

Unmasking the tyrant



Andrei Shcherbine

About the author

Andrei Chtcherbine (Андрей Щербин) was born in 1985 in the city of Yalta, Ukraine, and lived until the age of 13 in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Coming from a family historically persecuted by Stalinism and exiled to Uzbekistan, he emigrated to Argentina in 1998 at the behest of his mother, who feared a possible return of the communist regime or that her children would be sent to war, at that time, the war in Chechnya.

Once in Buenos Aires, the author trained as a park ranger and teacher, while also becoming an environmental, social, and animal rights activist. Together with other comrades in the struggle, he led the offensive against zoos, achieving historic transformations in these anachronistic institutions. He also founded a group against animal experimentation, bringing visibility to the dark world of laboratories.

These different themes are linked by a logic that has been present in the author's thinking since he was a child: the struggle is one and the same. Discovering the mechanisms of oppression, domination, and power relations helps us break the chains—both our own and those we impose on others.

...all that remains is for me to thank those who helped me make this work a reality and everyone who reads it.

You know, in this society, many choose to live life
as if they were at a party,

but there are others who prefer to take charge of their responsibilities,
who want to change this world, those who are hurt by every injustice.

Behind each of the concepts we criticize, each facet
of systemic oppression we address, there are real
people

suffering, being alienated, made invisible, being deprived of
the ability to fully enjoy their lives.

Therefore, the theoretical framework presented in these pages is a guide and
a call to action, not an intellectual pursuit destined for the bookshelf.

Foreword

Almost 500 years ago, Étienne de la Boétie wrote his work *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*. Despite this great contribution to libertarian theory and many others that followed in the 19th century, obedience and servitude continue to be the basis of societies. In this text, I will attempt to explain some of these mechanisms from my perspective.

We will go over the fundamentals of the state and the dilemma of individual and collective freedom, and I will offer a series of critiques of the democratic model and meritocratic societies, as well as socialism and proposals for social justice. I must say, as part of this introduction to the new edition, that I am deeply concerned about the loss of culture and critical thinking that we are experiencing, which is accelerating every year. Technological advances are exceptional. Perhaps the younger generations will never read a complete book in their entire lives, replacing it with social media and summaries of fundamental works in videos lasting a few minutes. I warn you of the seriousness of this, as an excerpt is nothing more than a conclusion drawn by someone else, a synthesis that is arbitrary and subjective.

This work is based on my journey and comparative analysis of several works. If the reader is not familiar with the concepts presented, I suggest reading the source material, as it will enrich their perspective. References to works, historical events, and concepts that are not explained are included; otherwise, the text would be much longer. However, I hope that it will serve to pique your curiosity and encourage personal research.

The state of the time of Étienne de la Boétie was what we would call paternalistic: a rigid, hierarchical, pyramidal institution that resorted to the most severe and direct repression to maintain power, the nature of which was justified at the time by a religious fable. This paternalistic state represents the father figure of a society that accepts being "educated" and directed in every way by authority.

The French philosopher was surprised by how people allowed themselves to be subjugated and subordinated to the king, a single lord to whom they granted absolute power to do both good and evil, surrendering themselves completely to his whims.

Despite this, quoting Jean Rousseau, we can affirm: "The strongest is never strong enough to dominate forever if he does not change his strength into right and obedience into obligation." So, when we look back on the mutation of that force, we see how the state moved from a crude, rough, and repressive form to more sophisticated methods of control. The reason is exactly as Rousseau pointed out: ruling by direct force in the long term is exhausting for the state, ultimately generating mechanisms of resistance and, ultimately, paving the way for revolution.

Chapter 1

The dilemma of freedom and meritocracy

Every ideal is unattainable, every utopia unachievable. Even so, it gives us that horizon which, as Eduardo Galeano said, "helps us to walk." However, we must be attentive to what happens to us as we walk, lest, as we advance, we become monsters.

Those who govern say that their goal is the well-being of citizens. Historically, this narrative emphasized ensuring order, stability, and security for the people. Today, the slogan that resonates most with voters is one that promises to solve economic problems and respond to certain social demands. According to the dominant ideology, we can divide today's societies into two broad groups: meritocratic and social justice. Both promise freedom and well-being, although they approach the idea of freedom from different angles... but what is freedom?

Freedom is going where we want, professing the religion of our choice, thinking, writing, speaking, and associating with whomever we want. Being free from all oppression is freedom, but is that all there is to freedom? If we cannot develop our full potential, if we do not have access to education, if we do not have the means to buy food, books, computers, or simply do not have the time, that limits our freedom and our intellectual, physical, and spiritual development.

These are two concepts of freedom known as "positive freedom" (which allows me to develop my inner potential) and "negative freedom" (which allows me to use and enjoy that potential).

A homeless person is "free." Free to enroll in school and finish it, free to study for a degree, free to walk the streets and express themselves publicly. They are free to get a job. They are even free to one day become president of the nation, but all those (negative) freedoms are worth little to someone who does not have the abilities or the means to enjoy them. Thus, we live in a society that equalizes our negative freedoms, but what determines the scope of freedom is knowledge, skills, social position, and, of course, money. If life were a game of chess, negative freedom would be the ability to move our pieces without restriction, but to achieve something, to play on par with others, to be able to develop a game, we need knowledge, skills, and education. Without these things, we would only move the pieces; we would not be able to plan anything or make real decisions.

Negative freedom is the freedom that a wild animal needs. Human beings, embedded in an increasingly complex society, need tools to develop our potential, and this is where it gets interesting: what knowledge and education give us freedom, and which ones, on the other hand, mold us into obedience and rigidity? No one is totally free in this sense; we are all conditioned. However, it cannot be denied that this baggage allows us to be freer: a decision made by someone who knows the world and science does not have the same meaning as a decision made by someone who is ignorant of all that. Positive freedom is difficult to assess because as our civilization advances, it requires more and more to understand its complexity and, worse still, science and ideas are developing rapidly, but education and general knowledge seem to be stagnating. This produces such an imbalance that we live surrounded by technology, ideologies, politics, and knowledge that we do not understand, but we are taught that we are free...

We get angry with people because they are swayed by harmful ideologies, but we are often unaware of how complex the concepts are that enable us to understand why they are wrong. Ideologies of hate and conspiracy theories come neatly packaged and successfully manipulate us because our minds lack sufficient knowledge and skills. It is easier to say that we are free and that falling is up to each individual, because they are foolish or evil, but let us look at examples from the past. Wars, dictatorships, and genocides were carried out by ordinary people, like us. All of this happens because their freedom was not up to the task

circumstances; they were manipulated because they did not have the cognitive tools to see the reality behind the staging.

What is the point of all this? The intention is not to absolve people of guilt, but to try to see the inequality in which they find themselves when making a supposedly free decision. A community that lives self-sufficiently and barely survives can be manipulated by a government or a company into giving up its land for short-term benefits. A community with little education (and I am not referring to formal education), inserted into a national production model, allows the "free" scrapping of natural resources. With what real freedom do we choose that?

Naturally, we imagine the logical conclusion: that the two freedoms go hand in hand and are both important. However, there is a huge disconnect between the two due to the hegemonic narrative, which varies depending on the type of government and system we find ourselves in.

When we delve into the global politics of the last century, we see a constant struggle between two antagonistic systems: the American dream model, based on meritocracy, and the socialist model, founded on social justice. Capitalism focuses mainly on negative freedom: "if you want it, you can do it." In this way, it attributes responsibility for success or failure to the individual. The socialist model aims to establish basic conditions of equality to allow each citizen to develop: positive freedom. The former is an individualistic model; the latter, collectivist. The question then arises: why are these two models antagonistic if both freedoms are important? Both seek the common good, but each has its dark side.

The idea of choosing according to individual merit and not because of certain birthrights or social position, as proposed by meritocracy, is very noble; normally, it cannot be argued against. Appointing generals in an army because they are the children of high-ranking officers or electing representatives because they have money seems wrong to all of us, at least in Western societies. Obviously, no one likes leaders to be appointed because they are "friends of..." or "children of..."

We want them to hold these positions because of their abilities and to be selected in the fairest way possible. We all agree that a person who works harder should be better paid than someone who works less. However, this does not sum up meritocracy. What we have just described, following the definitions of the different freedoms, is only negative meritocracy. Now, how do people acquire what they need to compete in these fair selections? If in a country

only 1% of people know how to read and write and I am going to select a president, I will obviously choose from among that 1%. For those who are part of that percentage of the population, the selection will be fair and transparent, but what about everyone else?

Meritocracy (negative) is individualistic and fits very well into the capitalist model of production, as well as into a stratified society divided into different elements of authority, because hierarchy is explained by merit. If meritocracy assumes that all people obtain a reward equivalent to their merit or effort, then those who have a lot have worked hard to get it and those who have little have not worked hard enough. However, there is no merit in luck: the system privileges those who are born rich. Ultimately, it is just another way of maintaining the *status quo*.

Social justice, despite being the opposite of the capitalist model, which is clearly deficient in human terms, has very deep problems when attempted in its pure form. The socialist system, by focusing almost exclusively on historical redress for oppressed groups (the working class being a prime example) and attempting to level society in terms of income, health, education, and services, tends to neglect incentives for individual growth, which is viewed with suspicion. As the state tends to become more rigid in order to guarantee equity, it encounters another major problem: growing internal discontent, fueled by the interests of markets that consider these equalizations unfair. Faced with this threat, the state apparatus is forced to limit individual freedoms because it needs to prevent uprisings. Everything is nationalized, criticism and contact with the outside world are prohibited, etc. Otherwise, the project collapses, democratic institutions, free elections, the free market, everything facilitates the entry of capitalist, individualistic, meritocratic ideas and practices. In short, the state limits negative freedom in order to promote the positive freedom of the population, but can this work? In a globalized world, where the economy is governed by the capitalist system, this is extremely difficult to do, and it comes at a very high cost: a human cost of negative freedom so great that it calls into question the very meaning of the model.

The free market is another maxim of capitalism: non-intervention by the state in market mechanisms would ensure healthy competition

between companies and guarantee economic well-being. However, practice shows that there is no free market in a situation of such marked inequalities as those between SMEs and giant transnational companies.

In these seemingly neutral and emotionless arguments, workers appear as independent actors who choose who they want to work for, who they sell their labor to. In reality, this choice is fictitious. Whether it is slightly better or slightly worse, it does not change the statistics, much less in a context of job scarcity.

The concept of the free market is closely related to meritocracy and operates in the same way, placing all responsibility on the individual. If a person is poor, it is a choice; they choose to be poor. And if they are exploited, it is also their choice, because who is stopping them from looking for a better job? In an increasingly demanding market, where even a college degree is not enough to secure a decent job, individuals are blamed for allowing themselves to be exploited in crappy jobs, even when going to college, even a public one, is reserved for a minority.

In this sense, schools and universities fulfill a necessary function in separating the population into more and less exploitable sectors. Even the individual himself feels less capable because he has not completed his studies and does not aspire to a better-paid job. He knows that if he did not finish high school, he will have to settle for a job that is probably informal and poorly paid, and if he does not have a college degree, he will end up, with luck, in a factory or as disposable personnel in some exploitative company. The person himself fits himself into and categorizes himself in the labor market. Every company sets arbitrary conditions, and we workers must accept them or leave. That is why it is essential to rethink the working class as dispossessed.

