

Anarcho-Leftism: A philosophy of theft?

by

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Forward

This is a continuing work which will, in future revisions, include the Anarcho-Socialism concept of jurisprudence in civil and criminal law ,and the question of public goods that are presently provided by the State. The present version deals only with the economic system. *(Hint for the Humour-Impaired: This article written with tongue firmly in cheek)*.

The Economic System of Anarcho-Socialism

Whether it is called Anarcho-Socialism, Anarcho-syndicalism or Anarcho-communism, the philosophy of the collectivist anarchists is one based on the appropriation of property and the redistribution of capital.

Depending on the particular ideology of the person describing anarchism of the leftist variety, the scenario works out something along the line of ...

The *exploited* workers (Note that in anarcho-left theory, there is no room for satisfied workers existing under capitalism) will rise up and peacefully seize the means of production. The owners of such property will evidently have a choice of becoming advisers to the spontaneous worker's committees that will be elected by the workers or, in the peculiar logic of socialism, initiating force by having the police arrest and remove the workers who have taken possession of their property.

Now it appears that one of the ideas cherished by the anarcho-theftists is that certain property is not property. Any property that can be used to produce is not the property of the owner but that of the *enslaved* workers. Of course, any property can be used to produce a profit, so theoretically any property obtained through profit or capable of producing a profit is fair game for appropriation.

But I digress... we left our *valiant heroes of the revolution* occupying the factory and, for the sake of example, our factory owner, Ebenezer Scrooge accepting a position as adviser.

The committees will meet with other *revolutionary peoples committees* and decide what to do with the factory. If the factory produces something deemed *useful* to the community, the workers would keep on working at their jobs and trading the finished product with the community based on the hours of effort required to produce that product.

Ebenezer will lend his technical expertise and be paid the same as the rest of the workers.

"Existing firms might simply be turned over to worker ownership, and then be subject to the democratic control of the workers. This is the anarcho-syndicalist picture: keeping an economy based upon a multitude of firms, but with firms owned and managed by the workers at each firm. Presumably firms would then strike deals with one another to secure needed materials; or perhaps firms would continue to pay money wages and sell products to consumers." [1]

Of course, if the factory produces something that the community decides is not useful, (who knows what that would be...as under the former capitalist system, factories that produce unsaleable goods tend to go bankrupt) the *revolting people's committee* will direct the workers to convert the factory to create a product that is required by the community.

The question of how the necessary machinery or material for the new facility will be acquired is never mentioned...presumably a committee will vote it into existence. However, we shall assume that the committee has voted and it now exists. Soon the new factory is busy churning out the *Bakunin People's Bus* (that being the decision of the committee).

A fly develops in the ointment.. Joe Prole, a worker in the Bakunin Bus Factory, becomes dissatisfied with his job. No problem, according to the anarcho-theftists... he can change jobs. There will be no restricted markets or fields of employment in Theftopia. Joe Prole is free to enter a new profession.

Joe Prole walks over to the local hospital and announces that he is bringing his experience as a tool and die maker to the hospital and wishes to become a surgeon (this being a job that was denied to him by the former "class" system of the Capitalists). Since all work is measured by hours of work, his pay won't rise but he will be happier and that is the measure of success in this workers utopia. (whether his patients are happier is another story)

"..workplaces should be associations one joins rather than companies owned by someone else that one sells labour to. Today if you want to be a partial owner of a certain clubhouse, you join the club, and then you are. In my concept of socialism, I can choose a facility which does the work I like, and -- note carefully -- I do not "apply for a job" there -- what I do is I walk in and notify them that I am joining. With that act I am a a partner in the ownership and the management." [2]

Joe will receive the same pay and rewards as his fellow surgeons, no matter what training or education their class privilege obtained for them under the old system of capitalist feudalism.

An frequently made assertion by the socialists and pseudo anarchists is that the workers are at the mercy of the "owners". Yet at least one pseudo-anarchist admits that it is really a consensual agreement.

