lower to higher theoretical forms, to affirm this I base myself on my experience and my development, which has led me to plunge deep into Marxist thought and its later coherent elaborations.

and enriching character of the above-mentioned doctrinal interpenetration and to discredit those who support it. In the case of the platformist current, the problem is exacerbated because in this case it lays claim to Bakunin, not as a representative of a “pure” anarchism, but as the integrator of elements of Marxist thought and Proudhonian conceptions. This is by no means an invention; it is documented. Nor is it an invention that Marx was also influenced by anti-statist currents and had already developed anti-bureaucratic positions in his youth.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, in both theoretical instances there are unresolved contradictions, which has allowed these “ideological guardians” to transform the incoherencies, tensions and reciprocal critiques into the well-known conflicting fetishes of the “idealist Bakunin” and the “authoritarian Marx”, which they then utilize as a measuring rod to distinguish between followers and opponents, conduct that has done everything imaginable to make it harder to achieve proletarian unity and has proven to be much more sectarian than enlightening.

Attempts to safeguard the “revolutionary purity” of theory by preventing its “contamination” by outside ideas reflect a situation of political weakness and a quasi-mythological mentality. According to this view, it is ideas and not living activity that determine the revolutionary character of the proletarian movement or its organizations—a concept against which Bakunin warned insistently, having seen precisely an incoherence of this type in the political praxis of the Marxists. Purity of thought, in whatever manner it is conceived, does not guarantee an answer for how to address practical problems, nor is it even any sort of criterion for evaluating a change of course in thought, except in religious thinking. In the latter the criterion for truth is not praxis, but specific orthodoxy in contrast to which diverging opinions are presented as “heterodox”, as counter-assertions, which the former consigns to the category of “sin” while the orthodox postulates are identified with “purity” or “goodness”.

All of this may seem to be mere foolishness, and that is just what it is. Such views are expressions of alienated thought, thought that is subordinated to political interests that have become autonomous, that is, party interests rather than class interests. “Contamination” has always been a result of the fact that distinct revolutionary currents form part of the same general social movement. This “contamination” does not represent desires for intellectual eclecticism, but the needs of the masses who, by approaching doctrines from a practical point of view, have naturally tended to recast them. It is true that the product of this operation may be progressive or regressive, but those who invariably categorize this phenomenon as regressive have usually not distinguished themselves by serious historical-practical analysis and also often hold on to conservative perspectives that are opposed to efforts to actualize revolutionary praxis on the theoretical plane and on that of theoretical activity. To summarize, revolutionary theory cannot preserve its revolutionary effectiveness unless it connects with practical efforts to develop revolutionary praxis in the given historical context; the efforts of the purists only impede this process and therefore also hinder the historical maturation of thought as well as action.

For my part, I have preferred to define myself as a communist rather than an anarchist because I view the capital-labor opposition at the economic level as the primary form of the spontaneous conflict that could impel a revolutionary process on a mass scale. I have also referred to myself

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<sup>10</sup> Which is why his arguments in favor of the Commune as a revolutionary political form were already prefigured in his writings of 1844, which makes it clear that the Marxist theory of the extinction of the State was no mere rhetorical device. To acquire a more profound grasp of this issue one may consult a notebook I assembled consisting of a very extensive selection of quotations from Marx and Engels: *Una revolución contra el estado mismo* [A Revolution against the State Itself].



as being within the council communist tradition, because I consider that it has represented the most advanced theoretical understanding of the most important problems we have to face today. Besides this, however, I have never partaken of any doctrinal uniformity nor has it been my opinion that the defense of such uniformity has anything progressive about it. It seems to me that to criticize platformism for including Marxist ideas—or, rather, for doing so explicitly—is a sectarian error and the debate must be oriented around the Leninist or social democratic features of those ideas. Nor does it seem correct to use Bakunin’s arguments against Marx’s theories in order to oppose the inclusion of such ideas without at the same time making an effort of critical reevaluation, above all if one refers, as Patrick does, to the fragmentary and even “confused” character of Bakunin’s theoretical reflections in order to refute the platformist concept of the “anarchist party”.

Nor is there any attempt in the three articles under discussion (Patrick, Barret and Rodríguez) to distinguish between the original Marxist theories and their Leninist interpretations. This could have been accomplished simply by referring to the non-Leninist Marxist revolutionaries of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, not to mention precursors such as William Morris in Britain. Such an effort would allow for expanding horizons beyond the reductionism and the unilateral declarations regarding the “orthodox” Leninist. I assume the failure to do so can be explained by a lack of interest. It is still thought that “Marxism” is not the affair of anarchists, except when it threatens their particular “bailiwick” (and most Marxists do likewise).

