The Anarchist Library (Mirror)
Anti-Copyright

Felipe Corrêa
Towards An Anarchist Theory of Power
2019

http://blackrosefed.org/towards-anarchist-theory-of-power-correa/

Felipe Corrêa is a teacher and political militant in São Paulo, Brazil. He is a participant with the Institute of Theory and Anarchist History (ITHA) and Coordenação Anarquista Brasileira or Brazilian Anarchist Coordination. This piece was originally published in Portuguese on the site Estratégia e Análise.Translation by Jonathan Payn of ZACF, South Africa with revisions by the author.

usa.anarchistlibraries.net

Towards An Anarchist Theory of Power

Felipe Corrêa

2019

over the majority – (which has been called the proletariat, the oppressed class, the working class etc.).

In this sense, the anarchist strategy was aimed at transforming the relations of domination into relations of power, which should have no hierarchy or relations of command/obedience in its womb. The power sought by anarchism must be collectivised, socialised; it being the participation in power – or at least the opportunity for participation, open to the whole population – which should decide its rules and guarantee their application on the basis of mechanisms democratic in fact (direct democracy), guaranteed by self-management and by federalism.

Contents

1. **Power**: Social regulatory function, a set of processes with which a society regulates itself by producing norms, applying them, making them to be respected.

2. **Domination**: Social regulatory function that is exercised only by a part of society, the power being the monopoly of a privileged (dominant) sector and implying hierarchical relations and those of command/obedience.

3. **Authority**: Asymmetries of competence that determine asymmetries of reciprocal determinations between individuals.

4. **Influence**: Asymmetries that exist by reason of personal characteristics.

When the author assumes power and authority (also including influence) as "neutral" categories, he is conducting a trial from the anarchist ethic/morality. Neutral because, in these terms, anarchism historically considered to be within its camp of ethically and morally justifiable relations, relations of influence, of authority and also of power – understanding them, clearly, from the categories defined by Bertolo.

Historically, anarchism placed itself in opposition to domination: for anarchists, social regulation should be collectivised, and the proposals of self-management, of federalism and of direct democracy have always sought this sense of sharing power and of exercising it for the benefit of the collectivity.

Capitalist and statist society has always been understood as a society not only of power, but of domination, since the power would not be collectivised and would be exercised only by a minority – which has been called by various terms (the ruling class, the capitalist class, the bourgeoisie etc.) – which would exercise hierarchy and relations of command/obedience

the slaves by nature) produces a beneficial effect for both and, ultimately, it is an admirable contrivance of nature or of providence to make human society and the advantages derived from it possible." "The second type of approach is cultural," and those that defend it consider the natural explanations of power/domination unsustainable. From this approach, it is considered that power/domination "is not the effect of a pre-existing inequality but, on the contrary, is the cause of the first fundamental inequality amongst men."

Bertolo believes still to be able to classify the approaches to the genesis of power/domination differently: "those who explicitly or implicitly assume it, presenting man and/or society as the same, and those who posit its birth at a certain moment in history."

In his concept of domination, the author dismisses the natural, bio-psychological approaches, intending instead a cultural approach to domination. For him, studies such as those of Clastres, as for example Society Against the State, demonstrate that there is a history of cultures that did not have domination, but only power. Although it is only a hypothesis, Bertolo identifies the origin of domination as a cultural change in society that would have occurred at a particular moment, when man had already been living in society.

Anarchism, Power and Authority and Domination

Departing from the definitions proposed by Bertolo, some conclusions are possible. Dividing the asymmetries in the social relations between authority (functional) and influence (personal), it can be affirmed that the author works with four key categories:

The following piece by Brazilian anarchist Felipe Corrêa reviews contemporary discussions of power from an anarchist perspective and their contributions to a broader theory of power for utilization in building analysis and strategy. To avoid confusion the article title has been changed to refer to an "anarchist theory of power" but we have preserved the articles use of the phrase "libertarian theory of political power" – as outside the U.S. the term "libertarian" has always historically been associated with anarchism.

