

A Letter to Communists and Capitalists of the Libertarian Form

Derek Wittorff

September 16th, 2012

Mutualists don't argue that possession is alone enough of a precondition for property because that approach ignores the accounts of what social context possession occurs, whether shared or exclusive, nor does it have regard for occupancy and use, and therefore denies the principle of equality. The equality of property is important to federations and preventing the development of hierarchy, centralism and monopoly, the State which described by the governmental principle is a state reliant and subservient to a fictitious "external constitution of social power", standing in opposition to a state of self-government. Equality can only be realized alongside property if the form of property is allodial and not fiefdom, and if there is the potential for mobility, division and exchange since that creates the tendency towards equality. The constituents of a federation require comprehension of property rights, ie information of boundaries necessary for progress in mutual respect, and the mechanism of exchange and gift for mutual-aid. This letter is not an attack towards libertarian communists and libertarian capitalists personally, but a critique of libertarian capitalist and libertarian communist ideology, even though they tend to vary considerably.

Mutualists theorize that from the application of reciprocity that property would develop the norms of possession, occupancy and use. Mutualists also comprehend the antinomic dimensions of property, such as the fact-right antinomy. Property is factually the "ownness" that progressively culminates within the individual, or between individuals and collectives, and property rights are the rights of force, mechanisms determining boundaries for social order, that institutionally serve a conscious system of self-government. There is also an antinomy between "property in person" and "property by extension", a seeming contradiction between personality and external resources, which if gone unresolved ultimately reproduces injustice in appropriation, misappropriation that conventionally takes the form of capitalist property. The factuality is that we compose a social being that has its own law organization, and while individuals may harmonize to determine its logic, they have their own logic that may conflict and threaten social laws of organization. The normativity of property aims to materialize through the process of justice, or the justification of rights, the approximation of the harmony between individualities and collectivities, facts and rights. Property may be regulated by privilege of the

State, but if we apply reciprocity to property outside of the governmental principle of the state we can see possession becoming the trend, but not Slavic possession or fief, rather possession that is also allodial an exchangeable in character.

Mutualism is both individualism and socialism. Reciprocity, or the Golden Rule, is our ethical principle which the individual and group must apply to the institution, or any institution, if they desire respect of their own because if practiced the resulting property rights and approximation of property forms will tend to correspond to justly individual and social contexts and therefore realizes individualism and socialism where its appropriate. The application of reciprocity can approximate the harmony of property forms and peace between collective forces such as persons, group, and environment in order to approximate justice, equality and anarchy.

According to mutualists property rights emerge in a social context of rivalry because we as individuals and groups cannot absolutely attain mutual respect for each others uniqueness and the properties that implies. Absolute social equilibrium and factually perfect property relations don't exist, we can only approximate them by means of justifying reciprocal property rights. Historically speaking, capitalism is the encroachment of ones space or property over another's space, the encroachment of private norms over social realms which happens to directly invade and negate social life and indirectly invade our private life, since both private and social life are interrelated according to mutualists as both individualists and socialists, but this is the process of capitalist appropriation we've all experienced. If we share this planet, we must give each other our own exclusive space without it constituting a lack of space for another person or group, but this is why property as a right is also a right of invasion, not just exclusion, that forms a counter-force to exclusion that so happens to be invasive.

Libertarian capitalists, with non-Proviso Lockeanism coupled with the theory of self-ownership, on the flip side, propose that property rights are non-rivalrous because they are inalienable, a priori, self-evident and natural. This is why their property as an emergent norm or institution is generally treated individually until there is some explicit contract otherwise to treat it cooperatively or communally. To them as natural rights theorists of sorts, the fact-right antinomy of property doesn't exist, which is partially why they radicalize individualism to the point of capitalism and smother any sort of revolutionary ideas and forces in the process in support of crypto-fascism, intentionally or not.

Given the complexity and scale of material properties in modern capitalist societies since industrialization, treating property norms as de facto individual norms tends to centralize them into capitalist norms, and non-Proviso Lockean natural rights theorists such as Rothbard don't fail to see that as a theoretical contradiction, whether ethically, socio-politically, socio-economically, etc. This is why they would reestablish those capitalist contradictions in practice. Non-Proviso Lockeanism technically doesn't even exist, it was just a halfway point from Locke's early work to his complete work. The complexity and scale of material properties cause individual norms to centralize into capitalist norms in present social situations because we no longer have the reason, knowledge, organization or will to reproduce such material on our own since the complexity of the division of labor and the artificial scarcity of information is too great, ultimately making our

own possession in particular a problem, since we obviously use and occupy capital.