What merit are we seeking? What sacrifice are we proposing? The idea that "work" gives "value" to a person is shared by both communist and capitalist models. It is not easy to escape this way of thinking when our whole life revolves around work. Among the few who have historically opposed the idea of work as a source of dignity are anarchists. For example, Severino di Giovanni, who said:

"The more we work, the less time we have to devote to intellectual or idealistic activities; the less we can enjoy life, its beauties, the satisfactions it can offer us; the less we enjoy joys, pleasures, love. You cannot ask a tired and worn-out body to

devote itself to study, to feel the charm of art: poetry, music, painting, or even to have eyes to admire the infinite beauties of nature. An exhausted body, worn out by work, exhausted by hunger and consumption, desires nothing more than to sleep and die. It is a clumsy irony, a bloody mockery, to claim that a man, after eight or more hours of manual labor, still has the strength to enjoy himself, to enjoy himself in a higher, spiritual way. After the overwhelming task, he possesses only the passivity to become numb, because for this he needs only to let himself fall, to drag himself along. Despite its hypocritical singers, work in today's society is nothing but a condemnation and an abjection. It is usury, sacrifice, suicide."

The third pillar we must tear down is the strongest and least universally questioned: democracy. It is very common to hear criticism of meritocracy from the progressive sector and criticism of the free market from socialism. However, few dare to openly question "democracy," a concept that seems to bring together the best achievements of Western societies to date.

It is not difficult, however, to find serious inconsistencies in the democratic proposal since it is governed, as I will demonstrate, by the same principles of meritocracy and the free market. Modern democracy, which establishes an election of the supreme executive power every four or five years, is based on the premise that adults know what we want and that we will choose what is best for us. In this way, we can determine our own destiny and be represented by the most worthy people for the job. All of these assumptions are false. In a situation of monopoly, or oligopoly, of the mass media, with media barriers and almost absolute cultural indoctrination, it is impossible to speak of free choice. We choose from what the media offers us, highly conditioned by the hegemonic and the brainwashing to which we are subjected throughout more than a decade of compulsory schooling. On the other hand, according to "democracy," anyone can create a party and run for election. But this is false for the same reasons that the free market is false: established parties are sponsored by very powerful people and can advertise much more, they can go much further with their propaganda than we ever could. It is not even a question of money: the media are manipulated by these powers, or even owned by them, so they can cancel our proposals in very effective ways.

Our societies, particularly "American" ones, are trapped in partisanship. It is a very simple political dynamic: two or three major parties compete for power in each election, while the rest never achieve anything. The party that wins, almost always with false promises, cares more about staying in power than anything else. Those who are left out become part of the opposition and spend four years criticizing everything the government does, then eventually they are elected and those who were in power become detractors. It may seem that this dynamic helps to keep political forces in balance, but in practice it turns everything into a power struggle where the measures that are carried out are designed solely for their usefulness in winning votes. When a new government comes to power, it has two needs: to shield itself from criticism, for which it is always very useful to blame previous governments, and to construct a narrative in which they are the good guys. Therefore, if they are not re-elected, everything will get worse. In this dynamic of partisan struggle, those who hold power want only to keep it, and those who do not have it want only to obtain it. It may seem oversimplified, but let's see what happens to the "voter" caught up in all this fighting.

Faced with the power of the media and propaganda, voters end up choosing from the political options on offer, which are generally antagonistic or at least very different. The chosen ideology begins to set the course and determines the yardstick by which voters measure all political proposals. If it comes from the Democrats and you are a Republican, you will automatically view it with suspicion, because supporting anything from the "enemy" or "opposing" party would be playing into their hands. Little by little, we are creating a "divide" in which "the other" is increasingly stigmatized and their proposals are always frowned upon. Even governments find it almost impossible to govern without a majority, because politicians from other parties are simply instructed not to vote for anything that comes from the opposition party. It is a fierce struggle, where the real measures matter least. Democracy itself is a mask if there is no possibility of voting for something truly different, for whatever reason. Can we vote to work six hours and earn the same? Can we vote for the means of production to be shared? Can we vote that no one can inherit half the country? Can we vote that companies share profits with employees and don't exploit them by keeping everything? No? Or if we did vote for it, by some miracle, do you think it would actually happen?

This is like one of those casinos: suddenly you get the perfect combination that guarantees you millions, but they refuse to pay you. Why do we play if we can't win? It's nothing more than a scam.

Generally, when it comes to blaming individuals for the ills of democracy, a specific sector of the population is targeted, almost always the poor, thus reinforcing the elitist idea that democracy would work well if poor, uneducated people did not vote. But this is where the meritocratic heart of democracy lies: we give them the opportunity to do something different, but not the tools to make that decision, so when they always choose the same thing, it is their fault.

Despite all that has been said, the possibility of long-term change cannot be ruled out if some structural adjustments were made. Although partisanship is a show that serves power, democracy could function in a direct way by eliminating parties. While this would not magically solve all problems, there would be more room to debate concrete measures and break out of the vicious circle of partisanship.

We can, then, divide the current meritocracy into three parts: economic, political, and social. It operates in the same way in all three fields. It proposes rules of the game that are supposedly equal for all but in reality benefit some and subjugate others, justifying this inequality with the argument that the opportunity for success was granted equally to all people.

Chapter 2

Moral neoliberalism

With some fear of falling into generalizations, typical of this type of analysis, I dare to say that most people do not understand the meaning of neoliberalism. At best, the definition we give focuses on the liberalization and deregulation of markets, the retreat of the state, privatizations, etc. We rarely mention the social effects of neoliberalism. We talk about hyper-individualism, the destruction of social ties, and consumerism, but not about the moralization of individual behavior as the only proposal for structural change. Neoliberalism emphasizes individual responsibility, understanding that social change comes from the bottom up. In this way, we get the politicians we deserve, as

society; the police we deserve... A view that fits very well with the capitalist and meritocratic order of the West, something we have already mentioned. When we face new struggles—environmental, animal rights, or not so new, but with renewed approaches: feminism, social struggles in general—it is difficult not to carry with us these neoliberal ideas that are unconsciously ingrained in us. We reproduce mechanisms that lead struggles to a dead end.

We can find some of the clearest examples of how these moralistic approaches have deeply permeated the narrative of current environmentalism and veganism. This does not invalidate the fundamental arguments of these struggles, which I fully support.

The environmental field has been channeled in two main ways: the branch of individual responsibility, where citizens must be more "ecological" in their consumption, save water, recycle, buy organic, second-hand clothing, and all the other things that make for a more sustainable lifestyle. The other branch is governmental, which seeks to curb the climate crisis through international agreements and, at a more local level, to limit deforestation and pollution through laws and injunctions. In general, it is a legalistic struggle in which social mobilization also plays a strong role. The branch of individual responsibility responds fully to neoliberal logic: being more "ecological" is now part of the social mandate, and doing something "polluting" fills us with guilt. In this way, we also judge others for their "unsustainable" or consumerist behaviors and consumption. Is it wrong to judge or feel guilty for not behaving in an ecologically appropriate manner? I don't think it's wrong, but it is possible that this often distracts from the focus of the discussion.

Changes in personal behavior will occur naturally if there is a willingness to do so. The only way to force it would be to apply fines and prohibitions from the state apparatus. Let's take a current example: in Mendoza, many people are currently mobilizing against mining companies for wasting water in a region where it is a scarce resource. Instead, they could go after every citizen who fills their pool twice a month or waters their sidewalk with water. Not only would the effect be less, but it would also generate disputes among them without addressing the root of the problem. On the other hand, collective action against mining companies has a contagious effect: if I am against wasting water, I am likely to rethink my personal behavior in terms of caring for this resource.

Several of today's struggles have these two facets: individual behavior and collective action such as protests or reforms. Another very clear example of this is veganism, although it went much further in moral terms.

Once again, we have individual behavior: not consuming animal products, not using non-human animals in any way. On the other hand, we have collective action: protests against animal shows, slaughterhouses, places where animals are experimented on, proposals for reformist or abolitionist laws, etc.

Unlike environmentalism, veganism tends to be very rigorous in terms of the correlation between individual and collective action: it is often required that a person be vegan in order to protest, otherwise it would be an insurmountable inconsistency. Obviously, if we compare it to the anti-racist struggle, it would be inconsistent to fight for the rights of black people in the streets while I have slaves in my house, but I maintain that it is an inconsistency that the same person would sooner or later notice. I am not sure that it is necessary to exclude such a person from the struggle. In the case of many battles won, or half-won, such as the one against zoos, in which I was involved, much was achieved precisely because of the enormous turnout of people who were neither vegan nor vegetarian, but who joined the fight for other reasons. I am sure, although I cannot prove it, that some people have rethought their consumption habits as a result of all the public discussion that took place around zoos.

If everyone stopped eating meat today, there would be no more animal slaughter: this is as true as it is utopian. It fills us with guilt and resentment towards others, isolating us. The current system tries to channel struggles down individual paths, knowing full well that structural change is practically impossible in this way.

With the latest rise of feminism and the inclusion of the fight for the LGBT+ community, something similar happened: there was a lot of emphasis on inclusive writing and speech, the condemnation of sexist attitudes, micro-sexism, street catcalling, and then public shaming. Once again, there was strong moralization and control of behavior and consumption (in this case, for example, the consumption of sexist television programs, pornography, etc.) and, once again, all things that I think are extremely important to criticize and change together.

These new moralisms imposed by neoliberal logic can also be associated with side effects: "anti-woke" attitudes, the rise of the reactionary right, anti-everything discourses such as anti-feminism, anti-veganism, anti-intellectualism, anti-environmentalism, etc. One could say that this

happened because the struggles bothered "the system," so the state machinery and the media created an artificial rejection among the population to turn it "anti-woke," but I don't think that's the best explanation.

Let's think about it together: no one likes to be pointed at as inconsistent, foolish, or morally inferior. When a new moralism emerges, people either incorporate it into their daily lives and behavior or reject it, and the rejection can be as violent as the insistence on the other side. If we add to this the fact that we live in meritocratic societies that value negative freedom above all else, that we are increasingly less inclined to self-criticism and less tolerant of frustration, and if we add to that the phrase that opened this book: "Many people try to live their lives as if they were at a birthday party," we have a perfect cocktail.

There is an interesting idea that comes from psychology and proposes something like this: the person first ignores criticism, reality, or their own inconsistency, then violently opposes the idea with mockery or attacks, and finally accepts it. This would describe the process of a person going through grief or not wanting to accept something that hurts a lot. Following this logic, some people believe that this "anti-woke" stage would be the second phase and that the next would be acceptance. The truth is that I find this idea dangerous. With this criterion, antifa groups are about to become friends with neo-Nazis, right? Absurd. Just because they sound good, ideas cannot cross disciplinary boundaries. No, they are not in the process of acceptance; they are in the process of creating a collective identity based on the rejection of all these moralisms, something that unites them because they feel offended by them. All of this suits the "system" perfectly: minorities, activists, and feminists are used as scapegoats to blame them for problems inherent in capitalism, such as individualism and the loss of meaning or collectivity.

Another proposal has been gaining relevance and followers, and that is the unification of struggles under slogans such as "Total Liberation," "Anarcho-veganism," "Feminist Antispeciesism," and others. The idea is clear and understandable: the struggles overlap and share subjects and objectives. However, when we add struggles together, what are we really adding? A slogan?

