



TENDENCIES

This booklet was created in February
2020 for the Denton Left's Leftism 101
series.

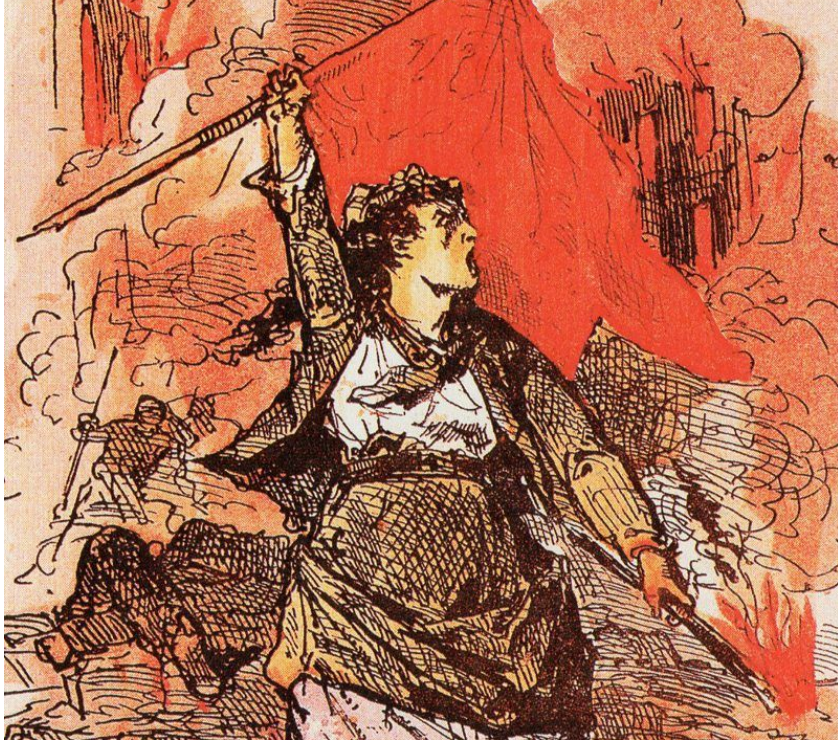
@dentonleft

@badradcatdad

@cloudrunner666

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Marxism	1
Leninism	3
Marxism-Leninism	5
Maoism	7
Trotskyism	9
Luxemburgism	11
Democratic Socialism	13
Anarchism	15
Anarcho-Communism	17
Anarcho-Syndicalism	19
Insurrecto-Nihilism	21
Other Tendencies	23
Flow Chart	26
Glossary	27



MARXISM

- There are ultimately two social classes: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.
- The proletariat are the workers. They must sell their labor to the bourgeoisie.
- The bourgeoisie owns the means of production.
- The means of production are the facilities, machinery, tools, and materials used to produce goods and services. In Marx's time, the factory was the quintessential means of production. The means of production also include the means of distribution and related vehicles and infrastructure both physical and virtual.
- Workers are alienated from the products of their labor under capitalism in that, once they make the "product," it becomes the property of the capitalist who owns the means of production.
- The labor theory of value states that the value of a commodity is dependent on the amount of labor necessary for its production.
- Profit is value created by the worker that has been expropriated by the capitalist.
- Class consciousness is the realization that your position in society is defined by your relationship to the means of production. According to Marx, only a class conscious proletariat is capable of revolution.
- Capital is money invested with the intention of turning a profit.
- Socialism is a society in which workers control the means of production. For Marx, it is the transitory stage before communism
- A communist society, according to Marx, is one that has developed to the point of being fully classless.
- Marx and Engels championed scientific socialism rooted in a materialist outlook as opposed to the idealistic utopian socialism prominent at the time. Scientific socialism--which became historical materialism--used data and historical trends to predict and explain historical and economic conditions.

- Tsarist Russia was a pre-industrial society with a large peasantry. It began to rapidly industrialize in the early 20th century, but development was uneven and concentrated in urban areas. The Tsarist regime made organizing very difficult, forcing revolutionaries underground.



- These conditions led Lenin to advocate the development of a vanguard party in his pamphlet *What is to be Done*.
- Although Lenin was an early proponent of spontaneous revolution, his experiences led him to believe in the necessity of a party.



- The role of the vanguard party is to disseminate revolutionary ideas and win the masses over to the necessity of revolution.
- Lenin still thought organizing workers was necessary to take economic power, and that organizing the most committed and class conscious workers into a vanguard party was necessary for taking political power.

