

## Butterfly-Fluttering Libertarian Practice: Anarchist Contributions to Teaching Práctica libertaria *mariposeante* - aportaciones anarquistas a la enseñanza Prática libertária borboleteante - contribuições anarquistas para docência

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### Abstract

Anarchists have developed diverse strategies, attempting to systematize their conceptions of education at different points in history, with varying degrees of divergence and convergence. Unraveling some clues about the abundant field of libertarian practice in this area, focusing on teaching, is the objective of this essay, where we will explore what could be understood as the "butterflying" gesture as an ethical attitude of teachers toward the educational task. "Butterflying" is a concept that emerged with Fourier and was developed at various points in anarchist thought, whether by Faure, Ferrer Guardia, Pelloutier, the Soares sisters, Pinho, Scherer, or Gallo; is a state of constant mutation and continuous variation of forms, which cannot be captured by methodologies based on dogma, science, or any other rigid parameter. It should be noted, in general terms, that education and work have been associated in anarchist practices throughout history, and this warrants reflection. We will outline some of the most important anarchist experiences in education, to encounter the thinking of Scherer and Gallo, and a possible libertarian practice of butterflies.

**Keywords:** Anarchism, education, ethics, philosophy of education, history of education, critical thinking, revolution, cultural revolution, sociology of education, theory of education.

### Resumen

Anarquistas han desarrollado diversas estrategias intentado sistematizar sus concepciones de la educación en diferentes momentos de la historia, con diversas divergencias y convergencias. Desentrañar algunas pistas sobre el abundante campo de la práctica libertaria en ello, centrándome en el ejercicio docente, es objetivo de este escrito, donde vamos a desarrollar lo que podría ser el gesto de *mariposear* como actitud ética de profesoras y profesores ante la tarea educativa. *Mariposear* es un concepto que surge con Fourier y se desarrolla en algunos momentos del pensamiento ácrata, ya sea por Faure, Ferrer Guardia, Pelloutier, las hermanas Soares, Pinho, Scherer y Gallo. El *mariposeo* es un estado de constante mutación y variación continua de formas, que no se deja capturar por

metodologías basadas en el dogma, la ciencia o cualquier otro parámetro rígido. Cabe señalar, en términos generales, que la educación y el trabajo han estado asociados en las prácticas anarquistas a lo largo de la historia, y hay que reflexionar sobre ello. Trazaremos algunos esbozos de algunas de las más importantes experiencias anarquistas en educación, para encontrarnos con el pensamiento de Scherer y Gallo, y una posible práctica libertaria de mariposas.

**Palabras clave:** Anarquismo, educación, ética, filosofía de la educación, historia de la educación, pensamiento crítico, revolución, revolución cultural, sociología de la educación, teoría de la educación.

## Resumo

Os anarquistas desenvolveram diversas estratégias, procurando sistematizar as suas concepções de educação em diferentes momentos da história, com graus variáveis de divergência e convergência. Desvendar algumas pistas sobre o vasto campo da prática libertária nesta área, com enfoque no ensino, é o objectivo deste ensaio, no qual exploraremos o que poderia ser entendido como o gesto "borboleta" enquanto atitude ética dos professores em relação à tarefa educativa. "Borboleta" é um conceito que surgiu com Fourier e foi desenvolvido em vários momentos do pensamento anarquista, seja por Faure, Ferrer-Guardia, Pelloutier, as irmãs Soares, Pinho, Scherer ou Gallo; trata-se de um estado de constante mutação e contínua variação de formas, que não pode ser captado por metodologias baseadas em dogmas, ciência ou qualquer outro parâmetro rígido. É de salientar, em termos gerais, que a educação e o trabalho têm estado associados nas práticas anarquistas ao longo da história, e isso merece reflexão. Iremos apresentar algumas das experiências anarquistas mais importantes na educação, para confrontar o pensamento de Scherer e Gallo, e uma possível prática libertária das borboletas.

**Palavras-chave:** Anarquismo, educação, ética, filosofia da educação, história da educação, pensamento crítico, revolução, revolução cultural, sociologia da educação, teoria da educação.

## Education as an Anti-Method

Following a diffuse path, it is impossible to write a method for anarchist education. On the contrary, what we find is a continual mutation of practices: moments in which clusters of ideas converge, and others in which disruption and divergence open new paths to explore. In the introduction to the book *The Future of Our Girls and Boys and Other Essays* we find:

It is up to the reader, of course, to wander through this compelling labyrinth of ideas—ideas that show us where it is possible to enter, but never indicate a single, predetermined, definitive exit, for such exits exist only when they are built in step with those who dare, uncompromisingly, to

walk toward freedom in order to truly move beyond where they are. (Reclus et al., 2017, p. 33).

To truly move beyond -to displace one's thinking and practice, to place oneself and one's community under constant questioning, to dig through practices and the winding bends of thought- these are the paths that lead toward the expansion of practices and contexts of freedom. As published in the *Boletín de la Escuela Moderna de Barcelona*: "This is what the true method consists of: seeing, recreating, and not repeating by rote" (Ferrer, 2014, p. 97). The true method is an anti-method: it consists in recreating, and is therefore impossible to crystallize.