Our commitment to this other cause? Do we demonstrate consistency in other areas? At times, there is even an intention to moralize some causes over others, with veganism seeking to moralize environmentalism by pointing out its contradictions for not incorporating an anti-speciesist perspective, and environmentalism doing the same. Then feminism would appear to point out the inconsistencies of both for not taking patriarchy into account. These are layers and layers of criticism that are necessary, that

enrich the debate and perspective, but which often border on puritanism and an increasing distancing from reality.

When we add more and more labels to our proposal, we must be very careful not to fall into a simplification of the internal debates that each one has. For example, if I say that I am going to create an anarcho-feminist-environmental movement, we must see which version of each cause I intend to incorporate because clearly there is no single anarchism, just as there is no single feminism or environmentalism. If my intention is to add the moralistic neoliberal versions of these struggles, my initial proposal may become overly demanding of its followers and create many difficulties when interacting with people who are unaware of all this.

Likewise, we must not forget the complexity of each struggle, its technical nature, and its diversity. For example, when groups from other sectors incorporate "environmental issues," they often do so under the influence of the media, and the issue ends up being summarized as "the climate crisis" or "consumerism." This is an agenda imposed by "first world" countries, where these issues are the most pressing. To talk about the climate crisis in a country like Argentina is, at the very least, to ignore the fact that there are much more severe and urgent problems locally, such as deforestation, the destruction of glaciers, the use of agrochemicals, and the mismanagement of protected natural areas. Talking about "consumerism" to a "third world" population that barely has enough to eat also shows how global propaganda has seeped in. It's not that there aren't consumers here, but if my message is to blame everyone equally, I'll be doing a great job for the system. I'm not criticizing ethics: I'm criticizing replacing them with individual blame.

Imagine if I, as an anarchist, went out and told people that we are in a bad way because of each and every one of you who voted. Which is true. What result would I get? No, anarchism has always stayed away from individual moralizing, even though it has always been very morally and ethically charged. Private property, the state, the existence and actions of institutions are moralized, not ordinary people, and obviously, as these struggles are fought, one is constantly confronted with one's own contradictions.

When I say, "The struggle is one," I mean something else. I mean that whatever field you choose is part of what needs to be done, it is part of the resistance. There are a thousand causes to contribute to, and they are all important: choose one and fight. The problem is not in the

Despite the incompatibilities of these struggles and their internal inconsistencies, the biggest problem remains that while 1% fights, 99% does not get involved in anything.

Chapter 3

The spiral of fascism

At this point, I would like to address some practical issues related to fascism. The intention is not to share a historical perspective, but rather a guide and a concrete tool for understanding and combating oppression.



Fascism is often taught as an invention of the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, an ally of Nazi Germany who was defeated during World War II. But this interpretation of fascism is inadequate. Yes, Mussolini

gives it a name, although it does not invent anything new. Let's look at the principles of this ideology. The *fascio*, or group, is formed on the basis of common characteristics—which may be nationality, ethnicity, religion, ideology, etc.—in opposition to another group, or groups, considered inferior or harmful. This was and is common practically everywhere, especially in societies with strong nationalism or intolerance of diversity. The Italian dictator takes this collective sentiment to its highest expression: the nation is everything, the government is everything, the unity of the people is everything, and those who oppose their well-being will be considered enemies. In this way, we find a reaffirmation of the group as well as immense control and constant dehumanization of the enemy outside the group to which one belongs. Using propaganda disseminated through a revolutionary medium for the time, namely radio, fascism managed to consolidate an apparent national unity. It exploited deeply human and universal aspects: tribalism, the need to belong, and the fear of exclusion. To exercise violence against internal enemies, the regime used both legal and extralegal tools. At first, it resorted to armed gangs—including, for example, the so-called "Black Shirts"—which harassed the political opposition, critical intellectuals, and ethnic minorities. Later, as the regime consolidated its political power, these repressive functions were taken over directly by the state, institutionalizing violence as a mechanism of control and oppression.

Today, fascism acts more subtly, except in countries where war and genocide are taking place, as in those cases total control of the population and the narrative becomes indispensable. Very powerful tools are needed to ensure that, in the midst of the digital age, people accept a single way of seeing things: the one narrated by the state. This is achieved through a gradual process of stripping away rights and freedoms. Let's look at the following graph:



This spiral seeks to represent the trajectory of expansion and consolidation of fascism, which uses events that we consider completely normal, preparing our minds for the next step—something similar to the "boiled frog" effect: a frog escapes from hot water, but is cooked alive if the water temperature is increased gradually. No authoritarian regime arises out of nowhere; behind it lies fertile ground of indoctrination, control, obedience, and fear.

Many intellectuals argue that the division between the political right and left no longer applies today. However, for me it is very clear: those who reinforce this spiral are being right-wing, at least on that specific issue. Of course, this picture could benefit from a million details to deepen the explanation: religion, in many societies mononormativity and heteronormativity, economic violence against workers or non-workers. Suppose there is a priest who promotes resistance to a fascist regime: he is being "left-wing" because he opposes the advance of authoritarianism, but he intends to return along the timeline only to a specific point. He questions the most obvious fascism, but he has naturalized other forms of oppression, such as normalizing religion. We all have naturalized micro-fascisms that we do not see today; that is why introspection is essential. Fascism,

first place, is installed in our own heads. The spiral turns, reinforced by years of propaganda and systematic violence, while also alienating us from a healthy way of life in terms of what we consume and nature in general. All of this creates a breeding ground for fascism, which advances noticeably through the spiral in the context of major economic, humanitarian, or environmental crises. Let's analyze this in more detail.

When it comes to tribalism, there is a tendency that we can consider natural among humans—and also in many other animal species—to be social within their own group. We are a gregarious species that relies on mutual aid for survival. This tribalism also motivates a drive to form smaller groups with something in common, such as a soccer team. As fans, we have something that sets us apart from the rest: our colors, our chants. The rivalry between the supporters of one team and another is a great expression of tribalism, which often leads to violence, dehumanization, and madness. They call it "passion," and passion "is inexplicable." Well, we can say that it actually is. The "inexplicable" is an instinctive drive toward tribalism that awakens in us a visceral sense of belonging to the group. Absurd? Perhaps, but no more absurd than nationalism, which is the same feeling applied to a larger group. This tribalism has been extremely useful for the construction and reaffirmation of a national identity which, once again, leads to the consideration of others as inferior or harmful, to their dehumanization and, ultimately, to violence or aggression. For this triangle of fascism—construction of the inferior other, violence against outside groups, dehumanization—to be a concrete sign, several of its parts must be actively promoted by the state. For example, if the Vélez soccer hooligans chant racist slogans against River fans and then attack them as they leave the stadium, this is an event that fulfills all parts of the triangle, but these are not actions promoted by the state on a large scale. Therefore, *underground* fascist or neo-Nazi groups are not, strictly speaking, fascists, but rather wannabes. True fascists are those who exercise fascism from state power. This is how tribalism and nationalism reinforce the spiral. Let's see what other tools exert a more subtle control over us.

The state demands a hierarchical society that allows it to govern, which inherently leads to very deep and institutionalized inequalities that remain static. In short, those who hold power tend to

have more and more power, while those who do not have it are more oppressed. There is no rotation, no dynamic that allows privileges in society to be reshuffled and redistributed: the status quo is a solid rock. Speaking of privileges, there is also patriarchy. While we can make the caveat that in many Western societies there has been a decline in this type of oppression and it is no longer as systemic as before, in other cultures patriarchy is very strong and is mixed with religion as a form of control. In general, religion has been a great ally of this fascist spiral, as it establishes guidelines for behavior, gender stereotypes, dress codes, and even tells us what to think so as not to fall out of God's favor.

Authority, whatever it may be, must be obeyed. If instead of "los" or "las," I write "lxs," it has an immediate effect on certain indoctrinated people, and they will want to correct me. The Royal Spanish Academy has determined that it should not be written that way and has the final say on the matter. Now, if the RAE itself says that "che" is not a word, but an Argentine invention... Who cares?

Returning to these standardizations, it is very interesting to see what they generate in people. Doing something outside the norm is even considered disrespectful and has even led to murders. Have you heard of rape as a form of correction for lesbianism? Obviously, these are cases considered extreme in Western culture, but their narrative, their root, is no different from what many people express when faced with a gay pride march or a person with "strange" hair color. They feel compelled to correct them, to make them all "fall in line" and be "normal." Their attitude sickens them; it's as if, after so many years of brainwashing, they find comfort in that normality, and when someone disrupts it, it awakens hatred in them.

Control is very strong even at this stage of the journey, yet it is so naturalized that we take it for granted and only become alarmed when the spiral advances a little further. We do not realize that in order to move on to the next stage, the previous one must be naturalized, something we can call micro-fascism because of its subtle nature. In fact, to a large extent, we have naturalized a certain level of dehumanization and violence towards certain groups. Today, these actions are increasingly taking place in the digital world. We find the same things there: for example, attacks by trolls seeking to discredit and harass the opposition or groups considered inferior. We also find very strong control of these digital spaces, exercised through censorship.

the alteration of algorithms and the selection of content that tends to keep people within "their" information bubble.

When things become sufficiently consolidated and there is a state need to expand the spiral, we begin to see things like the unification of the narrative, the persecution of the opposition, violence encouraged by the state apparatus, total control of the media, institutionalized terror, war, and genocide.

There is an effect that I like to call "snowballing," which refers to the accumulation of events and practices that shape culture and are difficult to reverse, but rather build on previous events to create new, more intense ones. For example, in this culture, meritocracy and punitivism are very naturalized, but underneath we also have a high degree of xenophobia, racism, and classism. When the state or the big economic actors, which is practically the same thing, decide that they need to expand the spiral toward a new immigration law that seals the borders and expels migrants, they need to generate a certain social climate. They know exactly what they have to do and they are very good at it. They will start by increasing the headlines about theft and violence by migrants, saying that migrants "take things from above." In this way, over time, they build up that social mood. Playing on what was already swept under the rug in society, they will dehumanize certain groups so that when the time comes, approval for certain legal measures will be overwhelming. This is where "progressivism" criticizes the media and specific actions, but fails to see where the snowball is coming from: it comes from the micro-fascisms built and fertilized, in part, by themselves. Anarchism, in this context, is an effective vaccine against fascism because, by being aware of what has been shown previously in the spiral, it prevents propaganda from indoctrinating us to move towards more obvious oppression and violence.

Chapter 4

War: a factory of enemies

Living in times of peace, it is not surprising that many people find it difficult to imagine war, beyond war movies or some kind of history lesson. Absurd horror and extermination seem like echoes of the past, something that as a society we prefer not to relive. However, when they occur before our eyes, we look the other way. Genocide, a word that evokes in us the atrocities of concentration camps and makes us wonder, "What was the rest of the world doing? How did they allow this to happen?" exposes our own hypocrisy. The world at that time did the same as we do today, continuing with their normal lives and unwilling to leave their comfort zone to confront the perpetrators of genocide, exactly what we are doing today, witnessing at least two genocides: that of the Gaza Strip and that of Ukraine.

