

## REVIEWS

Carlos Taibo, *Rethinking Anarchy. Direct Action, Autonomy, Self-Management*, The Autonomies Collective (trans.)

Oakland, CA & Edinburgh: AK Press, 2019; 140pp; ISBN 9781849353328

Carlos Taibo's *Rethinking Anarchy* is neither an introduction to anarchism nor a political manifesto. Rather, this slim volume is a brief meditation on what anarchism is, in Taibo's understanding, and how anarchism could be further opened up to welcome other movements that share similar practices and values but do not act under the banner of anarchism.

The book presents a selection of key anarchist ideas in a concise and digestible format whilst making a persuasive case for their further development. Taibo starts off with a claim that we need to rethink many of the concepts inherited from the nineteenth-century anarchist classics in order to better adjust anarchist thought to the realities of our contemporary world. As the author argues in his prologue: 'it appears ever more pressing to break with the isolation inherent in many identitarian forms of anarchism and to consequently do so from the nondogmatic perspective' (p3). It is in the pursuit of this goal, then, that the author introduces a distinction between the adjectives *anarchist* and *libertarian*. The former, according to him, refers to 'positions and movements that assume a clear doctrinal identification with anarchism, understood in its most restricted sense' (p4). The latter, by contrast, designates 'positions and movements that are not necessarily anarchist but that nonetheless agree with the basic tenets, like those linked to direct democracy, assemblies, or self-management' (p4). In this understanding, *anarchist* carries 'a greater ideological and doctrinal weight' (p16), whereas *libertarian* comprises a 'less-defined identitarian dimension' (p17). Despite this distinction, Taibo employs the terms *anarchist* and *libertarian* as synonyms throughout the book; whilst the former appears more frequently in the text, he prefers the latter in terms of its greater definitional inclusivity. With his proposed shift in terminology, Taibo aims to open up anarchism to various forms of movements that adopt anarchist practices but do not self-identify as anarchist. This openness to more people, to include those who share anarchist/libertarian practices but differ on some ideological points, constitutes the key thrust of this book.

The volume opens with a concise rehearsal of some of the ideas and questions fundamental to anarchism. It addresses the relationship between the individual and the collective, human nature, and approaches to both authority and utopia. He points to a dichotomy at the very heart of anarchist thought. Pessimism regarding power relations is integral to anarchism, but so too is a remarkable optimism about the possibility of re-creating human relations based on solidarity, mutual aid, and equality. In the chapters that follow, this analytical strand is further fleshed out, with a consideration of anarchist critique of representation in democracy, elections, the state, capitalism, and class struggle. Such discussions ground explanations of the anarchist rationale for direct action, self-management, and spaces of autonomy.

The book comes to a close by instantiating a dialogue between the past and the future. Taibo offers commentary on a series of historical events in their Spanish context(s), teasing out their relationship to anarchism. This geographical specificity reflects the book's original publication in Spanish. In particular, the author emphasises the growing cross-fertilisation between feminism, environmentalism and anarchism, underscoring the utility of such ongoing critical intersections for the development of anarchist thought. He proposes, for example, four verbs that would allow *libertarian* thought to meet the challenge of the ecological crisis: 'degrow', 'deurbanize', 'detechnologize', and 'decomplexify'. In this way, he attempts to sketch fruitful developments in the future of anarchism.

*Rethinking Anarchy* offers much food for thought. Taibo takes up a number of important issues and debates within anarchist critique, and provides his own take on them. This allows readers more familiar with anarchist debates to position themselves in relation to Taibo's views. At the same time, non-expert readers receive a solid overview of key questions and discussion points that continue to animate anarchist literature. It is commendable that feminism and environmentalism are included and explicitly discussed from the perspective of the anarchist tradition. In sum, *Rethinking Anarchy* is a welcome addition to the field. Whether readers are in agreement with the author's contentions or not, the volume presents a wealth of sensible ideas and valuable insights. Taibo advocates that anarchists should take a step away from counterproductive dogmatism and fights over ideological purity, and embrace instead other *libertarian* – albeit not explicitly *anarchist* – projects. On that it is difficult not to agree.

Iwona Janicka, Aarhus University