



# ANARCHIST PEDAGOGIES

COLLECTIVE ACTIONS, THEORIES,  
AND CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON EDUCATION



EDITED BY ROBERT H. HAWORTH

*Afterword by Allan Antliff*

Anarchist Pedagogies:  
Collective Actions, Theories, and  
Critical Reflections on Education

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**PM**

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# Introduction

Robert H. Haworth

As I sit to write this introduction I am reminded of a particular teaching experience I had almost a decade ago. During class, I was passing out the dreaded federal standardized test when one of my students who considered himself an anarcho-punk yelled out, “Hey ... Mr. Haworth, you are a fucking sell-out!” I couldn’t help but think about the two decades I had been involved in punk and hardcore, as well as the intense collective work many (including myself) had participated in throughout those years. How could I be a sell-out? I stopped everything and asked him what it meant to be a “punk,” and how he identified and acted as an anarchist within the overwhelming functions of the state and capitalism? I went on to ask the rest of the class specifically, “If I don’t have a certain punk aesthetic and work as a teacher in the public schools, is that considered selling out?”

After that experience, I went home frustrated. As a student, I didn’t like high school or the ridiculous standardized tests either, but I asked myself an important question: “Was I doing something different in my classroom or just reinforcing and reproducing state and corporate interests?” As an educator, I worked diligently to teach through a more creative, dialogical, and critical framework. I worked as a social studies teacher because I felt it was a space where I could engage students in important discussions surrounding the problems of capitalism and the injustices in the world. I believed public schools were potential spaces to experiment in different pedagogical practices and at the same time cultivate dissent against a system that has been so oppressive to young people and anyone living outside of dominant cultural practices.

I have to be honest that I don’t agree with my student’s judgment that I am a “sell-out,” although there are times I feel differently. Throughout my transition into academia, I have realized how much those comments and that conversation with the class had an impact on my thinking. Experiences such as these have led me to think more critically about the complex relationship anarchism has with education. In fact, the more we engage in conversations about these intricate relationships the more we see that they are filled with tensions and ambiguity. Should we place our bets on a state-run educational system that anarchists have always been skeptical of (including my student)—one that is hierarchical and extremely authoritative? For me, and probably my old student, the answer is no, but I don’t make that decision lightly or without bringing up more inquiries.

For example, scholars within critical pedagogy (see Paulo Freire) have not only written extensively on pedagogical processes that question and resist authoritative structures, but they have also taken into consideration the transformative possibilities

and spaces of resistance that teachers form within different public school settings. Tensions definitely emerge with the deskilling of teachers (Giroux, 1988) as our schools are inundated with prescribed curriculum and there is very little room to discuss ideas and critical perspectives outside of the scripted materials. On the other hand, anarchists have taken a different direction. Historically, anarchists have steadily criticized the state and public schools and have considered them mundane institutions that uniformly reinforce capitalism and hierarchical models of control. However, over the last century, anarchists have made numerous attempts to create educational processes that transgress authoritative factory models and deterministic curriculum of the state and corporate entities (see Paul Avrich).

The early twentieth century was full of criticisms and philosophical discussions surrounding education. John Dewey and others brought into question the very nature of schooling and what it means to be an educated person (see *My Pedagogic Creed*). Unfortunately, many progressive criticisms and pedagogical practices had limitations. Their notions of education were more in line and embedded in school reform under the state and limited to what can be imagined and created within a managed or representative democratic society. One of the many significant anarchist voices that challenged state-run schools and their oppressive pedagogical practices was that of Emma Goldman. Inspired by Francisco Ferrer's (1913) work in Spain, Goldman wrote scathing critiques of classroom teachers, specifically their troublesome teaching practices under capitalism and the suffocating implications they had on the larger society: "The ideal of the average pedagogist is not a complete, well-rounded, original being; rather does he seek that the result of his art of pedagogy shall be automatons of flesh and blood, to best fit into the treadmill of society and the emptiness and dullness of our lives" (p. 8).