LENINISM

- Lenin advocated democratic centralism. He believed that, while ideas must be debated and criticized, action must be unified after a decisive vote.
- For Lenin, the decisions of higher up organizing bodies were binding on all members of the party, including lower bodies of organization.
- Direct democracy was carried out through workers councils known as soviets. Only workers and peasants were allowed on the soviets to ensure a dictatorship of the proletariat.
- The dictatorship of the proletariat is not a one-person tyrannical dictatorship as we think of the word but rather the dictatorship of the proletariat class over the bourgeoisie. It ensures that counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie cannot use the state apparatus to halt the development of a classless society.
- Although at one point all other political parties were banned, Lenin maintained that this was in response to the context-specific counterrevolutionary white movement and that political suppression was not inherent to his politics.
- In *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin argues that capitalists from more developed countries will inevitably seek out new markets, new opportunities for profit, and new workers even more susceptible to exploitation through imperialism.
- In *"Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, Lenin argues against what he saw as premature and/or undisciplined attempts at overthrowing capital.



MARXISM-LENINISM

- Marxism-Leninism, as the name suggests, synthesizes Marxism and Leninism.
- It was developed by Stalin in the 1920's and became the official ideology of the Soviet Union when he took power.
- *Foundations of Leninism* is a series of lectures by Stalin published in *Pravda* in 1924. In the book, Stalin discusses the party, the peasantry, and imperialism.
- **Stalin expands on Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism.***





- Many of the socialist countries that have actually existed won their independence as Marxist-Leninists.
- Marxist-Leninists today continue the important work of standing against imperialist aggression. They are some of the most committed anti-war activists operating in the US today.
- Each nation and/or party has their own context-specific take on Marxism-Leninism. As with many leftist tendencies, the material conditions of place and time influence tactics and ideology.

MAOISM

- Maoism--or Mao Zedong Thought--is a version of Marxism-Leninism developed by Mao for the conditions of pre-industrial China.
- Tactically, Mao focused on guerilla warfare and "surrounding the cities from the countryside."



- Because China had more peasants than proletariat industrial workers, Mao cast the peasants, or popular masses, as his revolutionary class.

- Mass Line: The demands of the party are taken from the demands of the masses. The role of the party is not to dictate demands, but to listen to the masses and assess their demands through a Marxist-Leninist framework.



- The Black Panthers were founded by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton in 1966 as a cop watch meant to address police brutality.
- The Black Panther's Free Breakfast program for Children in Oakland pressured more establishment political institutions to provide social programs to feed children.
- Fred Hampton, a chairman of the BPP, explicitly used the mass line to organize around the needs of the people, but his efforts were tragically cut short when the Chicago Police assassinated him in conjunction with the FBI's COINTELPRO initiative when he was only 21-years-old.

