

**In Defence of Associative Specificity
Concerning (Inherently)
Anarchist “Sectarianism”**

Gustavo Rodríguez



Part i. Part ii Part iii

**This is of a series of articles by anarchist comrade
Gustavo Rodriguez, in response to the critiques
of Marxism and some anarchist individualities, who seek
revolutionary unity and label those of us who do NOT
forget the objective and the path we must create for
anarchy as a sect.**

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**In Defence of Associative Specificity – Concerning (Inherently) Anarchist “Sectarianism”
Part I.**

London,] November 23, 1871 “[...] The International was founded in order to replace the Socialist or semi-Socialist sects by a real organisation of the working class for struggle [...], the Internationalists could not have maintained themselves if the course of history had not already smashed up the sectarian system [...] So long as the sects are (historically) justified, the working class is not yet ripe for an independent historic movement.

As soon as it has attained this maturity all sects are essentially reactionary. [...] And the history of the International was a continual struggle on the part of the General Council against the sects [...] At the end of 1868 the Russian, Bakunin, entered the International with the aim of forming inside it a second International called the “Alliance of Social Democracy”. Bakunin – a man devoid of theoretical knowledge – put forward the pretension that this separate body was to represent the scientific propaganda of the International, which was to be made the special function of this second International within the International. His program was a superficially scraped together hash of petty bourgeois ideas from here and there: [...] atheism as a dogma to be dictated to the members of the International, etc., and as the main dogma, (Proudhonist) abstention from the political movement. This children’s fable found favour (and still has a certain hold) in Italy and Spain [...] and among a few vain, ambitious and empty doctrinaires in French Switzerland and Belgium [...] Resolutions 1(2) and (3) and IX now give the New York committee legal weapons with which to put an end to all sectarian formations and amateur groups and if necessary to expel them [...]”

Marx, Letter to Friedrich Bolte, November 23, 1871 (1).

Since the defeat of Spanish anarcho-syndicalism, reiteration is a frequent occurrence in the babelic context in which the life of the so-called “anarchist movement” painfully takes place.(2) As if it were Groundhog Day,(3) we are condemned to repeat the same experience indefinitely. Again and again, ideological displacements and external conceptualizations gain presence in our shops. Thus – once again –, the notions of “sect”, “sectarianism” and “sectarian” emerge in the debate. We do not have the slightest chance of escaping this vicious circle. Like Phil Connors (Bill Murray) in the famous comedy, every day we are hit with the same song (at six o’clock in the morning!), forced to repeat ourselves in an infinite cycle from which not even suicide can save us.

Perhaps, for those who come from the so-called “left” – who happily have already evolved into “libertarian” positions – and today share the same barricade side by side, these imprecations have always been there, within reach. Ready to be wielded at the slightest provocation. So they assume that such curse words are part of our lexicon or that they are part of a sort of universal vocabulary that we are obliged to use.

For those of us who have been in the struggle for some years, the feeling of *déjà vu* that the remastering of this slapstick operetta provokes is unavoidable. Indeed, this is not the first time we have had to face these epithets and it will definitely not be the last. They are repeated like a mantra invoking the “crushing march of history” (St. Charlie of Trier, dixit). The sad fact is that this liturgy takes place even in the intricacies of the praxis – alive and active today – of the Informal Anarchic Tendency (TIA). A tendency where there is no room for uniformist practices, nor for repetition; that is to say, for attempts at forming a front nor attempts at “tactical unity” and “collective responsibility”.

The TIA reaffirms itself in the critique and permanent conflict with each and every form and strategy of power; in the constant experimentation and the relentless search for total liberation; in the frame

pp. 138 ff. ?

First published partially in the book: Engels, F.; *Politisches Vermächtnis. Aus unveröffentlichten Briefen*, Berlin, 1920; in complete form in the journal *Die Gesellschaft*, no. 11, Berlin, 1925. Collected in: C. Marx, C. and Engels, F.; *Selected Works*, in three volumes, Progress Publishing House, Moscow, 1974, t. II. Available online: <https://www.marxists.org/espanol/m-e/cartas/e24-1-72.htm> (accessed: 18/10/2021). ?