"Actually in the current society they *do* live by the charity of the workers, while in an anarchistic society they would have to work to earn money." staffan.vilcans@ortivus.se (Staffan Vilcans) [9]

In other words...the workers are *not forced* to work, as so many of the

left claim, but rather have the ability to withdraw their services. While charity is probably not the correct term, it does demonstrate that the fallacious *workers as slaves* is a myth. Since charity is not provided by slaves but rather is freely given, one can not say that workers are slaves to the owners.

The admission that Socialism cannot produce the "means of production"

"I assumed we were talking about transition from a private-capitalist society, not a cooperativist-capitalist society of worker owners. In the latter, capital could be converted to transferable assets; however, capitalist states have demonstrated a tendency to economically isolate, embargo and boycott societies that try to change their economic structure away from private capitalism, so there's a good chance that such asset conversion would not do the would-be socialists any good. You can't *buy* new capital if no one will take your money. In that case they would have to physically remove their fixed capital -- no easy task." [3]

Here Elkins confirms my position that socialism cannot produce within its own economic system, the means of production. He automatically assumes that the means of production must be purchased if it can't be taken over by force. This indicates that he has rejected the possibility of socialism producing the means of production and that capital must be obtained from capitalists.

A clear statement that socialism can only exist as a parasitic force rather than a productive system in itself.

When a State isn't a State

A common theme among the anarcho-socialists is the claim that the state will be no longer...that the masses will decide how things are done for themselves. Yet in the next breath, they state the the masses will form into committees and congresses which will set production targets and set rules for individuals.

"There are other ways of ensuring a "fit" between worker management and consumer preferences. For example, collective negotiation between the haircutting workers' organization and the local workers congress or consumers organization, on such issues as hours of operation, types of service provided, etc." [6]

"There may not be a state but there will be structure of social self-governance. Rules are made, decisions about social production priorities are decided -- that's what the workers' *congresses* or conventions are for." [6]

"There cannot be a stable social arrangement in which there are no rules that are applicable to all, and to which everyone is obligated. A stable social organization presupposes a system of rights and obligations." [6]

Why work in Utopia?

Of course, the question of why should anyone work arises.. After all, in

Theftopia, there are *no wage slaves*, so therefore, how can you force someone to work if he chooses not to do so. Perhaps he would rather commune with nature. Should he starve as he would under the *evil capitalist system*? No... the workers utopia must provide a subsistence for him. How it will, is another detail not yet explained by the theorists. It can't be from a state funded program...there is no state.. a tax on the workers? Who collects it? Can a person be forced to work? That would be enslavement, and therefore wrong according to Anarcho-theftism.

"It is unclear how the syndicalist intends to arrange for the egalitarian care of the needy, or the provision of necessary but unprofitable products. Perhaps it is supposed that syndicates would contribute out of social responsibility; others have suggested that firms would elect representatives for a larger meta-firm organization which would carry out the necessary tasks."[1]

Another curious issue that seems to be ignored by the theologians of the Anarcho-Socialist movement and one that deserves a closer look is the issue of unavailable goods. Not all goods can be produced in a single country. For example, the favourite beverage of anarcho theologians as they expound on their theories seems to be coffee. How will the anarcho-theftists society in Northern Europe obtain coffee? Will they engage in trade with capitalist countries? Will multi-nationals, particularly ones that have had their property seized, be willing to trade with the anarcho-theftists? It does provide for an interesting vision. *The Revolting People's Committee* that operates a former division of a Multinational, negotiating a trade deal where they would sell the product produced in a stolen plant back to the original owners.

Justice in an Anarcho-Socialist world.

According to the anarcho-socialists, justice would be provided by courts set up and administered by the workers and their committees. Evidently, according to a Usenet post by Elkins, the rules of evidence and the concept of burden of proof would be very different from the form they take today.

Under the anarcho-socialists system, the *burden of proof would lie with the defendant*, who must prove his innocence to charges.

Elkins does not say whether this form of evidentiary procedure would extend to all court actions, or if it would be restricted to **show trials** against capitalists.

"In article Those who can prove that they bought their capital assets with money that did not come from profits -- IE. surplus value stolen from workers -- would have the option of keeping their assets or selling them at fair market value to a collective. Or, in cases where they could prove that at least **part** of their assets were bought in this way, they would have the option of keeping that part or be compensated for it.