However, from the moment that Leninism began to constitute (and to a certain degree it still does) a dominant influence on the extreme left, the task of freeing the Marxist revolutionary theorizations from subsequent ideological deformations and clarifying its true meaning and intent, is no longer a question of intellectuals or sects: *it becomes a basic political task for all those who fight for autonomous proletarian liberation*. In the case of platformism, its supersession requires a deeper scrutiny of the contradictions posed by its political praxis not only by contrasting it with other concepts of anarchist practice, but also by contrasting those Marxist elements that may be present with the anti-Leninist interpretation of Marxist thought. This would allow many points to become clear, and would create more favorable conditions for fruitful discussion.

### III

Since Leninism not merely falsifies but distorts the Marxist categories, it bequeathed to neoplatformism a progressive side that most other currents of anarchism lack, which could be the main source of its appeal. More precisely, it actively combines progressive elements of Marxism and anarchism in a more coherent way than the prevailing anarchism, which renounces or marginalizes Marxism. The reaffirmation of the class struggle, historical materialism, class organization and class unity, is a progressive attitude because these are values<sup>11</sup> that underwent a crisis in the general defeat of the 1970s and were diluted in the ocean of postmodernism—although to some “experts”, who confuse books with reality, it seems that this never happened, which is why they want to convince people that neoplatformism is rooted in a “juvenile” paucity (which curiously

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<sup>11</sup> By saying that this reaffirmation is progressive I am not claiming that the form in which it is carried out is also progressive. In many respects the neoplatformist formulations are also a reprise of the leftist worldview of the 60s-70s which must be overcome.

brings us back to Lenin's thesis of the "infantile disorder" and reestablishes it as an analytical criterion). It is in this sense that Gustavo Rodríguez points out that:

"We are witnessing—in Latin America—a basically juvenile anarchist 'movement' which lacks a model of organization and action and which is shot through with a certain ideological confusion; or, more precisely, with an ideological elaboration that is considerably retrograde with respect to our current needs."

He says more or less the same thing in connection with the movement's naiveté.<sup>12</sup> The culminating point of his critique of neoplatformism, by referring to "blind alleys" and "deviations of thought" reflects the same logic that characterizes Lenin's famous pamphlet. For those of us who perceive the need for a long-lasting revolutionary regroupment, and understand that today's revolutionary groups are tiny minorities or groupuscules and are geographically dispersed (since we do not confuse ideological fictions or the "fictitious movement" with real historical praxis), it is hard not to see that the classical issues upon which neoplatformism was founded are primordial questions of revolutionary praxis, for which the other anarchist currents have failed to provide satisfactory answers/solutions. In addition, the latter have promoted a distancing, and even an animosity, with respect to Marxism in general, which contributes to the inhibition of any effort to advance toward better solutions. Of course, none of these problems can be resolved with abstract declarations about the need for new forms of organization and action that do not transcend the framework of debate and incipient formulaic apologetics, as Gustavo attempts to do.

As for naiveté, this could very well be a higher expression of revolutionary sincerity. Both can be present at the same time. And if I have to choose between mistaken innocents and coarse salesmen smelling of tradition, I prefer the former, because at least they represent a living movement. It would be helpful if the authors quoted above would clarify this politically. A progressive tradition is preferable to a regressive one, and in this sense I have no doubt that platformism is, theoretically, regressive with respect to traditional anarchism and its syncretic focus, which platformism brands as reactionary and false. But I also think that a progressive naiveté, draped in a regressive tradition, is preferable to any traditionalism, which is conservative by definition although, in relative terms, it can temporarily serve the task of recovering lost or marginalized lessons and theories.

The authentic neoplatformists, that is, those who were attracted to platformism as a result of their experience over the last few decades rather than for reactionary reasons—despair over the fiasco of traditional anarchism and more generally over the historical defeat of the old workers movement—are correct to seek and to demand a precise social focus, theoretical method and organizational formula. Even the insurrectionists, who may have until now been the most politically advanced current within anarchism (despite serious blind spots), were trying to move in the same