Clearly Goldman's statement is not limited to that particular time period. Her foretelling words resonate deeply into schools in the twenty-first century. In many cases, schools are still dull and lack inspiration, creativity, and spontaneity. From an anarchist perspective, public schools are connected to and guided by the state, whereby they are infused with authoritarian relationships between the student and teacher, they uphold corporate structures and are inundated with standardized curriculum. Under these particular state structures, teachers' work lacks autonomy and many (particularly failing schools under federal mandates) are forced to conform to curriculum standards, meritocracy, and quantitative outcomes.

Therefore, important questions need to be addressed. For example, "Are there spaces where discussions surrounding education and connections to anarchism are occurring?" and "Are there movements to create alternatives to schooling under capitalism and state structures?" It is quite evident that the body of writings by Goldman and others who challenged the dominant practices of state-run education are considered less frequently within academic settings and in the larger public school discourse. However, there are locations where alternative learning spaces are being created and where discussions are happening surrounding anarchist pedagogies. This is particularly evident in the struggles against neoliberalism and in the current Occupy movements. Yet it is still not seen as a relevant philosophy or theoretical framework.

This should probably not be a surprise to anyone. For over a century, anarchism has been predominantly misunderstood and definitely misrepresented in political, economic, social, and cultural spaces. Graeber (2004) points out that “most academics seem to have only the vaguest idea what anarchism is even about; or dismiss it with the crudest stereotypes” (p. 2). Unfortunately, the dismissal of anarchist thought tends to move even further away when discussing philosophical and theoretical frameworks in education. Although there are many educational researchers who frame their work within critical perspectives (Marxism, neo-Marxism, Autonomist Marxism, and Marxist Humanism), the majority of research and teaching practices are confined to “liberal” and “conservative” ideological debates.

The issues emphasized above are some of the major factors that motivated me to create this book. I wanted to emphasize the important contributions anarchism has made to educational praxis. Additionally, I wanted the book to disrupt dominant discussions regarding formal state-run education and explore the more creative spaces of resistance that emerge out of anarchist pedagogies and nonstatist structures. Moreover, from the body of work illustrated by the contributors, it is evident that there is not one defining position on anarchist pedagogy. In some cases, the fluid characteristics of anarchism and the pedagogical processes that individuals and collectives engage in are situated and nestled into the different educative spaces we inhabit. With this in mind, within these pages there are opportunities for anarchists to explore and critically reflect.

### **Knowledge and the Marketplace**

This leads me to consider another important factor as to why I wanted to create this volume. There is a critical need to realize anarchism within an educational context in order to provide alternatives to the intensive shifts to universalize global capitalism at all levels of society. Part of this shift is due to the fact that, “conservative, neo-conservative, and neoliberal educational reforms are gaining momentum and have been quite successful in making their arguments clear and concise” (DeLeon, 2008, p. 137). As globalization “from above” has dominated the discourse surrounding educational reform so has the relationship solidified between knowledge production and marketplace values. Michael Peters (2009) describes the shift into the “creative economy” as a way of moving the global economic order into one that focuses on “the growing power of ideas and virtual value chain—the turn from steel and hamburgers to software and intellectual property” (p. 45). Education is thus adrift within the shifting tides of capitalism. In fact, Dokuzović and Freudmann (2009) point out that even investors in the music industry are altering their capitalist energies to focus on education, highlighting that “knowledge is a tradable commodity and considered profitable.” With the massive international movements to standardize curriculum, commodify knowledge, and privatize public institutions, it is evident that state education has deepened its relationships with capitalism and embracing the move to the new knowledge economy (Giroux, 2004; Saltman, 2007).

But why should anarchists care about how capitalism and the state operate within educational structures? Public schools and universities under state control continue to



have oppressive tendencies. They rely on relationships and financial backing by corporations, while operating extensively under hierarchal structures. These modes become intensified under neoliberalism and the attempts to universalize globalize capitalism.

However, it is vital that we not view or discuss these dominating forces as impenetrable (Day, 2007). According to Day (2004) a “multiplicity of new forms of struggle is emerging” (p. 741). Struggles within multiple fronts contest the overbearing reaches of global capitalism. Students, workers, activists and other community members have organized in different capacities. They form creative and innovative interventions that challenge the dismantling of public spaces, while at the same time, “create alternatives to state and corporate forms of social organization” (Day, 2004, p. 740).