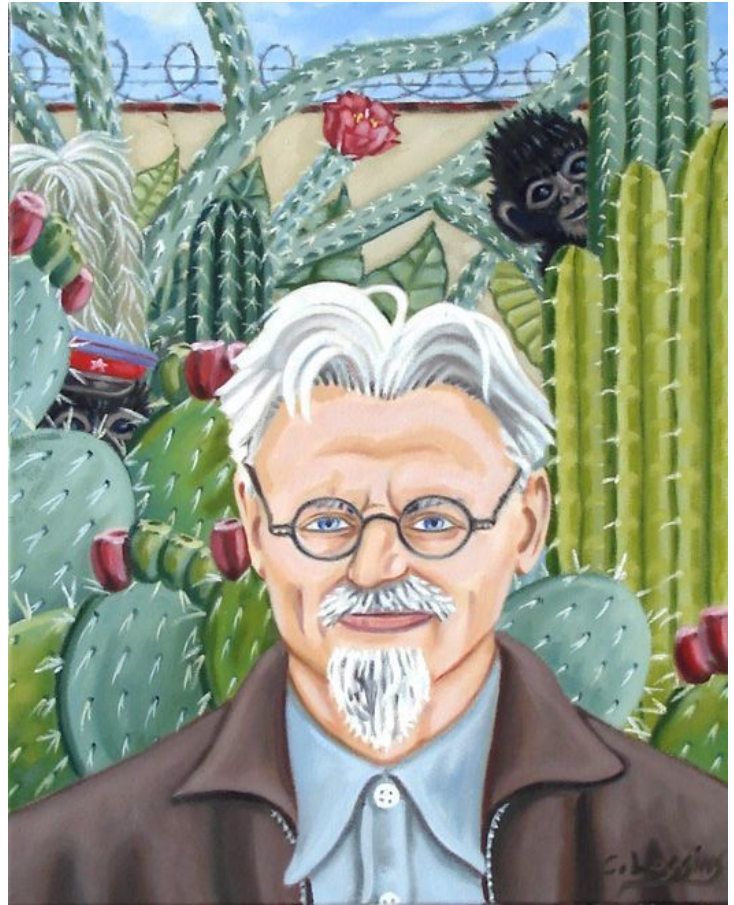


TROTSKYISM

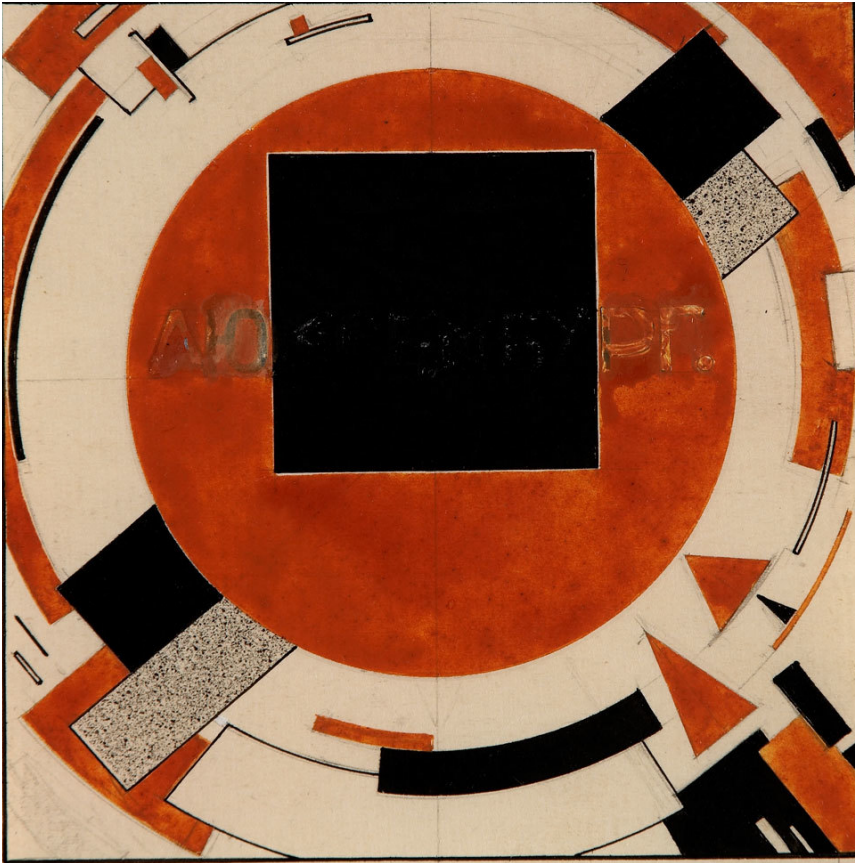
- Trotsky was a close friend of Lenin and one of the main organizers of the October Revolution in 1917. His most significant contributions to Marxism are his theory of permanent revolution, his united front strategy, and his first-hand accounts of the Russian Revolution.
- After a general strike in 1905, Trotsky developed the theory of permanent revolution. Here, he came to believe the possibility of socialist revolution in underdeveloped/pre-industrial countries. At the time, the orthodox Marxist understanding was that pre-capitalist countries must first go through a bourgeois revolution, then a socialist one after sufficient development had taken place. He proposed instead an uninterrupted transition from the bourgeois to the socialist revolution. This necessitates the help of more advanced countries spurring a worldwide proletarian revolution.
- After an attempted revolution in Germany in 1919, Lenin and Trotsky came up with the strategy of the United Front to win over the working class to communism by working with other leftist and non-revolutionary organizations (e.g. trade unions and democratic socialists) with the intention of winning them over to a revolutionary perspective.



- In response to what he saw as the increasing bureaucratization of the Soviet Union after Lenin's death, he formed the Left Opposition with others to challenge the Party's leadership.
- In 1927 after a targeted campaign of slander, the Left Opposition was banned from the Party and two years later Trotsky was deported from Russia.



- During his exile, Trotsky continued to write and develop a Leninist analysis of world politics.
- In a series of letters, he wrote *Fighting Fascism: What It Is and How to Fight It* where he warns about the crisis of fascism and analyzes the conditions that gave rise to it.
- In 1938, the Fourth International was formed and was the foundation for the Trotskyist movements that followed.



