The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Andie Nordgren
The Road to Relationship Anarchy
2018

Melk #6, page 75

theanarchistlibrary.org

The Road to Relationship Anarchy

Andie Nordgren

2018

In Stockholm during the early 2000s, *Relationship Anarchy* was born out of an environment which included and celebrated an array of counterculture; such as polyamory, fetishism, interactive art, tech activism, anarchist politics, and roleplaying games.

We, the people who came together, and found each other within this countercultural environment, had theories and lived experiences proving to us that love could be felt towards more than one person at a time. Also, that societal relationship norms could police this out of existence, creating a kind of cage around love-based relationships. Polyamory seemed, at least to us, to be the very key which would open the cage door — but we soon found that this movement similarly caged love in, only finding room for more than two people inside. The rules sometimes seemed even stricter within the polyamorous relationships, where love was somehow both special and dangerous. Those who entered the cage willingly would both be subject to control by the other(s), as well as be forced to exercise control over the other(s) behavior. Our anarchist spirits

would tolerate no such cage, or wish to put any other person, especially those for whom we felt love, into such a cage.

Relationship Anarchy is the idea that love does not need a specific set of rules, but rather that all of our relationships can be construed as valuable, that all can be constructed and shaped by people who want to engage in them, based on free will, and a radical wish to avoid defining relationships by attempts to exercise power over each other. Simultaneously, we were discarding static notions of gender — which meant throwing away any relationship models built on obsolete ideas of gender and sexuality. When you can't or won't define what constitutes love or sexual attraction in a world where all these notions are irreversibly tied to sex and gender, using it as a foundation to define relationships seemed futile. Get rid of it all! We wanted anarchy, and to say:

Fuck all order and power relations stemming from these roots!

Relationship Anarchy became my personal road to freedom from all the rigid norms and power structures that I found in normative love and gender roles. And it resonated, in its difference from polyamory, with enough people that it continued to evolve, took on a life of its own, and in Sweden; became an established strand of the queer and poly movements — carried on by people looking for a radical departure from stifling norms, and a model that felt queer enough to contain them and their relationships.

We always knew it would be more work to have relationships like this — to define them ourself, with those in them with us, rather than falling back on the norm. Today, I also see the importance of acknowledging the power dynamics within anarchistic relationships. And to push for relationships that start with skewed power dynamics, to be aware of this. The cost of making a completely custom relationship agreement can look very different for different people, and the tyranny of "structurelessness" must be considered — where too little structure can turn into power and benefit for those who already possess it. Relationship Anarchy must be equipped with this power analysis, and be open for declaring structure to relationships when it's needed to protect individuals from each other.