It is a glaring contradiction that Saint Charlie argued his systematic attacks on “sectarianism” on the basis of this conception of the inexorable development of history, drawing on the evolutionist view, while in many articles in the press, as well as in the *Grundrisse* of 1857-1858, he effusively questioned all evolutionism in history. Curiously, his acolytes rarely reflect on this. ?

Marx, K, *Third Manuscript (Private Property and Communism)*, in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts 1844*, available online: <https://www.marxists.org/espanol/m-e/1840s/manuscritos/man3.htm> (accessed: 18/10/2021). ?

In all honesty, I must admit that Marxians have always rejected monotheistic beliefs but have never overcome the monotheistic way of thinking. Certainly, behind these conceptions is hidden the blind faith in the “god Humanity” and the belief in history as a movement towards a universal purpose: “the progress of humanity”. The myth of progress is a clear vestige of the radical change in human affairs announced and expected by Christianity. Hence the similarities between the religion that Mr Friedrich invented from the life and sermons of Saint Charlie and the religion that St. Paul invented from the life and sermons of Jesus. ?

Op. cit., Cohn, Norman, p. 404. ?

the verbiage of Jesus announcing the end of the old world and the arrival of a new one that would be established in its place.

In his excellent book *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, Cohn summarizes the defining features of Marxian religion: “what Marx brought to the communist movement was not the fruit of his long years of study in the fields of economics and sociology, but an almost apocalyptic fantasy [...]”.⁸ Indeed, Saint Charlie recycled apocalyptic conceptions in scientific terms, transforming them into metaphors for the rational hopes that inspired the dull and dark red fascisms, an approach to which certain anarchism – the heir of rationalism – is much too indebted.

**Gustavo Rodriguez,
Planet Earth, October 19, 2021.**

(From the pamphlet “Apología a la especificidad asociativa” [In defence of associative specificity]).

The Marxian position on the “workers’ party” and the “proletarian government” was embodied in Resolution IX, on the “Political Action of the Working Class”, agreed on July 25, 1871 – which took place behind closed doors by Engels’ orders – and, “ratified” by “22 delegates with full rights and 10 with voice but without vote”, on the basis of the Blanquist motion during the London Conference. Dommanget, Maurice, “La Première Internationale”, *Revue d’histoire économique et sociale*, 1962, Vol. 40, No. 4, pp. 553-556. ?

The International Alliance of Socialist Democracy was an anarchist secret society founded by Bakunin and his associates in Geneva in September 1868 in order to coordinate a global conspiracy through the First International. ?

F. Engels, “Bericht über die Allianz der Sozialistischen Demokratie, vorgelegt dem Haager Kongreß im Namen des Generalrats,” 1872, in *Marx-Engels-Werke (MEW)*, Band. XVIII,

work of the war against all that exists through the continuous practice of individual insurrection. All of which should be understood as a constant tension – not an achievable end -, incited by those who do not harbor hopes for savior Revolutions or regimes to come, and set aside ALL mythography. Aware that Anarchy cannot be reduced to the nineteenth-century “assault on heaven” nor to the outdated “transformation” of certain structures; much less to the establishment of a system of (self-)government nor to the mode of (self-)management of production. Read: the onanistic practices around libertarian Communism.

However, these annotations should not be conceived as a pontificate exercised from the comfort of neutrality and/or ideological abstraction, but aspire to be a reaffirmation of deeply self-critical principles. I too (at some point in my life) fell into the trap of “tactical unity” and disavowed our “sectarianism” for the sake of “the unity of revolutionary struggles”, whose concreteness turned out to be the desideratum of the reflections of the time. A quick reading of Guillén’s frontist rantings (4) is enough to assay the monumental size of the ’60s, ’70s and even ’80s distortions of the recently baptized “revolutionary anarchism”, strongly influenced by Leninist Autonomy.(5)

But those experiments, which today seem to us entirely absurd – four decades later -, were not the product of repetition. On the contrary, they were intended to reorganize the field of understandings and meanings of an anarchist cosmovision that was facing conceptual displacements and relocations in search of favorable conditions that would allow it to abandon the immobilism to which the “movement” had been condemned. A societal transformation was being faced with profound changes in the configuration of classes, actors and potential “revolutionary subjects”; in a context where labor began to lose its central condition.(6) The State itself was moving away from that vigorous role that supported the principle of authority, undergoing a process of redefinition of its historical role.