- Rosa Luxemburg criticized both the Bolsheviks for the undemocratic nature of their party and the German social democrats (SPD) for endorsing WWI.

- In 1914, she founded the Spartacus League with other anti-war socialists and was instrumental in organizing the 1919 German Revolution. Tragically, she was executed with Karl Liebknecht shortly after the failed uprising.



Luxemburgism

- Luxemburg was a staunch anti-imperialist and opposed to workers being sent to die in the interest of the national bourgeoisie.
- Instead of a Leninist vanguard party, Luxemburg favored a more council communist/syndicalist approach to democracy.
- Luxemburg believed in the dialectical unity of revolutionary spontaneity and organization. She argues that class struggle does not originate from a formulaic program, but rather evolves from the spontaneous actions of the working class.
- Among other works, Luxemburg is well known for writing *Reform or Revolution* and *The Mass Strike*.

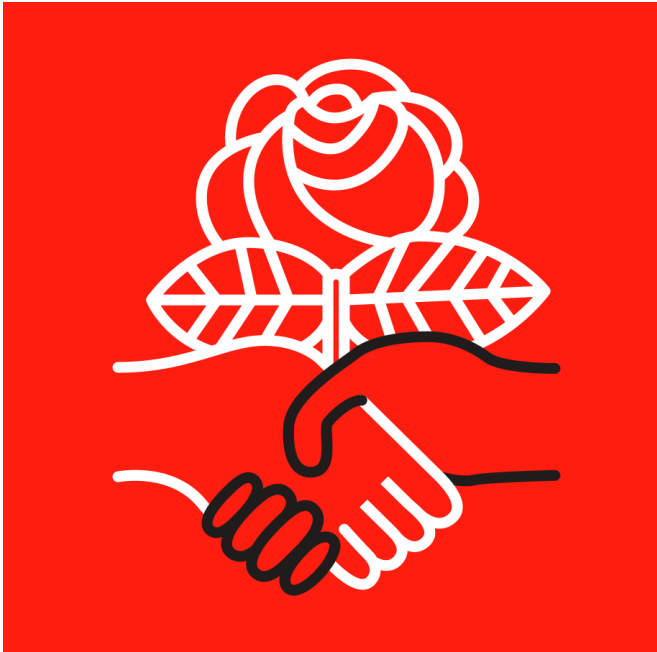


Democratic

- Democratic socialists seek a transition to socialism through a combination of electoral politics and movements for reforms.
- Social democrat is another word traditionally used for reformist minded democratic socialists.
- When people talk about the Scandinavian model, they're talking about social democracy.
- Although social democrats stop at reformism, many democratic socialists seek to realize worker controlled means of production through a gradual process.
- Democratic socialists seek to build broad alliances. In the end, politics is a numbers game.



Socialism



- The major Democratic Socialist party in the US is the DSA; you might have heard of them.

- While building support for more foundational restructuring, they fight for reforms such as Medicare for All, rent control, student debt cancellation, and the Green New Deal.





Anarchism

- Anarchism opposes the state and other forms of hierarchy.
- There have always been people who have lived more or less as anarchists in the margins of society.
- Anarchists advocate social affiliations based on free association, self-determination, and decentralization.
- Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was the first philosopher to actually self identify as an anarchist and in 1840, he wrote *What is Property?* (hint: it's theft).
- Proudhon's called his anarchism "mutualist socialism," which is the basis for mutualism.
- Inspired by Proudhon's mutualism, Bakunin started a movement known as collectivist anarchism, which called for the abolition of both the state and private property. He was concerned that revolutionaries would just become the new tyrants if they took power. His group joined the First International but were expelled in 1872.
- From there, Peter Kropotkin and the anarcho-communists carried the torch. They were inspired by the Paris Commune and advocated distribution of resources according to need.
- The two main historical beefs between anarchism and communism are Kronstadt and the Spanish Civil War.
- Although they are not officially anarchist organizations, anarchists today often organize with the IWW, Food Not Bombs, and environmentalist direct action in addition to local collectives and affinity groups.

ANARCHO

- Anarcho-communism was formulated in opposition to the mutualists (Proudhon) and the collectivist anarchists (Bakunin). The main disagreement stems from how things will be distributed after the revolution.
- Anarcho-communists argue for the abolition of exchange value by way of “labor notes,” or vouchers, based on work performed. They believe that having a form of currency will invariably reproduce the issues with unequal capital accumulation and authority.
- In *The Conquest of Bread*, Kropotkin expounds anarcho-communism and imagines what such a society would look like.



