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Abstract: *Anarchism, of whatever type, is likely to be resistance to the idea of world government. But this does not entail that it is resistance to world governance. Governance can happen at a variety of levels. It does not have to be top-down, as with world government, but can arise from the bottom up. To assume otherwise is to assume that governance happens only through hierarchies and not through the building of networks. The question facing those of us who would like to ask about how people's behavior might be non-hierarchically governed in a world sense is that of how to construct networks of practices that presuppose the equality of everyone rather than asking what kind of transnational government would be adequate to the task of governing everyone.*

When I was approached to contribute an article on world government from the point of view of an anarchist, my first reaction was,

"World government? Why, no." For many anarchists, of course, government is the problem rather than a solution to anything. However, a little reflection teaches that this reaction is too quick. Ronald Reagan was famous for saying that the government is not the solution, it is the problem. Many Tea Party members, as well as libertarians like Ron Paul, believe the same thing. And the last I checked, anarchists did not count Reagan, the Tea Party, or Ron Paul among their numbers.

There is a problem here that goes deep into the history of anarchist theory. It is that of an ambivalence between the embrace of liberty and the embrace of equality. This ambivalence is nearly as old as anarchism itself. In his famous 1910 article on anarchism for the Encyclopedia Britannica, Peter Kropotkin distinguishes between individualist and communist anarchism.[1] The former is the forerunner of today's libertarian philosophy, emphasizing individual freedom against its limitation by the state. The term *anarchism* is rarely used today to describe this position, although it does appear in Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*.[2] Communist anarchism, by contrast, is the view associated with the political left, taking its position against both the liberal state and Marxist collectivism.

The difficulty that threatens the coherence of what Kropotkin calls communist anarchism (hereafter anarchism) is that it seeks to incorporate both liberty and equality as though they were seamless. The difficulty of such an incorporation was less obvious to nineteenth-century anarchists than it is today. The reason for this, explained by historian George Crowder, is the belief in progress characteristic of much nineteenth-century thought. Roughly, the idea is that human beings, if left to their own devices, display a natural tendency toward progress. Therefore, if we remove the power

[1] Peter Kropotkin, "Anarchism," in *The Conquest of Bread and Other Writings*, ed. Marshall S. Shatz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[2] Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

that oppresses human beings—the most important expression of which is state power—then humans will, in the exercise of their liberty, naturally progress toward a better state. For anarchists, that better state is one of equality.[3]

I have argued elsewhere that for those who call themselves anarchists today, those who embrace the leftist or communist form of anarchism rather than its libertarian variant, the most coherent approach is to plump for equality over liberty.[4] This does not entail that one should embrace equality *rather than* liberty. There is no need to think that an embrace of equality requires that there be no liberty at all. Rather, the idea is that the liberty to which people should be entitled must be subject to—and perhaps even defined through—a recognition of common equality. To treat someone else as an equal is not to deny their liberty, but neither is it to give that liberty unrestricted scope. It is rather to recognize that to treat them as an equal requires respecting their ability to decide upon and create a life compatible with the equality of others.

This, however, raises the question of what is meant by equality. After all, the Soviet Union and China in their different ways spoke of equality, and even promoted a form of it to some extent, during their respective heydays of communist rule. And these were hardly models of anarchist social arrangements. Moreover, one of the reasons they were not such models is that, in important ways, these states denied the liberty of their citizens by subjecting them to totalitarian rule. So when it is said that equality does not entail a denial of liberty, how is equality being understood?

In order to answer this question, it is helpful to turn to the thought of Jacques Rancière. For him, politics—at least a democratic politics—is one that emerges out of the collective

[3] For more on this view, see George Crowder, *Classical Anarchism: The Political Thought of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

[4] Todd May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière: Creating Equality*(Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2008), chap. 3.

presupposition of equality. Rancière contrasts politics with police, where the latter involves the distribution of roles and places in a society, a distribution that is always hierarchical. In a police order, there are those who have a part to play and those with no part. By contrast, "political activity is always a mode of expression that undoes the perceptible divisions of the police order by implementing a basically heterogeneous assumption, that of a part of those who have no part, an assumption that, at the end of the day, itself demonstrates the sheer contingency of the order, the equality of any speaking being with any other speaking being."[5] What, then, is this equality presupposed by political activity?