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<sup>12</sup> "In the first group—the one that is most removed from Leninism—are the European organizations like the Italians of the *Federazione de Comunisti Anarchici*, the French comrades of *Alternative Libertaire*, the almost unknown Spaniards of the *Organización Anarco-Comunista Andaluza*, the U.S. and Canadian anarchists of the *Northeastern Federation of Anarchist Communists* (NEFAC), the English *Anarchist Communist Federation* (ACF), the Mexicans of the *Grupo Socialista Libertario* (GSL) and the above-mentioned *Workers Solidarity Movement* (WSM) in Ireland... Here, it is necessary to make it clear that I do not think that any of the groups that fit into this first 'circuit' have been infiltrated or are 'diabolically' inspired but, quite simply, that they are naïve in their formulations and are guided by a yearning for alliances which do not have much of a basis for a long term project; although I must also stress that this does not exonerate them from criticism. Their tacit disagreement with the postulates and principles of the anarchist project situates them as well on the terrain of 'deviation'." (Gustavo Rodríguez)

direction, although they obviously underrated the methodological dimension. They, too, insisted on a class perspective, although not in a fetishistic way, and developed their own organizational positions, putting the emphasis on “informality”. The rest of anarchism has instead remained in a kind of stagnant condition (or has fallen prey to postmodernist detours of decomposition), which is explained by its practical character as a reformist movement which expresses aspirations for freedom, but does not feel the need for a revolutionary struggle in the here and now, viewing the latter as a future “utopia”.

From the point of view of the attempt to provide solutions for the three fundamental questions mentioned above, Patrick’s article is very good as critical historiography, but does not contribute solutions relevant for our time. It does not attempt to combine criticism with positive creativity. It furthermore implies, either by omission or intentionally, that he thinks that the traditional schemas, or the precarious formulas that have been able to emerge empirically in the present era, continue to be or have now become a sufficient basis for current progress: whether it is the Iberian model of the CNT-FAI or the Argentine FORA, or other models with less historical evidence for their generative or auxiliary role in mass movements, such as “coordinadoras”, networks, “black blocs”, etc. For example, Gustavo clearly states his opposition to anarchosyndicalism and “especifismo” and appears to declare his support for the latter, more recently evolved type of model (“coordinadoras”, etc.). But he does not bother to analyze the close bond that exists between the historical situation of weakness, the fleeting nature and the structural paucity of this kind of model, and the more or less ephemeral or sporadic purposes of the struggles for which its various manifestations were designed.

Naturally, “pragmatic” people always do things with the thought of what it is that they concretely want to achieve. But we cannot think in this manner, because what we want to achieve cannot be predicted in advance except along basic and general lines. We cannot say at this time what kind of society we are going to build, reducing it to a recipe or a list of social measures. Therefore, for us organization does not possess a merely pragmatic value, but a *constituent* one: it allows for the preservation and extension of cooperation and the subjective processes that will concretely determine the realization of our goals. More generally, one must not confuse the less permanent and less cohesive organization characteristic of a state of weakness, as formally manifested today in the form of “coordinadoras” of independent groups or “networks” that engage in sporadic joint activities, with a solution of the problems we have posed.

Much the same is true if we consider questions relating to social focus and theoretical methodology—in other words, our theoretical worldview. The need for a theoretical worldview that is logically consistent and precise at the level of intellectual categories is not a mere whim. We are not talking about inventing a jargon that the masses will find hard to understand. The only jargon that the masses understand “*a priori*” is the language of domination, whose categories exclude the antagonistic articulation of thought. A quite obvious example, one that is unfortunately still relevant, is the superficial understanding of the problem of proletarian liberation that lacks the category of *self-alienation*, which leads to all kinds of false views about the question of why the proletarian movement is the way it is, among which we can distinguish the following two extreme examples:

- 1) Denial of the formal freedom of individuals that characterizes mature capitalist society, consequently imputing the responsibility for the internal problems of the class movement to autonomous external causes (the power of the enemy, the obstacles posed by and the manipulative activities of the traditional bureaucratic organizations, etc.);

2) The view that this formal individual freedom is not only real at a *formal* level, but also at an *effective* level, thereby leading to the interpretation that holds that the absence of a revolutionary dynamic or radicalization can only be due to a failure of the will, which is explained by mere ignorance or by the disinformation peddled by the system's cultural apparatus.

Both viewpoints initially favor the implementation of elitist practices, and their subsequent failure elicits demoralization. For both, the root problem, concerning how the proletariat is ruled by the products of its activity—which are transformed into a hostile force that rules it—both at the level of society as a whole as well as at the level of its own class movement, and concerning why propaganda cannot alter this general dynamic except during certain moments of particular conflicts, is simply ignored. And if this is not understood it is impossible to understand how to develop organizational forms that can overcome this self-alienation, and allow for the constitution of the proletarians as autonomous subjects, which is the key to the whole revolutionary process and its preparation.