Is it not the purest manifestation of the absurdity and cruelty of this system that billions are spent on weapons while much of the world is starving? Wars persist because they benefit power, capital, and fascism. This is not a simplistic generalization, but a deliberate political reality. There is a decision to continue wars globally, which involves everyone. If they really wanted to avoid war, they would have reached an agreement to create an international force to prevent it. They simply do not want to do so; they make political excuses, take lukewarm decisions, and even support and finance massacres and genocides. From different angles, benefits, and social positions, a common agreement for war is reached: some will passively oppose it, others will support it, some will be harmed in their daily lives or businesses, while others will benefit. The point is that, in one way or another, this social complicity is achieved.

War plays a major role for governments, as they can regain internal support as long as no one demands great management from them. Their mission, in the eyes of the citizen, becomes victory. Tolerance for political opposition, protests, and citizen demands becomes minimal. The entire community is expected to be united; this is no time for disputes.

Preparation and the battlefield strongly condition the soldier's way of thinking: yes, it is kill or be killed, although it goes much deeper than that. The dehumanization of the enemy is crucial: the very word "enemy" implies that they want to harm me and move in a homogeneous way, as if they were a single organism and not a bunch of soldiers with their own unique lives and histories. To carry out the killings, the soldier must also dehumanize himself and become part of this machine. The

logic of war promises impunity: we are only following orders from our superiors. At the same time, they exercise a moral authority that allows us to delegate personal judgments, decisions, and the purpose of everything to a "common good" and to the idea that there is "someone above who knows what they are doing." What ultimately makes armed conflict between strangers possible is the idea of an enemy who must be destroyed before he kills me, and the less I know about that enemy, the better. The veil of mystery, that supposed evil, must not be broken; hence the prohibition of all contact or fraternization with the enemy.

Dying for one's country, dying for who knows what in a suicide attack forcing fortified enemy positions, what does that tell us about the human condition? It tells us that purpose is often more valuable than our own lives, or so we have been led to believe. Someone "up there" knows what we must do and will value our sacrifice. You have to believe in a purpose; otherwise, who would go and die? Double dehumanization allows killing and dying in the name of a greater goal, even to the point where these rules of the game are accepted by society as a whole. What is wrong with war is killing civilians; killing soldiers is not wrong because people, by putting on the uniform, agreed to be part of the game. Obviously, this deliberately ignores the biases in the recruitment process and the fact that, in many cases, the soldier is not there of their own free will.

What is this devotion, this willingness, this submission to the orders of a superior? It reminds me of the submission we experience when we go to the doctor. You make yourself available, suppressing your will; it's the only way. "Stand up" and I stand up. "Take a deep breath" and I breathe. "Hold on a moment, this is going to hurt" and I hold on. We have all felt it; we put our desires and our will aside because we know that resistance is pointless, we have to obey and that's that. Something similar happens with all authorities in general: we obey, we go with the flow, we avoid confrontation until one day we find ourselves in that situation. They say "go die" and I go.

As we saw in the case of fascism, there is a construction of the group to which one belongs and an antagonistic group, the enemy. Fascism is nothing more than the application of the logic of war to civil society. There is a necessary victimization, because the enemy wants to hurt us, a situation that, at the same time, allows me morally to hurt him. In the civilian sphere, when we talk about fascism, there is also a dehumanization that can be twofold. The fanatic operates with a total dualism, where there is an antagonistic enemy. One becomes

a kind of soldier who carries out actions in the name of the cause, becoming part of the machinery of an ideological war.

Fascist or authoritarian regimes are seduced by the idea of going to war for any reason whatsoever. There must always be an enemy to fight; it can be internal or external, or both. War helps to reinforce control within society, it helps to unite the people behind their leaders, to minimize criticism and discontent. Not to mention that it facilitates the elimination of people who bother those in power or get in the way of business. War serves everyone, everyone in power. How is it that the working class ends up supporting wars that impoverish and destroy them? The answer is very simple: through propaganda, the cultural factory, nationalist narratives. Together we are building this spiral, this snowball that day after day shapes our morals, our perception. From tribalism to nationalism, we are on a sure path that leads to national unity and pride in the nation-territory. Today I am here to tell you that all of this is rubbish. It is nothing more than a social construct that serves the interests of the powerful. What a surprise! And although we know this intuitively, we continue to repeat the mantra that we are made to memorize in school. Think about it: today we watch in horror as hundreds of thousands of people are killed in a geopolitical dispute between nations that were once united. If tomorrow an Argentine province wanted to become independent, would you take up arms and go out to kill in the name of "a united Argentina"? Do you think you wouldn't? Well, many would, if given enough propaganda. It's not that difficult. Based on nationalism, you can introduce the idea that there are foreign powers that want to divide Argentina, with a lot of money behind them, and that this is all a plan to conquer the Southern Cone. That's it, we have thousands and thousands of soldiers willing to die.

We express our opinions, based on a logic imposed by nation states, on the pros and cons of wars in other parts of the world, who was right in World War I or World War II, in Vietnam or Syria.

We express our opinions on whether the United States had the right to invade Iraq or whether it was right to leave Afghanistan. This whole way of thinking reflects only the logic of domination, a discourse to which we subscribe, manipulated by propaganda.

We are locked in a vicious circle. If every people is indoctrinated to follow the agenda of their political leaders, we are doomed to be cannon fodder in battles that are not really ours. Let's imagine a world where instead of state governments there are companies. We work for Coca-Cola and those in the other country work for McDonald's, and they tell us

"McDonald's wants to conquer us, we must defend our Coca-Cola identity and stand up to them." So a bunch of Coca-Cola employees form battalions to defend their homeland and fight to the death against other workers just like them, but who make hamburgers.

Does this mean that all wars are the same, that all governments are the same, and that it is not worth fighting against a worse one? No. To take the same stance of non-violence and say that all countries involved in wars are the same and that violent resistance is not the solution would be to make the work of the worst ones easier.

This is a complex world, and opting for easy solutions only leads to worse consequences. Every country, every people is mired in its own propaganda, its own world created on the basis of existing culture.

Used as puppets, our feelings are directed by those in power to their advantage and, if necessary, they will not hesitate to spill the blood of their slaves.

Chapter 5

The transformation of the state

There is a necessary transition from a paternalistic state to a state that we might call democratic. As Michel Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish*, public torture is replaced by the dungeon and then by the modern prison and the reform of the individual.

It is true: a despotic, authoritarian regime can last for hundreds of years, but sooner or later it falls, and in doing so, it causes more structural damage than a "voluntary" transition to another type of state. Simply put, if "the people" were to defeat the regime, that victory would make them aware of their own strength. Today, many people think that the modern, democratic rule of law was the product of the will of the ruling class. This is one of the great skills of the system: to make us believe that all struggle is in vain, that every setback of oppression, every advance of equality and justice would have happened anyway because of the benevolence of the king or the state. To internalize the importance of the social struggles of the past, I suggest reading works such as *Caliban and the Witch* by Silvia Federici.

It would be very difficult to expect the entire population to suddenly rebel against a democratic state. There is always a conservative sector that will come out to defend the order and, with it, guarantee the monopoly of force and violence. There is a reason why the repressive organs of the state are subject to such rigid rules and so much brainwashing; there is a reason why they end up selecting people capable of carrying out brutal acts, who do not question orders. There are always such people, and I have deep contempt for them. Perhaps if more people shared that feeling and the clarity of seeing the repressor in every uniform, even if they are not repressing at that moment, we would have a chance.

On the subject of authority, I would like to introduce a quote from Jiddu Krishnamurti, from his book *The Art of Living*:

“...We create authority, the authority of the state, of the police, the authority of ideals, the authority of tradition. I want to do something, but my father says, ‘Don’t do it.’ I have to obey him, otherwise he will get angry, and I depend on him for food. He controls me through fear, doesn’t he? Therefore, he becomes my authority. In the same way, we are controlled by tradition: ‘You must do this and not that, you must wear your sari in a certain way, you must not look at boys, or girls...’ Tradition tells you what to do; and tradition, after all, is knowledge, isn’t it? There are books that tell you what to do, your parents tell you what to do, society and religion tell you what to do. And what happens to you? You are crushed, beaten down. You never think, you never act and live vitally, because all these things frighten you. You say you have to obey, otherwise you will be helpless. What does this mean? It means that you have created authority because you are looking for a safe way to behave, a safe way to live. The very pursuit of safety creates authority, and that is how we become mere slaves, cogs in the wheels of a machine, living without any capacity to think, to create.

Indeed, if we do not free our minds from authority, it would be very difficult to overcome the system already established on the basis of obedience. Authority, as such, will always exist. Even in the freest communities known to us, or that we can imagine, there is a culture and a set of traditions, there is a morality. All these things are indispensable and are what make us human. If there is no state and no government, let us suppose that there are assemblies that make decisions, unanimously or otherwise, because one cannot live in community without

making collective decisions. These decisions will have validity, and that in itself constitutes a sign of authority.

As always, taking any proposal to its absolute limit ends up defeating its purpose. "Against all authority" is a beautiful and correct slogan in the current context, in which authorities are vested with institutional power that is part of the state. What we criticize is the degree, the magnification of that power, of that authority; its arbitrary nature, its service to a few through exploitation. Anarchy is a force of entropy, seeking to destroy the concentration of power and thus distribute it among all. When we allow authority to advance, taking over more and more ground, taking advantage of our fears, our need for security, our passivity, that authority inevitably becomes greater and greater, accumulating more and more power, more wealth. It is impossible for that power not to corrupt. Therefore, a constant exercise of entropy is necessary and healthy; every so often, we must start over, rewrite all the scripts, and rethink all the rules.

The Church has resisted; despite Copernicus, Darwin, Nietzsche, and so many others, people continue to believe in it. Capitalism resists despite Marx, the Soviet Union, Iraq, Vietnam, and the Great Depression. It resists despite the most compelling evidence that it is a model that leads to environmental collapse, inequality, and wars. In the same way, schools also resist, even though their system has remained virtually unchanged since their creation and reformist scholars continue to rack their brains to understand how or why. Why? The answer is simple: all these institutions resist because they serve power, no matter how many of us believe that they do not serve humanity; that is not their purpose.

Successive military dictatorships, which occasionally step aside to make way for democratic governments, return when unpopular measures need to be implemented. They come back out of the closet because the democratic system does not allow them to make such drastic adjustments or kill so many people. There have been brutal adjustments carried out in the midst of democracy that have not been strongly opposed; therefore, dictatorship does not appear because it is "not necessary." These comings and goings are obviously not at all popular, and the strongest economies avoid them at all costs, although they may sponsor them in other countries from which they feed.

In Argentina, in the northern provinces, or outside urban centers, life is much worse and the repressive forces are more brutal; governments don't change, they are like fiefdoms; they are much more like the paternalistic state model. At the same time, in large cities, people live in a modern democratic state where the repressive forces are generally less fierce. Why is this the case? It is very interesting, because I really do not believe that people on the periphery are in any way inferior to people in the cities. The problem is that the central power is forced to maintain its mask of kindness in front of the majority of the population, while with the rest it can afford to be less benevolent. All this hypocrisy of the democratic state crystallizes when the lights go out and the cameras point elsewhere. What is it really? In the city, it advances little by little with oppressive laws of adjustment and labor flexibility, but in the interior, where it wants to apply a model of brutal plunder, it has to resort to the old recipes of the paternalistic state. In a context of armed conflict, where do they get more recruits to send to the front? They often resort to the interior and, when not, to the most vulnerable populations in the cities.