In the light of these events, the resurgence of anarchical brazenness animated a set of transgressive practices impregnated with hedonism – with its blatant fondness for intransigent freedom, its stubborn insurrectional breath and its patricidal talents – which immediately and without too many charges of conscience replaced the aetic and sacrificial models of the traditional organizational containers (be they libertarian unions, synthesis federations or specificist parties), animated by the informality and pleasure of anarchic action. At the same time, it placed on record the imperious effort of recruitment, refutation and even secession from the revolutionary hegemony of the time (defined by the Marxian-Leninoid orthodoxy), highlighting the elements of theoretical-practical distinction that have made us, since time immemorial, into a “sect”; that is, a distinct species and a radical expression of rupture; which has always allowed us to recognize and develop our singularity.

That heresy earned us then, as it had earned us before and earns us again now, the appellative “sectarian”. That is to say, those who nurture the “doctrine that departs from orthodoxy” or “section” themselves.

This accusation was not only imputed to us from the totalizing ecclesiastical vision of red fascism that subdued the struggles of those years, but it was also wielded from the pragmatic deviations of anarcho-leninism, in impudent harmony with the grammar of anti-imperialist frontism. Unfortunately, many comrades fled from our “sect” flying other people’s flags and joined the fold of the “Church”. Some offered their lives, impregnated with faith, consolidating dictatorships; others today serve in electoral parties such as the Party for the Victory of the People.⁽⁷⁾ Of course, beyond their hegemonic pretensions, these ideological and organizational “options” – traced in each of these areas -, were too closely related to vanguardist specialization, social-democratic reformism and populist demagogy (depending on the case), for the “sectarians” of yesterday, today and always to find them attractive.

Indeed, the unlimited expansion of a process of “social evolution” and the “inexorable development of history”⁵ are the central dogma of the Marxian religion. Its unreflective faith in human progress knows no bounds. For the eternal tenant of Highgate, the human animal would expand its power through the driving force of scientific-technical progress – hand in hand with ethical-political evolution – transforming Humanity into the true supreme being to be venerated for centuries to come. This positivist and evolutionist conception of history is the basic peculiarity of Marxian religion, which requires a much greater act of faith than the faith demanded by any other religion. Hence his predictions about the substitution of the “government of men” by the “administration of things” once the earthly paradise, that is, communism, has been reached: “the riddle of history solved”.⁶

Of course, any conception that departs from this monotheistic vision ⁷ is a sacrilegious act that weakens both the meaning of the organizational structure and the monopolistic forms of worship and doctrine, earning the condemnation of the Marxian Church for its “reactionary essence”. This automatically places all critical, dissenting and/or splinter positions in the category of “sects”. As such, they are placed outside of time and place, in a movement asynchronous with “the historical tendency towards the unity of the proletarian movement” and, therefore, alien to the “real world”.

Particularly striking is a contradiction that appears as a constant in Marxian doctrine around the critique of history and the teleological temptation of the inexorable realization of objective development. Underlying his conception of history – as a movement towards a universal goal – is the idea of a teleological development that assigns a predetermined purpose to history. This is evidence of the reincarnation of Christian theodicy in the myth of Humanity with a capital H. Thus, the narrative of divine redemption was replaced by that of progress through the efforts of the human animal transmuted into a collective moral agent, confirming that the Marxian story of “human self-realization” rests on the apocalyptic myth and fits with

ristans.