Nieuwenhuis (2017) argues that discontented people are the ones who seek new paths to travel, the ones who give flavor and meaning to everything. The discontented, the restless, the unsatisfied, those who refuse the crystallized truths that scatter a toxic dust over living things. These are the people who inhabit limits and edges, who are able to leap higher and open pathways of experience and discovery of the new. Processes of knowledge production occur, broadly speaking, through experience and through the construction of provisional truths -truths built communally, from below- that will, at some point, nourish the revolt of those yet to come, the new truths yet to emerge. To know is to rebel against the provisional, crystallized truths of a given territory and to expand the boundaries of what it is possible to know. "Above all, it is necessary to proclaim for girls and boys the right to think, to speak frankly, to doubt, to have their own personal opinion, and also the right to revolt" (Reclus et al., 2017, p. 53).

For anarchist traditions, education forms part of the permanent revolution in which we are all engaged. Beyond generational differences, entering into a process of producing and sharing knowledge -self-managing one's own processes communally and carving out spaces of freedom and collective experimentation in the present- is an essential impulse for nourishing revolt and revolution along the paths of learning.

In this article, we develop the idea of *mariposear*<sup>1</sup> (butterfly fluttering) as an ethical attitude adopted by teachers within educational practice. *Mariposear* is a concept that emerges with Fourier (2007) and appears throughout various moments of libertarian thought, in Faure (2015), Ferrer Guardia (Nascimento, 2025), Pelloutier (1900), the Soares Sisters (Tannús, 2006), Pinho (2013), Schérer (2005), and Gallo (2007, 2018; Gallo et al., 2021; Gallo & Limongelli, 2020). *Mariposear* names a state of constant mutation and continual variation of forms, one that refuses to be captured by methodologies grounded in dogma, science, or any other rigid paradigm. It is worth noting, in broad strokes, that education and labor have historically been intertwined in anarchist practice. For this reason, the article moves back and forth between these themes, and with that purpose, we outline key anarchist

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<sup>1</sup> The Spanish verb *mariposear* exists in standard Spanish (including the dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy), where it generally means "to flit about" or "to move from one thing to another without settling" In this article, however, the term is used in a distinct, conceptual way within libertarian pedagogy to evoke a continuous state of ethical, intellectual, and practical variation. For this reason, the term is kept in Spanish throughout.

experiences in education so that, in the end, we may arrive at the thought of Schérer (2005) and Gallo (2007, 2018), and with a possible reactivation of a butterfly-fluttering libertarian machine.

## **Mutualism**

In a text published by the Centro de Cultura Libertária in Almada (Portugal), we find a forceful analysis by Pelloutier (1900) on private property and the exchange value that capitalism imposes on labor, functioning as the very mechanism that defines class inequalities. It is the same process that condemns one part of the population to misery and another, much smaller part, to luxury. Between these two classes, a series of police forces and militias are organized to uphold the structure through violence:

Militias, armies, magistracies, and police forces gradually came into being, charged with protecting the social organism, along with parliaments and ministries charged with administering it. And because these various functions are costly while producing nothing, the poor were forced to redouble their efforts in order to meet the needs of the parasites. (p. 10).

In another passage, where he seeks to imagine what a society grounded in exchange and mutualism might look like -a society forming a new community free from oppression- he writes: "To eat and to think, to draw fruit from the earth and ideas from the mind: such must be the occupation of humanity" (Pelloutier, 1900, p. 12).

Throughout the text, he defends a strategy of struggle and action known as anarcho-syndicalism or radical unionism, articulated through the existence of the Labor Exchanges (Bourses du Travail) and an International Federation of them. The Labor Exchanges were spaces granted by certain French municipalities to the organized workers' movement, strongly inspired by Proudhon's ideas of mutualism and federalism (Dixon, 2012). Within them, activities included union coordination, support centers for sick workers, training and educational initiatives, and assistance centers for the unemployed.

From Pelloutier's (1900) perspective, the Labor Exchanges and their Federation were instruments for the self-management of production in its various forms -grains, minerals, arts, and more- capable of promoting direct exchange among workers and thereby creating an alternative circulation of production outside the capitalist and market-driven scheme of exploitation.

Between the union organization being built and the initial period of the communist-anarchist society, there is agreement. We want every social function to be reduced to the satisfaction of our needs; the union wants this as well -this is its purpose- and it is increasingly freeing itself from belief in the necessity of governments. We want the free agreement of individuals; the union can exist only by expelling from its midst any form of authority or coercion. We want social emancipation to be the work of the people themselves; the union wants this as well (Pelloutier,

1900, p. 18).

Pelloutier served as the general secretary of the Federation of Labor Exchanges from 1895 to 1901, and was one of the principal driving forces behind the popular education practices developed in those spaces. Funded through strike funds and mutualist initiatives, the Labor Exchanges organized numerous direct-action popular education activities.

The Labor Exchanges thus became centers dedicated to the education and discussion of the problems affecting the working class. Instruction was led by the most educated workers. The educational services included a library, an information office, a social museum, vocational courses, and general education courses (Cuevas, 2014, p. 101).

Through the Labor Exchanges, essential spaces were fostered for cultivating memory and learning within the libertarian philosophical tradition. They housed important anarchist libraries, the Museum of Labor, and information and propaganda offices dedicated to formalizing and preserving the documents and notes produced by workers' organizations. They became known as the workers' university, where training courses were organized across diverse fields, from engineering and medicine to the arts.