In fact, many thinkers have proclaimed that this liberal model would not be viable without the inequality inherent in it, that rich countries could not be rich without exploiting poor countries. This can be extrapolated equally to all levels: if there are rich and poor, under this model, could the rich continue to be rich if there were no one to exploit?

The welfare state was born as a response to communism. The geniuses at the top realized that if workers were heavily exploited, it would lay the groundwork for a revolution; the example of Russia was not encouraging at all. So, the idea of reducing inequality and giving the working class more purchasing power emerged. It worked wonders, but when the danger of social revolution had passed, the state—influenced by its friends and owners, i.e., big business—began to tighten the screws again.

Everything we achieve in this benevolent era will turn to dust the moment the state decides it has gone too far and feels like enslaving us a little more. Their guarantees are worthless. Their constitution is worthless. All these promises are only good when the master is in a good mood. I ask you: when resources begin to run out, what do you think the state will do with its guarantees? Who will it benefit? Who will it repress and abandon to their fate?

Do you think it will hold a popular referendum to see who is saved and who is not?

Who dies? Things are rapidly moving toward environmental collapse, and we don't have much power in this system to stop it. The big resource-exploiting companies, friends of the states, are the ones who decide the future of this planet. I also find it a little sad to have to resort to this argument to try to mobilize against the system, as if exploitation, inequality, brutalization, and the lack of participation we have in our own destiny were not enough.

What can you discuss with people who find it normal that every Google search we make is monitored by the FBI? Our cell phones spy on us day and night, sending information about our every move to the web, and they are even susceptible to being accessed by the state to function as microphones, hidden cameras... In short, all of this is normalized today; we live in a state of complete surveillance. The phenomenon knows no borders; it happens in both the first and third worlds. We believe that the democratic state is so benevolent that it will never use these means and data to harm the people. The master to whom we have granted the power to do good and evil, as Étienne de la Boétie says, has not forgotten his ability to repress us if necessary.

People in the middle sector of society, both progressives and conservatives, see no danger in granting power to the state, in being monitored. They believe they will never do anything to attract the attention of the repressive organs. This illusion collapses from time to time. For example, in today's Russia, where until a couple of years ago, people may not have seen any danger in being monitored by the state. Today, when they can be sentenced to many years in prison for a post or for subscribing to an anti-war Telegram channel, it becomes clear that there was and is much to fear. Like lambs, we hand over the keys to everything to the master, hoping that he will be benevolent to us for our obedience; but when he claims our lives, it is too late to escape him.

The problem with the state is not that it serves inequality, which is obviously serious and inhumane, but that it will always be an entity to which we delegate our power and, in doing so, we instrumentalize ourselves, becoming apathetic about our own destiny as humanity.

The three errors of Marxism

The left is a political sector that dares to criticize the democratic model, but it has some significant shortcomings that prevent it from progressing. Marxism, despite being an excellent political theory that understood the exploitation of the proletariat in the capitalist model, is a reductionist doctrine that has been left behind by time and today cannot offer us a solution because the playing field has changed.

The working class to which Marx referred, the proletariat of the 19th century, was extremely exploited, unable to access a reasonably dignified life. The bourgeoisie, on the other hand, were a specific and defined group that owned the means of production, i.e., factories and other industries. These were two antagonistic social classes separated by a huge economic gap, with no middle class to act as a buffer between them. Today, with an improvement in the quality of life for workers and a promise of social mobility that occasionally becomes a reality, it is possible to live relatively well—depending on the country, of course—without owning the means of production. These improvements have further divided workers, who have now lost virtually all class consciousness.

Meritocracy, the free market, and party democracy have managed to stifle any attempt at social revolution. Those who are poor think about getting out of poverty and see other workers like themselves as role models. Those who are well off, even if they have to work for a boss to whom they have to hand over part of their labor and are thus cheated and exploited, see no need to rebel; at most, they become moderate progressives.

In this way, the first mistake of contemporary Marxism is economic: it appeals to a social class that is no longer as desperate as it was in the 19th century.

Modern democracy has found very effective ways to lull workers into complacency and mask their exploitation, not only by reinforcing the idea of social advancement through meritocracy, but also by giving the masses access to all kinds of entertainment and technology.

For a revolution to occur, two components are necessary: a sense of desperation, which can be caused by hunger, lack of opportunities, or a certainty of imminent death, and a revolutionary idea. These components are inversely proportional in their effect: the greater the desperation, the less necessary a

to ignite the people; it is like a haystack that catches fire from a single match. On the other hand, if we are dealing with a population whose needs are all met, or who have hopes of social advancement, despair is minimal and it would take a very powerful revolutionary idea to achieve mobilization.

After all, we are creatures of habit who always seek pleasure and avoid pain. Modern democracy understood this perfectly and gave us the bare minimum necessary to avoid revolt: the promise of change, a life with basic needs met, or with the hope of being able to meet them, and a wide variety of entertainment to avoid creative leisure or thinking too much.

The second error of Marxism is political: it seeks the solution in a return to a paternalistic state. Yes, Marx's ideal involves the dissolution of the state in its final stage, but to get there, it first resorts to a workers' revolution and then to a dictatorship of the proletariat, the form most universally known as Soviet socialism. However, this form of dictatorial state, even if governed by workers, is a paternalistic figure characterized by a high degree of hierarchy, institutionalism, state monopoly of the media, restrictions on free expression, bureaucratization, glorious leaders who lead toward a "bright future," etc. Trying to fit this ideal into the current democratic model is impossible, as it implies a loss of negative freedoms, which most people are not willing to accept. In attempting to return to a paternalistic state, we ignore the fact that society has advanced toward a democratic state for a number of reasons and that this progress is very difficult to undo, because the new model has proven to be more efficient and resilient, much more so than Marx had predicted.

The third mistake of current Marxism is social: it appeals to a working class that is highly heterogeneous in its political perceptions, including both conservatives and progressives, revolutionaries and reactionaries. If we divide society into these four factions, it operates in ways that are totally different from what we can imagine from the perspective of class struggle, a dualistic and reductionist explanation that, in my opinion, should have remained in modernity and not been stretched to try to explain all current social issues.

The bulk of society is made up of a middle segment, around 95% of the population. Here we find moderate reformists, or

progressives, conservatives, and a range of nuances where reformist positions are interspersed with the occasional right-wing ingredient. It is always striking how very poor and marginalized segments of society vote for politicians who clearly represent other economic classes. This happens because they are conservatives. There are rich conservatives and there are poor conservatives. And yes, the poor vote for the rich, even though the rich despise them. Marxists call it alienation or lack of class consciousness, but this explanation is clearly insufficient. It is not that poor conservatives who vote for rich conservatives believe that the latter will make them rich. No. There is an ideological affiliation that is stronger than weak class consciousness. They are not confused, they have not forgotten that they are poor, they are simply conservatives. Is that not enough of an explanation?

Apart from this large group divided into two, we have the revolutionaries, a very small percentage of the population who seek radical change and are not satisfied with reforms. And, on the other hand, we find the reactionaries: a similarly marginal fraction that strongly opposes social change or progress. This reactionary sector finds an audience among the conservative half of society and generally proposes a return to a previous *status quo*, an ideal past that was not perverted by progressive and revolutionary ideas. The revolutionaries, on the other hand, mainly attract an audience from the reformist sector of society and promise to lead everyone to a better future. We could summarize this struggle as a tug-of-war between the past and the future, in which the extremes share one characteristic: they seek to mobilize the average citizen. Unlike the center, both have tremendous energy with which they infect us and try to convince us.

Reactionaries often sell themselves as revolutionaries, and since they are also very active and passionate like them, they can be confused. They are very adept at manipulating the sentiments of the conservative sector and come up with facile criticisms such as "politicians earn too much and are thieves," "we give too much to foreigners," and "there is too much crime because the laws are too lenient." Obviously, these ideas are nothing revolutionary, but they can empower and mobilize a significant sector of the population. We all like "the new," the promise of change, the energy. That is why revolution has never gone out of style. Revolution sells.

The Democratic center, as a government, ends up being boring for people, and if things go badly, even worse. The desire for change makes itself felt, and that is when the reactionary right appears, kicking over the table of

conservatives and stale progressives, infecting the people with the idea that they are the only ones who are different. With a populist and recalcitrant discourse that appeals to the conservative sector and a bit of pseudo-revolution to co-opt young people, the reactionary paves a sure path for itself, while the revolutionary left not only fails time and again to radicalize the progressive sector, but also fails to interest workers due to a lack of class consciousness.

It makes no sense to appeal to conservatives, even if they are proletarians, with revolutionary rhetoric. Nor does it make sense to appeal to reformists with rhetoric that smacks of regression rather than progress: returning to a paternalistic state is not desirable. For any progressive, the idea of returning to the fascist or socialist models of the past is madness.

Proposing that the state regain the power to expropriate private property and the means of production and intervene in all markets is today, let's agree, an unattractive proposition, even for progressives. These ideas worked well when levels of despair in society were very high, but today there is no solid basis for a social revolution of this kind.

The great deception of Russian communism was that, after overthrowing the state and even killing the father figure, the tsar, it returned, once again, to paternalism. What a misfortune and what a great injustice to have come all that way and shed so much blood for nothing! Worse still, the socialist model sought antagonism with the democratic model of the West, causing both many armed conflicts that only respond to a logic of power and domination by a few people.

We make a logical error in our thinking, the same one Marx made. If our doctrine or philosophy, which we can reduce to an equation, lacks the things we hope to find at the end, if the result is not a logical consequence of the parts, then we are promising something that we will probably not be able to deliver. If an unjust society is proposed in which exploitation and destruction take place, but the horizon is a perfect world, then we are faced with a deception. In this way, Marx sought communism: a world without social classes, without exploitation, and without a state; however, to reach that point, the population had to be subjugated by means of a workers' dictatorship. It was never going to work. In the same way, we expect capitalism to solve the social and environmental problems that the system itself is causing in the future. It is absurd and a logical error.

Chapter 7

The myth of nonviolence

It is very difficult to talk about challenging the tyrant and his monopoly on violence without touching on the subject of violence itself. As Peter Genderloos has pointed out in interviews and in his great book *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, violence is seen today as entirely negative. The state is allowed to use violence, and although it is condemned, it is the only entity that can legitimately use it; like a father who beats his children, he is condemned, but no one disputes or challenges his power. Any use of violence outside of this monopoly is seen as terrorism or vandalism.

Under the doctrine of nonviolent struggle, it is assumed that all advances in society have been achieved through nonviolent forms of resistance and that "what is achieved through violence can only be maintained through violence," as Gandhi said. He also said many other beautiful things. However, it would be important for us to look around and see what kind of person we choose to build a myth around. In Gandhi's case, that myth has very short legs. If you research this figure's biography on the web, you will find the truths silenced by the fabricated history.

My problem, however, is not so much with the idol of nonviolence, but with the doctrine he has left as his legacy. It is true that peaceful struggle, protests, and marches serve to obtain some benefits from the state and make it back down by granting some rights. The rest will remain the same. It is a proposal that seeks to accelerate the transition from a paternalistic state to a democratic state. Once this is achieved, everyone can sleep peacefully, while the foundations of exploitation and inequality persist. It is a form of protest that seeks to persuade the state, not challenge it directly; therefore, the state reconfigures itself to continue operating.