Capitalists currently possess a gross portion of the means of production, and some of it isn't even actively possessed by them but rather lays idle in their bank accounts maintaining a status of potential possession. Not only do we currently have a possession problem but the use of this material in it's current form is clearly causing harm to the people and our environment, which is part of our discouragement in repossessing these materials I'm sure, but is why State and Capital coerce us to use and maintain it through their constructed, implemented and administered social structures with given systemic purposes so we can't even recycle or transform the material if we wanted to. The lack of possession we maintain should theoretically lead to some lack of use as a result, but since private proprietors possess the means of production and manipulate the state to violently enforce their possession, we are forced to use said capital out of necessity because we no longer have means of subsistence of our own. I'm speaking very generally, but many use material properties yet are currently incapable of possessing them because of this lack of reason, knowledge, organization and will, hence why these individual, societal, material and ecological properties reciprocate with each other in a way that we cannot justify in good conscience. The material and social structures as they currently exist, regardless of which created which, as its mutually causal now, is hard for anyone to justify on a systemic level when we have the technology and information just waiting to manifest into something of use-value but will not because of the level of bureaucracy and system of patents blocking its development.

Non-Proviso Lockeanism practiced would reproduce similar if not worse capitalist norms because there is no adherence to the Proviso's or any account that nature un-mixes labor as properties therefore permitting absenteeism, waste, and pollution to subsume within the subtext of a capitalist system that thrives on these externalities. If you think that absenteeism, waste and pollution doesn't sound too bad, look at the extent of how this occurs today and tell me that wasting a revolution to approximately reinstate false principles like these wouldn't waste one of the few chances humanity may have left. I'm assuming we manage to actually acquire the faculties, organization and will to possess the material given the extensive division of labor and information problem, but I cannot logically make this assumption in the first place. I can't even make this assumption because in approximately applying non-Proviso Lockeanism as a principle, we embrace and apply its flaws in practice, making the manifestation of the faculties and organization for possession in aforementioned appropriate social contexts impossible for the people since the possession of those trust worthy capitalists is good enough. When you think that the means of production are too complicated and large-scale to control, and you have the assumption in your mind that the capitalist has the right to this knowledge and control, no one is even going to bother learning about the whole production process in order to effectively possess the means of production making the whole struggle against authority the mere act of empowering another. In other words, people applying these principles wouldn't seek possession of the means of production because they preconceive their lives as subservient users of capital waiting for a pittance of their product that is a wage. This is probably why libertarian capitalists will never have their revolution let alone a movement.

If communism was practiced I have a similar feeling property would become a destructive institution, not only because possession is communally organized and use individually actu-

alized by subjective interpretations of “ability and need” that are likely to be dictated by the inter-subjective pressures of social status within the democratic institution of the commune, therefore leaving little or no control to the individual at all ignoring the political role of occupancy, but because libertarian communism does not theoretically embrace organizational forms other than the commune causing that particular problem of social status to manifest. I believe that communal domain and communal organizations should expand drastically but that doesn’t make me a communist per se. There are alternative organizational structures and property forms that can be considered non-exploitative without adhering to the “need principle”, which is why applying the need principle uniformly in all social contexts for all people is probably not the best idea if we want to stay true to anarchism.

I get that the commune is an amorphous stake in the capital and product of associated labor wherein each individual maintains an unhindered contribution to production that implies an unhindered stake in the use of capital and consumption of product. This mode of organization is great, but like all organizations it has its potential problems. Implicit social pressures of a quid pro quo nature are essential to an organizational balance of ability and need since explicit social pressures of price within a market regulate supply and demand, but those implicit social forces have the potential to be abused for the purpose of externalizing costs and promoting structural privilege just like market forces. Social forces of a market manage to reinforce structures of privilege if appropriation is invasive and therefore manages to skew price from cost as a means to extract surplus value. The same truth about property norms applies to the social forces of an organization. Communal organization has its costs and benefits depending on the nature of production but to have it applied to every imaginable association would definitely ignore the particular nature of production and what level and mode of organization if any at all is necessary causing those social pressures containing cost externalities to interlock and snowball into an authoritarian hierarchy. Similar to the reality that imposing private norms in all social organizations negates social life and reproduce state-capitalism, imposing communal norms in all social organizations would negate private life and produce state-communism.