### **Integral Education**

Libertarian proposals for an anti-authoritarian education are closely connected to the thought and practice of Paul Robin (Moriyón, 1989), especially in his effort to systematize the idea of integral education. Before joining libertarian socialist struggles, Robin trained as a teacher in the formal French school system and worked in various institutions, where he quickly became disillusioned with the educational model as we know it. His libertarian trajectory began when he moved to Brussels. In Geneva, he met Bakunin (Cohn, 2008) within the International Workingmen's Association, and at the 1868 congress he presented a motion in favor of integral education, participating in the General Council until he was expelled along with other anti-authoritarian socialists (Merbilhaá, 2023).

While those who for centuries have imposed their domination upon the people—with the false promise of making them happy—fight and struggle at the expense of their subjects, and even enjoy themselves at the cost of their pockets, the intelligent minority of workers, completely disillusioned, come to understand one another, organize themselves, and actively reverse the current of decadence into which despots have cast humanity. For nearly five years [...] proletarians of all countries have been uniting in an International Association. (Moriyón, 1989, p. 92).

In his internationalist struggle for the emancipation of peoples, of the poor, and of workers, Robin consistently argued that education had to be an essential strategy for social revolution—a revolution

that would inaugurate a society founded on equality.

Therefore, in the name of justice, we want complete, integral education for all. Only those who cling to the old theological principle can divide human beings into two castes: those who work and those who enjoy themselves, those who obey and those who command. Justice cannot legitimize inequality!" (Moriyón, 1989, p. 89).

With the support of the mayor of Cempuis<sup>2</sup> -who was familiar with Robin's ideas- he was invited to direct the Cempuis Orphanage, a position he held from 1880 to 1894. At Cempuis, Robin was able to develop one of the first long-term anarchist educational experiments with children and youth: fourteen years of libertarian practice. The orphanage housed around 150 children and adolescents, placed there for various reasons: disciplinary sanctions, absence of guardians, or issues that today would be understood as related to mental health.

Robin introduced radical transformations to the educational models of his time: he replaced religious instruction with a rational and scientific education; he rejected learning theories based on memorizing established truths; and he deepened an instructional model centered on the means of producing knowledge. To the horror of the patriarchal society of his era, he also advocated mixed education, with girls and boys learning together. Robin understood education as a process that cut across the development of physical, moral, and intellectual capacities.

Physical activities at Cempuis occupied a little more than one third of the daily schedule. They included swimming, horseback riding, and gymnastics (in a gym equipped with various apparatuses), as well as outdoor games and activities. Meals were entirely vegetarian, as Robin believed such practices nourished the body, mind, and community in an integral way.

Intellectual, manual, and artistic activities were organized according to the interests of each group of students. They were first guided to discover -through observing their surroundings (nature, the city, society, the school, factories, phenomena)- the topics that sparked their curiosity. They then explored these interests through hands-on practice, advancing toward theoretical and experimental research in laboratories, field studies, and collective readings. Vocational discovery was always open to all, without distinctions of gender. Beginning at age twelve, young people were encouraged to try out a profession for at least three hours a day. Cempuis also had a printing press, where students learned editing and typography.

Moral activities sought to cultivate a new ethic, far removed from bourgeois and religious morality. Libertarian morality was inspired by Kropotkin's ideals of human solidarity and mutual aid (Skyer et al., 2025). Two elements were essential to cultivating this new morality: on the one hand, the way of life and

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<sup>2</sup> Cempuis is a French locality (north of Paris, in the Oise department).

the collective management of the school; on the other, the selection of content and theories taught, eliminating anything imbued with religion or capitalism.

The organization of the Cempuis school sought to place all members of the community -teachers, students, administrators, workers- on an equal footing: everyone was expected to respect one another, and the freedom of each person was considered fundamental to the proper development of studies. The relationship between teacher and student was based on discussion and questioning, encouraging children to develop critical thinking and autonomy, and never submission. (Gallo, 2007, p. 87).

Gallo (2007) recounts that at Cempuis, children's activities also involved experimental objects: scales, magnifying glasses, barometers, tongs, thermometers, telescopes, and others. Around age ten, they began participating in workshops offering trades such as shoemaking, printing, bookbinding, blacksmithing, carpentry, sewing, and laundry. The daily routine for students up to age thirteen -when they completed primary education- consisted of nine hours a day: five dedicated to manual work (workshops and collective labor) and four to formal instruction (classes and readings).

After completing primary school, they entered the *mariposeo* period, during which they rotated daily among the different workshops (woodworking, metalwork, forging, sewing, typography, printing, general services). After this experimental phase, young people chose the area in which they wished to specialize, always retaining the possibility of changing trades: a pedagogy of freedom in motion.

### **Neither This nor That**

Sébastien Faure's (1858–1942) biography is profoundly singular (García & Garay, 2024). He participated in countless militant contexts, was tried in the Trial of the Thirty, directed the newspaper *Le Libéraire*, and devoted his life to traveling the world giving lectures on libertarian principles—lectures that helped finance the communal experiment of *La Ruche* (The Hive).

In *La Ruche*, various forms of children's participation coexisted: some children lived inside the community, while others attended daily and returned to their families. There they engaged in games, classes, trades, and numerous activities. Yet Faure insisted that *La Ruche* should not be defined as a school: "*La Ruche* is therefore neither a school, nor a boarding house, nor an orphanage" (Faure, 2015, p. 50).

Funded by resources from workers' organizations around the world, by family donations (when possible), by the sale of materials and goods produced within the community, by subscriptions to its published newspapers, and by contributions from militants attending his international lectures, *La Ruche* existed outside the logics of the public and the private, outside the categories of school and orphanage. This placed it in constant friction with state authorities, something that did not seem to trouble Faure:



"The situation remains the same: the legislator ignores *La Ruche*, and *La Ruche* ignores the legislator. It is simple, frank, clear, and precise" (Faure, 2015, p. 56).