At the university level, it is vital to recognize that contemporary uprisings to contest neoliberal policies and austerity are not movements to reclaim these institutions in order to “rewind” them back to some romanticized liberal democratic spaces. In contrast, the movements are much more privy to the complex historical problems of how universities operate, they are working diligently to distance themselves from the reestablishment of these structures of the past. However, if universities operate under rigid and hierarchical settings, why are they important within an anarchist context? Stephven Shukaitis (2009) makes an important argument that “one can find ways to use the institutional space without being of the institution, without taking the institution’s goals as ones own” (p. 167). Shukaitis’s suggestions are important to underline as the movements to contest neoliberalism unfold. As we participate in liberating spaces out of the clutches of neoliberal policies and global capitalism, it is critical that anarchists continue to develop their reflective capacities.

Within an educational context, such discussions bring forth significant implications. Currently, there is an incredible need for anarchists to interrupt the authoritative and deterministic nature of state-run compulsory schooling and at the same time, continuing to immerse themselves in creative reflective actions which are not always present in contemporary movements. Unfortunately, anarchists have been inconsistent in constructing critical reflections surrounding their pedagogical practices. This has led some to criticize, and in most cases dismiss, anarchist experiments in education. Suissa (2010) recognizes some of the pedagogical vulnerabilities within anarchism: “As far as educational practice is concerned, there are several weaknesses in the anarchist account. Primarily the sparse attention paid by anarchist writers to the issue of pedagogy both exposes this account to theoretical questions about the most appropriate pedagogical approach and opens the door to questionable pedagogical practices” (p. 149).

As anarchists negotiate the difficult terrain of shaping different pedagogical practices, they cannot be dismissive of Suissa’s concerns. Questions surrounding how power operates within these educational spaces demands ongoing external and internal struggles. Although Graeber (2002) highlights the diverse functionality of consensus and how collective actions enable individuals to create proposals and “allow initiatives to rise from below” and “without stifling dissenting voices” (p. 71), these

processes do not occur by happenstance. Within these unique spaces, particular anarchist pedagogies do emerge. But as creative organizers and activists, how do we continue to be diligent in confronting the overbearing racist, classist, sexist, and homophobic structures we are so immersed in? One example anarchists may consider is the work of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987), who in the past have advocated for a continuous critique of how we take up transformations in our attempts to escape capitalist lines of flight. Thus, stressing the major point that movements wage permanent struggle within their own collective organizations; thus working to guard against the potential of emerging microfascisms.

Similarly, while there is a need for anarchists to emphasize their struggle within their own collective organizations and movements, there is also potential for these processes to offer insights into our pedagogical practices and educational spaces. Similar to how the critical educator (within a Freirian context) uses reflective practices to challenge the authoritarian and antidialogical learning environments in the classroom (and in the larger society), anarchists must value those reflective insights that transform the infoshops, the free schools, the independent media sites and other autonomous locales.

Broadly, this volume seeks to highlight the multiple sites where anarchist pedagogies operate and where they extend throughout the different locales and communities where knowledge is produced. Moreover, because these spaces and theoretical frameworks are consistently being renegotiated and reimagined, I understand that the following contributions are in no way conclusive. These examples are the subjectivities that surface within the cracks and in-between spaces that disrupt the oppressive practices of capitalism (Holloway, 2010).

In the final portion of the introduction I will briefly discuss how the three main sections of the book can help expand our understandings of anarchism's historical contributions, contemporary anarchist pedagogies and experiments, and finally, the important influences other philosophical and theoretical frameworks have on anarchist thinking.