COMMUNISM



- Mexican revolutionary Ricardo Flores Magón held Kropotkin in great esteem.
- Magón and his brothers developed a strain of anarcho-communism known as *Magonismo* that combined indigenous community organizing with anarchism.
- Magón fled Mexico in 1904 when he was banned from publishing his anarchist newspaper *Regeneración*. He continued to publish and lead the Partido Liberal Mexicano from exile in the Los Angeles.

- Magón's ideas helped inspire the 1910 Mexican Revolution and later the Zapatistas claimed to inherit the legacy of *Magonismo*.



ANARCHO -

- Anarcho-Syndicalism is primarily based in the labor movement and labor organizing. "Syndicalism" comes from the French syndicat, which means trade union. The syndicates serve as both the organ for revolutionary change and the model for the future organization of society.
- Although very similar to Marxism, Anarcho-Syndicalists reject the need for a transitory workers' state (i.e. dictatorship of the proletariat) or advocacy for a political party.



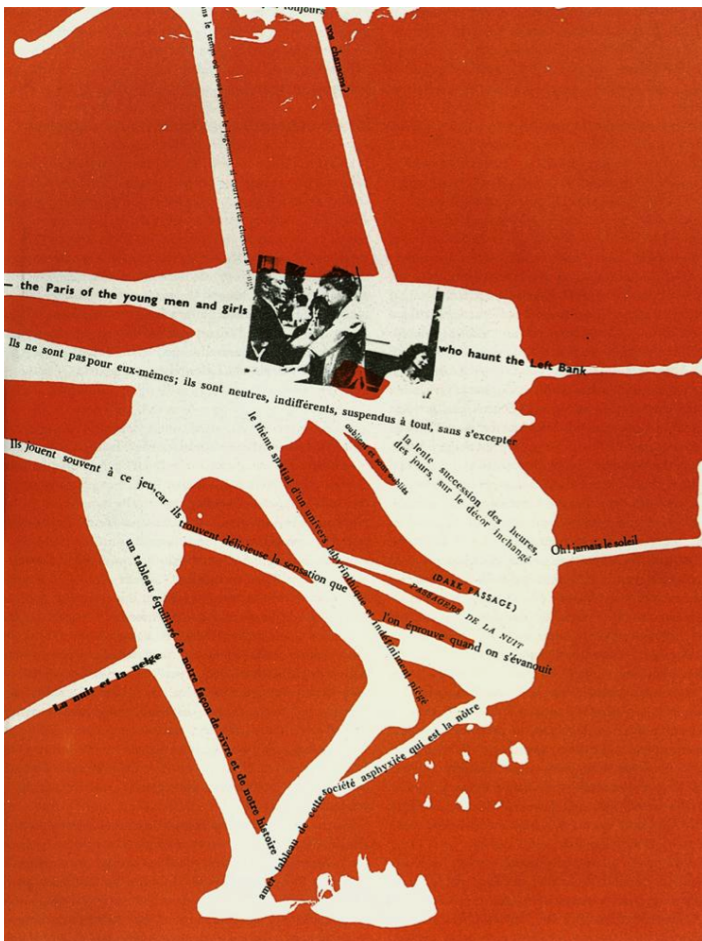
SYNDICALISM

- Rudolf Rocker is regarded as the founder of Anarcho-Syndicalism while working with the CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail) in France.
- In Spain, the CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo) was one of the main groups fighting fascism during the Spanish Civil War.
- In 1905, the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) was formed in the US as “one big union” and has a diverse and radical history. It continues to have a vast presence among the left today.



INSURRECTO-

- Some anarchists think attempts to maintain formal organizations is inorganic and dooms you to recreate the problems of hierarchical organizing.
- These comrades tend to focus on spontaneous insurrectionary moments and movements where organization happens organically and in real-time.



- Disillusioned leftists respond in different ways. Some drop out entirely, but others form communitarian associations and stay ready for the next upswing in the struggle.
- Comrades skeptical of organizing may follow in the tradition of groups like Bash Back! and Afropessimism.
- They focus on the destruction of enlightenment, morality, and humanism.

NIHILISM

- There are many problems that can plague an organization, and no form of organization is immune to them.

