

“Red Mutualism” Series at Mutualism Co-Op

Eric Fleischmann

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If there are two contemporary anarchist theorists whose work occupies and influences my thought the most, they are Kevin Carson and Wayne Price. Carson has spent a huge segment of his career not just reconstructing a mutualist political economy as an alternative to the anarchist default to the economics of Karl Marx but also making incredibly original contributions to the fields of decentralized technology/production and spontaneous organization theory. Wayne Price in turn has dedicated his mind to a task that at first seems wholly opposite to Carson’s: working to adapt Marxist economics and political strategy to an anarchist core through works like *The Value of Radical Theory An Anarchist Introduction to Marx’s Critique of Political Economy* and *Marx’s Economics for Anarchists*.

Yet despite their obvious differences, Price speaks highly of Carson, writing in his article “Conceptions of Dual Power and Prefigurative Politics” how through Carson’s work we “learn a great deal about how anarchism might function in a decentralized but modern technological society.” In the same piece, Price ultimately rejects the dualism between revolutionary class-struggle anarchism and cooperative dual power rooted in classical mutualist proposals like “a nonprofit ‘mutual’ bank to link up peasants, small businesses, artisan shops, and workers’ self-governing industrial associations.” Carson in turn, whose work on primitive accumulation and state capitalism has always been strongly influenced by Marxist historical analysis, has increasingly been inspired (just read his C4SS bio) by the work and praxis of autonomist Marxists—especially Sylvia Federici, John Holloway, and Massimo De Angelis—in advocating not just anti-statist, decentralized labor struggle but the undertaking, as he writes in his latest book *Exodus*, of “an ever larger share of production of life’s necessities in the social sphere, in self-provisioning in the informal economy, through commons-based peer production, or through cooperative labor by workers using affordable high-tech tools in their own homes and shops.”

My reason for outlining the thinking of and overlap between Carson and Price is that my own work is very much an attempt at synthesizing libertarian Marxism and left-market anarchism/neo-mutualism. Such is the effort elucidated in my new (or rather ‘updated’) series of articles out on Mutualism Co-op:

- “In Lieu of Free Banking”
- “Beyond Free Banking: On Marx’s Critique of the Proudhonists”

- “The Individual in Marxist (and Proudhonian) Social Analysis”
- “Historical Materialism: A Brief Overview and Left-Libertarian Reinterpretation” (Third Edition)
- Market Anarchist Plus: Our Plan of Work” (Second Edition)
- On Liberated Zones Theory; Or How BIPOC Groups are Already Doing the Work (Second Edition)

With this series I am attempting to even further bridge the gap that Carson and Price have worked toward closing and to further reunite market anarchism with its historical context as part of the socialist political movement and working class economic struggle. As an anarchist, I of course remain highly critical of “state socialists,” but I do see the sense, at least in particular contexts, in market socialist Richard Wolff’s call for a combined Proudhonian-Marxist approach involving both bottom-up and top-down changes. I look toward ways in which these leftist cross-ideological efforts can help create net reductions in state power and progress against economic exploitation.

This is just the beginning, as I am ultimately attempting to draw together a more cohesive “red mutualism” (a term coined by critics on the libertarian right). This may include thoughts on industrial democracy in a freed market setting, the theoretical place of base and superstructure, state-captured markets as the basis of the circulatory social relationship of Capital based on surplus value extraction, the freed market as a historical trend toward social self-governance akin to Bakunin’s and Marx’s understanding of communism, and beyond. I hope to see this culminate in a contribution on a mutualist synthesis of Marxist and agorist theories of class struggle for the Mutualist Reasoning Collective’s upcoming anthology on 21st century mutualism. For now though, I intend to take a break from both hosting The Enragés podcast and writing on politics. I want to focus on exploring—on the ground, through praxis—what Kali Akuno, as I quote in my piece “Market Anarchist Plus,” calls the “shared practices” which will allow revolutionary anti-capitalists to “coordinate our work to the greatest extent possible.” I am also interested in delving deeper into liberation theology.

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