A radical horizontalism governed its internal organization. Although roles existed (administration, teaching, technical work), decisions were made collectively in assemblies open to all who wished to participate. It was "life in full daylight, absolute trust, the simple and frank exchange of opinions with an open heart. It is the surest and most effective means of preventing intrigues and the formation of cliques built on secrets and silence" (Faure, 2015, p. 64).

Faure assumed the role of director only in external matters -agreements with institutions, creditors, or public interlocutors-, but within the community he dissolved himself: "With the groups and comrades, the director stands alongside his collaborators and merges back into the group, leaves his position, and becomes one more among them, neither more nor less" (Faure, 2015, p. 58).

The management of internal resources was equally self-governed. Collaborators shared a common fund for personal expenses:

Everyone has access to a small amount of personal money; for that purpose, there is a common cash box from which they may withdraw what they need without giving explanations, being themselves the only judges of their needs. I am happy to say, as praise to all, that after almost ten years of *La Ruche*'s existence, all our collaborators have used the common fund with absolute discretion and restraint, trying to weigh as little as possible on our budget (Faure, 2015, p. 62).

Children were organized according to an objective criterion: little ones, middle ones, and older ones. The distribution depended on each group's capacities and desires for various tasks. Generally, the youngest combined play, some lessons, and household tasks (peeling vegetables, cleaning, etc.). The middle group alternated between play, manual workshops -echoing Robin's *mariposear*- lessons, and free readings. The older group devoted their time to the trade they had chosen, attended classes voluntarily, and could, if they wished, participate in community management or in teaching the younger groups.

Education must aim to produce individuals as complete as possible, capable of going beyond their everyday specialties whenever circumstances or needs allow or require it: manual workers able to tackle a scientific problem, appreciate a work of art, conceive or execute a plan, even participate in a philosophical discussion; intellectual workers able to put their hands in the dough, in the workshop or in the fields, with dignity and in useful work (Faure, 2015, p. 109).

*La Ruche* sought to involve the community in its daily life and also traveled outward to learn about other places. These actions confirmed that school and learning are not islands detached from society or nature. The education Faure proposed was a practice of collective self-formation, where unions,



associations, cooperatives, families, artists, and anyone interested collaborated in creating new ways of living.

The products created in the workshops -carpentry, forging, sewing, notebooks, food- sustained the school financially, while its publications circulated in various contexts of workers' struggle, guaranteeing a key part of its funding. *La Ruche* welcomed other groups and associations to experiment with alternative models of popular education.

Every year, *La Ruche* organized a festival attended by comrades from around the world. Amid choirs, poetry readings, music, and shared meals, the joy of collective experience was celebrated:

Everyone carries away in their lungs a supply of pure, invigorating air, and in their hearts a long-lasting joy and emotion. This great celebration offers those who have never seen *La Ruche* the chance to visit it in detail, and those who already know it, the moment to rediscover the environment where our dear girls and boys grow -children who are, in a way, also theirs- and to witness the ongoing development of the project (Faure, 2015, p. 138).

Alongside this outward openness, the children of *La Ruche* frequently traveled to other places, following Reclus's advice (Ferretti, 2014), learning the geography of the world with their own bodies. These journeys were a pedagogical assertion: they were not "environmental studies" designed to illustrate content but encounters with the new before thinking about it, a pedagogy of sensitivity and decentering.

May the boundaries of their young hearts expand without end, so they grow accustomed to embracing, in a single feeling of fraternal solidarity, all those who -regardless of the land where they live, the garments they wear, or the language they speak- aspire to universal emancipation (Faure, 2015, p. 148).

### **Transdisciplinary and Shared**

Maria Angelina Soares and Maria Antonia Soares, known as the Soares sisters, were born in a modest home in the Mooca neighborhood of São Paulo. At the time, their neighborhood was a hybrid of industrial hub and rural zone: still distant from the city center, it housed factories and workshops of various sizes. As Ludmila (2021) notes, "the Soares family home was a meeting point for educational activity (the Rationalist Popular University) and union organizing (the Shoemakers' Union)" (p. 15).

Coming from a family of anarchist militants, it is likely that Maria Antonia Soares attended a libertarian school between the ages of eight and twelve in Rosario (Argentina), where her brother -persecuted by the Santos police- worked as a teacher. Ludmila (2021) highlights a reference by Juana Buela (p. 20) to a *Centro Feminino de Jovens Idealistas* (Women's Center of Young Idealists) created in São Paulo,

emphasizing the importance of such centers in promoting the emancipation of women and society as a whole.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, neighborhoods such as Mooca, Brás, Belenzinho, and Bom Retiro were undergoing profound transformations. Libertarian organizing, previously concentrated in Bom Retiro and Brás, expanded into new working-class districts -Mooca, Ipiranga, and Lapa- located near railway lines, factories, and workers' homes. In this context, the Centro de Jóvenes Idealistas was founded in 1913. Its program, published in *Grito Operário* (1915) and *A Plebe* (1920), set out the following goals: to gather as many women as possible; to foster strong, friendly relationships among them in pursuit of emancipation; to create free schools for young women; to establish libraries and publications; and to organize lectures and festivals (Ludmila, 2021, p. 147).