## IV

Considering the root problem from the perspective I have outlined, it can be said that the platformist response is erroneous, but the same is true of traditional anarchism. Platformism sacrifices freedom for efficiency (as in Case No. 1), while traditional anarchism sacrifices efficiency for freedom (as in Case No. 2). In both instances there is a serious unilateral dimension, and the fact that they are still utilized is not due to stupidity, but to the fact that they subscribe to a reductionist concept of the power against which we are fighting and of the human needs that are the beginning, the middle, and the basic end of the struggle.<sup>13</sup>

Both efficiency as well as freedom (freedom in the ordinary, external, volitional meaning of the word, i.e., doing what one wishes) refer to the immediate present. They are conceived as means to alter the present, whether by planning mechanisms in the case of efficiency, or by non-planning mechanisms in the case of immediate freedom. But the problem of revolutionary praxis does not consist solely of the capacity for action affecting the present, but of its continuity and extension into the future. Therefore, what matters is not *efficiency* (the ability to attain certain effects in a certain period of time) but *historical effectiveness* (the production of real effects that allow for revolutionary development to proceed towards its full maturation at an unknown future time). Nor is external *freedom* in and of itself determinant, a freedom that can up to a certain point be measured by “rights”, but *autonomy*, that is, the ability to consciously make use of one's own energies and resources (including external freedom) in accordance with one's own existence. This autonomy presupposes, in reality, external freedom in order to develop, but is not a simple result of the latter's existence. Autonomy is directly related to how we conceive of ourselves, how we conceive of our needs and abilities, our nature; in short, it is itself the effective power that allows the self-constitution of the revolutionary subject, surpassing the stage of mere negative rebellion and converting the experience of passive and active antagonism into the inspirational source of a different kind of life.

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<sup>13</sup> This is because it is through unsatisfied needs, through becoming aware of the former and the effort to provide them with a possible objectification or a partial realization, that revolutionary subjectivity has been constituted historically. Without this, any discussion of social needs as a revolutionary goal is pure abstraction.

These points are key issues that must be resolved by way of concrete practical proposals. But I know this problem has not yet been seriously addressed in the anarchist movement in general. This deficiency is exemplified quite well by the topic of organizational forms because, whether we are speaking of functionality (or internal regimen), or of the types of organization with respect to their internal forms (pyramidal or network, rigid or flexible, levels of activity at the base or in delegative structures) or with respect to their social functionality (permanent or temporary in character, field of activity, type of objectives), there has been no advance beyond the insurrectionist proposals of the late 1970s. Needless to say, other experiences have not been considered, like the German Workers Unions of the 1920s, in which elements of the (anarchosyndicalist) FAUD participated, probably due to their obsession with the idea of “revolutionary trade unionism” (sic).

For those of us who understand that creativity, the unfolding of transformative capacity, is the basis of all revolutionary praxis, the questions, the critiques, and the answers that neoplatformism can provide must proceed in the direction of liberating and developing the progressive elements present within it. But to do this a point of view superior to the one that led to this division in anarchism, which seems to be constitutive for the latter (the theme of the efficiency-freedom conflict is clearly pertinent) must be developed. It does not appear to be appropriate to analyze the conflict in terms of an antagonism between types of subjectivity because, except for the explicit philo-Leninists, it seems to me that the neoplatformist comrades sincerely support anarchist-communist goals. The issue cannot be approached using the reductionist and abstract key of: “what is authoritarian is counterrevolutionary, what is anti-authoritarian is revolutionary”. The problems of praxis that lie at the root of the reemergence of platformism require concrete proposals for their resolution, and it does not seem to me that those who criticize it have shown much interest in this factor. If they hold that the solutions to this problem already exist (theoretical solutions on the methodological plane, and practices on that of the organizational question and relations with the masses), they will have to prove this concretely. I am not aware of any other serious proposal that, since “straight” anarchism, has confronted these issues in depth, even on the organizational plane alone. Even classical council communism itself suffers from a similar shortcoming with respect to the concrete, because all there is to it is a series of general orientations that, at the hour of truth, do not clarify a multitude of questions that must be confronted in organizational life.<sup>14</sup>

Concerning this last-mentioned topic I would like to call attention to one point in particular. The revolutionary organization, and every non-alienating organization more generally, must be based on the integral and fullest possible participation of its members. How can this be established in organizational practice? My efforts in this direction were initially characterized by an

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<sup>14</sup> I am referring to the critiques of trade unionism and parties. Although the classic councilists based themselves on concrete experiences, such as the German Workers Unions and other subsequent efforts (KAUD, GIKH), they left a blind spot with regard to many problems that were not posed in their era, as in the case of the problem of militant commitment to the organization. Naturally, an organization that arises from the revolutionary dynamic is an organization based on conscious cooperation rather than economic or ideological bonds like trade unions or parties. At the present time, it is evident that the concrete form of confronting the problem of commitment to participation is crucial, because “direct democracy” can have little value and cannot last long—or have any real existence—unless a majority of individuals directly and consciously exercise their power constantly in all the activities of the organization, and are not merely “show” members or utilitarian members or mere passive attendees at assemblies, who are not involved in the organization’s tasks and their own education and who are completely susceptible to keeping themselves in a subordinate relation to minority factions to which they grant moral or intellectual authority.