However, the use of the term “sectarian” as a synonym for anarchist already had a long history among the Marxian nomenclature. In the pages of the Communist Manifesto (1848), both Saint Charlie and Mr Friedrich give irrefutable proof of their condemnation of “reactionary sects”. During the days of the Paris Commune, the anti-sectarian lexicon grows against “Herr Bakunin” and his ilk, for objecting to the formation of a “workers’ party”, the seizure of power by the “working class” and the establishment of a “proletarian government”. It was precisely this authoritarian strategy that was adopted by the new alliance between Blanquists and Marxians, which was recorded at the London Conference of September 1871.¹ On that autumn equinox, Édouard Villant and Constant Martin, together with other well-known exponents of the Blanquist party exiled in London, incriminated “Bakunist sectarianism” with the same fury as Saint Charlie. This atmosphere encouraged the sixth section of the Conference to lash out against the anarchist Alliance², blaming them for acting to the detriment of the development of the International, with the sectarian intention of “promoting political abstention and atheism” as fundamental principles of the Association.³

In a letter addressed to Theodor Cuno dated January 24, 1872 in London, Mr Friedrich mockingly attacked the “intriguing” Bakunin and his circle of “sectarians”.⁴ In the same letter, he was optimistic and convinced that an evolutionary process was bringing about the advance of capitalism in most of the world which was increasing the antagonism between capitalists and wage workers and, with it, the inevitable emergence of an increasingly homogeneous class consciousness. He took for granted that this would put an end to capitalism, causing “the State to collapse of its own accord” as part of the inexorable development of history. But neither Saint Charlie’s theses nor the prognoses of his patron Mr Friedrich have been verified by the course of events, corroborating that “progress” and “social evolution” are a lousy invention of the Marxian Church, a fantasy that metamorphoses and multiplies, adopting new ways of reproducing more of the same.

Gustavo Rodriguez,
Planet Earth, October 19, 2021.
(From the booklet “In Defense of Associative Specificity”).

“Briefe und Auszüge aus Briefen von Joh. Phil. Becker, Jos.” Translated from German. Dietzgen, Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx und A. an F. A. Sorge und Andere, Stuttgart, 1906; available in Russian in Marx, K. and Engels, F.; Selected Works, 1st ed., t. XXVI, Moscow, 1935. In Spanish it is contained in C. Marx and, F. Engels, Obras Escogidas, in three volumes, Editorial Progreso, Moscow, 1974, t. II. An unabridged version of this letter is available in the digitized edition of KCL, Bakunin, Mijail; La Libertad: <https://circulosemiotico.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/bakunin-la-libertad.pdf> (accessed: 18/10/2021).

An extremely heterogeneous entity, incapable of producing the critical, methodological and organizational modifications that would permit the reappearance of Anarchy as a protagonist in our time and the development of its negative potency.

Groundhog Day (El día de la marmota in Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Venezuela; Hechizo del tiempo in the rest of Latin America and Atrapado en el tiempo in Spain), is an American science fiction comedy, made in 1993 under the Columbia Pictures label. It was directed by Harold Ramis, with a screenplay by Ramis himself in co-authorship with Danny Rubin and starring Bill Murray (Phill) and Andie MacDowell (Rita).

Vid., Guillén, Abraham; Desafío al Pentágono. La guerrilla latinoamericana, Editorial Andes, Montevideo, 1969; Estrategia de la guerrilla urbana, Ediciones Liberación, Montevideo, 1970 and; Lecciones de la guerrilla latinoamericana, in: Hodges Donald C. and Guillén, Abraham, Revaloración de la guerrilla urbana, Ediciones El Caballito, Mexico, D.F., 1977.

Let us not forget that the Marxist-Leninist hegemony is more than seven decades old; during this prolonged period it has imposed its model expressions in the name of “revolutionary unity” producing enormous distortions in our tents. Such distortions led the June 2nd Movement to dilute itself into the Red Army Faction (RAF) and the Revolutionäre Zellen (Revolutionary Cells) – fleeing from “sectarianism” within the framework of revolutionary frontism – and to operate with the support of the Stassi and the KGB, until concluding its days as mercenaries at the orders of Saddam Hussein and Al-Fatah, boasting the most pedestrian anti-Semitism. Undoubtedly, for these anti-imperialist groupings there was no contradiction in collaborating and coordinating with the henchmen of the German and Soviet secret police. From their fraternalist perspective, against “sectarianism”, all these repressive agencies were “tactical” allies. As Joaquín Sabina would say: “Whenever the KGB fights against the CIA, the final winner is the CIA”.