Nor is it true that major changes have been achieved peacefully without direct or potential violence behind them. It's simple. If we bring ten million people out onto the streets, no matter how peaceful they claim to be, it's a huge risk of popular uprising; they are always one step away from revolution. So no, it's not "violence," but it's a very serious threat, and the state is not stupid.

It is curious how this model of infantilized society expects us to subordinate ourselves to the father, the state, granting it tools that we do not allow ourselves. The state is the only one that has the power to spy on us, judge us, repress us, educate us. Its power is unquestionable, as long as it acts within reasonable limits. If it crosses the line, that transgression is criticized, such as police brutality or political corruption, but the system will always be as unjust as we allow it to be. It will always want to gain ground; it will advance and retreat, creating an illusion of victory every time it retreats and a feeling of greater oppression when it advances.

We grant it a monopoly on violence, while saying that "what is achieved through violence can only be maintained through violence."

Perfect, so we respect this rule, but are we going to allow the state to never respect it? Yes, the state has gained power through force, and yes, it will maintain it through force. By not using violence to combat it, we may be morally superior, but in reality, this changes absolutely nothing. Violence, according to this doctrine, is always the same thing, equally reprehensible whether it is exercised by the attacker, the defender, or the victim. By standing up to the aggressor and using violence, it argues, we end up becoming the very thing we want to fight. It would be something like "turning the other cheek." Well, we have been turning the other cheek to power for centuries, and you know what? Power is getting stronger and stronger.

There is nothing more paternalistic than the Christian religion, which is why it goes so well with the state. In these ideas of nonviolence, I believe, lies the culmination of the slave's thinking, so enslaved that it has created a dogma around the supposed moral superiority of being a slave. I am not, however, suggesting that all forms of nonviolent struggle are the same, nor that they are passive. They are very important and necessary, but they have a limit to their scope that they themselves set: a ceiling marked by their reformist nature.

Whenever mass peaceful protests occur—such as marches with signs or even strikes—and riots and vandalism break out, those carrying out these actions are often labeled as infiltrators and troublemakers. At best, they are considered people who do not understand what they are doing because they act on impulse and give reasons to criminalize the protest. And the criminalization of protest works very well, precisely because many people believe that peaceful protest is the only legitimate form of protest. What's more, if necessary, with the

help of the mainstream media, anything can be criminalized.

Suppose there is a situation of racially motivated police brutality in which young people from a poor neighborhood are constantly detained, harassed, and even tortured by the police. A protest by neighbors arises. They collect signatures. They go to the police station. They stand there with signs and do nothing. What will be the consequence of that action? Probably nothing. They have expressed their discontent, yes. Perhaps, if there are a lot of them, it will catch the attention of the police chief, who will ask the officers if they know anything about what the neighbors are saying. This action, if it poses no risk to the police station, will not go any further and will probably not change anything. There is an assumption that the failure of the peaceful struggle of a few people occurs because, in reality, they do not express the desire of the majority of society. In this case, it is fine if nothing happens. What is ignored in this case is that the vast majority are not even aware of what is happening and, even if they are, since it does not affect them directly, they are not in a position to really express an opinion, nor are they interested in doing so. Democracy uses this "silent majority" as dead weight to ignore the demands of supposed minorities.

Let's suppose that, in this same example of police brutality, two thousand people live in the neighborhood, of whom only one hundred came out to protest.

So, can we say that this is a minority? Let's imagine another scenario: the neighbors go to the police station, burn tires, block the street, insult every police officer they see there, try to break into the police station, throw stones, throw a Molotov cocktail, beat up two officers, and destroy vehicles. Fifty people are arrested. The media arrives. Everything is chaos. They are repressed, and the people retreat. What consequences do you think this action will have?

Today, it is not possible to openly challenge the state's monopoly on force, but it is clear that rioting is a much faster and more effective way to achieve certain results. The violence exercised by the mob against the police station is in self-defense and is absolutely legitimate; in fact, people in the slums understand this much better than the bourgeois middle class.

There is another way of using violence, outside the framework of mass protests, which is more characterized as a terrorist act. These are attacks on targets related to the systematic oppression to which we are subjected. The assassination of police chief Ramón Falcón by anarchist Simón Radowitzky on November 14, 1909, is a close example. Let's see what Severino Di Giovanni had to say about it:

You do work that you enjoy, you are self-employed, and you are not greatly bothered by the yoke of your boss; you too submit resignedly or cowardly in your capacity as an exploited worker: how dare you condemn so severely those who have moved on to the offensive against the enemy? We want to say only one thing to you: "Silence!" For the sake of honesty, dignity, and fierceness. Don't you feel their suffering? Shut up! Don't you have their audacity? Then, once again, shut up! Shut up, because you don't know the tortures of hated work and exploitation."

Individual acts that bring violence to the enemy are also acts of self-defense. I consider them to be similar to a revolution, but taken to a personal level and charged with great despair and frustration. They are desperate acts in themselves, because a single individual or group rarely has the hope of changing things with their action or of emerging unscathed from what they are doing. They know that the machinery of power will catch up with them. They also know that the majority will condemn them for challenging the tyrants. Neither in Severino's time, nor even less so now, do I believe that this is a path that will bring about change; for most people, these will be seen as nothing more than terrorist acts by a few madmen, and the media will do everything in their power to distort the truth.

Violence cannot be discussed as a whole. Those who exercise it systematically and cynically from within the state, as they have done for hundreds of years, cannot be judged by the same standards as those who exercise it as a one-off act in search of justice, or a community that defends itself with the few weapons it has to resist an oppressive state. Obviously, lukewarm reformists do not want any revolt; it is not difficult for them to buy into the conformist discourse of television if they themselves do not feel the yoke of exploitation on their own skin.

Anarchism is a feeling of love and altruism for human dignity against all oppression. Yes, that love can be expressed in anger and hatred, and it is not easy to explain to a conservative how throwing a Molotov cocktail is an act of love, but that's their problem. Revolutionaries are passionate men and women who do not do things by halves.

Communists realized long ago that protests alone would not work. In the *Manifesto*, we find a very clear guide to action that includes nonviolent forms of protest—such as walkouts, strikes, blockades, boycotts, and demonstrations—but these are not an end in themselves. Nor do they have anything to do with the false hope that they will change the order of things, even if they manage to wrest a victory or two from

the bourgeoisie and cause them to lose ground in the distribution of wealth. Communism has no illusions; that is why it was a true revolutionary movement and bore the fruits we all know. Its mistakes have already been discussed at length, and I do not want to return to those hackneyed criticisms, only to state that the primary objective of the nonviolent action of the working class was to unite the workers for the subsequent armed revolution. It was, in fact, a very astute form of opposition, using the means that the system itself provided, advancing along the legal path, always on the edge, and, from time to time, testing the possibility of taking over a factory, until the ground was prepared and legality no longer mattered. The monopoly of force had already ceased to exist because the labor movement had grown so much that it became unstoppable.

Chapter 8

The balance of forces

Both globally, in geopolitics and economics, and internally in each country, there is a balance of power. It is clearly uneven, but it has gained legitimacy and become normalized.

Russia is a military power and a huge country. It goes without saying that its smaller neighbors, especially the countries of the former USSR, are under Moscow's influence. As soon as they try to step out of its shadow, Russia invades them or intervenes in less obvious ways. The United States, on the other hand, is also a great power and has many countries under its economic control. If necessary, it can invade them, but it is always easier and less risky to stir up disputes, support opposition groups, or finance coups to install a government that represents its interests.

When Russia invades Ukraine, that act is interpreted as an escalation. The rest of the world chooses not to act, not to get directly involved in the war. They support Ukraine with weapons, but they do not want to escalate the situation to a higher level; why take the risk? In most wars, the same thing happens: countries not directly involved watch events unfold from afar, even if it is a massacre or genocide. All presidents talk about their concern for world peace and, in the vast majority of cases, do nothing. Only

those governments whose interests are at stake will respond. In this way, poor countries are at the mercy of rich countries.

There is a double oppression on the people: from the world order, forcing the country to subordinate itself to the rules of a global market, and also from the government itself, which generally does nothing but perpetuate those demands locally.

In the wars waged by the powers, there is a historically well-founded idea: the aggressor does not stop on its own. When the aggressor is given territory and power, it eventually comes back for more. This can be seen time and time again throughout history. When there is escalation and no deterrent response, it is interpreted as a green light to continue attacking. This is partly because, as we have seen, the machinery of fascism must continue to function and expand, otherwise it becomes more difficult to maintain internal order.

When a government implements brutal austerity measures and society does not respond, the same thing happens as when one country attacks another and does not receive a forceful response. In both cases, the oppressor gets away with it and a new status quo is established. There is a rather naive general belief that international laws protect small countries from aggression by large ones, in the same way that laws and the constitution protect the people from their rulers. Of course, this is not the case.

Behind every law, every international agreement, every article of the constitution, is the ability of certain actors to exercise force over the transgressor. Over time, that force becomes more conceptual and theoretical. It can happen, and often does, that agreements that had backing actually cease to have it. Then the transgressor appears and escalates without being struck back, either because the force that maintained that agreement no longer exists, or because those who should apply it are cowed and do not want to match the escalation of tension.

The different sectors of society are ordered according to their privileges and, just like countries, they look the other way while war or austerity falls on others less fortunate. The ingenuity, or if you will, the artistry of governments lies in adjusting each sector separately. This prevents them from joining forces to oppose them. It is the same logic followed by empires: 'divide and conquer'. However, there are limits to austerity and wars; there are sectors that are untouchable because they can hit the government

where it hurts and are very well organized, unlike ordinary people. It is no easy task to cut the profits of multinationals; it is not easy to attack a giant, so the weak are attacked, and thus inequality is deepened.

We must not be afraid to escalate tension in response to aggression. By acting in unison, it is possible to avoid austerity and wars, but also to shift the balance of power elsewhere, where the people dictate the dynamics of tension. Not only must we stop the barrage of blows from those in power, but we, the organized people, must be the ones who corner governments. Ultimately, we are the lifeblood of these powers, and only through culture is it possible to govern ourselves. Not through force. In the long run, no power can sustain itself without legitimacy.

How can we, as workers, escalate the tension? What can we do to respond to the constant attacks by governments on our quality of life, our wages, and inflation? Historically, peasants, tired of the mistreatment of feudal lords, took up arms. Other times, they formed free communities. They defended themselves from the yoke of kings with their own strength and often paid the highest price for their rebellion. Those were different times, but peasants generally owned their land, so they had strong roots and a sense of community that allowed them to organize resistance. When capitalism took hold, peasants were deprived of their own means of subsistence and transformed into something hated and despised: wage workers. Despite this, the working class organized in different parts of the world and found ways to escalate tensions with the bourgeoisie. Together, they took over factories, went on strike, marched, and protested in ways that today would seem completely crazy to many.

Let us leave aside the discussion of whether it is reasonable to demand anything from the bourgeoisie or the state, given that their government and power are in fact illegitimate.

I want to point out something different: these ways of escalating tension, or at least matching it in response to the permanent adjustment in favor of the exploiters, practically no longer exist today. When was the last time you heard about a general strike? About a factory takeover? In fact, many people are firmly convinced that none of this works, that there is no point in participating in protests.