overwhelmingly formalist approach, which was insufficient. I agree with the idea of requiring of the members of an organization a certain level of commitment to the life of the organization, which must of course be based on their self-determination when they join it. That is, they are there to work on a collective project, not to make use of that project for utilitarian ends or to satisfy their needs for identity and a sense of belonging. The problem resides in the fact that the revolutionary project is essentially a project of self-liberation. The concept of *self-liberation* as a representation of a process combines the *unity of principles-means-ends* in a holistic way. And there is no individual self-liberation by collective impositions, but it is also impossible without collective cooperation towards common goals; nor is collective self-liberation possible without the autonomous development of individuals that enables them to carry out collective tasks, the tasks of the revolutionary transformation of society, with their own hands and brains, not the tasks of attending assemblies, voting and distributing leaflets, etc. Looking at it another way, the absence of committed and conscious participation is the ultimate reason for the emergence of hierarchies and bureaucratization and therefore of a weakening of the organization in quantitative and qualitative terms, which finally presents us with the outcome we know all too well: *reformist bureaucratic organizations integrated into the legal margins of the system.*

It is within this practical frame of reference that the controversial issue of “collective responsibility” must be settled. For me, responsibility is imminently individual, as it was for Malatesta. But this does not mean that each individual has no responsibility vis-à-vis others, not only for consensual activities or those to which he has made a commitment, but also, within certain parameters of coherence, for the project in whose development he participates, parameters that could be established in founding guidelines and in some criteria affecting the purview of the members to act on their own account without prejudice to the organization’s goals. It is true that any such limitations could lead to splits, which is why it cannot be “totalitarian”, nor can it become an artificial discipline imposed on individuals. But it does not make sense either to avoid splits to the detriment of the will of the majority, by seeking compulsory consensus that would favor inactivity, sporadic or irregular actions or concentration on factional struggles. Such outcomes are even less libertarian than the establishment of collective rules.

There must therefore be a collective form of responsibility, although it must not be autonomous and reified as a property of the organization and its structures (rank and file or delegates) and thus transformed into the impersonal repository of the real power of the associated individuals. Collective responsibility must be an effect of the collective commitment of cooperation, as a democratic sum of individual responsibilities that, to advance their goals, have the right to project a collective identity and to take the necessary and coherent measures to avoid deviations, and to demand from each individual a minimum of coherence and responsibility, both within and without organized activity. For me this includes the particular point that each member has the right to demand explanations from other members—and not only those who are involved with particular tasks—for what they may view as shortcomings with respect to collective commitment. Also, it would not be convenient to establish artificial mechanisms of discipline, or ones that would permit harassment of that kind. Obviously, however, a person who repeatedly fails to fulfill the commitments he agreed to must be subject to collective scrutiny. Limits could be established that would be indispensable in order to determine when collective intervention is necessary, first with warnings, and then, if necessary, with sanctions or even expulsion. It is clear that if an attempt is made to resolve problems that are rooted in alienated subjectivity by means of strict formalities and a rigid disciplinary regime it will be a bitter failure as the organization

grows, or else only non-revolutionary individuals will be accepted. But as is evident in the case of insurrectionism, excessive informality is just as harmful as an excess of formalism. In general, authoritarianism and liberal permissiveness are only the two opposite poles of self-alienation.

Of course, every law is a convention, a kind of arbitrariness, but it is no less true that democracy and its system of rights is an expression of the dissolution of the human community in a society divided into classes and, in capitalism, highly atomized individually. Since we start from this basis we have to assume democracy and particular rules as a normal procedure for decision-making and organizing activity, although we understand that majority rule is arbitrary—nonetheless, to transform consensus into a norm is no less arbitrary. Otherwise, what we would have is not an advance towards communist anarchy, but a retreat towards the capitalist anarchy of private individuals.