### **Learning from Past Experimentations**

In the first section contributors provide vital discussions into past experiments in anarchists pedagogies, their implications for contemporary public schools, and new educational experiences and subjectivities. There is a serious need for anarchists and other radical pedagogues to revisit some of these historical critiques and philosophical conversations. Conceptually, the section was inspired by Judith Suissa's (2010) argument that the relationship between anarchism and education has been "undertheorized." I concur with Suissa's assessment. For anarchists, it is important to question, reflect, and further theorize on the wide-ranging historical experiences that anarchists have created. Furthermore, taking into consideration what these practices might mean for those exploring education in contemporary times and future spaces. It is my desire that these critical reflections help rekindle the anarchist "spirit" in not only critiquing compulsory schooling under the state and capitalist structures, but by revisiting arguments regarding education that are outside of hierarchical,

authoritarian, and formal state institutions.

### **Anarchist Pedagogies: Situated Knowledge and Actions**

Anarchists take into account that knowledge is produced through situated processes. On a larger scale, Janet Conway (2006) describes knowledge created in twenty-first-century social movements as “largely tacit” (p. 1). Through Graeber’s (2009) ethnographic research, situated knowledge is evident within the movement’s diverse organizational strategies and learning processes. In his book entitled *Direct Action: An Ethnography*, Graeber illustrates how individuals and collectives recognize the oppressive nature of hierarchical and authoritative structures, thereby helping to build alternative venues to engage in particular pedagogical practices that represent those horizontal and mutual spaces. Additionally, these situated spaces highlight the intricate and sometimes delicate affinity between the different activists and organizations.

Adding to the literature of direct action and critical ethnographies, Conway, Graeber, and others have engaged in documenting the movement’s diverse narratives and organizational experiences. Contributors in the second section of the book add voice to some of the contemporary challenges in these educational spaces. Authors explore ways in which active learning takes place in the streets, free schools, unions, and even the potentialities within the structures of the university. The narratives offer new perspectives into the ongoing challenges of collectively building spaces of learning. At the same time, the discussions also offer some interesting discernments regarding the tensions that occur when entering into these mutual, horizontal, and voluntary spaces. These educational projects help us better understand the complexities of teaching and learning within anarchist spaces, not so as to construct deterministic or objective goals, but rather to envision such projects as ongoing and continuous processes.

### **Philosophical Perspectives and Theoretical Frameworks**

To help us navigate this section, Jesse Cohn’s (2006) description of anarchism as a “theoretical magpie” cannot be overstated (p. 97). In fact, Cohn’s remarks not only demonstrate the complexities of anarchist thinking but underline the important need for anarchists to be critical in how anarchism attaches itself to certain frameworks. Because of anarchism’s fluidity many anarchists have taken up multiple directions regarding educational practices. Historically, Rudolf Rocker (2004) viewed anarchism as existing beyond a fixed and self enclosed social system. In his discussions regarding anarchism and pedagogy Armaline (2009) suggests not only that anarchism is “fluid” but that “it changes with the needs and will of those who (re)produce it.” (p. 136). Similar to Ferrer’s (1913) work, Freire was concerned with dogmatic processes that were prevalent within education and in many of the liberation movements of the 1960s. Much of his work embraces teaching and learning as a dialogical process, where education is a processes of exposing and contesting authoritarian power dynamics between teacher-student and student-teacher relationships. Additionally, he describes the importance of having a “respect for the autonomy of the student” (Freire, 1998, p. 59). The naming or exposing of power, as well as acting against oppressive

perspectives, becomes an important transformative educational experience toward critical consciousness (Freire, 1972; Kahn, 2009). Although Freire's work is invaluable in discussing liberatory and transformative ways of teaching and learning, it is important to mention the theoretical tensions his work has within some of the current literature surrounding anarchism and poststructuralist thought.

In the mid-1990s, Todd May's (1994) work broadened theoretical and philosophical thinking between anarchism and poststructuralism. Constructing relationships between Deleuze and Guattari (1983; 1987), Michel Foucault (1980), and others, May reopened the conversation surrounding the fluid traits of anarchism and its connections to poststructuralist thought. Other poststructuralist thinkers in education, including Diana Masny, whose work incorporates Deleuzian perspectives on literacy, have critiqued and extended the discourse regarding transformation. Masny does not disagree with Freire that transformations take place within individual subjects, but her work is concerned with how transformations are taken up. For Masny (2006), transformative education discussed within the Freirian context is too linear and deterministic. While Freire was correct that we are "always becoming" in the world, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) contested our understanding of transformation as moving in a unidirectional path of liberation and critical consciousness. Therefore, subjects do not transform into something that is "good" or "bad," but recognizing that, we are "becoming other than."