This was so, at least in those societies that possessed an extraordinary accumulation of available goods and had reached “an astonishing technological development” (to express it within the aspirations of the time).

A shameful example is the former Uruguayan Anarchist Federation (FAU) and its degeneration – fleeing from “sectarianism” – into an electoral party (Partido de la Victoria del Pueblo). For further information, see https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partido_por_la_Victoria_del_Pueblo (accessed on 18/10/2021).

Part III: “The marxian church against anarchist “sectarianism””. by Gustavo Rodriguez

Anti-sectarian grammar achieved preeminence amidst the entanglements of the First International between 1864 and 1872. While during its first years the conceptual discrepancies between Proudhonians, Blanquists, Lassalleans and Marxists had been resolved without major tantrums within the International Workingmen’s Association (IWA), in 1868 tensions increased with the incorporation of Bakunin and a large group of like-minded people. The anarchists went so far as to demolish all the economic onanism of Saint Charlie and his acolytes, placing in their sights the “gravest evil”. That is to say, the State (in particular) and all authority (in general). Thus, they erected their strongest theoretical specificity on the assumption that property or, generically, the relationship with the means of production, was not the only and excluding factor of “class” domination, but that the very instances of domination – and the State in particular – were also mechanisms that generated social groups that could be considered privileged.

On top of all that, the anarchists defended the full autonomy of the different sections of the IWA against the statutory centralism of the General Council tooth and nail. This position provoked the definitive rupture with the Marxists during the celebration of the V Congress of the Association in 1872. The theoretical-practical positions were irreconcilable and markedly antagonistic. For Saint Charlie, the International had to be the centralizing and guiding organ of the “movement”; while for the Russian anarchist and his comrades, it had to be a planetary conspiracy lacking a directing organ, centred on the concrete individual and his freedom; capable of eradicating all authority from the face of the earth, even that which was instituted in the name of the proletariat. By placing individual freedom and voluntary and autonomous association “before the historical development of society”, they received the eternal condemnation of the marxian Church and were accused of being “sectarians”; becoming the target of the wrath of Saint Charlie and his fervent sac-

There is a Spanish edition: *Ensayo sobre las costumbres y el espíritu de las naciones*, Biblioteca Hachette de Filosofía, Buenos Aires, 1959. To appraise Voltaire's rationalist racism in its right dimension, it is highly recommended to take a look at his *Diccionario filosófico*, Akal, Madrid, 2007. ?

Schoeck, Helmut; *Diccionario de sociología*, Herder Editorial, Barcelona, 1985. ?

Hillmann, Karl-Heinz; *Diccionario enciclopédico de sociología*, Herder Editorial, Barcelona, 2001. ?

Arlotti, Raúl; *Vocabulario técnico y científico de la política*, Editorial Dunken, Buenos Aires, 2003. ?

Weber, Max; *La ética protestante y el espíritu del capitalismo*, Navarro Pérez, Jorge. ed., Villacañas, José Luis. pról., Ediciones Istmo, Colección Fundamentos N° 135, Madrid, 1998, p. 268. ?

Ibid. ?

Ibid., p. 312. ?

Weber, Max; *Economy and Society. Esbozo de sociología comprensiva*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico, 2005. p. 932. ?

Troeltsch, E.; *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd-The Macmillan Company, London-N.Y, 1950. p. 993. ?

Ibid. ?

Engels, Friedrich; *Introduction [to Karl Marx, Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich 1848 bis 1850]* ?

Consulting the dictionary: concepts and definitions of “sectarianism” part ii

According to the *Diccionario de uso del español*¹ María Moliner,² it is defined as:

Sect: Doctrine taught by a teacher and followed by his adepts. Particularly, the doctrine and the group of its adepts. *desp.* Doctrine considered erroneous, or that departs from the traditional or official, and, especially, that which is considered pernicious for its followers: “Destructive sect”. A group of the followers of a sect.

Sectarian: -a (adv. sectarian) 1 adj. and n. (of) Follower of a certain sect. 2 Applied to one who fanatically follows a doctrine, and its attitude, opinions, etc. ? *Intransigent, * partisan.