The only possible solution for the problem of organizational freedom consists in establishing a balance between rights and responsibilities, freedom of movement and commitment to participation, cooperation and individual self-realization. “No responsibilities without rights, no rights without responsibilities” (AIT). In other words, what we need is a type of organization that would be strict and explicit in its basic orientations that would generate obligations for its members, but at the same time would be flexible and open in its everyday activity, which generates freedom. But this type of organization demands much more from individuals than previous forms of organization; it demands their constant commitment to practical tasks and to their self-development as conscious subjects. It represents a higher level of proletarian autonomous activity than traditional forms of organization. The organization itself must assume the fundamental goal of promoting the self-development of its members as autonomous subjects and must not be conceived as a mere “instrument of struggle”. Therefore, it cannot develop by means of impositions of any kind, but it must emerge, as was true of its historical precursors, from the consciousness of the need for participation and self-determination on the part of the proletarians, in such a way that the objective form of the organization finds its counterpart in subjectivity.

This issue, in turn, leads us to a blind spot in the vision of the revolutionary transformation of society that derives from the bourgeois revolutionary era. Revolutionary transformation is still considered as a process that is based upon, or develops, predominantly at the level of the social structure as such, external to the subjectivity of its agents. This presupposes a separation of transformation and self-transformation and the reduction of the development of revolutionary consciousness to a process of the assimilation or elaboration of ideas, without affecting psychology as a whole, that is, the whole constitution of subjectivity, or personal (“private”) and everyday life, or individuals’ ordinary behavior. The prevalent type of anarchism has little to say about such matters, except to repeat what was already said more than a century ago. The libertarian ethos that has always been a characteristic of anarchism has little to contribute in this regard.

## V

As I said above, I have not found satisfactory answers to the basic problems that confront us today in the prevailing form of anarchism, which is why I doubt that the neoplatformist comrades can provide them. Their doctrinal corpus and their organizational practical dynamics are not exactly suitable for resolving these problems. It appears that their followers have not even addressed the issue and the well-known assemblyist-spontaneist fetishism continues to run rampant despite

having failed on thousands of occasions as an organizational basis for the social struggle. Not to mention the fact that not even once have they successfully prevented any of the evils in response to which their organizational formulations were designed (hierarchies, bureaucracy, minority manipulations, sectarianism...).

There are no real solutions with regard to the topic of party and trade union type organizational forms within the anarchist tradition. Insurrectionism placed sufficient emphasis on this, under some councilist influence, but in my judgment did not do so as successfully as council communism. The model of the Workers Unions was an object lesson that illustrated what was to be understood by the phrase, 'supersession of trade unionism'. The insurrectionist concept of "autonomous nucleus" is very abstract and in its formulations from the 1970s seemed to have been functionally designed to serve the point of view of the anarchist minority, as a transmission belt. Furthermore, despite all their polemics against the "party" concept of the platformists, traditional anarchism and its postmodern deviations have never overcome the party form; they have only changed the name or adopted a nihilist stance. The only difference between anarchist affinity groups and the explicitly constituted political party is that the former lack disciplinary mechanisms and may evince greater degrees of heterogeneity, while the explicit political party possesses such mechanisms and exercises them in order to reduce heterogeneity. But in both cases the community of ideas is the basis of the organization, which may be no more than a creed among the affinity groups, while in the party form this demands a minimum of programmatic development and, therefore, a certain explicit elaboration of the collective consciousness. Affinity groups are, historically speaking, an underdeveloped party form, halfway between the sects of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and modern parties. Their libertarian ideology does not alter this characterization. Platformism, viewed within this framework, only represents a maturation of this contradictory reality. To mention only one relevant example, the Iberian Anarchist Federation (the FAI), while confronting the situation of war and revolution in 1936–39, and clearly without any influence from the "Platform", developed positions very similar to the latter, although the model of the FAI was more that of a "mass party" than that of a "vanguard party"—or at least it was something located between these two forms. It is also absolutely true that Bakunin's concept of the Alliance for Social Democracy found a coherent expression in the FAI's development (which is not to say that it was the most coherent such expression, if we note the proclaimed goals). To deny all this in the name of the inconsistencies of Bakunin's writings, as Patrick implicitly does, seems to me to be a totally lame excuse. Likewise, to replace this development with a turn towards dispersion into small affinity groups, which are only sporadically coordinated and are structurally incapable of constituting a necessary socio-political and intellectual reference point within the class struggle, appears to me to be a totally false solution, which reminds me of the theme of sectarian involution addressed by Marx and Engels in opposition to Bakunin:

"The first phase of the proletariat's struggle against the bourgeoisie is marked by a sectarian movement. That is logical at a time when the proletariat has not yet developed sufficiently to act as a class. Certain thinkers criticize social antagonisms and suggest fantastic solutions thereof, which the mass of workers is left to accept, preach, and put into practice... These sects act as levers of the movement in the beginning, but become an obstruction as soon as the movement outgrows them; after which they became reactionary... To sum up, we have here the infancy



of the proletarian movement, just as astrology and alchemy are the infancy of science. If the International were to be founded, it was necessary that the proletariat go through this phase.”<sup>15</sup>