Part 1: Ibáñez and Libertarian Political Power

In this first article of the series I will use for discussion the article "For a Libertarian Political Power" ("Por um Poder Político Libertário"), by Tomás Ibáñez.[1] In it – a short article, which does not exceed more than a few pages – the author places himself critically in relation to the libertarian approach that had been made the theme. The article by Ibáñez was originally written as a contribution for the seminar "Power and its Negation" ("O Poder e sua Negação"), promoted by the CIRA and the CSL Pinelli, in July of 1983. Until that time, for the author, anarchism was "tied to the rigidity of concepts and proposals created, for the most part, during the 18th and 19th centuries." And, for him, to discuss the question of power in depth would be a relevant renovation in the theoretical camp of anarchism.

The Semantic Problem With Discussions About Power

Already at that time Ibáñez identified that "the polysemy [a word that has more than one meaning] of the term 'power'

[1] *Tomás Ibáñez. "For a Libertarian Political Power: epistemological and strategic considerations around a concept."* Article originally published in 1983 in the Italian magazine Volontà. For the quotes I use a translation into Portuguese by Miguel Serras Pereira, done for a Portuguese publication from the 1980s. The article is also on the compilation called Actualidad del Anarquismo, published by Aarres Books, Buenos Aires in 2007. [Translator to En-

stinct, which have little or no social significance." Therefore, he understands that "to man, the 'environment' is more cultural than natural," since "the environment of human beings is constituted by relations with other humans and that the relations with the world 'of objects' passes through a symbolic mediation." Thus, a discussion about power must evade the pursuit of man's natural instincts, which would be present in a given human nature.

As for him the human environment is much more cultural than natural, power, from the perspective of social regulation, does not stem from a natural instinct or specific human nature, but from a determined culture forged in social relations. "Man must produce norms, but he can produce the norms that he wants." The norms would then be a central operation of society and its content would not be determined a priori, but would be forged in the midst of a reality that is at the same time cultural and social.

This social reality is forged by a dialectic reality between individuals and society, a relationship in which the individual, though they can also determine the society, is more determined by it: "the single individual is always more determined by the society than they can determine it. Man produces society collectively, but is modeled by it individually."

Thus, one could say that a type of power that implies domination should not be analysed by the natural instincts or by the human nature of man, but by their relations, which imply social and cultural aspects. Bertolo identifies two fundamental types of justifications of domination: "a first type of approach is that which, proceeding from domination to power, justifies the first with bio-psychological motivations (that is, innate 'natural' psychological mechanisms): there are personalities naturally predisposed to domination and others naturally predisposed to submission." This approach relies on the "most attractive structural elements, coming to say that the 'natural' subdivision of man in to two categories (the masters by nature and

thus, "the level of participation in the process of regulation" is fundamental "for freedom as self-determination, because the individual is freer [...] the greater is their access to power." If power is defined around the regulatory functions of a society, it is natural that, the more these functions are shared, the higher would be the level of freedom of this society. "An equal access to power for all members of a society is, then, the first and inescapable condition of equal liberty for all." What the author calls "power for all," that is, a generalised democratisation of power, or at least a generalisation of the opportunities for the access to power, would be fundamental for societal processes of freedom, of equality and, why not, of democracy.

The differentiation between the concepts of power and domination is fundamental for Bertolo. Power, as we have seen, would imply social regulation. This power could be more or less shared in a given society and, when it is exercised by a minority from hierarchical relationships of command/obedience, this means that this power implies domination. The more collective is the power, the greater is the freedom of a society – and, therefore, it is possible to note a connection made by the author between freedom and equality.

Philosophical Contributions

Bertolo's article also contains some philosophical reflections that may help in understanding the topic. Below are the main points of discussion, which will be briefly presented.

Bertolo wants to take into account the "cultural determinations" of man and not the "natural determinations" marked by instinct and by environment which, he believes, "do not play a similar role in this strange animal that is man." For him, "man does not know instinct in the strict sense (that is, accurate answers to genetically inherited behavior in response to given environmental stimuli), but, at most, traces or residues of in-

and the breadth of their semantic spectrum constitute the conditions for a dialog of the deaf." For him, in the discussion about power, the discourses overlap and do not articulate with one another. And this happens because "they deal with profoundly different objects, in the confusion induced by the recourse to another common term: power."