Sectarianism: m. Quality or attitude of sectarian.

If we consult the Indo-European Etymological Dictionary of the Spanish Language, it reveals that the noun “sect” (sectam) is the feminine of an obsolete participle of the Latin *sequor* (“to follow”) that comes from the Indo-European root *sek?-³ The Oxford Latin Dictionary also agrees with this meaning.⁴ And, in the same vein, the Encyclopedic Theological Dictionary is also in agreement with this meaning; therefore, it is inferred that “the sect has as its first point of reference, not a particular doctrine, but [...] membership to a group with a identity which is well-defined and distinct from the broader social environment [...] The opposition is then manifested at the level of doctrine, morals, ritual and discipline and structuring of the group”⁵.

However, around this elucidation there are strong discrepancies, since the Indo-European root *sek* actually has three meanings that give rise to three Latin verbs: 1. *secare* (to blind/cut), 2. *sequor* (to follow), 3. *siccare* (to dry). The latter comes from the Latin word *siccus* (“dry”) which has a very different Indo-European root (*seik).

However, *secare* or *sectum* (“to cut”), from which the Latin word *sectio* (sector/section/segment) derives, does seem to be related to the Latin and Spanish voice “secta”, as well as the verbs *sequor*, *sequi*, *sequere* (“to follow”, “to continue”, “sequence”). In this sense, the *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue Latine. Histoire des mots* by Alfred Ernout and Antoine Meillet, offers us a certain “solution” by combining the verbs *sequor* (to follow) and *siccus* (“dry”), concluding that *secta* could rather derive from the verbal frequentative *sector*.⁶ In this regard, it is curious – without falling into wordplay – that the feminine noun “sedition”, which comes from the Latin *seditio*, *seditionis* (“estrangement”, “disunion”, “going far away”, “departure from an established power or a common march”), from which also comes “revolt”), although derived from a completely different Indo-European root (**ei*, meaning “to go”), is closely related conceptually to the notion of “sect” understood as the “doctrine that departs from orthodoxy” or “sections itself from the established”.

In the religious context, these nominatives (“sect”, “sectarian” and “sectarianism”) are widely documented in the Jewish religion. Specifically, upon their return from exile (in the 6th century B.C.E.), the idea of a single God became popular among the Israelites and, hand in hand with this monotheistic conception, any group that departed from the religious hegemony began to be adjectivized as a “sect” or “faction”, considering it a “disloyal practice”. In this sense, the Bible mentions the Sadducees, Pharisees, Nazarenes and Christians as factions of Judaism. When they departed from the orthodox ideas and practices of Judaism, they were called “sectarians”.

This epithet gained even more force in the context of the monopoly of fundamentalist Catholicism. The Catholic Church considers itself “the only universal society instituted by Jesus Christ which has a legitimate claim to the allegiance of all men”, and therefore it claims to be “the sole guardian of the whole teaching of Jesus Christ, which must be accepted in its entirety by all mankind”.⁷ Assuming itself to be the possessor of the “universal truth”, any dissent was understood as a “sectarian” position and condemned as “heresy”.

Divino, Navarra, 1995. ?

Ernout, Alfred and Meillet, Antoine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue Latine. Histoire des mots*, Klincksieck, Paris, 1951, p. 608. ?

Weber, Nichola; *Sect and Sects*. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 13, Robert Appleton Company, New York, 1912. Available at: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13674a.htm> (accessed: 10/18/2021). ?

Ibid. ?

Kalb, Ernst *Kirchen und Sekten der Gegenwart* (Churches and Sects of Today), Verlag der Buchhandlung der Evang. Gesellschaft, Stuttgart, 1905. ?