It is worth noting that in *A Lanterna* (July 1913), on its back cover, the Center described itself as a space for "propaganda in favor of women's emancipation, that is, freeing her from the slavery in which she finds herself and placing her in her rightful place in society" (Ludmila, 2021, p. 146).

This center brought together numerous women around diverse issues, played a key role during the general strike of 1917 in Brazil, and coordinated a wide range of public actions: publications, manifestos, lectures, and campaigns. For a period, they organized a Sunday school for women, anticlerical and libertarian in nature, seeking through education to promote propaganda for women's emancipation and social struggle.

Antonia Soares wrote (Ludmila, 2021) that "through newspapers, books, pamphlets, bulletins, meetings, conferences, etc., we have communicated with the public and with workers, sharing our aspirations with them" (p. 54). Communication was conceived as an essential tool to counter the disinformation and slander campaigns spread by the threatened bourgeoisie, who accused anarchists of terrorism: "We would greatly regret, however, if workers -seduced by the bourgeois siren song- fell into the trap set for them by capitalists, leading them to complete moral annihilation, to the last rung of modern slavery" (p. 55).

Within the *Centro Feminino de Jovens Idealistas*, women exchanged and shared responsibilities in organizing public activities, acting through self-management. According to Ludmila (2021), "the lack of distinction among those who carry out editing, translation, printing, and distribution is intentional, making anarchist militancy a transdisciplinary practice shared by an editorial body expressed through a collective of militants" (p. 170).

In the Center's activist practices, one perceives a deep articulation between propaganda, education, and labor, put into action through publishing, the Sunday school, and rallies-lectures. The women often shared authorship of texts signed collectively by the Center, and they rotated the tasks of editing, thereby rejecting the hierarchical division of labor within their own organizations. They also organized fundraising

campaigns and collaborated with existing libertarian schools in São Paulo, such as *Escolas Modernas* No. 1 and No. 2.

### Perpetual Exchange

A lecture delivered by Adelino de Pinho in 1908, titled for Education and for Labor and later published as a pamphlet, emblematically captures his ideas, and we follow here several of the points proposed in the self-taught anarchist's analysis. Adelino emphasized an education founded on the abolition of punishments and rewards, oriented toward building solidarity among peers: "In all schools, in all countries and in all eras, healthy work will depend on the absolute exclusion of all competitive stimulus, in whatever form or guise" (Pinho, 2013, p. 34).

Regardless of whether a child adapts more or less easily to formal education -whether they complete tasks with greater or lesser facility- we must, as a community, be supportive and sympathetic toward all of them: "Therefore, as a conclusion, children deserve our full respect, our full sympathy, our full love" (Pinho, 2013, p. 27). The different ways of approaching knowledge -with some more naturally inclined toward the arts and facing more challenges in mathematics, and others more comfortable with physical activities outdoors while finding reading and writing more difficult- should not be interpreted as learning problems: "There is simply a diversity of tendencies" (Pinho, 2013, p. 28).

Throughout his writing, one perceives a clear valorization of labor, of craft, of manual activity, of making with one's own hands as both work and struggle. Pinho fought against the division of labor based on the appropriation of knowledge by one class to the detriment of another, and against the inequality between the diploma-holders and the workers. He encouraged those who wished to pursue diplomas to do so (because it "is part of a social game") but warned that bureaucrats should not be cultivated: "Workers should strive, yes, but to make their children good manual laborers, skilled in their trades, capable of living through work and through struggle. The realm of the diploma-holders is the realm of the accommodated" (Pinho, 2013, p. 28).

He radicalizes his perspective—largely inspired by Proudhon's thought—by valuing human labor, the power of the body, of the arms, of the works that workers inscribe upon the earth:

The worker -with a brain to think, a heart to feel, and an arm to wield the tool- is the unit of moral value that prevails [...] His arm, aided by intelligence, removes all obstacles: it opens canals, drills tunnels, climb mountains, digs lakes, crosses the ocean. And after that... gets a diploma! (Pinho, 2018, p. 29).

Pinho identifies an inversion in the structures that assign value to labor, arguing that the most valuable work is that which most directly benefits the collective—returning energy to the very community that has just exerted it. This stands in opposition to the capitalist market, which asserts that the most individually

“qualified” work should also be the most individually valued (the engineer above the bricklayer; the doctor above the nurse; etc.). In another pamphlet published in 1920, Pinho is uncompromising from the title onward –“Who Does Not Work Does Not Eat!”- and develops, following Pelloutier’s line of thought, an explanation of the logic of exploitation through which diploma-holders dominate the non-diploma-holders:

There is no way around it. The world is large enough and has resources sufficient for everyone to employ their activity, their effort, their capacities for useful and necessary labor. Only the parasitic caste of the chronically idle -those drones of the social hive who suck the honey and leave only the residue to the fertile and hardworking bees- will lack the terrain needed for their usual exploits and their pernicious habits of sanctified idleness (Pinho, 2013, p. 65).

Affirming that the world has sufficient resources and space for everyone to work and collectively accomplish the labor of all, Pinho warns:

Hurry, then, to take your place in the immense army of workers. If the sun, when it rises, is for everyone, the same must be true for labor, which benefits all and in which many do not participate. Remember that whoever does not work does not eat (Pinho, 2013, p. 65).