And so the identified need for "our defining the term 'power', before we initiate the discussion." Regardless of such efforts, the author did not believe it to be possible to arrive at an objective and 'aseptic' definition of the word "power," since "it deals with a political term loaded with meaning, always analysed from a precise political location, and of which it is not possible to have a 'neutral' definition."

Power From a Triple Definition

The first element to start a definition of power is that, within a libertarian perspective, it cannot be considered only in a negative manner: "in terms of negation/denial, exclusion, refusal, opposition, contradiction." For Ibáñez, power can be defined starting from three interpretations: 1.) as capacity, 2.) as asymmetry in power relations, and 3.) as structures and mechanisms of regulation and control. Let's see, according to the author himself, how one defines power in each of these meanings.

1. Power as capacity

"In one of its senses, probably the most general and diachronically first, the term 'power' acts as an equivalent of the expression 'capacity to', i.e.: as a synonym for all the effects of which a given agent, animated or not, can be the direct or indirect cause.

glish's note: quotes were subsequently translated from Portuguese to English and not from the Italian, and there might therefore be slight discrepancies].

It is interesting that, from the beginning, power is defined in relational terms, to the extent that, in order for an element to be able to produce or inhibit an effect, it is necessary to establish an interaction."

Thought of in this sense, power could be conceived as 'having power to' or 'having power for', a capacity for realisation or a potential force that could be applied in a social relation. This places social relations as the premise of this definition of power. That is, interaction between social agents.

2. Power as asymmetry in power relations

"In a second sense the term 'power' refers to a certain type of relation between social agents, and one is now accustomed to characterising it as an asymmetric or unequal capacity that the agents possess to cause effects on the other pole of a given relationship."

While still anchored in power as capacity, this other meaning allows us to think of the asymmetries of the different social forces that are encountered in a particular social relationship. These forces, always asymmetric and unequal, when in interaction/relation, forge the effects over one or more poles, as each one of them possesses a distinct force and, therefore, a distinct capacity. Again, it affirms power as a relationship between social agents, each one of which has a distinct capacity to cause effects on others.

3. Power as structures and mechanisms of regulation and control

"In a third meaning, the term 'power' refers to the macro-social structures and the macro-social mechanisms of regulation or of social control. In this sense it speaks of 'instruments' or 'devices' of power, of 'centers' or of 'structures' of power, etc."

come from the regulatory function. He argues that one does not obey (in a broad sense) a norm; for him one respects a norm. Obedience is connected to a command, "that is, to the way in which a norm is presented within a system of domination." Thus, domination would be fundamentally linked to the "expropriation of the regulatory function exercised by a minority," responsible for enforcing its rules "on the rest of society" – that is, it would be linked to imposition.

Therefore, if the "social function of regulation" of a society is "exercised only by a part of the society, if the power is then the monopoly of a privileged (dominant) sector, this gives rise to another category, to a set of hierarchical relations of command/obedience that I propose to call domination." Domination, defined in this way, would imply hierarchy and the monopoly of power.

Power, Authority and Domination

Defined in these terms, Bertolo affirms that power and authority would be "neutral" concepts, that is, they are neither necessarily good nor bad. Authority would imply something evident in society; the differences in competencies between individuals and groups and the interaction and mutual influence that is exercised between the diverse agents in any social relationship. That is, it is a category that embraces social diversity and assumes it as inevitable. In relation to power, the author says: "we define power in this way as a 'neutral' and even necessary social function, not only for the existence of society, of culture and of man, but also for the exercise of that freedom seen as a choice between certain possibilities, which we take as a departure point for our discourse."

This relation between power and freedom allows us to better understand Bertolo's propositions. For him, freedom is directly linked to the possibility of choice that each one has and,

function of regulation, the processes by which a society is regulated, producing standards, applying them, making them to be respected." And in this sense, to define power from a macro level, that would function in terms of societal management and would be linked to the decision making processes.

Authority

For the category of authority, Bertolo defends the following usage: "I propose, finally, to call authority the asymmetries of competence that determine asymmetries of reciprocal determinations between individuals and the influence in the asymmetries by reason of personal characteristics." In this sense, authority would be fundamentally linked to the capacity to properly execute a certain activity and the multiple influences that, personally, are exercised in this sense. Distinguishing personal and functional relations, Bertolo puts it thus: "in the case of personal relations, we can define the asymmetry as influence; in the case of functional relations we can define the asymmetry as authority."