- Careerism
- Power imbalances
- The problem of free time
- Racism, sexism, homophobia
- Transactionary relationships
- Petrification of roles
- Petty power plays
- Recruitment without substance
- Disconnection from how most people live
- Substitutionism
- Grandiosity
- Depersonalization of members
- Getting stuck in ineffective routines
- Infiltration
- Paranoia
- Cooptation
- Cancel culture
- Narcissists
- Burn-out
- Interpersonal conflict
- Disillusionment



OTHER TENDENCIES

Anarcha-Feminism: a school of thought that views capitalism, patriarchy, and the state as inextricably linked authoritarian systems that must be opposed

Anarcho-Primitivism: Primitivists critique the notions of progress, development, and civilization. They advocate deindustrialization and the abandonment of certain technologies and social structures.

Autonomism: left-wing communism that emerged in Italy in the 1960's and championed resistance outside traditional party politics

Blanquism: In the tradition of the ideas of Louis Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881), Blanquists believed that socialism should be established by way of a coup carried out by a small group of conspirators rather than by the revolutionary action of the working class.

Bolivarianism: Named after Simón Bolívar, also known as "El Libertador" for helping many South American countries gain independence from the Spanish Empire. Bolivarianism in Venezuela is primarily associated with Hugo Chavez's anti-imperialist policies that included nationalization of industries, the expansion of welfare, and participatory democracy.

Council Communism: A communist tendency that favors decentralization and democracy via workers councils (or soviets) over a democratic centralist vanguard party.

Egoism: An individualist school of thought that rejects moralism. It originated with Max Stirner and influenced individualist anarchism.

Eurocommunism: From 1968 to the 1980's, there was a trend of Western European communist parties organizing separately from the Soviet Union. Many of the parties were social democratic and sought to gain power electorally within their country and more or less made concessions to their more traditionally communist supporters.

Hoxhism: A tendency named after Albanian communist leader Enver Hoxha formed after a split between the Chinese Communist Party and the Party of Labor in Albania in 1978. Hoxhism is committed to carrying on the legacy of Stalin and considers many other parties revisionists. Perhaps most famously, Hoxha is known for constructing approximately 175,000 bunkers in Albania.

Juche: Rooted in Marxism-Leninism, Juche is the official ideology of the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea).

Mutualism: An anarchist form of market socialism rooted in what Proudhon called "mutualist socialism." Mutualists favor worker's associations and condemn the centralized hierarchy of the state controlled market. They advocate for worker's control of the means of production and argue for a free association of communes that use direct democracy. Proudhon imagined a mutualist society in which artists and workers would create their own markets without the state controlling them and use a system of "labor vouchers" as currency.

Posadism: Founded by J. Posadas in Argentina, a variant of Trotskyism that expressed enthusiasm for nuclear war as a means for destroying capitalism and providing the opportunity for the working class to build socialism in the immediate aftermath. Posadas became enamored with the idea of communication with dolphins and advocated for their participation in the revolution. Posadas also introduced elements of ufology into Marxism by advocating for collaboration with aliens believing that their mastery of advanced technologies could be used in the interests of Earth's working class.

Prachanda Path: a MLM tendency in Nepal named after the Unified Communist Party of Nepal leader commonly known as Prachanda