Additionally, the authors in the third section facilitate important philosophical inquiries into anarchist theories that emerge out of constructing complex pedagogical practices. As anarchist pedagogies unfold, important questions regarding national borders and the nation-state, gender and queer theory, the difficulties of working in and around state structures, and questioning our personal assumptions about teaching come into fruition. Within these knotty discussions, the authors are able to discuss some of the challenges and navigate the fluid intersections between the social, political (micro and macro), and cultural spaces. Therefore, this section cultivates philosophical and theoretical conversations about the experiments we are constructing to escape education as an oppressive machine of capitalism.

In closing, it is difficult to say if I could give my old student a definitive explanation of how we can challenge dominant educational practices (or even grapple with the definition of punk). Public schools are still moving in extremely unhealthy directions that are, in many cases, irreconcilable even under state and capitalist structures. The intention of this book is to think differently about some of these complex educational issues and their relationships to anarchism. As Armaline points out, "anarchist theory contains a component of self-reflection and self-critique" (p. 136). With this process in mind, it is important to recognize that our creative responses to construct anarchist pedagogies are not linear or deterministic. Rather, the intricate networks of situated knowledge provide important insights into how we might envision different educational experiences and processes thus offering the potential to transform our collective work.

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SECTION I

Anarchism & Education: Learning from Historical  
Experimentations

## DIALOGUE 1

*(On a desert island, between friends)*

### Alejandro de Acosta

- A:** Even in the strangeness of our isolation, you want to discuss something you call anarchist pedagogy? Haven't we been circling around this topic for some time now? Well, if I understand your expression, it is already underway.
- B:** Yes, it has been underway for centuries.
- A:** And yet, here in our isolation, we feel the need to talk it over again. What's more, if I know you, you will want to narrate a myth of origin ...
- B:** Remember, always, that it is just that, a myth, a story.
- A:** So maybe I am the one who is inclined to fabulate here. We agree that it is underway, but it begins again, is renewed, in the posing of a new problem. Not merely ridding ourselves of the problems whose names are so familiar ...
- B:** ... and just why is it that the names "school, schooling" fit these familiar problems so well? ...
- A:** ... rather shifting attention and interest to a new set of, let's say, "unschoolish" problems.
- B:** Is this the concern that made me want to talk? From one problem, one frustration to another?
- A:** Not every problem, not every frustration is identical. There is great virtue, one could even say will power, in selecting one's greatest problems. You have spoken macroscopically, as if from a great distance. But I will remind you that, here on our island, it is wisest to speak microscopically. Have we not been teasing out the fine grain of a redefinition of freedom, endlessly rediscovered, a shift from opposition to invention (and affirmation)? Though neither of us willed this our isolation, is that research not one of the ways that we have come to accept, even desire, our prolonged stay here?
- B:** Well, there is your story, finally: from freedom as the remainder of an agon, a struggle, a combat (the operation impure, the fight always on the verge of returning, a mark, a brand on the body of the free) to freedom as self-invention, creativity, undiscovered potential.
- A:** Now that these first words have passed our mouths, I see the strangeness of this story. We have been speaking with each other for a very long time. Now I want to ask you: invention, creativity, potential—of what? Of the human?
- B:** Perhaps. I have invoked "schools, schooling" and to many this suggests the idea of the child. Of course, though here on the island we have not seen children for some time, surely we have not been here so long as to forget all that. I think the suggestion is deceptive. I doubt that we will discover some pure freedom here. We have long agreed that is nonsensical. The "unschoolish" freedom in question is something else than what we imagine the human animal is doing in its untrammelled youth.
- A:** Yes, what we are after is something other than the infantilization of everyone ...
- B:** ... including youth. It is a question of knowing just what a myth, a story, a fable is.
- A:** An adventure of ideas? Not just of images and symbols?
- B:** We are exploring the island, again ...
- A:** In this adventure of ideas, we might take up your strange couple: a word that says not-something (anarchy) and one that says ... yes, someone, a companion (pedagogy).
- B:** Let us become interested in this unlikely coupling, if only because it is another name for the ever-repeated birth of another people ... our silent, invisible companions here?