Domination

"Domination, then, defines the relations between unequals – unequals in terms of power, namely, freedom – the situations of 'supra-ordination' and subordination; it defines the systems of permanent asymmetry between social groups." Domination, in this sense, would imply the inequalities of power that would define permanent relations of command/obedience, also at the macro level, not between individuals, but between social groups (castes, classes etc.).

The relations of domination are based, therefore, on the relations of command/obedience, "in which the command has the content of regulating the behavior of that which obeys." This relation of command/obedience, according to Bertolo, does not

Conceived of in this way power would constitute the "system" of a given society, with regards to its structures and mechanisms of regulation and of control. It would be the set of rules of a given society, which involves both the taking of decisions for its establishment and to define its control, as well as the actual application of this control. A structuring of society that makes deliberative and executive instances necessary.

What Are the Possibilities of a Society Without Power?

Departing from these three interpretations, it can be affirmed that "to speak of a society 'without power' constitutes an aberration, whether we position ourselves from the point of view of power/capacity (meaning that one would have a society that 'couldn't do' anything?), whether we position ourselves at the level of asymmetric relations (which would mean social interactions without asymmetric effects?), or by positioning ourselves from the point of view of power as mechanisms and structures of macro-social regulation (which would be a system whose elements were not 'forced' by the set of relations that define exactly that system itself?)."

There is no society without social agents with capacity, and there is no society where all social relations are symmetric – that is, a society in which all social agents have the same capacity to cause effects on others, in all social relations – or without structures and mechanisms of social control and regulation. This allows us to agree with Ibáñez in relation to the absurd which means, taking into account the definitions presented by the author, speaking of society without power, of struggling against power, of ending or destroying power.

Ibáñez believes that *"power relations are inherently linked to the social fact itself, they are inherent in it, impregnate it, contain it, at the very instant in which they emanate from it."*When

dealing with any aspect of the so-called social context, it can be affirmed that in it exist interactions between diverse elements that constitute a given system. For the author, besides this, "there are inevitably certain effects of the power of the system on its elements, exactly as there are also effects of the power between the elements of the system." That is, power permeates both the relations between elements as well as the relations between the system and elements.

To conceive of a society without power means, for the author, to believe in the possibility of the existence of a "society without social relations, without social rules and without processes of social decisions." That is, it would be to conceive the "unthinkable."

A Libertarian Conception of Power

Such arguments allow for the affirmation that *"there exists a libertarian conception of power, and it is false that this has to constitute a negation/denial of power."* To deny this fact would necessarily imply a difficulty both in terms of analysis of the reality, and in terms of conception of a strategy. *"While this is not fully assumed by libertarian thought," Ibáñez emphasises, "it will not be capable of initiating the analyses and actions that enable it to have force in the social reality."*

And what he argues makes sense if we look at the history of anarchism or even that which was called the "libertarian camp." Going beyond the semantic assertions – which very often gave/give to the word 'power' a State meaning – it seems clear that "libertarian thought" never denied the capacity of social agents, the asymmetries in power relations or the structures and mechanisms of regulation and control.

An example that is significantly common in the libertarian tradition. Considering the asymmetric relations of classes in capitalist society and, basing it on the idea of the capacity of

concepts behind the terms and at the contents behind the concepts."

Proposed Definition

Seeking a conceptual alignment, Bertolo suggests standard definitions for power, authority and domination.

Power

"The production and application of norms and sanctions then define the function of social regulation, a function for which I propose the term power." The author believes that power, defined in these terms, is related to Proudhon's concept of collective force and also with the definition of Lasswell and Kaplan posed earlier: "Power is participation in decision making" and "a decision is a line of conduct which carries severe sanctions." He believes that Clastres also works with a similar definition to distinguish "non-coercive power," which would resemble this definition of power, and "coercive power," which is close to the author's definition of domination. For Clastres, "political power as coercion (or as relations of command-obedience) is not the model of true power, but simply a particular case." He also maintains that "the social is not thinkable without the political, in other words, there is no society without power."

In this sense, there are a few elements that should be highlighted. For Bertolo, power is defined around social regulation and may or may not be coercive (and therefore imply domination). In this sense, as any society has regulatory systems, there could not be, in this sense, society without power, endorsing Clastres' affirmation.