Sects are not defined by their size, but by their relations with the proletarian movement. From this perspective most of today’s affinity groups and micro-parties (whether under the anarchist, the Marxist, or any other label) are nothing but sects. Their existence on the margins of social struggles effectively presupposes a situation where they can bring about a germination of anti-capitalist consciousness, but they are incapable of contributing to the development of a concrete global alternative.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, at the present the problem is no longer the proletariat’s ability to act as a class, but the development of that ability on a scale sufficient to confront the more amplified level of development reached by capitalist rule—the Global Factory-State<sup>17</sup>—and to smash the equally amplified self-alienation that characterizes the society of the spectacle in its latest phase (oneiric, or dreamlike existence, the confusion of the real and the virtual in life). Since the sects are impotent in the face of these historical-material challenges, because the only thing that can be done to escape from the dynamic of permanent defeat must be directly based on a historical-materialist understanding of the social totality and must refer to a proletarian mass movement, the very existence of the sects is reactionary and can no longer make any meaningful contributions. Today this role could be played by ascendant movements that still adopt traditional-modern forms, but which are simultaneously propelled by a dynamic of class confrontations to go beyond those forms during the unfolding of the struggle and to consider the radical and total transformation of society.

Sectarian forms thus constitute a dead end, just like the rigid parties or trade unions and every form that reproduces the manual-intellectual division of labor. What the situation calls for is a determined and creative view towards the future, without fear of posing solutions that, although now seemingly unrealizable, may allow for the elaboration of proposals that through the test of history and in the hands of the proletarian class, will make a decisive contribution to the task of resolving the historical problems that we shall face.

The historical crossroads at which we stand requires from us a more complex understanding of society, of life, of the struggle movement, and of the process of socio-historical transformation. As long as this is not addressed, the revolutionary movement will remain atomized and underdeveloped, or else it will degenerate along the way, extinguishing its initial spirit in favor of the alienating dynamics rooted in today’s society which are constantly being renewed in individuals’ everyday lives.

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<sup>15</sup> *The Alleged Splits in the International, a private circular of the General Council of the International Workingmen’s Association, 1872.* [Available online at: [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org)]

<sup>16</sup> In each case different reasons for this predominate. The rigidity and narrowness of theoretical thought in general, reductionist notions concerning autonomous proletarian cooperation and especially its international articulation (localist or anti-national positions), pretensions to possessing the truth about principles, program, etc., are examples of the ways the sectarian phenomenon is manifested today. We must set aside the vulgar conceptions of sect and sectarianism as they have been passed down to us from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and direct our attention, in this case, more to the utopian and messianic sects of the more distant past. Utopianism and messianism still exist, and the fact that they justify themselves with pseudo-scientific ideologies or project themselves upon an unreal proletariat does not alter their character. To overcome this it is necessary to bring the model of scientific thought to its logical conclusion, where there is no more room for superstitions, pseudo-rational theories or confusion of desires with reality, where empirical study is always the reference point and practical solutions are sought for practical problems.

<sup>17</sup> See the *Provisional Program* of Cooperación Obreira.

In conclusion, neoplatformism can only be superseded by means of a more complex and profound development of revolutionary thought, and I do not see any reason to think that those who oppose neoplatformism from traditionalist or postmodernist positions are any more likely to attain this goal than the neoplatformists themselves. Only the advance towards real freedom, towards the concrete consciousness of how to free ourselves from capitalism, will allow us to make the revolutionary project relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The entire article entitled “Contra el fetichismo politico” addresses general questions relating to the supersession of the fetishism of leadership and organizational formalities. See also the series of articles, “Against Democracy” where, in a polemic with the International Communist Group, theoretical-practical tactical questions are addressed (see the ICAC’s archives, in the section entitled “Our Texts”).

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## Synopsis of the Text

by Ricardo Fuego

In the text below I specify my criticisms of what I consider to be the current position of revolutionary anarchism on fundamental issues.