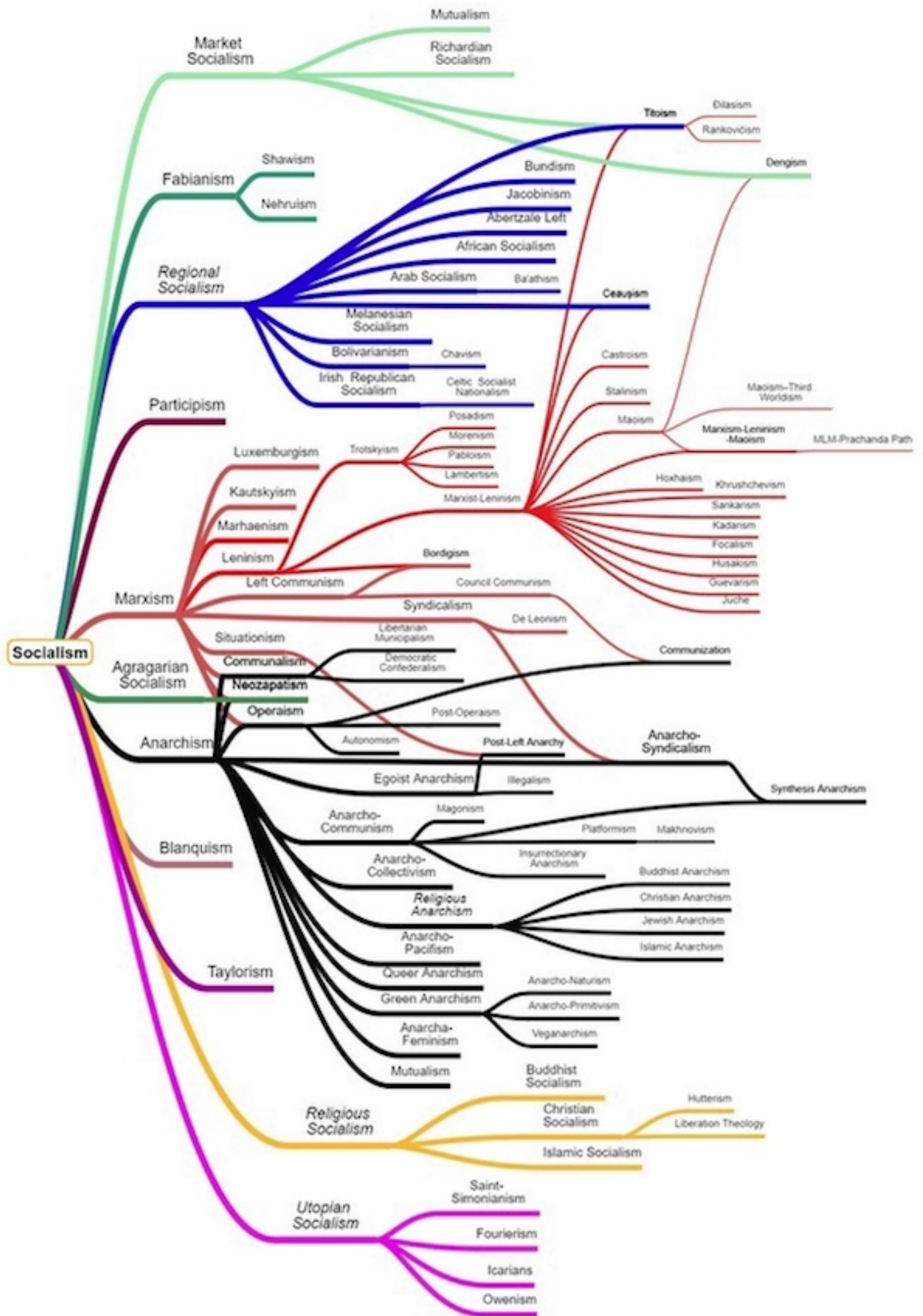
Queer Anarchism: Given their anti-authoritarian nature, anarchists were early proponents of queer liberation. This tendency advocates anarchism as a means for LGBT+ liberation.

Situationism: A tendency skeptical of calling itself such that arose out of the avant garde art movement and was influential in the 1968 riots in France. Although Marxists, they were skeptical of the state. They opposed traditional culture and routines and advocated the creation of "situations" that would unlock the possibility for more organic and fulfilling experiences.

Third Worldism: A tendency that prioritizes the struggles of the Third World over those in the First World. Third Worldists maintain that the working class in the First World is actually part of a labor aristocracy that actively benefits from the under-development of the Third World. As part of the process of achieving a global people's war, they unconditionally (though not uncritically) support all struggles for national liberation against imperialism and for full self-determination.

Titoism: Titoism is named for Josep Broz Tito, president of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Tito opposed Soviet control and attempted to form a bloc of nonaligned states during the cold war. This didn't work out, but Tito managed to keep Yugoslavia itself united despite conflicting separatist tendencies within the country. After his death in 1980, however, these internal tensions--compounded by economic collapse--led to the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990's.

**THERE IS NO
PERFECT TENDENCY
AND THERE ARE NO
PERFECT PEOPLE,
JUST COMRADES
YOU TRUST TO BE
THERE WHEN SHIT
GOES DOWN.**



GLOSSARY

Affinity Group- a small group of comrades who autonomously work together on direct action and other projects

Afropessimism- a lens of interpretation that accounts for society's denial of black subjecthood and its dependence on anti-black violence

Alienation- Workers are alienated from the products of their labor in that the goods and services they produce are owned by the capitalists they work for rather than themselves.

Anarcho-nihilism- the view that society is unsalvageable and must be met with hostility and negation. It opposes all authority including traditional forms of organizing.

Base- the means and relations of production

Black Bloc- a bloc of protestors within a march who wear black and cover their faces. The tactic originated in Berlin by squatters defending themselves from police repression and neo-Nazis.