It is what Rancière calls the equality of intelligence. By the equality of intelligence, he does not mean that we can all understand string theory in physics or the hidden meanings of Finnegan's Wake — although he does think we could all do a lot better along those lines than current social arrangements would lead us to believe. Rather, the equality of intelligence is an assumption that each of us, unless he or she has been severely damaged in one way or another, is capable of conceiving a life plan and, alongside others in the society, enacting that plan. We don't require others to fell us who we want or need to be, that is, to assign us a place in a police order. We can do that ourselves, in cooperation with others who are also doing if themselves.

In conceiving politics this way, Rancière does not feel the need to establish this equality of intelligence as a fact. He writes, "[O]ur problem," he writes, "isn't proving that all intelligence is equal. It's seeing what can be done under that presupposition. And for this, it's enough for us that the opinion be possible — that is, that no opposing truth be proved."[6] I think it can be argued that *every* progressive politics requires a presupposition like this. After all, if one

[5] Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 30.

[6] Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, trans. Kristin Ross (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 46.286

from a governmental institution — world, national, or otherwise — but as arising from practices in which we choose the character of our interactions with others.

An anarchist world governance, then, would not ask the question of how to construct a transnational government that is just or fair. It would instead ask how we can construct practices, irrespective of borders, that facilitate interaction with one another on the basis of the presupposition of equality. Moreover, it would ask how to reinforce that presupposition. That is a task not simply for those who delegate themselves or are delegated by us to the task of governance. It is a task for all of us. As Rancière insists, "Democracy first of all means this: anarchic 'government,' one based on nothing other than the absence of every title to govern."[15]

[15] Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, trans. S. Corcoran (London: Verso, 2006), 41.

assumes the contrary position — that people cannot conceive and enact meaningful lives alongside others — then the necessity of a hierarchical order follows immediately from this. The equality of intelligence, then, as Rancière conceives it, lies at the heart of progressive political change.

If anarchism is a matter of equality rather than (primarily) liberty, then one cannot immediately rule out all forms of anarchist governance. The reason for this is not far to seek. Those who hold their master value as liberty — like Robert Nozick or Ron Paul— countenance as little governmental intervention as possible. Essentially, there can be only as much government as is necessarily to preserve the widest realm of liberty for all. Anything beyond this would be an interference with rather than a protection of liberty. However, if what is to be protected is equality, this does not immediately bar the prospect of a more involved governance. To be sure, that governance requires preserving the equality of everyone—a point to which we will return. But if governance is not itself in tension with equality in the way if is in tension with liberty, then the question for anarchists is not so much whether or how much governance to allow, but what kind.

The reason for this lies in the social character of equality. If we presuppose, with the libertarians, that individual liberty is the most important value, then any form of governance that does not protect that liberty violates the central normative commitment of libertarianism. In fact, the situation is slightly more complicated than that. Governance will, in all likelihood, violate that central commitment in any event. This could be because if governance occurs in the form of governmental institutions like the police or the military, they require material resources, as Nozick has observed. Those material resources must come from somewhere. And that, in furn, requires the appropriation of money from individuals who may not want to sacrifice if for the project of such governance. This would be an involuntary re-distribution. Alternatively, even if everyone in the society supported the existence of, say a police, military,

and judiciary to protect individual liberty — and supported them enough to sacrifice some of their personal resources—many among them are not likely to support every policy adopted by these institutions. Their operation would likely involve infringements of liberty, even if done in the name of liberty. For instance, the police might stop my liberty of driving my car at the edge of your front lawn.

Thinking of matters this way comes from a normative framework that ignores the social character of life in favor of its individual integrity. Anarchists, if they are instead to be committed to equality as the presupposition of the equal intelligence of everyone, are more likely to recognize and integrate into their normative view the social character of human existence. In a world in which our navigation is bound to the navigation of others, in which our life plans and their execution is interwoven with those of others, the recognition of the equality of each cannot be severed from the larger question of the nature or structure of the social whole. The question of governance, then, is again not a question of how to limit it to its minimum, but how it can be had in such a way as to preserve, as Rancière put it, "the equality of every speaking being with any other speaking being." And the question of *world* governance is the question of how to conceive that governance on a transnational scale.