- A:** It is pleasant to think of them. It is also pleasant to suppose that every generation will amuse itself by cultivating the prefixes no-, un-, de-, an- as so many prefaces to what I call its compelling new problem, rediscovered, reinvented ...
- B:** Or to what I will still call a frustration, one which is not humiliating and becomes, in time, a fascination. Remember our arrival here, the first few years ...
- A:** What else is there to do, if we agree that it is already underway?
- B:** More or less everything. But, in this myth, which is a little bit more yours than mine, in these birth stories, these genealogies, we might learn how to be fascinated by a series of recalcitrant minorities ...
- A:** Our companions, now less silent, less invisible: a fringe that invites us to reconsider where we had placed the center of our island, and so to conceive its problem as our own.
- B:** Yes: for them it is already underway, and, from them, we might learn that the same is true for the rest of us.

## CHAPTER 1

# Anarchism, the State, and the Role of Education

Justin Mueller

Education has played a particularly important role in the history of anarchist thought and practice, perhaps more so than any other political philosophy aimed at social transformation. This is in part because, for anarchists of all stripes, education has never been simply a means to achieve a new social order. It has been, rather, part of the very practice and prefiguration of the anarchist ideal of creating freer and more critical minds, and more open, cooperative and nonoppressive relationships within society. As a result, understanding the peculiar nature of the role of education for anarchism can help us better understand the relationship between anarchist educational theory and its relatives in the broader circles of “libertarian” or “radical” education. It can also help us underscore the tremendous differences between the anarchist conception of education and that of historical and contemporary statist and capitalist pedagogies. Finally, a greater understanding of the role of education within anarchist theory can help us clarify the means, aims, and ideas of the wider anarchist movement and tradition. First, however, we will briefly look at what is meant by “anarchism” and provide a basic foundation for further discussion of its values and criticisms of the existing state of education.

### **A Brief Sketch of Anarchism**

Anarchism has had a rather bedeviled career, maligned by many, misunderstood by most, and marginalized even by erstwhile theoretical allies. In the popular imagination, it is often seen as simply synonymous with chaos, disorder, or violence; more likely to evoke the image of a smashed Starbucks window than a nuanced philosophy based upon principles of economic and political equality (Starr, 2000). However, the anarchist Emma Goldman defined anarchism in this way:

Anarchism, then, really stands for the liberation of the human mind from the dominion of religion; the liberation of the human body from the dominion of property; liberation from the shackles and restraint of government. Anarchism stands for a social order based on the free grouping of individuals for the purpose of producing real social wealth; an order that will guarantee to every human being free access to the earth and full enjoyment of the necessities of life, according to individual desires, tastes, and inclinations. (1911a)

Such an idea hardly seems to warrant immediate dismissal. Rather than social

disintegration, the normative principles and organizational ideas in anarchist theory advocate social, economic, and political arrangements that affirm a strong valuation of individuals as ends in themselves, a commitment to egalitarian and democratic methods, and a staunch opposition to hierarchical institutional power arrangements that subordinate some individuals to others. Fundamentally, anarchist theory operates under the notion that people can and should determine the direction of their own lives, and that social arrangements should be constructed with this aim in mind.

In answering the simple question, “What is anarchism?” it may help to begin by thinking rather of “anarchisms.” The term “anarchism” really refers to a cluster of ideologies, movements and theories that share a family resemblance to each other, rather than to a largely enclosed and holistic system of thought (Guérin, 1970, p. 4) like Marxism. In this way, the wide variety of often conflicting opinions that fall under the label of “anarchism,” especially regarding along what lines a future society ought to be ordered, should not be viewed as simple internal “contradictions.” Rather they represent an experimental “plurality of possibilities” that may be more or less relevant or useful in a variety of different situations (de Cleyre, 2005, p. 48).