From the early days of the year 1533, the Anabaptists led by the “prophet” Jan Matthis, decreed “Christian communism” in Münster. To this end, they ordered the inhabitants of the city to put their money into a communal fund for the purchase of food, the distribution of propaganda and the recruitment of mercenaries for the defense of the regime and the eradication of any subsidies. To ensure the new social order and community life, the library was burned and communal dining rooms were created, where the population was fed while the Bible was read to them; they also ordered that doors and windows of all houses remain open 24 hours a day and capital punishment was decreed against “sectarians”. In the spring of 1534, after the capture and execution of Matthis by forces loyal to the Church, his disciple Jan Bockelson (John of Leyden) would proclaim himself king of Münster, giving continuity to the communist theocracy. Under his rule, terror reached its peak, making executions a daily spectacle, while consolidating the communism of “goods and women”. Thus, the Christian communists led by Jan Bockelson, would go so far as to execute anyone who tried to flee the city, hide food in their homes and all adolescent women who refused to marry under the regime of forced polygamy implemented by the prophet-king. ?

Cohn, Norman; *In Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, Pepitas de calabaza ed., Logroño, 2015, p. 401. ?

doctrine as well as the historical element” (my italics).²¹
In an analogous direction, the objectives of the Marxian Church are revalidated. It is not by chance that Friedrich Engels ends his introduction to *The Class Struggle in France* with an analogy between the development of Marxian ideology and the rise of the Christians in the Roman Empire (from being a sect to being the State religion).²², in: *Marx-Engels-Werke (MEW) Band. XXII*, p.p. 526-527.] Such considerations clearly show us how Friedrich (the main investor and founder of the Marxian Church) imagined hegemony in the State and society. Thus, the Marxian ideology would triumph because its ideas, values and objectives would be the dominant ideas, values and objectives, imposed by means of the State religion. Once “this maturity is reached, all sects become essentially reactionary” (St. Charlie, dixit). In other words, the anarchic (equivocist) heresy would have the deserved ecclesiastical condemnation. In such a way, all its radicalism would be extirpated, its passion sterilized and its practices castrated; sending the “sectarian” to ostracism, to the stake or to the madhouse.

**Gustavo Rodriguez,
Planet Earth, October 19, 2021.**

(Excerpted from the booklet “In Defense of Associative Specificity”).

Surely, this explanatory segment will be boring (and even petulant to many comrades), for which I apologize in advance. I confess my supreme ignorance, so I have no other recourse than to go through the books on the subject at hand. ?

Moliner, María, *Diccionario del uso del español*, Editorial Gredos, Madrid, 2007, p. 2674. ?

Roberts, Edward A., (trans.) Bárbara Pastor, *Diccionario Etimológico Indoeuropeo de la Lengua Española*. Colección Alianza Dictionaries, Alianza Ed., Madrid, 2013, p. 152. ?

Oxford Latin Dictionary; ed. P. G. W. Glare (2nd Edn.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012. ?

Pacomio, Luciano, *Diccionario Teológico Enciclopédico*, Verbo

Thus, Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Arianism, the Albigensians, the Hussites and Protestantism of later date, would be inscribed as “heretical sects” in the Epistles of the New Testament. Particularly, the Epistle to the Galatians (5,20), mentions “quarrels, dissensions (and), sects”, as “works of the flesh” and, Simeon Peter (alias St. Peter), in his Second Epistle (2,1) warns about the “false teachers who will introduce pernicious sects”.⁸

Among the “Protestant” denominations, particularly in Germany and the United Kingdom, where state churches or national churches exist (this is also the case with the National Church of Iceland and the Danish People’s Church), any dissent is likewise labeled a “sect”. Obedience to civil authority in religious matters is a necessary prerequisite, going so far as to affirm that only “the preaching of the Word of God, the legitimate administration of the Sacraments and the historical identification with the national life of a people entitles a denomination to consider itself a Church; in the absence of these requirements, it is nothing more than a sect.”⁹

Even the Anabaptists, one of the Christian millenarianist movements that have most rejected the label of “sect” and which, paradoxically, has been labeled as such – by the Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican and Russian Orthodox churches, among others – when they imposed communism in Münster,¹⁰ hardened the persecution of the “sectarians” by demonizing the exogroups; that is, any dissidence to the regime. That theocratic-communist city-state – so defended by Tolstoy from his delirious conception of anarchism – was transformed into hell and purgatory for the “sectarians” in the name of “fantasies of a final and destructive struggle against ‘the powerful’ and of a perfect world in which selfish interest would be abolished forever”.¹¹