I should have added, however, that unless they could also prove that they had not been using their capital to exploit workers -- a heavy burden of proof, given that they are, by hypothesis, capitalists -- they would also have to pay punitive damages in the

estimated amount of surplus value they had stolen from workers, and in many cases this would probably be equal to or more than the value of their assets. In that case their fine would have to be in the form of asset forfeiture to the workers' collectives."[3]

One can assume that in a world where innocence must be proved, that the risk of witch-hunts is greatly increased.

The claim by Elkins that there would be People's Courts (Judge Wapner, are you listening) is disputed by a fellow theftist who states in a later article in Usenet that in an anarchist society, there is *NO LAW*.

"Anarchism, on the other hand, puts liberty first, and is opposed to ALL law. And that is why, even though I failed the laissez-faire capitalist test, I consider myself to be an anarchist."[7]

So either, there is a kangaroo court form of law as stated by Elkins or there is no law as stated by Greg Alt. In either case, I think it is sufficient to say that unless you are part of the committees (state), there is no justice in the theftist form of society.

One curiosity is the persistence with which the so-called anarchist-left defends and advances totalitarian ideas...

In the following passages written by Andrew Flood, one can see the inherent totalitarian and authoritarian ideas that form the basis of a "workers state" that the anarchist-left seek to form.

First...a call for a hierarchy.

"Quite simple because the CNT had not considered how industry could be re-organized or how the revolution could be defended and extended in the context of a situation where it was in the minority it became paralysed, the revolutionary gains were made not by the co-ordinated and previously discussed actions of the CNT as a body but rather by the spontaneous and local actions of each CNT section or community where it had support in the first weeks of the revolution when the state was essentially powerless..."[10]

"They labelled us agents provocateurs because we demanded that provocateurs be shot, that the armed forces be disbanded, that political parties who had armed the provocation be suppressed, and also that a revolutionary Junta be established, to press on with the socialisation of the economy and to claim all economic power for the unions." "All of this was necessary in the context of carrying the revolution to completion."[10]

Anarcho-Socialist have problems with definitions and history.

Most anarcho-theftists seem to have problems with definitions. Standard usage of terms creates problems for their arguments, so they tend to redefine terminology and revise history. An example... An anarcho-theftist needs to refute anarcho-capitalism, so he points out:

"As George Orwell once pointed out, capitalists are happy to let radical papers exist when they reach 5% of the population. However, when these ideas become widespread, then that's somewhat different. This happened in Italy, 1920 - the result was fascism. The fascists

were actually employed as private cops to break strikes initially. They did should a good job, the wealthy backed them with funds."[4]

Thus he implies that Italy in the early 1900's was an anarcho-capitalist society. This, as any reasonably informed person knows, was not the case. But, to the anarcho-theftist, since this revision of history suits his argument needs, then the revision is OK.

Another example of the confusion or distortion that comes from the anarcho-theftist position is in the following where McKay seems to be making the assertion that Guatemala is an anarcho-capitalist society:

"Or what about recent events in Guatemala city where private cops murder homeless children. These kids cannot afford to pay for private cops, but of course, poor do not exist in the books, eh?"[4]

Here McKay seems to be claiming that anarcho-capitalism cannot result in protection for the poor because Guatemala, which is not an anarcho-capitalist society proves other wise.

Curious logic...similar to pointing out that because elephants do not fly, then birds can not exist.

The anarcho-theftists have trouble with even their own basic definitions. They claim that a capitalist system enslaves workers and does not permit them to freely choose the job the worker wishes. Yet, when asked why so many work for the very state that they claim to despise, they announce:

I work to meet those needs because I have to. *I'm free to choose wherever I work*; there is no inconsistency with my beliefs."[5]

Which certainly makes a mockery of their claim that capitalism does not allow a free choice for the workers.

However this form of argument is only allowed when the anarcho-theftists are attempting to discredit an argument. When pointed out that in all cases where socialist revolution has occurred that a power class of elite has emerged and quickly organized a repressive state, the anarcho-theftist resorts to denials that the socialists were involved. It was always *some other guys* who did the dirty deed. It would appear that anarcho-theftists have a double standard about debating tactics.