Hand in hand with union corruption, which negotiated with those in power and reduced the intensity of organized worker resistance, today we no longer have a way to match the escalation of tension with our

masters. Peaceful marches, attempts to boycott products to show that "we consumers have the power," or some other progressive fable.

The struggle has been delegitimized, the ideal seems to be to work and accept any conditions without complaint because if I don't like it, I can look for another job.

But how was the workers' struggle reduced, divided, and fragmented? Beyond the underlying cause, which is the advance of capitalism that makes us increasingly individualistic, those in power have resorted to a series of nefarious practices to achieve their goal. Military dictatorships in Latin America destroyed the workers' struggle through state terrorism. However, in the eyes of the current population, they seem to have been a fascist outburst. It is believed that revolutionary people were killed and disappeared, and then, due to social pressure, the government ceded to democracy.

Democratic government is seen as a savior, but it does not restore the previous conditions. It operates on a new level and takes advantage of the fear that remains in the population for generations. So, the military does not leave because of social pressure; it leaves because its work is done. It makes way for a democratic government to avoid long-term conflict because, even if it does not say so, it knows that its authoritarian government is always illegitimate.

This is how the adjustment takes shape, always sawing downwards. We are relieved that the de facto government is leaving, yes, but what does it leave behind as the norm? Scorched earth, an atomized community, resigned to individualism. This is an idea I had many years ago and, because it was perhaps too controversial, I was unable to develop it: an autocratic government is, in a way, easier to fight. There are no masks, there is an obvious fascism that cannot be hidden. Yes, there is a narrative that tries to justify it, but in the eyes of any logical person, none of that can be legitimate. So what are we celebrating when we celebrate democracy? Of course, we don't want to be disappeared and tortured as we were under the dictatorship, but what is there to celebrate if the dictatorship achieved its goal? Even if the repressors and genocidal killers are brought to justice, even if we say "Never again," can we go back to how we were before?

Some may say that it is not possible to return to the previous distribution of profits because things have changed. Well, that is the achievement, the achievement of having carried out a brutal adjustment through repression and that today we believe that ceiling of discussion in economic terms is unattainable.

Today we live in a reality where protesting is for slackers and striking is for terrorists. What tools do we have left? Democracy and dictatorship play a game of "good cop, bad cop" with us. We feel relief when the good cop returns, but he only does so to reinforce what the bad cop achieved through torture and extortion.

When austerity measures are implemented, as seen in Argentina under Milei's government, it is argued that they were inevitable given the state of affairs: unsustainable inflation, excessive government spending on services, etc. The working class, defeated, accepts this. There is no faith that resistance can continue, as inflation outpaces wages year after year. We do not take into account that inflation "is" an indicator of resistance, evidence of a struggle in the market over prices versus a struggle by workers over wages. They cannot agree. Prices rise because the bourgeoisie wants to earn more, so the government and the unions agree on a corresponding wage increase that triggers inflation again.

Faced with these escalations of power to exploit us more and more, what is the role of the police? Their function is to maintain order, yes, but what order?

They will not prevent an escalation by those in power; they will always be there to stop the people from responding to the escalation.

Let's suppose that one fine day, the president decides to brutally raise all taxes. What can the people do in response? Take to the streets with signs.

Fine. Let's suppose that happens and nothing else happens. What else?

Maybe take over a factory, block a street, storm the government building, or go on strike. The police will be there to prevent that from happening. So it is very clear that the order they protect is the order of exploitation; they are the guardians of slaves who have no real rights while the government does whatever it wants.

Just as there is a balance of power in the world that prevents any single nation from taking control of everything, so too should there be different sectors in society with enough power so that none can be a dictator. In fact, the separation of powers of the state was supposedly designed with that intention in mind, and any liberal would defend it to the death.

In practice, this division of powers is a smokescreen. A president can handpick judges, govern with mega-decrees, and veto any law he does not like. Even when it works "well," this division of powers is only there to distribute things among the economic powers and fight each other for positions.

How can we equate the escalation of tension with the advance of fascism? It seems counterintuitive, in fact, to respond in kind to

its constant attacks because common sense suggests we try to tone down the discussion and not resort to violence. So we have to accept hate speech because it is a form of free expression, we have to normalize the oppression of different minorities and workers because we have no legitimate way to oppose it. Our "representatives," increasingly bizarre characters, come out with delusional narratives, defying history and memory.

The hatred they sow then explodes in society, and they are directly responsible. Even so, when someone responds with individual violence, that action is considered an inappropriate escalation. Progressives will call it horrific, although they will make the caveat that the victim is a monster. Fascists will say he is a saint and demand freedom of expression, while escalating state violence even further, justifying it as an isolated incident. They may even say that they are now at war, a war that they themselves started and that progressives refuse to see.

So, is it better not to escalate? That seems to be the conclusion of a resigned people. They kill us, they exploit us, and in response to all that, we make memes. Because there seems to be nothing we can do, political activism is a fraud, "the streets" are the scene of partisan struggle, a display of ideological soldiers as a show of force. All this with the intention of persuading those in power to tone down their austerity measures. Are you kidding? The fact is that we have no way of countering economic escalation: they impoverish us day by day, and what are we supposed to do to strike back at the companies? Stop eating? Physical violence seems out of place when what is at stake is the economy, or austerity measures, or the discourse of the hater, yet there are other forms of violence that are no less harmful. We must stop seeing physical violence as an expression of barbarism that dehumanizes and denigrates those who use it to defend themselves against other forms of oppression.

I remember very well when, in 2017, Mauricio Macri imposed a provisional reform that harmed retirees. Faced with this tremendous escalation against the economic power of a vulnerable sector, thousands of people took to the streets to protest and were repressed. The icon of that protest was a labor activist who fired a kind of mortar and was pursued with an international arrest warrant. Instead of criticizing the measure that was impoverishing their grandparents, many people spent their time making memes about the "fat mortar guy," while others denigrated him for protesting. Of course, the violence did not come from the government or the police

who fired tear gas and rubber bullets at them. No, it was his, he was out of place, he was escalating the tension.

It is a very clever move by the state to separate political measures, speeches, and propaganda from physical actions. To deal with physical actions, there is the police, the gendarmerie, and the military, so if you want to, go and take them on in the streets. To counteract the measures, there are other measures, that is, we live in a kind of Platonic world. There would be a world of ideas and a physical world. Ordinary citizens do not have access to proposing other measures or counteracting those proposed by the state. So, either we only participate by voting every four years for a new quasi-monarch, or we fall into this reality of having to match our force with that of the police. The aggravating factor is that, in addition to all the disadvantages, we barely respond minimally in the streets, in the face of repression, we find ourselves embroiled in an absurd controversy.

It is logical that there is no way out because the system is designed in such a way that it offers us no solution within its rules of the game. Accepting this means resigning ourselves to a life of servitude. Understanding is the greatest challenge; by understanding the mechanism, we can destroy it.

Chapter 9

The Damned Police

Before rage consumes me, I am going to spit out these words against the police, an institution whose nature perfectly explains the functioning and internal contradictions of the system in which we live.

On November 23, 2025, Samuel Tobárez, 34, was killed by members of the Cordoba police force. A witness claims that they beat him to death and insulted him, calling him a "fucking faggot." "His skull was damaged and he was missing teeth," said the victim's mother.

This crime is not an institutional accident; it is consistent with the role of the police.

Hollywood movies sell us the image of the heroic police officer, the savior, devoted to his work, investigating, fighting crime, a Johan McClane, a Robocop. The reality is very different, but let's take it one step at a time:

Following David Graeber, who describes today's "bullshit jobs," law enforcement officers play a key role as lackeys, henchmen, and enforcers of the system. The police are the backdrop of social order, their presence reminding us that we are under constant surveillance. It is a disciplinary theater: patrolling, observing, asking for documents. This does not combat structural crime; it is a ritual that makes the population internalize obedience. In their role as henchmen, they act against real or imagined threats to the system. They protect economic or class interests. Finally, as wire binders, they combat some symptoms of underlying social problems, never attacking the root causes.

Yes, real police work exists—the kind you see in the movies—but it represents only a marginal fraction of their tasks. The rest is bureaucracy, disciplining, normalizing, and correcting. However, these functions are protected from criticism behind the moral image of an institution that fights crime.

How paradoxical is it that the same police officer who represses you at a protest is the one you turn to when your cell phone is stolen? If the institution that controls you is also the one that saves you, then you can never see it as a problem.

The question is inevitable: if the police disappeared tomorrow, what do we imagine would happen? Chaos. Looting. Violence. The law of the jungle. A war of all against all.

We have been taught that the only thing that stops murder, robbery, or rape is the fear of punishment. Not because we are going to commit these crimes, but because of the constant suspicion that "others" would. It's curious: most of us live in neighborhoods where people are friendly, where no one behaves like a beast. Yet we always believe that somewhere else in the city there are dangerous hordes ready to come after us if the police ceased to exist for five minutes.

The reality is simpler and less dramatic. Most crimes go unsolved. The vast majority of people would not become criminals, even if there were no police or prisons. These two facts alone dismantle much of the fiction.

Our daily coexistence proves it. We could all treat each other much worse: assault each other, break other people's things, insult strangers, or steal small objects without anyone noticing. And yet we don't. No

It's not because there's a police officer on every corner watching us, nor because we've been "trained" like lab animals. What holds us back are unspoken agreements, rules of coexistence that we respect because we know that without them, life would be more difficult for everyone. If I treat people badly, they will avoid me. If I steal from them, they will confront me. And if the situation escalates, only then will the police appear, because we have delegated the management of serious conflicts to the state. But that does not mean that without the state, conflicts would not be resolved. They would be resolved in a different way, without prisons or judicial mechanisms designed to punish rather than to repair.

This raises a key question: how does a minority—institutions, law enforcement, the state apparatus—keep a population of millions under control? It does so with a carefully constructed charade that has been repeated for centuries.

First, a moral code is constructed that defines crime and what is acceptable. Many laws codify what was already an existing agreement. Over time, those laws are twisted to serve those in power. If there is inequality, hunger, or despair, some will want to break those rules, and that is when the second step of the strategy comes into play.

The illusion of total surveillance is created. We are few, yes, say the watchmen, but we have eyes and ears everywhere. It doesn't matter if you commit a crime alone, in silence, in a corner where no one can see you: sooner or later we will catch you. This illusion is reinforced every day by headlines and news stories that serve several purposes at once: to instill fear, to generate mutual distrust, to show us that criminals are everywhere.

The third step is punishment. Prison is presented as a necessary hell, an exemplary suffering that should deter us. Few wonder if it really serves any purpose other than to destroy lives, but its function was never to repair: it is to terrorize.

With these three tools—morality shaped from above, imagined surveillance, and brutal punishment—obedience becomes almost automatic. The state cannot prevent or solve most crimes, but fear of the consequences is enough to prevent us from even considering acting outside the rules. Even if many laws are unjust, if everyone around me follows them, I am more likely to do so too. Even if I live surrounded by good people, if every day I am shown murderers and rapists on the screen, I will distrust anyone I don't know.

Here we are, at the mercy of a state force that seems omnipresent and morally superior, the only thing stopping us from being devoured by one another

by the others. A Leviathan that we have created out of fear of our own nature and which, paradoxically, embodies the worst of it. The police force is, at almost every level, one of the most corrupt, arbitrary, and prone to fascist violence institutions. This is not mere conjecture: often the institution itself protects organized crime, defends unjust power against the people, and allows many to use their authority to give free rein to their own hatred.