It is important to emphasize that the work to which Pinho refers does not correspond solely to the forms of labor capitalism has traditionally defined as masculine -factory or agricultural work- even if his text may be criticized for its sexist bias, which could be a thesis of its own. His conception of labor is broad and involves a perpetual exchange among all people, nature, the arts, and sensibilities:

Life is a perpetual exchange. The human being stands in a relationship of reciprocity with the natural and social environment, with the entire universe and with fellow human beings. They were not born solely to know, but also to act. Alternately active and passive, they give and receive; they take ideas from things and later inscribe their ideas in their works. They enter into a community of interests, feelings, and thoughts with others; they benefit from the labor of others and, in turn, exercise their activity for their own benefit and for the benefit of all (Pinho, 2013, p. 32).

In this expansive argument, Pinho points to the necessity of constant exchange between everyone and everything, a permanent openness to mutability. Whether with what he calls the individual, social, natural, or universal environment, one can perceive resonances that could be read in dialogue with later ecosophical thought (Limongelli, 2024). Knowledge and labor occur within a community of shared interests, and in a permanent exchange of everyone with everything, and of everything with each one, through a permeable gesture of activity and passivity, like a transversal membrane: “to assimilate and to produce, to understand and to express, to know truth and to realize what is useful, good, and beautiful; to know and to labor” (Pinho, 2013, p. 32).

For Adelino de Pinho -and for a segment of anarchism as a current of thought-, education takes place through labor, by means of labor, and for labor: a different kind of labor, far from the increasingly

exploitative forms we know today; labor that contains within itself a perpetual exchange with the earth, with other beings, with societies, grounded in mutual aid and in interspecies and planetary solidarity. Labor understood as experience within a multi-organic whole. "Let us not struggle against labor, then, but organize it so that no one is left without work, so that work ceases to be an odious instrument of exploitation and becomes an instrument of happiness" (Pinho, 2013, p. 33).

This instrument of happiness is broad: it includes labor in the fields, on the land, in the factory, in cities, in theaters, on screens, in letters, in ideas, on the seas... wherever human action exists, constantly entangled with social, environmental, and subjective forces. "But human beings do not live by bread alone. They need books, music, statues, painting, landscapes. Therefore, beside a worker, we must also make a think." (Pinho, 2013, p. 33).

### **Self-Management, Propaganda, and Aesthetics**

I selected these educational experiences because I believe they offer a powerful and sensitive response for creating another kind of work within libertarian educational practices. The Labor Exchanges, Cempuis, *La Ruche*, and the *Centro Feminino de Jovens Idealistas* carried out, in the immediacy of their practices, several radical transformations in the realms of labor, propaganda, and education: first, in the organization of labor within the institutions themselves, through the radical self-management of administration and knowledge production; second, in the connection between extra-school knowledge dissemination and popular propaganda campaigns as well as public actions; and third, in the ethical-aesthetic stance toward the division of labor, activating the device of *mariposear* in the face of labor serialization.

Self-management is, of course, a key concept for understanding these four experiences. On one hand, all of them practiced self-management in their own organizational forms, challenging different meanings of what we call the division of labor. On the other, they thematized self-management in their modes of knowledge production, whether in school practices, publications, rallies, or in the propaganda of the anarchist idea of self-management. The Labor Exchanges were organized around a decentralized, mutualist federation self-managed by libertarian unions. They operated through the exchange of products of various kinds, maintaining a circulation outside the capitalist market. Their management, sustainability, and organization were carried out by workers and for workers, embodying a radical stance against the division of labor, and creating spaces where everyone learned and taught collectively, regardless of their positions in the intellectual, manual, artistic, or industrial world.

*La Ruche* operated a system of administrative and educational self-management open to everyone involved in the process: maintenance workers, cooks, gardeners, farmers, teachers, directors, students, and the wider community. In Faure's narrative, it was an open space where speaking freely expanded mutual trust. In this way, solidarity and mutual support fostered a new form of education and life. *La*

*Ruche* -neither orphanage nor school- was a self-managed educational territory. All its collective production -agricultural work, sewing, newspaper circulation, or the festivities with artistic performances that served as ongoing sources of funding- was carried out by all participants: students, teachers, and workers. Labor produced by all, managed by all, shared by all, and capable of educating all.

Often we cannot identify the authorship of statements and manifestos from the *Centro Feminino de Jovens Idealistas*, since many were written collectively through a self-managed communication process that abolished the division of labor among them. Self-management functioned as a mutualistic teaching practice in which everyone taught and learned in continuous flow with one another.

The system's propaganda is the sludge of the business—the toxic mud of the dams that destroyed Brumadinho and Mariana. Propaganda is a viscous mud of obedience, consumption, servility, violence, and apathy. A thick and sticky substance that seeps into every corner of social life: how we eat, sleep, love, pray, smile, produce. Through the propaganda of capital, the state, the church, and corporations, desires, behaviors, and practices are molded. Anarchists have always had to remain vigilant about this, as Antonia Soares (Tannús, 2006) warns about the necessary attention to the siren song that pulls the workers' vessel toward the reefs.

The Labor Exchanges took on the wide task of sustaining a libertarian culture through the creation of anarchist libraries, museums of labor, and diverse archives that stored pamphlets, newspapers, statements, regulations, and instructions. It is important to remember that the library and museum differed profoundly from what we now understand as atomized spaces of individual consumption of art, like contemporary mega-exhibitions. The libertarian library functioned as a gathering place and space for mutual learning, with collective readings aloud for comrades who were just beginning to read, as well as study groups on various topics. They were spaces for disseminating libertarian thought—an anti-capitalist counter-propaganda. Cempuis and *La Ruche* had facilities for typography, printing, and bookbinding, where books, newspapers, pamphlets, posters, and statements were produced. Materials were created by all institutional members—teachers, students, workers—through experiences of mutual education in a self-managed system.