There are common principles, however, that unify anarchists. The word “anarchy” comes from the Greek, “an,” meaning “no” or “without,” and “archos,” meaning “ruler” or “authority.” In this sense, the concept does not mean “chaos” but rather an opposition to *hierarchical power relationships*, which are the corporeal embodiment of the notion of “opaque” authority (Sylvan, 1993, p. 221). Thus, opposition to the State and capitalism are appropriately features of anarchist theory, but they are *incidental* byproducts of this primary rejection of hierarchy, of divisions between those who command and those who are compelled to obey (Bookchin, 2005, p. 27). This simple principle of opposition to hierarchy and imposed authority, taken seriously, logically extends to an opposition to all dominating and exploitative social, political, and economic power relationships, including not just capitalism and the State, but patriarchy, racism, sexism, heterosexism, war (and by extension, imperialism), and any number of other manifestations of power disparity as harmful to human development.

Anarchism is not simply a negative critique. Moving beyond the extensive list of things anarchists are opposed to, the anarchist opposition to hierarchy implies a wide variety of positive means of association. Behind any specifically proposed social arrangements, however, are a few general principles, which will be elaborated in the next sections.

## **Values, Human Nature, and Other Pedagogies**

Let the universal culture of schooling aim at an apprenticeship in freedom, and not in submissiveness ... The motif, the thrust of the new age is the freedom of the will. Consequently, pedagogy ought to espouse the molding of the free personality as its starting point and objective ... That culture, which is genuinely universal in that the humblest rub shoulders with the haughtiest, represents the true equality of all: the equality of free persons. For only freedom is equality. (Stirner, 2005, pp. 19–20)

The above quote by Max Stirner provides an excellent introduction to the anarchist attitude toward education. As Stirner suggests, the role of education in anarchist theory is one of emancipation and cultivation. Its aim is to develop free and critical minds, and in pursuit of this, cultivate the values of liberty, equality, and solidarity (Kropotkin, 1985, p. 128). We must explore what these concepts mean and how they are used for anarchists specifically. Certainly, no pedagogues from other progressive or libertarian schools of thought would deny that they too seek to develop many or all of these traits in some fashion. In order to understand what makes an anarchist approach to education distinct, then, we also need to understand the nuances in anarchist thought regarding the interplay of values, human nature, and development, as well as the relationship between individuals and society.

## **Values**

As mentioned previously, the major values espoused by anarchists are liberty, equality, and solidarity. While different schools of anarchist thought may appear to emphasize one over the others (as with arguments between “individualist” and “social” anarchists), these differences are largely superficial, with little changed in substantive values (Guérin, 1970, p. 4). In actuality they are inseparable from and mutually inform each other. Rather than a fixed value-slope or hierarchy, these values form a continuum wherein each idea is meaningfully constituted only in association with the others.

## *Liberty*

While distinctions can be drawn between the concepts of “freedom” and “liberty,” they are essentially interchangeable in anarchist literature, and for the purposes of this essay. The anarchist conception of freedom is fundamental to understanding the entire thrust of anarchist theory. Unfortunately, it is also one of its most frequently misunderstood, caricatured or oversimplified ideas. Freedom must be understood within the context of the anarchist conception of human nature, which we will explore later. For now, it is sufficient to note that anarchists view human nature as malleable, that we have the potential to do *better*, and that freedom is a necessary condition for the development of one’s potentials. Freedom for anarchists, then, goes beyond the classical liberal notions of autonomous, atomized, presocial free persons, as in the thought of Rousseau or Locke. Such liberal notions prescribe formal liberty and equality before the law, but do not provide substantively for the material security and development of individual faculties and expression (Goldman, 1940). As Daniel Guérin (1970) states, “For the anarchist, freedom is not an abstract philosophical concept, but the vital concrete possibility for every human being to bring to full development all the powers, capacities and talents with which nature has endowed him [sic], and turn them to social account” (p. vii).

For anarchists, freedom is not simply a lack of external fetters or domination. Nor is it, as occasionally and misleadingly imagined by critics, an “absolute” claim for simple license to do whatever one wants, regardless of wider consequences. As Errico Malatesta (1993) explains, “[Anarchism means] freedom for everybody ... with the