1. ***Assessing organizations on the basis of the doctrinal origin of their programmatic proposals rather than their concrete praxis within a concrete socio-historical context.*** The progressive or regressive character of groups that claim to be revolutionary cannot be judged solely on the basis of their relation or adherence to one or another historical current, but on the basis of what concrete contributions they make to the autonomous development of the class movement.
2. ***Explaining the existence of certain organizations by the persistence of certain “false” ideas which must be refuted.*** Once again, this implies a diversion of attention from the material and subjective conditions that lead to a certain hegemony of ideas and forms of praxis. If platformist ideas still exercise influence among the exploited this is not due to mere unawareness of the “true ideas” or the fact that the libertarian milieu’s critique of platformism is not accurate enough, but to the fact that platformist ideas correspond to the present state of historical development of some sectors of the exploited.
3. ***New Ideas do not lead to New Consciousness which leads to New Practice.*** Our consciousness is fundamentally determined by our experience and our capability to perceive that experience (sensitivity), and it is therefore natural that the ideas we adopt are those which mentally express our consciousness of our experience (and thus it is also natural that our mind is more “permeable” to some ideas than to others). This does not mean that debate and propaganda of ideas are useless or that they have no effect on consciousness, but only that their effect is dependent on their ability to offer a rational form by which

individuals can express the new experiences they have perceived, experiences that the old ideas are unable to express or which express them in a contradictory way.<sup>18</sup>

**4. *The Marxism/Anarchism dichotomy and the reactionary concept of “contamination”.***

If what is aimed at is building a revolutionary movement, this cannot be done from a group- or party-based point of view (in the sense of a historical current), but only from a *class* point of view. The historical experience of radical proletarian praxis—that is, the experience of its defeats—has shown that neither of the two currents is “sufficient on its own”. To the contrary, it has demonstrated the serious limitations of both currents when they had to confront a capitalism that was much more mature than the capitalism of the era when they originated. If the party spirit is an obstacle to the construction of an autonomous class movement, since it tends to identify the general development of the movement with the struggle for hegemony among different currents (the party struggle), so too is doctrinal “purism” because, by prioritizing the destruction of “the competition” it remains in a self-referential and therefore conservative dynamic, which blocks not only self-criticism but also the effort to make revolutionary thought relevant for our times.

5. ***The superficial understanding of the problem of proletarian self-liberation.*** By not taking into consideration the fact that the structures that oppress and condition the proletariat are the products of the latter’s own alienated self-activity (self-alienation), one ends up explaining the current situation by the extraordinary attributes of the “enemy” or by the stupidity, cowardice and ignorance of the masses. Both interpretations, separately or in combination, favor elitist approaches (even if, formally, they are not authoritarian approaches) and do not take into account the process of self-liberation in all its necessary complexity. This has two possible results: the promotion of actions to “attack the enemy” which are disconnected from the mass movement, carried out by groups of specialists, or the opportunist adaptation to the backward consciousness of the masses and a semi-conscious subordination (with quite a bit of self-deception) to the current reformist dynamic.

6. ***Contrasting free will and efficacy.*** Both free will (doing what you want) and efficacy (subordinating action to the achievement of results in the short-term) are notions limited to the immediate present, and are thus useless for the purposes of establishing a coherent praxis that extends from the present into the future. What must be opposed to a praxis based on efficacy is a practice focused on historical effectiveness, that is, one that is oriented to developing our autonomous abilities (including our will) in accordance with our real needs.

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<sup>18</sup> If an individual has reformist ideas, this is not because he is not familiar with revolutionary ideas or does not understand their logic, but because his practice is reformist. In order for revolutionary ideas to get his practical attention, contradictions must emerge not within his ideas but between his ideas and his practical consciousness. And this takes place when the individual has, and *successfully perceives*, new experiences that his theory cannot explain, and not before this occurs. Then it is not a matter of contrasting one idea with another, but of trying to harmoniously move to the next level on the terrains of experience, perception and consciousness. A particular experience leads to a particular perception which leads to a particular consciousness, but each develops at its own pace and may enter into contradiction with the others. Propaganda and theoretical debate must be directed towards clarifying these contradictions between experience, perception and consciousness, because otherwise everything is limited to the logical opposition between ideas, as if human activity was basically rational and theory was the precondition for practice.

7. ***Contrasting authoritarian organizations and affinity groups.*** This extends the dichotomy between efficacy and free will to that between an organizational form that subordinates individuals to a praxis focused on efficacy and an organizational form that subordinates collective interests to the individual will. It opposes the organization as an end-in-itself where individuals are means of the organization, to the organization as a means of the individual will. There is no way that an organization can be a means for the permanent cooperation among individuals unless there is a balance struck between responsibilities and rights, between individual will and the collective goal pursued by way of cooperation. The individual's participation in organizational life must be an active and conscious commitment for the individual's own self-development and also involves the individual's responsibility towards freely assumed collective goals, rather than a mere means to satisfy egotistic needs. This must be made explicit in the form of guidelines that are voluntarily and consciously assumed by the organization's members because, if formalism leads to the development of an organization's impersonal power over individuals, informalism's effect is no less alienating in that it reproduces the atomization characteristic of individuals in capitalist society.

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The Question of Neoplatformism  
Critiques, Mystifications, Solutions  
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