

## Anarchists Care About Books: The Writings of Abdullah Öcalan

1. Do you think Ocalan is an anarchist? Why or why not? Does it even matter if he is?
2. Ocalan repeats a line familiar to antifascist organizing: democratic confederalism has to defend itself, its identity, and its democracy to survive. This seems particularly relevant in the last few months with the invasion of Afrin and US intervention in Syria. On the other hand, democratic-confederalist military groups (YPG, YPJ, SDF) operate hierarchically, and there have been conflicts over their responsiveness to the assemblies or to the state. How can we reconcile the democratic impulse behind confederalism with the challenges of self-defense and related questions of martyrdom and discipline? See *Democratic Confederalism* 28-29.
3. What do you think of the ways that Ocalan uses history in his arguments? Do you believe what he says about the origins of hierarchy? Does it matter if we don't?
4. To what extent has anarchist organizing taken on a confederalist bent? Should we be moving more in that direction? Do the mixed successes of Occupy point to what confederalism would look like in a US context?
5. Ocalan remains interested in national liberation, but much of anarchist thought condemns nationhood as inevitably counter-revolutionary. On the other hand, democratic-confederalist organizing in Syria has shown much success in including non-Kurdish ethnic groups in ethnically diverse northern Syria. Should we work to weaken our antagonism to nationhood or is it hopelessly bound up with militarism and white supremacy in the US?
6. Ocalan insists that overcoming the state is a long process, and that democratic confederalism must prove its problem-solving abilities. In the meantime, he seems willing to work with state governments. Can we consider this anarchism? Do we agree with it?
7. Are Ocalan's ideas about gender too binary? What are the limits of this way of thinking? Are there some advantages to his way of defining gender?
8. Does it make sense for radicals in the US to study jineoloji? If so, how should we do it?
9. Ocalan links hunters, priests, and elders in his discussion of patriarchy. Does this analysis fit with your view of patriarchy?
10. One of the main contrasts that Ocalan discusses is between monopolies and social confederacies. How does that challenge work?
11. Ocalan is writing from prison. Should we trust him? Is it problematic to have a leader dictating the program for Rojava's revolution in this way?

## Some Interesting Quotations We Might Discuss

Liberating Life, page 25:

“Woman is not targeted as the female gender, but as the founder of the matriarchal society.”

Liberating Life, page 35:

“The male monopoly that has been maintained over the life and world of woman throughout history, is not unlike the monopoly chain that capital monopolies maintain over society. More importantly, it is the oldest powerful monopoly. We might draw more realistic conclusions if we evaluate woman’s existence as the oldest colonial phenomenon.”

Liberating Life, page 45:

“Capitalist modernity is a system based on the denial of love. Its denial of society, unrestrained individualism, gender discrimination in all areas, deification of money, substitution of god with the nation-state, and turning woman into an automaton that receives no or little wages, mean that there are no material grounds for love either.”

Liberating Life, page 54:

“Because hierarchy and statism are not easily compatible with woman’s nature, a movement for women’s freedom should strive for anti-hierarchical and non-statist political formations.”

Democratic Confederalism, page 29:

“Against the network of monopolies we must build up an equally strong network of social confederacies.”

Democratic Confederalism, page 32:

“Neither total rejection nor complete recognition of the state is useful for the democratic efforts of the civil society. The overcoming of the state, particularly the nation-state, is a long-term process. The state will be overcome when democratic confederalism has proved its problem-solving capacities with a view to social issues.”