

# **Anarcha-feminist pedagogy**

**Collaborative and emancipatory learning in inclusive environments**

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*Anarchists know that a long period of education must precede any great fundamental change in society, hence they do not believe in vote begging, nor political campaigns, but rather in the development of self-thinking individuals.*

— Lucy Parsons, 1890

## **Education as a liberation process, just relying on rationality?**

Judith Suissa's overview about philosophy of anarchistic pedagogy in her book "Anarchism and Education" gives a great overview about the main principles in anarchist education. Many of these principles, such as freedom, holistic approach to learning process and anti-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian praxis independently of state organizing are very much needed nowadays.

At the same time, as an anarchist pedagogue myself, I wonder if there is a pivotal point we have to expand to make anarchist pedagogies more inclusive and more grounded in mutual aid principle and praxis. It is not just in the classroom we must include people, but also in daily revolutionary processes. In her book, Suissa names rationality as a predominant factor in order to understand and analyze the oppressive systems around us at a cognitive level, but also as the prerequisite for being able to be an active person to participate in new social structures outside the capitalist system.

In the anarchist tradition, rationality can be a potential factor for exclusion, not only from the classrooms but from the permanent revolutionary process related to life-long learning.

Many might still think that in order to learn and being active learners, we must rely exclusively on rationality. Rationality in psychology is seen as high cognitive functions, which allow us to complex processes in analyzing and managing spoken and written information and later in decision-making. This is partly correct, but the whole picture in what processes are important to learning points at much more combined processes that includes also emotions, communication with our surroundings and more biological factors such as regular sugar levels in our blood or good mental health. An overweight in cognitive function leaves many individuals apart in the construction of open inclusive societies. Where is the diversity and how can we build free and just societies if some people are not included?

It is imperative that we include modern knowledge around learning processes, not only as individuals, but as collectives where we need to adapt and expand our principles and praxis to make our movements and organizations inclusive. Emancipation has to be for all, and emancipation must go beyond our trust on pure rationality in order to contribute to new social structures.

An issue that has largely been misused against women and non-conforming gendered people is actually our lack of rationality as a sign of not being able of making decisions for ourselves or for the collective good. Here can we find a huge intersection where ableism, racism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia meet. In this intersection is where anarcho-feminist educators must find the tools to deconstruct the oppressive mechanisms that support not only gender roles, but other types of classifications that diminishes people and excludes us from revolutionary processes.

## **Anarcha-feminist pedagogy, a practical pending action in educational systems, anarchist organizations and movements**

The purpose of this blogpost is not to give a final answer to what anarcha-feminist pedagogy is. This is just a concept I came up with in order to expand and reevaluate the principles of anarchist pedagogy. Most theorists who have been given weight in anarchist pedagogies are men, which is fine but very narrow. We are all influenced by our own perceptions and experiences, and we can be sure that this is also the case for these theorists when they developed their pedagogical theories in anarchism. Besides, some of them have none educational nor pedagogical experience themselves, which from my point of view breaks with the conception of hollistic education where theory is equally important to practice.

It is then very much about time to take a critical look to our own approaches and methods in anarchist pedagogies, in orden to discuss collectively further paths to create more holistic and inclusive praxis in our organizations and movements. Then again, it is crucial to work actively with our own pedagogical principles to adapt them to our current challenges.

There are many patriarchal behaviours among teachers, both when it comes to gender roles and to social expectations towards girls and non-conforming gender children and adults. Kropotkin and Bakunin, in addition to other known anarchist pedagogs, always talked about chidren in a gender-neutral manner. Reality shows us that most of individuals that do not identify themselves as cis-men are more discriminated and exploited than men. Not only that, children are still indoctrinated into obedience and there we find differences between the genders in bynary systems, while other non-conforming genderer children are invisibilized. It is important then, to adress the social construction of gender in the educational systems in order but first we have to address discrimination by gender.

Furthermore, we need to work explicitly with ideals of respect and ethic, as well as we unlearn the patriarchal and capitalistic patterns we have in globalized neoliberal educational systems.

In many cases, educational institutions imprent religious values that enforce and enhance women's and non-gendered people's exploitation. Then again, it must be up to discussion the still existing link between the state and religious institutions, especially in cases where the potential break with globalized homogeneous educational systems are taken over by nationalistic-conservative governments. This is a contextual primary issue to be adressed as well in our conversations.

## **Liberation for whom? Anarcha-feministic pedagogy meets Disability Pedagogy**

Women and non-conforming gender people with disabilities suffer violence and discrimination in a higher degree than non-disabled. This is connected to two points.

In one hand, rationality that has made us see people with disabilities as a kind of monsters that needs to be tamed and taken out of sight, as Sara Orning describes in her article "Montermekanismen" (Monster mechanisms)

On the other hand several authors, like Marta Russell, underline the idea that disability is a consequence of capitalism, since the work force is built up under certain sensorial, physical and cognitive conditions in workers, which makes it structurally discriminatory. In her book “Capitalism and Disability” she explains how at the same time, when the system does not allow certain bodies to participate in the work force, discrimination adds the stigma of not being productive enough to have a decent life, making many individuals poor at the expense of the state to survive and cover for minimum of daily living.

So, how can we develop anarcho-feminist pedagogy to break both with the ties of education as a means for participation in the work force to enhance capitalistic production, and at the same time open for learning praxis based on mutual aid and mutual care other than on rationality, to open our spaces to the natural diversity of people?

## **Building up practical answers to expand anarchist pedagogies. Short remarks to enhance mutual aid and emancipation in education and in society**

We want everybody to participate actively in learning, creating free environments at school with reflective individuals that can build up revolutionary communities. Mutual aid is the answer here, in concrete to achieve at least two things. One, increasing the choice of mutual aid as an educational tool before rationality can help diminish the stigma of emotions and feelings in learning and instead seeing them as positive reactors that help weave our social bonds. Second, mutual aid as an educational praxis opens up for a breaking point against the ultra-individualistic neoliberal principles of learning as an individual matter. Learning is always a social process. That does not mean that we have to do everything together, but we most certainly need exchange of ideas and mutual support either by communicating with other people, engaging in self-learning activities or through direct action. Not only at a rational level, but a physical, emotional, social and psychological level.

These aspects, as anything else regarding life-long learning liberating processes, can only happen outside the state educational systems. That means that we, teachers, educators and facilitators, must make sure we develop systems to enhance mutual aid and participation of all individuals regardless of our function, in order to adapt the way to our collective liberation against oppressive systems. This is what mutual aid is about as well, in adapting and working towards full accessibility in social dynamics, communication tools, spaces, information and processes that grow our consciousness and at the same time meet the necessities of all individuals.

Just including everybody in revolutionary learning processes, can we all achieve freedom. Together.

### ***Sources***

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