If we review some glossaries of socio-political terminology, we can see that the notions “sect”, “sectarian” and “sectarianism” have always been inscribed in a pejorative spirit regardless of the conceptual affiliations of their authors. Emerging in the field of religious

confrontation, these words became “modular” and were transplanted – with all their axiologically negative connotations – to a wide variety of ideological fields. Thus, they were introduced into the political lexicon, gaining significant presence in the Marxian vocabulary in the 19th century. However, there is evidence of their use (and abuse) in the 18th century. The rabid anti-Semitism of the most prominent philosophers of the Enlightenment testifies to this. In his *Essai sur les mœurs et l’ esprit des nations*¹² (1756), Voltaire unburdens himself by endowing racism with “intellectual” authority and lashes out with hatred against the “Jewish sect”.

For the author of *Envy and Society*, sociologist Helmut Schoeck, the terms “sect” and “sectarianism” have “a pejorative meaning, because sects have always been in opposition to majority groups” (my italics).¹³ His counterpart, Karl-Heinz Hillman, does not object in the least to this definition by specifying that a “sect” is a “religious or political community which, opposing a larger social organization (religious denomination, party), separates itself from it” (my italics).¹⁴ While Arlotti’s *Technical and Scientific Vocabulary of Politics* confirms the exegesis by calling “sect” (in its first meaning) a “group of persons professing the same doctrine”. AND, “B. In a special s., more usual and always pejorative, it is said of a group of men who adhere strictly to a very definite doctrine, and whom this adherence unites strongly among themselves, at the same time separating them from the others” (my italics).¹⁵

In the field of the sociology of religion, various types of religious organization (church, denomination, cult and sect) are distinguished, although difficulties arise as to their definition and delimitation. Thus, not only do we come across different meanings of the word “sect”, but we also find different uses of the term. Max Weber, in his revised edition of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1920), delved into the binary opposition between “Church” and “sect”. He defined the “Church” as “an institute of grace which administers religious goods of salvation as a custodial foundation and membership in which is (ideally) compulsory” (italics in original).¹⁶

Whereas he described the “sect” as “a voluntary association composed exclusively of (ideally) ethico-religiously qualified persons, into which one enters voluntarily if one is accepted by virtue of religious confirmation” (italics in original).¹⁷ Or, in other words, the “Church” as an institution of salvation that privileges the extension of its influence and the “sect” as a contractual group that emphasizes the intensity of life of its members. Therefore, “by its meaning and essence it must necessarily renounce universality and base itself on the free agreement of its members.” (italics in original).¹⁸ Weber thus made clear the opposition between the orthodox and heterodox ideal, orthodoxy being understood as a monopolistic organizational and doctrinal structure that privileges its hegemony (“Church”) and the heterodox perspective of those who, from multiple and varied interpretations, do not want to be part of a whole and associate freely (“sect”). In this sense, it refers to the “ecclesia pura” that seeks the “sect” in contrast to the “Church”. According to this Weberian reflection: “The sect has the ideal of the ‘ecclesia pura’ (hence the name ‘puritans’), [...] from whose bosom the mangy rams are excluded so that they do not offend the gaze of God”. For this reason he “rejects ecclesiastical indulgences and the official charisma”.¹⁹

The Protestant sociologist and theologian Ernst Troeltsch – who was a disciple of Weber – in his efforts to refine the Weberian typology, distinguished the discrepancies (between “sect” and “Church”) from the objectives. To this end, he pointed to the Church’s ability to adapt to society, establishing ties of “engagement with states.” Conversely, he identified that the “sect” distances itself from society and rejects adaptation and dialogue, reaffirming “its questioning of the social order”. Troeltsch fully agrees with the reflections of his teacher and colleague who asserts that “the church is an institution”; he also agrees with the assessment of the “sect” as “a voluntary society”.²⁰ However, he adds to his analysis the category of “mysticism”, which for Troeltsch “leads to the formation of groups on a purely personal basis, with a non-permanent form, which also tends to weaken both the significance of the forms of worship and