Identifying that one uses in the literature on the topic the term power to describe different conceptual categories, the author proposes "to retain this term only to define [...] the social

theoretical and practical critique – has not produced a more articulated and subtle theory of power than the apologists of domination."

The author believes that "the brilliant intuitions about power that the 'fathers' of anarchism had were not followed by an adequate reflection on their importance." Intuitions which, following this, would even be fruitful today, but which, if they are not the subject of discussion and deepening of understanding, run the risk of "sclerosis in stereotyped formulas, in beliefs, in taboos, losing a large part of its usefulness as a fundamental working hypothesis for the interpretation and transformation of reality."

The need for deepening the debate on power, therefore, would be fundamental in the libertarian camp for the establishment of adequate methods of analysis and of strategies capable of carrying out social transformation. For this, the intuitions that Bertolo understood to be present in the classics would not be enough: "The intuitions have become sclerosis and the relative lack of terminological and conceptual precision, inevitable and perhaps necessary in the first developments of reflection, becomes an obstacle to the progress of thought and action, the source of unjustifiable 'orthodoxies' and, therefore, of unjustifiable 'heresies', of traditional immobility and of 'innovative' nonsense, of semantic discussions and of social powerlessness."

This writing by Bertolo intends, as he himself affirms, "modestly and ambitiously – to propose some definitions that, according to the author, could make the debate between anarchists not only more rewarding, but also make the confrontation between anarchists and non-anarchists less arduous." Otherwise, he believes, one runs the risk of continuing a "dialogue of the deaf." For this he proposes to define, in terms of form and content, power, authority and domination: "it is clear that the defining work is directed not so much at the terms, but the

the working class, libertarians seek to promote a social revolution in which the force of the dominant class is overridden and which establishes a system of regulation and control founded on self-management and on federalism. Even with this generic example, it can be said that if the dominant class is removed from its condition of domination and gives way to a libertarian structure, even in the future society, this power relation between the dominant class separated from domination and the working class constitutes an asymmetric relation.

In this sense it is possible to assume that in fact, historically, there is a libertarian conception of power that – even though it has not been discussed in sufficient depth and has been complicated by a series of factors – possesses elements of relevance to this debate which is now being realised.

Domination as a Type of Power

When libertarians realize a discourse against power, says Ibáñez, they use the *"term 'power' to refer in fact to a 'certain type of power relation', that is, very concretely, to the type of power that is encountered in the 'relations of domination', in the 'structures of domination', in the 'devices of domination', or in the 'instruments of domination' etc. (be these relations of a coercive, manipulative or other nature)."* So, for him, domination is a type of power relation, but you cannot define domination as power, as they constitute distinct categories. For the author, you can not encompass in the relations of domination "the relations that link the freedom of the individual to that of groups." That is, you can not incorporate libertarian relations in to the category of domination. But this seems somewhat obvious. What is not obvious, in fact, is that when you equate power with domination, you assume that power is contrary to freedom. An affirmation with which the author disagrees. "Freedom and power are not really situated according to a relation of simple oppo-

sition." And: "Power and freedom thus find themselves in an inextricably complex relation of antagonism/possibility." Thus conceived, power could be contradictory to freedom, but could also potentialize its realization. It would be, in fact, the type of power that would determine this relation with freedom.

Thus, Ibáñez believes that "libertarians are situated, in reality, against the social systems based on relations of domination (in the strict sense).' Down with power!' is a formula that should disappear from the libertarian lexicon and be replaced by 'Down with relations of domination'. But on this point it is necessary to try to define the conditions that make such a society possible."

Against Domination and for a Libertarian Political Power

It can be said, based on this structural argument, that "libertarians are not against power, but against a certain kind of power," and in their strategies seek to be "builders of a variety of power, which it is convenient (and accurate) for us now to call 'libertarian power', or, more precisely: 'libertarian political power'." This would mean to assume that libertarians defend a (libertarian) working model of instruments, devices and relations of power.