Racism, crimes against sexual minorities, and domestic violence are commonplace among police officers. Their way of being and behavior are reinforced in this niche; people who desire power and authority to normalize and punish others are people who, feeling legitimized, become violent.

Why does beating a young man to death while shouting "fucking faggot" fit into this cycle? Because for the police, being gay is a sign of profound deviance, a challenge to the norm they believe they defend. As we saw earlier in the book, the spiral of fascism is built on these kinds of acts of normalization and discipline. In fact, the police apparatus is responsible for much of the dirty work of the state that twists our lives with bureaucracy, surveillance, and violence.

They are the ones who hold together an inherently unjust system with wire, saving us from our own ghosts.

Chapter 10

The nihilistic origins of anarchism

I hope I am wrong, but I believe that people interested in history, particularly the history of anarchism, are disappearing. Thus, the events of the past, the great deeds, battles, and ideas will be practically forgotten, and with them, the necessary knowledge about ideological and philosophical origins. When talking about modern anarchism, it is rare to hear about its nihilistic origins. That is why I want to devote a small space in this book to it, following the work *The Emissaries of Nothingness*, a journey through Russian nihilism and its link to revolutionary action.

What is the link between nihilism and anarchism? Nihilism—which comes from the Latin word for nothing—is a set of ideas that share a rejection of divinity, the purpose of human life, the idea of an inherent meaning to existence, and pre-established values. Nietzsche is probably the reference that comes to mind for readers, as he was the figure through whom some fundamental ideas of nihilism became popular in the West. However, it is important to note not only that Nietzsche was not a nihilist, but also that his works take up a specific form of this philosophy.

Nihilism, understood as the rejection of transcendent values, is as old as the first criticisms of religion. Parts of this philosophy have been circulating throughout our history since its inception, although it did not take concrete form in modern times until Arthur Schopenhauer, a thinker whose work Nietzsche draws on to offer a vision that transcends his passive or pessimistic nihilism. At the same time, a revolutionary movement based on nihilism emerged in Russia, challenging the established order: the tsar, the bourgeoisie, and the morality of their time.

The movement in question, which initially arose in certain academic circles, took its indignation at the prevailing inequality in Russia to a struggle against the officials in power, even achieving regicide. With the socialist revolution, some of the nihilists who were part of the movement joined the communists and others the anarchists. The flag and symbol of nihilism at the time was the color black. Since then and until now, it has also been the color adopted by anarchism, along with red and the letter A. I believe this reference clearly shows the influence of nihilism on anarchism in its origins. In fact, if we look at their actions and ideas, they have many points in common.

Russian nihilism—far from promoting resignation, apathy, or the search for escape from life in society, typical of passive nihilism—was the channeling of fury against the impositions of the state and absurd moral norms. When we read about the transgressive and provocative behavior of Russian nihilists of the time, mocking the bourgeoisie, hierarchies, and authorities, we find many similarities with anarchists and also with Nietzsche's defiant way of presenting his ideas. The more we read this philosopher, the more commonalities we find between his post-nihilism and anarchism, since both, ultimately, stem from an active rejection of the established order and believe in the capacity of human beings to govern themselves, not to be led like slaves by others. This does not

mean that Nietzsche was an anarchist or that anarchism is Nietzschean, but rather that they share certain critical impulses.

Nietzsche speaks of his rejection of weakness, but not from a position of cruelty, rather from the need to overcome that weakness without depending on someone stronger, that is, without creating an asymmetry in power relations that harms the weak, as it generates dependence. Anarchism, in this sense, by promoting direct action, responds with exactly the same logic: the only way to break the asymmetry is to empower ourselves, to stop asking the government or the authorities for our well-being, to emancipate ourselves as humanity. Notably, Nietzsche proposes an individualistic path and focuses on negative freedom, while Russian nihilism and collectivist anarchism also advocate positive freedom and fight for grassroots equality, aware that these goals must be achieved without perpetuating power relations.

In essence, nihilism can be thought of as the act of undermining values. Work, democracy, meritocracy, nationalism, religion, and the state are values, or institutions that embody values, that have been criticized throughout this book. They have been stripped of their morality, undermined, but not simply because they are rotten; new values have been proposed in their place, something that classical nihilism would not do. It would limit itself to destruction in the hope, or certainty, that something new would emerge afterwards.

Unlike nihilism, anarchism is essentially humanistic, but not from a naive perspective. It does not believe that human beings are good by nature or any other anthropocentric tale.

Anarchism is a dark humanism. It is aware of human weakness, of our ambition for power, our capacity for harm, our most perverse side. It also knows that much of what is negative is a product of culture and can be reversed. Anarchism does not believe in an ideal world or a perfect society, but proposes measures for a healthier culture that will limit our vices as much as possible. We are neither good nor bad by nature; we have the potential to be either, to develop better or worse abilities, depending on the system in which we are embedded.

The difference is simple: anarchism does not deny human darkness. It takes it seriously, and that is why it designs a world where no one has enough power to turn it into a regime.

Epilogue:

Without fear of contradiction

Historically, the paternalistic state, whose characteristics we have explored in depth in this text, has been a staunch enemy of criticism. For centuries, speaking out against the king, the system, or the church was a death sentence. This has changed in the West under the capitalist democratic system, but far from bringing us closer to liberation, it has helped to mitigate the discomfort of exploitation, transforming it into something psychologically more tolerable. Politicians no longer fear criticism; what's more, we can shout from the rooftops that the system doesn't work, we can publish investigations into political corruption, wars, or police repression. All of this is, to a certain extent, accepted. We are allowed to complain quietly, we are allowed to make memes laughing at those who govern, to create our own YouTube channel and say practically whatever we want. All of this is lost in the maelstrom of available content, but saying what we feel alleviates the discomfort and even generates a sense of acceptance and understanding through likes, views, or subscribers.

Deep down, most people can agree that the government, as it is currently structured, does not work. Today's system does not need you to believe in it; that poses no risk: it does not ask you to believe in God or to participate in public life. It does not need you to believe that it is fair; it only needs you to accept that it is inevitable.

What contributed greatly to this idea was the fall of the Soviet Union, because before that, people believed that there was an alternative, which is why the labor movement around the world was much more dangerous. If we don't have a different horizon, the struggle will always be reformist.

But what could that horizon be? What system could work that is neither capitalist nor socialist?

The problem is not in the name, but in the fact that a system based on other values requires a different approach to community that can only come from the grassroots. To achieve this, we must reverse hundreds of years of indoctrination and overcome not only daily propaganda but also much of the culture that has been established in society, built and shared. We must overcome the comfort of obedience. We must overcome the security of eternal servitude. We must spread that desire for novelty, risk, and rebellion.

We humans have developed psychological defenses; we cling to order and stillness, to predictability. It is very difficult to move from that position. They are layers and layers of a protective onion. An armor we wear: "there is no other way," they tell us from birth, "the system cannot be changed," adapt, get used to it.

And here come the current "solutions," ways to mitigate all that frustration: stoic self-help, individualistic moralism that we have already seen, partisanship that presents us with an illusion of change within the same system. "Accept what you cannot change," stoicism tells us. It is obvious that individually there are many things we cannot change, but the other is increasingly difficult, more distant, more feared.

No matter how much is said, people want "the solution" to everything. As far as possible, they want it to be easy and not involve too much work or risk. Worse still, many are already resigned, which is nothing more than a victory for the system: "I don't vote because politicians are all the same" or "They're all in cahoots anyway, so why bother voting?"

Even when we rebel against the system, we do so within the framework provided by it. And so, figures emerge who claim not to be politicians, and many vote for them precisely because they represent that "apolitical" sentiment. What ends up happening is that, thanks to corruption, people lose faith in politics, so they become less and less involved, leaving the way open for more corruption. We believe that standing aside is an act that undermines the government's credibility, challenges the rules, and makes our disagreement clear. I have news for all those who think this way: all you are doing is making the politicians' job easier. They don't need your support. Even if only 20% of the population turned out to vote, they would still go on with their circus.

Simplifying is easy; we all fall into that trap in one way or another. To get through each day, we construct a narrative about ourselves, our own story, a narrative about society. That narrative is full of generalizations, prejudices, and simplifications because it is not humanly possible to know everything, and what we do not know, we invent. We fill in the gaps in our knowledge with what we do know. In this way, "politicians are all the same" because I know several who are corrupt, and it is easy for me to extend this knowledge to others. Lifting the veil of this ignorance requires energy: stepping out of our comfort zone, accepting the risk of perhaps being wrong in some cases. All ideologies offer us a place of comfort: they explain the world based on stereotypes, generalizations, and prejudices. But they explain it. And that gives a sense of security. If I say that social life can be summed up as

A class struggle in which there are only two sides—workers and capitalists—and, on top of that, one side is good and the other is bad, is a very simplistic way of looking at the world. Even in anarchism, we can fall into this simplification. If I say that the state is bad and that people are victims, it is also an easy way of looking at life. This represents the meaning of the phrase that opened this book: "...Behind each of the concepts we present, there are people suffering, being alienated and made invisible..." because with these generalizations, we forget about what is real, tangible, and everyday. Ideologies instrumentalize our way of thinking. They remove complexity. They simplify debates and isolate us. Even when we argue that "ideologies are wrong," we are falling into a terrible simplification.

We do not say that we are anarchists in order to escape political debate and exempt ourselves from participating in the life of *the polis*. Quite the contrary. It is easy to fall into the trap of simplification and narrative, anarchism teaches us to be critical of that, which is why I propose it as "the solution." The fact is that our way of thinking is molded and formatted by this system, where capitalism is presented to us as natural and inevitable. Anything else seems like a utopia to us. What good is it for me to describe how a perfect society would work, without authorities and based on mutual aid? If there is no real will for change, there will always be an excuse for doing nothing.

For real transformation to happen, I believe that "utopian" is to expect change in the majority of society. The idea of working from the grassroots until there is awareness is very noble, and it can contribute, but it is a drop in the ocean of propaganda and existing culture. No.

Let's think about it this way: today, a minority is destroying the lives of the majority. Mortgaging their future, destroying their nature. Brutalizing them. Impoverishing. They have turned us into slaves. That minority is entrenched in power; they are not going to leave just because we ask them nicely. The only way to change this reality is through social revolution. It does not necessarily have to be the majority; it could perfectly well be a committed section of the population. What is needed is to change the dynamics of power, to achieve plurality and dynamism. Not to occupy the seat of power, not to monopolize it through a more conscious junta or elite, but to remove it. As many times as necessary. It is a system whose mechanisms are self-reproducing. They benefit each other in order to continue operating, that is, exploiting and oppressing, squeezing everything out of us and nature. We must show that another way of doing things is possible.

However, ideas must first be radicalized in order to then radicalize actions... creating pockets of resistance, sharing knowledge, debating, and forging bonds between comrades is essential. Is this a stage that we will probably never overcome? Perhaps, but along the way we are sowing seeds and creating communities, however small, based on the values we share and without fear of contradiction.

In this era of dehumanization that we are living through, the fact that you, reader, have come this far is an act of rebellion. You already possess vital knowledge that you can use to transform reality. You already know how the machinery of power and oppression works. It is up to you to decide how to proceed. This book is screaming at you not to leave it on the shelf. Will you listen?