At *La Ruche*, this practice reached extreme levels of importance and scale, becoming one of the main methods of financing the school. Among the workshops, the only one that produced for the outside—toward a cooperative market—was the print shop, which articulated a network of cooperation among unions, cooperatives, popular universities, Labor Exchanges, masonic lodges, and avant-garde groups. Faure (2015) describes it as follows:

[...] the unions, cooperatives, popular universities, Labor Exchanges, masonic lodges, avant-garde groups, all the friends of *La Ruche*, and also the many comrades who, individually, follow the development of our work with interest (p. 121).

In addition to *La Ruche's* Annual Festival -with theater, dance, poetry, music, food, and drink produced by the community-, they had rallies and lectures on education. During the Festival, many comrades from different parts of France gathered to celebrate libertarian culture. They could even take matters into their own hands and join the means of production: a newspaper reader might join its editorial team, or a theatergoer might become an actress in a libertarian troupe.

Capitalist voracity insists on assigning people to the top and the bottom. The children of those at the top, as part of a familiar tradition, study sciences, politics, industry, and engineering, reproducing privilege. Young people who are well-fed, white, and rosy-cheeked cultivate various forms of knowledge in schools dedicated to intellectual formation, learning forms of government, industrial planning, militarization, and policing. Meanwhile, the children of those at the bottom, very young, thin, and poorly dressed, are sent to factories as soon as they are strong enough to carry something, follow an order, help in the kitchen, or clean. From an early age they learn to rely on their own physical strength to sustain their labor, with little time for books or maps. Immediate life shapes their will and vocation. While those at the top, like parasites, savor the tastes and aptitudes of the most succulent portions of labor, those at the bottom are pushed into subordinate trades, gathering the crumbs of the bourgeois banquet. There is little choice of vocation, little pleasure. Faure (2015) expresses it as follows:

No doubt, the worker who goes to his job as the slave to his captivity feels neither taste nor aptitude for any work, and it matters little to him whether he works at this or that; such is the fate awaiting the unfortunate apprentice (p. 97).

There is a voracity to distribute servile sadness among those at the bottom, while those at the top consume the abundance of knowledge and labor. And there is, joyfully, a libertarian voracity to dismantle this structure of reproduced oppression through education.

### ***Mariposear***

A very powerful mechanism developed in Fourier's thought -and later taken up by Robin, Faure, Schérer, and Gallo- is the *mariposear* machine. At *La Ruche*, the workers established an ethical response to this procedure of life's serialization by creating a pre-learning period that, in Faure's (2015) words, allowed each apprentice to "experience various trades, spending enough time on each to establish the necessary comparisons among them, with herself [the apprentice] as the center" (p. 98). At *La Ruche*, children could live in the community until a certain age and then leave freely. Those who stayed committed themselves to the community through the production workshops they selected, through the socialization of labor, and, consequently, through the education of the younger ones. However, the gesture of *mariposear* among different work experiences, across various workshops, does not serve



only to find the task one enjoys most or that provides the greatest pleasure; it also activates an educational process that articulates body and mind. According to Faure (2015):

At the same time, those who continue their studies benefit not only because they are far from having acquired the sum of general knowledge that, in the future, whatever profession they pursue, will be indispensable to them; not only because they have already reached an age in which, with greater maturity, they will make better use of the teachings they receive, but above all because, by working alternately, every day, regularly, in the classroom and in the workshop, they will inevitably establish, even without suspecting it, a very useful relationship between their work here and their studies there; between the development of their intelligence, their vision, and their hands, between their general culture and their technical learning. (pp. 98-99).

Faure's argument helps us understand in practice what Proudhon attempted to project through a polytechnic vision of learning. The multiplicity of experiences an apprentice can explore -alternating between workshops and studies across different fields of knowledge- is organized to cultivate pleasure and autonomy in relation to labor. Through Faure's words, we also understand the continuous processes through which knowledge unfolds, not only within the school but within the development of the community itself, alternating between its direct production and, at the same time, its planning and organization.

Gallo (2018), advancing in our discussion, describes Schérer's anarchism as "no longer tied to individualistic demands but conceived within the context of a new sociability, shaped in the torn world of our time, pointing toward a new form of communitarianism centered on hospitality" (p. 800). A communitarianism that moves away from Stirner's anarcho-individualist thought (Burns, 2024), approaching instead an opening toward the Other, toward hospitality: "They constitute a call for a permanent, unconditional, and unlimited hospitality—of our homes, of our homelands, of our souls, of our bodies" (Schérer, 2005, cited in Gallo, 2018, p. 800), understood as the immigrant, the stranger, the one outside order, the one outside the world, the different one.

The radicalism of Schérer's thought seems driven by the intensification of global forms of capitalism and the increasing waves of migration from subalternized countries -in constant war and subject to extractivism- toward dominant countries at the poles of capital. This radical openness does not constitute a system in Schérer's thought, but rather a gesture of wandering that, as Gallo (2018) writes, "is not at all systematic; it is closer to a creative wandering than to the construction of an explanatory system" (p. 800). This line of wandering becomes a gesture of his philosophical anarchism and is grounded in the concept of *mariposear* that Schérer finds in Fourier: "of which I found the best expression in Fourier: an 'ambient and fragmented' style, corresponding to the dominance of the passion called 'alternating' or 'mariposeante': to move, to change. I only made incursions, proposed points, without insisting" (Schérer & Lagasnerie, 2007, cited in Gallo, 2018, p. 801).