Image: "In the Jaws of Power" by SL Rote. Blog/Website

ready eliminate much of the polemics generated in discussions of the libertarian universe.[3]

Thus, as Bertolo puts it, it is "necessary to resume the attempt of definition from an identification of the concepts and the contents, even though, naturally, this way of proceeding implies some difficulties in lexicon that we will try to overcome." In reality, the problems identified in relation to the discussion about power do not exist only in anarchism: "it may be comforting for the anarchists to know that not even official science has brought much clarity to this set of 'things' (relations, behaviors, social structures...) that are classified as power (or as authority or as domination) in the last century." A problem which, if it affects human sciences in general, could not fail to affect anarchism.

Anarchism and the Theory of Power

Bertolo identifies the gap in theoretical anarchist discussions about the theme of power. It would mean, for him, not necessarily "to unfasten it, but at least to clearly define an extremely complex conceptual node – and not simply to find an agreement in relation to the words – a central node within anarchist thought."

Paradoxically, he says, "anarchism – which can be regarded as the most radical critique of domination explained so far, a

[3] You can say that Proudhon was against authority and can easily obtain excerpts from his writings with this affirmation. Similarly, one can affirm that Bakunin was against power and can also find support for this in his theoretical texts. However, both claims become empty if you do not say what Proudhon meant by authority and what Bakunin meant by power. Briefly applying a content analysis in relation to the claims put forward, we can say that Proudhon, on affirming himself against authority, opposed authority as alienation and appropriation of the collective force by a monopoly; Bakunin, on opposing power, positioned himself against the State. Without deepening the discussion in these terms, the debate about power becomes completely empty.

ing adjectives and verbs, is less "multi-purpose than authority and power. Perhaps by reason of the emotively negative value disseminated that exists in its current use." Still, Bertolo highlights three cases in which domination is used in a "neutral" sense: Simmel (1978), "for whom domination is a universal category of social interaction, of which power is a particular form"; Dahrendorf (1970), "who proposes a definition of domination as 'possession of authority, that is, as a right to promulgate authoritarian orders"; Lasswell and Kaplan (1969), who consider that "domination is an effective model of power (but the English term used is 'rule' and not 'domination', which could be translated differently)."[2]

As it can clearly be noted in the definitions above, the semantic range certainly poses difficulties to the debate. There is, as the author points out, a fundamental question that arises between what you might call a form-content issue, in which it is impossible to deepen the discussion by taking only the form (the name of concepts such as "power," "authority," "domination" etc.), without entering into the contents given historically by the authors in the discussions about the themes. It is, in this sense, about going beyond the terms – that is, the name given to a particular "box" – and entering into concepts – that is, investigating the contents of the box. An aspect that would al-

[2] Bibliography (in order of citation): A. Lalande, Dizionario critico di filosofia, ISEDI, Milán, 1971. / H. D. Lasswell y A. Kaplan, Potere e società, Etas, Milán, 1969. / G. Ferrero, Potere, Sugarco, Milán, 1981. / N. Poulantzas, in Franco Ferrarotti, La sociologia del potere, Laterza, Bari, 1972. / W. Mills, Politica e potere, Bompiani, Milán, 1970. / B. De Jouvenel, Il Potere, Rizzoli, Milán, 1947. / R. Mousnier, Le gerarchie sociali dal 1450 ai nostri giorni, Vita e pensiero, 1971. / B. Russell, Il potere, Feltrinelli, Milán, 1967. / M. Weber, Economía y sociedad, F.C.E., México, 1980. / N. Luhman, Potere e complessità sociale, Il Saggiatore, Milán, 1979. / N. Abbagnano, Dizionario di filosofia, UTET, Turín, 1964. / R. Sennet, La autorità, Bompiani, Milán, 1981. / M. Horkheimer, citado por T. Eschemburg, Dell'autorità, Il Mulino, Bolonia, 1970. / G. Simmel, Il dominio, Bulzoni, Roma, 1978. / R. Dahrendorf, Classi e conflitto de classe nella società industriale, Laterza, Bari, 1970.

Part 2: Bertolo and Power as Social Function of Regulation

In this second article of the series, I will be using the article "Power, Authority, Domination"[(2)] by Amedeu Bertolo for discussion. The main contributions of the author will be presented schematically.