A classic defining statement has emerged from a libertarian-socialist:

Jason Kodish's sig shows the confusion that is inherent amongst the theftists.

"It is a sad day when one who opposes the ever looming power of the State is called an anarchist. When it becomes politically incorrect to believe in such basic precepts such as freedom of choice. It is my belief that those who do not defend their rights deserve to lose them...-Me."

But then, as most seem to be posting from state funded universities..where the funding is provided from tax money extracted by the state from the working people...it can be assumed that living with hypocrisy is no strange thing to the Anarcho-Theftist.

Yet another example of the Pseudo-anarchist confusion over definitions and their loose application of fact is demonstrated in this contribution by dtn307@nwu.edu (Daibhidh)

[5]

"We, the members of the Libertarian Party, challenge the cult of the omnipotent state and defend the rights of the individual."

Already, you see some qualifiers--they object to the OMNIPOTENT state, rather than objecting to the state itself. This would make them minarchists, not anarchists!

Here is a classic example of disinformation, or possibly lack of understanding of definitions. The USLP has never claimed to be an anarchist organization. Yet Daibhidh, because he wishes to make the claim that they falsely call themselves anarchists, ignores that fact.

"We, on the contrary, deny the right of any government to do these things, and hold that where governments exist, they must not violate the rights of any individual: namely, (1) the right to life -- accordingly we support the prohibition of the initiation of physical force against others; (2) the right to liberty of speech and action -- accordingly we oppose all attempts by government to abridge the freedom of speech and press, as well as government censorship in any form; and (3) the right to property -- accordingly we oppose all government interference with private property, such as confiscation, nationalization, and eminent domain, and support the prohibition of robbery, trespass, fraud, and misrepresentation."

Here is the classic Americanism in action: life, liberty, and property (aka, "the pursuit of happiness"). Property is the foundation upon which the Libertarian Party rests; liberty and life are secondary considerations. Libertarians see property as the means to perpetuate life and to maximize liberty.

Here is a classic example of ignoring what he has quoted and then redefining the meaning. Nowhere in the quoted text is property given supremacy, yet Daibhidh states that this precedence does occur. Daibhidh then goes on to complain that the USLP claims to be against the state yet supports the state. Again, this is pure nonsense. The USLP, being a minarchist party, does believe in a state, however the state being limited in it's actions and powers. This pseudo-intellectual word twisting is nonsensical yet appeals to the hatred of fact by the pseudo-anarchists who appear to feel that facts are unnecessary and that rhetoric without substance is the preferred method of debate. Here is another example of the lack of knowledge of the Theftists. In this example of incompetence, Elkins attempts to critique David Friedman's works on 12th Century Iceland.

Friedman points out the numerous errors in Elkins poorly written work.

"I didn't say it did. The whole account prior to the quote from the encyclopedia is imaginary--it was apparently written by someone who didn't know anything about Icelandic history, and assumed that he could figure out what must have happened on grounds of general principle."DF

"his change from a communal, anarchistic society to a statist,

propertarian one is described in an article on Iceland by Harvard's Einar Haugen in the Encyclopaedia Americana:

"During the 12th century, wealth and power began to accumulate in the hands of a few chiefs, and by 1220, six prominent families ruled the entire country. It was the internecine power struggle among these families, shrewdly exploited by King Haakon IV of Norway, that finally brought the old republic to an end."

The FAQ article does NOT say that the encyclopedia article refers specifically to a "communal, anarchist society."GE

"But it says that the change from a communal to a propertarian society is described in the article, which simply isn't true. What the article describes is the change from an independent propertarian society to a propertarian society ruled by the King of Norway, via a period of civil war. As is obvious to anyone who actually reads the sagas, the society described in them (prior to the change) is not "communal, anarchist." There are employees (farm labourers), land is privately held and bought and sold,"DF

"nothing about Jarls, Housecarls, or all the rest of the stuff Gary quoted"DF

"Why do you assume that the reference to Jarls and Housecarls is from the same article? Jarls etc were all common features of Viking society at the time, as far as I am aware. The English word Earl comes from Jarl, for example. I'll check up on my sources. In any case, these terms were not stated to have come from the encyclopedia article."GE

"No--and they didn't. Do you really assume that you can deduce the history of Iceland from "common features of Viking society?" As I pointed out long ago, there weren't jarls (or housecarls) in Iceland, making it obvious that whoever wrote that bit was simply making up his facts.