The commune would remain autonomous while the individual submissive if there can be no individual stake in its means of production because people would be coerced to associate with established communes with established capital. The social and cultural status associated with joining the largest commune emerge and free association would be suppressed in the long-run leading federal and regional delegates to represent suppression of rather than responsibility to the workers. If you think gift within the federations will be enough to counter that, because gifts would redistribute capital in an equitable manner, I just question at what point a commune would feel no point in gifting once it large enough to create some illusion of increased productivity and a false sense of entitlement in relation to other communes, similar the the economies of scale argument for the corporate form, or whether gifting necessarily promotes decentralization. The socio-political structure of an organization that size would be immensely hierarchical and I feel by that time the largest communes would have already indirectly appropriated all others within the federation. They won’t have to give to you, because if you don’t give to them, the largest commune, you’ll be blacklisted because you no longer recognize their “too big to fail” social status. Just as inequitable conditions distort the function of exchange, it also distorts the function of gift. No change in social organization or wealth transmission can escape that if there

is no engagement with property.

In dividing the political responsibility associated with possession and the political responsibility associated with use in such an opposing manner by means of centralizing the moral responsibility of possession to a single democratic institution and decentralizing the moral responsibility of use to the many individuals as such ignores the moral/political relationship between possession and use and therefore fails to recognize the moral/political role of occupancy within the institutions of organization and property. Libertarian communists essentially forget the inherent relationship between possession and use in the same way libertarian capitalists deny the fact-right antinomy of property, which communists also deny, and is why both end up implementing individualism and socialism in an antagonistic way. The key to balancing individualism and socialism is not radicalizing either one to the point of capitalism and communism after all.

Libertarian communists forget that in using the means of production one possesses them to some extent, and in possessing the means of production one also uses them in a certain manner. The capitalist, despite the fact that s/he is only productive by title and perceptually blind to the actual production process, still manages to contribute to the abstract production process, albeit through a structure of privileged control, because they are part of the reason the final product exists and manages to change hands. The wage-laborer, despite the fact that s/he lacks any privately or legally recognized control over the production process still manages to extend their personality over means of production and possess the productive process because use happens to imply labor. The capitalist class now delegates possession to their own wage-laborers through the managerial class. Wage-laborers, with the implied possession they have by their permission to labor within contractual terms of access and use of the capital provided by the privilege of the capitalist is now further concentrated to specific wage-laborers who desire possession remain centralized in the hands of the capitalists, ie the managerial class. In misunderstanding the relation between possession and use, and often failing to theoretically account for the dynamics of the managerial class in relation to these concepts, the moral and political responsibility of occupancy. This is why federal and regional delegates are pointless and can form a new bureaucratic ruling class. Communists may not prefer delegates in a scenario of “full communism”, but our ends follow from our means. Communism, similar to capitalism, divorces benefit from cost, capital from labor, fact from right, and socialism from individualism but in the name of “The Commune” rather than “The Market”, Federation rather than State.

There needs to be a way to prevent the productive and consumptive relations of use into a politically democratic game of state as opposed to a similar politically competitive game of proprietorship. There needs to be a system of institutional control that is directly bound to perception, valuation and action in a way that is fluid and responsive, not in a way that is conflicting and potentially bureaucratic. This requires a conscious engagement with the institutions of property, organization, market and federation by mutualist anarchist principles.

Property with its polycentric control and federation with its equal unity manages to create a social equilibrium between individualities and collectivities that share the association of markets and organizations. Organizations, rather than being static things or glorified abstractions, are

social structures for the purpose of actively organizing the production of goods which happen to be an example of a more planned order/explicit association. Markets, rather than being a static thing or glorified abstraction like “the market”, are social institutions for the purpose of actively circulating the allocation of goods whether by means of exchange, barter, gift, or skill-share which happens to be a more spontaneous order/implicit association. Property as a polycentric institution would decentralize/localize organizational structures and reinforce the decentralization/localization of market structures in effect. Federation as a unifying institution promotes equality and stability between the associations/orders/structures of market and organization since the terms of mutual-aid and mutual-coordination institutionalizes a culture of solidarity which enables future decentralism and localism of markets and organizations along with the polycentrism of property. However, if antinomies are ignored and reciprocity not applied, then the institutions of property, organization, market, and federation are unlikely to function or interrelate with each other in this way.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Derek Wittorff
A Letter to Communists and Capitalists of the Libertarian Form
September 16th, 2012

<https://mutualist-anarchist.blogspot.com/2012/09/a-letter-to-communists-and-capitalists.html?m=1>

theanarchistlibrary.org