Bourgeoisie- the social class that owns the means of production

Capital- money invested with the intention of turning a profit

Class Consciousness- the knowledge that your position in society is defined by your relationship to the means of production

Communism- the state of a society that has developed beyond class distinctions

Decolonization- the expulsion of colonial governments and ideas. For Marx and Lenin, those fighting imperial powers were allies in the fight against the European bourgeoisie

Democratic Centralism- an organizational structure in which ideas are debated, but action must be unified after a decisive vote. The decisions of higher up organizing bodies are binding on all members of the party, including lower bodies of organization.

Dialectic- The dialectical method is a process for analyzing change and/or evolution through contradiction. It consists of a thesis, antithesis, and a synthesis. The thesis is the original idea or statement, the antithesis is the direct reaction and contradiction to the thesis, this contradiction then gives rise to a synthesis which resolves the contradiction.

Dictatorship of the Proletariat- the dictatorship of the proletariat class over the bourgeoisie to ensure that counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie cannot use the state apparatus to halt the development of a classless society

Direct Action- using your own power to act in your own interest instead of appealing to a higher authority

Dual Power- a division of power between traditional institutions and leftist counter-institutions in a pre-revolutionary situation

Enlightenment- an 18th century philosophical movement that championed logic, science, and humanism

Exploitation- the act of treating someone unfairly for your benefit. For leftists, this focuses on how capitalists abuse their power over their employees and pay them less than the value of their labor in pursuit of profit.

False Consciousness- the inability to recognize one's true position in society based on one's relationship to the means of production; often used to indicate the ways in which ideology is used against the working class

Guerilla Gardening- the act of illegally gardening on privately owned land that has been abandoned or otherwise neglected

Historical Materialism- the scientific analysis of how material conditions bear on historic and economic trends

Ideology- the set of ideas, values, and beliefs that are held and reproduced to justify the status quo of a given community even in the face of contradictory information; the trash can from which we all eat

Imperialism- when a country imposes its rule or influence on a foreign nation. For Marxists, this is because the imperialist country is looking to expand markets, create and exploit vulnerability, and secure the global domination of capital.

Insurrection- an open and disruptive uprising against an authority or government

Labor Theory of Value- the value of a commodity is dependent on the amount of labor necessary for its production

Lifestylism- used by Murray Bookchin as a pejorative against anarcho-primitivists and individualist anarchists; refers to the preference of lifestyle choices as a means of dismantling capitalism (e.g. not working) as opposed to organizing the working class.

Mass Line- the Maoist practice of listening to the demands of the masses and basing the focus of the party on these concerns

Materialism- the philosophical emphasis on the material world as the foundation for thoughts and ideas

Means of Production- the facilities, machinery, tools, and materials used to produce goods and services

Mode of Production- the combination of the productive forces (means of production/human labor) and the relations of production (relationship between classes)

Mutual Aid- a voluntary exchange of skills and resources that does not reproduce the hierarchical, dehumanizing, and often exploitative nature of charity

Peasant- pre-industrial agricultural worker with limited land ownership

Political Economy- the study of the means of production in order to better understand their relationship to the economic, political, and social spheres of capitalism.

Proletariat- workers, or the social class that must sell their labor

Propaganda of the Deed- the use of action to ignite insurrection and/or inspire revolutionary action

Revisionist- describing offshoots of Marxism that require a break with fundamental theory, often used to describe reformist tendencies that don't centralize class struggle

Socialism- a society in which workers control the means of production

Soviet- Russian word for worker's council. They are a form of political organization that consists of elected, immediately recallable delegates within a region or county.

Spontaneity (Revolutionary)- an organizational tendency that believes the revolutionary moment should be led by the spontaneous action of the working class instead of being led by a party and/or professional revolutionaries

Superstructure- the legal, political, and ideological structure; anything that isn't the base

Surplus Value/Profit- value created by the worker that has been expropriated by the capitalist

Utopian Socialism- futuristic visions of cooperative society often implemented in small experimental communities. Some of these experiments preceded the communist manifesto and lacked a commitment to the class struggle.

Vanguard Party- a centralized party of workers militantly committed to the class struggle

Permanent Revolution- Trotsky's theory that under-developed countries could skip the bourgeois-democratic revolution and go right into a socialist revolution. This would be achievable only through an international socialist revolution as opposed to Stalin's "socialism in one country."

United Front- the strategy of uniting with non-revolutionary working class organizations against a common struggle and attempting to win them over to a revolutionary perspective