My point was not that you or your source was claiming that everything you said was in the Encyclopedia article but that you were claiming it supported some of what you said (communal anarchist to propertarian), which was false, and that the rest of what you said was not there, nor in any other reputable source, since it was, as I said at the beginning, a wholly imaginary account--made up by someone who had read a little about dark ages history."DF

Here, realizing that he has been exposed as posting a fraudulent piece of nonsense, Elkins attempts to change the thrust of the debate...using the "never mind that it is nonsense...here is what I mean" argument.

"That is the essence of the argument, namely, that MEDIEVAL ICELAND WAS DESTROYED BY CONCENTRATIONS OF PRIVATE WEALTH. Interesting that you totally ignore the main point of the argument and concentrate on minor details."

Friedman points out that Elkins has obviously never read the article which this essay supposedly critiques.

"If you read my Icelandic article, you will find that offered as one possible explanation of what happened as well. The "main point" was

what purported to be a history of Icelandic institutions; one element--and the only element having anything to do with the actual history of Iceland--was the observation that those institutions eventually broke down, and a conjecture as to why."DF

Smoke blowing from Elkins...

"The main fact quoted from the encyclopedia article -- destruction of medieval Icelandic society by concentrations of private wealth -- is accurate. The need for one stylistic editing change, a possible etymological error, and one wrong attribution for a quote are hardly strong indications of unreliability. Your exaggerations and quibbling about minor details -- while completely ignoring the argument -- actually damage your own credibility."

"That part of the quote is accurate; whether the explanation it offers is accurate neither you nor I knows, although it is certainly one possibility. I am still waiting for you, or anyone else, to justify the main body of what you posted. Find me the sources for Icelandic Jarls and Housecarls and all the rest of that account of what happened up to the Sturlung period."DF

And then the Killer...

As Friedman points out that not only does Elkins attribute the quote to the wrong name but no connection to Harvard is even listed in the encyclopedia that Elkins claims as the source.

"Also, the author's name is given as Hallberg Hallmundsson, and no connection to Harvard is mentioned, either in the article or in his entry in the description of contributors at the beginning of the encyclopedia. Gary is welcome to check these facts for himself--it's easy enough."DF

Typical of the poor research, and even lower standards of integrity displayed by the Theftists.

The Socialist Position on Free Speech.

"Any restriction on free speech furthers the advance of fascism and the law and order state."[8]

In this telling look at the conflicts inherent in socialist thought we see a simple question force the advocate of socialism into a contradiction.

I asked:

ll>> ...Do you support free speech as an absolute,unfettered
ll>>right, no qualifications?

ts> Yes.

In response to a question from someone else:

kw>>So... the BC NDP restrictions on election advertising are
kw>>advancing fascism etc.?

ts> No, correcting the long standing problem of the unjust distribution
ts> of wealth in hierarchically ordered, nominally "free-enterprise"
ts> states. They are not a restriction on free speech at all. You can
ts> say whatever you want but just can't spend absurd amounts of money
ts> saying it.

Bingo! the conflict is demonstrated.

Sources

- [1] Anarchist Theory FAQ; Bryan Caplan
- [2] Article from UseNet by Michael Lepore
- [3] Article from UseNet by Gary Elkins
- [4] Article from UseNet by Iain Mckay
- [5] Article from UseNet by dtn307@nwu.edu (Daibhidh)
- [6] Article from UseNet by tlw@Eng.Sun.COM
- [7] Article from UseNet by galt@lal.cs.utah.edu (Greg Alt)
- [8] Article from UseNet by think.uninc@sasknet.sk.ca (XXX)
- [9] Article from UseNet by staffan.vilcans@ortivus.se (Jan 14/97)
- [10] Article from UseNet by andrewflood@geocities.com (Jan 13/97)

Various Articles and Posts by supporters of Anarcho-Socialism were consulted. Particular thanks must go to Gary Elkins, Iain Mckay, Andrew Flood and Jason Kodish. Have another Espresso, boys!

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