Discussions on the Issues of Power, Authority and Domination

According to the author, "the custom, not only academically, is to start a discourse of semantic definitions from: 1) an etymological point of view and/ or 2) a historical point of view." However, for him, neither of the approaches have much relevance to the discussion he intends to have. According to his claims, the etymology of the three terms is of distant origin, in terms of time, allowing one, at most, to carry out an exercise in "linguistic archaeology." Besides this, for him the three terms have a very similar original meaning. Power, for example, "derives from the Latin 'polis' (boss, owner)"; "Domination derives from 'dominus' (head of the household, head of the family); Au-

[(2)] *Amedeu Bertolo. "Poder, Autoridad, Dominio: una propuesta de definición."* Article originally published in 1983 in the Italian magazine Volontà. Quotations translated in to Portuguese from the Spanish version (and subsequently into English from Portuguese – English translator's note), translated by Heloísa Castellanos, available on the internet and contained in the compilation organised by Christian Ferrer, El Lenguaje Libertario, published by Libros de Anarres/ Anarres Books of Buenos Aires in 2005.

thority, by contrast, comes from the Latin 'auctor', which in its origin means one that make believe, that adds something"[1].

With relation to the historical usage of the terms, Bertolo identifies that they are multipurpose and can, in many cases, be substituted for one another. And in this case, according to his belief, a historical analysis also could not solve the problem posed. For him, "in relation to the definitions of authority and power, they have everything for everyone," which motivates him to search for some definitions that will be now reproduced.

Definitions of Power

"Power is a) capacity or natural faculty to act […]; b) general or moral faculty, right to do something; c) authority, especially in the concrete sense, the body constituted to exercise it, government' (Lalande,1971). 'Power is the participation in decision making' and 'a decision is a line of conduct which carries severe sanctions' (Lasswell and Kaplan, 1969). Power is the 'right to be in charge' (Ferrero, 1981). 'We call power the capacity of a social class to realise its specific objective interests' (Poulantzas, 1972). 'Power is the ability to establish and execute decisions, even when others oppose them' (Mills, 1970). Power 'is a permanent body which we are accustomed to obey, which has material means to oblige us and that, thanks to the belief that one has in its strength, to the belief in its right to command, that is, in its legitimacy and in the hope of its kindness' (Jouvenel, 1947). By power, one must understand 'all the means by which one can persuade the will of other men' (Mousnier, 1971). You can define power as the 'capacity to realise desires' (Russell,1967). 'By power one must understand […] the possibility for specific mandates (or for any mandate) to be obeyed by part of a given group of men' (Weber, 1980). 'Power is communication regulated by a code (Luhman, 1979)."

[1] I have resorted, for this translation, to the Italian original "Potere, autorità, dominio: una proposta di definizione." In Italian, Bertolo says: "Potere' deriva dal latino potis (padrone, possessore), così come 'dominio' deriva da dominus (padrone di casa, capofamiglia); 'autorità' invece viene dal latino auctor che significava originariamente colui che fa crescere, che accresce." An excerpt somewhat different to the Spanish translation: "Poder deriva del latín 'polis' (= patrin, amo) así como Dominación deriva de 'dominus' (dueño de casa, jefe de familia); Autoridad, en cambio, proviene del latín 'auctor', que en su origen significa el que hace crecer, el que acrecienta." The Italian version can be read here.

Definitions of Authority

"Authority is 'any power exercised over a man or group of people by another man or group' (Abbagnano, 1964). 'Authority is a relationship between unequals' (Sennet,1981). 'Authority is a way to define and interpret differences in strength' (Sennet, ibid.), 'Authority is a quest for stability and security from the force of others' (Sennet, ibid.). Authority is an 'accepted dependence' (Horkheimer, no date). Authority is (psychological) superiority or personal ascendence […] and (sociological) right to decide and/ or command' (Lalande, 1971). 'The essence of authority […] is to give to a human being that security and that recognition in the decision that logically corresponds to an effective and supra-individual axiom or to a deduction' (Simmel, 1978). 'Authority is the expected and legitimate possession of power' (Lasswell and Kaplan, 1969)."

Definitions of Domination

Distinctly from the broad definitions of power and authority, the author notes that, in relation to domination, there is a little more conceptual agreement: "the word domination is almost only used in the sense of the power to imposed ad altri (by law or in fact) one's own will, with instruments of coercion, physical or mental." The term domination, and its correlat-