The hospitality associated with *mariposear* leads to a radicality of knowledge understood as a collective substance shared by all. Like gestures of wandering, knowledge cannot be conceived by a single person: it is collectivized thinking, always in motion. Knowledge is constituted through wanderings between a person, a thing, an idea, an instrument, a machine, other people, other ideas, and so on.

There is, of course, a creative paradox here, but it is nonetheless a paradox in which the idea of collective creation has been abolished. One must absolutely be oneself, and this is what becomes suffocating. Crushing. One must get out of there. (Schérer & Lagasnerie, 2007, cited in Gallo, 2018, p. 801)

It is therefore necessary to constitute ourselves in groups and collectives, forming a “self-outside itself”: a wandering hospitality. Anarchy, for Schérer, is an absence of principles—whatever they may be—including the principle of the self. For him, “the ‘an-archy,’ the absence of principle, is precisely the possibility of exiting the philosophy of consciousness, pushing us more toward the direction of the other than toward ourselves” (Gallo, 2018, p. 803). That is, even the principle of a pre-established consciousness, prior to the subject and requiring clarification (or emancipation), is an imposition of a subjective form already closed and completed. This leads to affirming an active consciousness through openness to inquietudes, through the problems and tremors that constitute thought. There is no rejection of collective organizations of any kind; For Reclus, anarchy is the highest expression of order. But not of transcendental orders or those imposed by representative, preconceived, and predetermined thought, whether by history, science, or divinity.

Critical thinking is generated through the inquietudes summoned by wandering actions in the encounters among people, things, modes, ideas, and practices. Education would then lie in the constant gesture of an anti-pedagogy established against the pedagogical apparatus of modernity, activating a practice in continuous mutation and variation, as Gallo (2018) writes about the anti-systemic features in Schérer’s philosophy of education:

it means thinking of it not as a system nor as a proposal for a form of educating; on the contrary, it means thinking of it within the realm of critique, of denunciation of a state of affairs produced by modernity -what the philosopher characterized as a “pedagogical apparatus”-, and in the invitation to a collective construction of elements that may connect and reconnect, producing new landscapes, new possibilities. Education thought, lived, and practiced as becoming and openness. (p. 804).

Becoming as openness, radical hospitality, polytechnic learning, alternations in learning, hands and minds articulated around a *mariposear* machine that investigates, within anarchist thought, the power of a perpetual exchange (Pinho, 2013, p. 32) maintained between labor and life. Against machines of extractivism, exploitation, and subordination, libertarian practices search for another taste for life. A taste forged through sharing, receiving, offering, and articulating communities freely associated through

collective experiences and ideas that seek to establish a redistribution of common life. We return here to the perspective of Adelino de Pinho, who, from his anarcho-syndicalist and self-taught standpoint, affirmed:

Alternately active and passive, he gives and receives; he takes ideas from things and then puts his ideas into his works. He enters into a community of interests, feelings, and thoughts with other men, uses the labor of others, and then exercises his activity for his own benefit and for the benefit of all. (Pinho, 2013, p. 32).

### **Alternation and wandering inaugurate a libertarian machine of *mariposeos***

Robin, Faure, Ferrer Guardia, the Soares sisters, Pinho... who intertwined their practices in the machinic phylum of libertarian education, deepened the notion of *mariposear* introduced by Fourier. *Mariposear* is an image in Fourier's thought that implies a gesture of variation and navigation among elements in a manner not strictly ordered or directed. A mode of navigation activated by another form of thinking, outside rationality—perhaps through the sensory plane or even through a knowledge of the living, as proposed by Rolnik (2019). This *mariposeante* gesture triggers diverse practical and theoretical propositions. It is, at the same time, a field of sensitive experimentation that opens spaces for the emergence of the new -of what is not yet known- and also promotes a direct confrontation with the social division of labor, allowing each person to integrate into their practices a variety of knowledges, skills, experiences, doings, and theories.

This integration of diverse elements would enable the diffusion throughout society of the capacity to manage, produce, think, create, develop, and investigate. This libertarian *mariposeante* machine is closely linked to the possibilities of local self-management and to the planetary federalism envisioned along the libertarian path. To expand self-management forces, it is necessary for a community to be able to carry out, collectively and individually, the widest possible variety of practices, theories, sciences, inventions, technologies, sensibilities, and aesthetic creations.

*Mariposeo* was also reintroduced into anarchist thought by Gallo and Schérer in their propositions. I consider that Schérer, through Gallo's words, carries out an amplification of the *mariposeante* gesture. He shifts this gesture away from the practical plane -delimited among the functions of life (industry, thought, theory, aesthetics, etc.)- which had been thematized by Robin, Faure, and Ferrer Guardia in the various workshops and laboratories installed in their schools. Schérer affirms that *mariposeo* is also a cosmological gesture, a mode of producing thought and life, a way of producing life and teaching practice. Not only a transdisciplinary program in which various trades are learned, but a transversal way of thinking in which boundaries are constantly erased.

Radical hospitality toward the other produces an effect of wandering. In wandering, we alter the forces that operate within our existential territory when we open our borders toward what lies outside us: others,

the other, shapeless things, and so on. May these ideas take flight in teaching practices of mariposeante movement.

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