In approaching this question, I should note that I am using the term governance instead of government. This is because, in keeping with the thought of Michel Foucault, I want to think of government in terms of its practices and the norms of those practices rather than starting with the institutions of governing. Foucault engages in this project in his two lecture series at the Collège de France *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*.[7] However, his purposes there are very different from mine. In those

[7] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) and *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de Prance 1978–1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (New Yok: Palgrave Macmillan 2008).

not happen as a result of conscious intervention. In contrast to the examples of the anarchist publishing company or non-hierarchical political councils, the operation of power Foucault describes rarely fakes the form of a deliberate project of molding or producing people. It more often happens behind our backs, as unintended consequences rather than as goals of those practices. Therefore, we might want to say that the operations of power Foucault describes are not matters of governance. Moreover, in his lectures on governance and governmentality, he does not refer to these practices, but rather to practices more consciously directed toward governance.

All of this may be granted. It may be that it would be inapt to assimilate all operations of power to practices of governance. However, we must not lose sight of the lesson that power works at the level of practices to mold and produce people. If this is the case, then it is often at the level of practices that people become oriented toward either more egalitarian or more hierarchical relations with one another. And, given that, then practices of governance cannot ignore questions of how we are produced. In engaging in the construction of networks of practices of governance, we must take into account other practices, not traditionally associated with governance, in order to ask how they affect who we become and how practices of governance ought to intersect, resist, or reinforce them.

These issues are better approached through governance as a network of practices rather than as an overarching institution, for obvious reasons. The subtle and multifarious ways in which practices mold us cannot all be addressed by a single institution. We are produced and produce ourselves on the various registers on which we live. Therefore, addressing power must itself occur at the level of those registers. Reflecting on and changing (or challenging) practices—either internally or through other, conscious practices of governance — must happen on the ground, where we live. The network orientation of the anarchist perspective articulated here does precisely that. It considers governance not simply as issuing

decision-making and the construction of cooperative networks would be a better political approach than a utopian assumption of a single revolutionary struggle whose result will be the spontaneous emergence of a just political order. As Colin Ward reminds us, "There is no final struggle, only a series of partisan struggles on a variety of fronts."[13]

Governance, then, far from being solely a matter of government, can happen at a variety of levels. Moreover, world governance is not just something that can occur through the creation of world governments. To assume this is to assume, to use Ward's terms, that governance happens only through hierarchies and not through networks. The question facing those of us who would like to ask about how people's behavior might be non-hierarchially governed in a transnational way is that of how to construct networks of practices that presuppose the equality of everyone rather than asking what kind of transnational government would be adequate to the task of governing everyone.

This conclusion is reinforced if we fake on board Foucault's lesson about power as not simply a form of coercion from above but as a productivity arising in our practices. As he writes in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*, "[P]ower must be understood in the first instance as a multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization."[14] Power works on people not only from the outside, forcing certain behaviors and prohibiting others. If also helps mold them to be who they are. Our sexual, psychological, economic, athletic, and other practices shape us, produce us in ways we might not otherwise be.

We might not think of this as a form of governance, because the molding or producing of who we are through these practices does

[13] Ward, *Anarchy in Action*, 26.

[14] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978), 92.

lectures Foucault was interested in the genealogical question of how practices of governmentality arose, and especially in what their effect was on who we are today. My interest is not genealogical but instead normative. Or, more precisely — since Foucault's genealogies have normative implications — my interest is directly rather than indirectly normative. I am interested in what good governance from an anarchist perspective, a perspective that respects the equality of everyone, might look like. And in doing so, my focus will be on practices of governance rather than on governmental institutions. Although I part with many anarchists who think that governmental institutions are anti-egalitarian in principle, I am sympathetic to the view that the history of those institutions does not inspire confidence in their preservation of equality. My wager is that if we turn our attention from institutions to governance, then perhaps we can avoid both the Scylla of individualism and the Charybdis of oppressive governmental institutions.

Before turning to that task, it is perhaps worth pausing momentarily over some of the shortcomings of contemporary attempts to enact world or supra-state governance. In particular, we might look at the United Nations and the European Union. Although a full treatment of these institutions is, of course, beyond the scope of this paper, a quick glance in their direction is revealing. The United Nations, for its part, is hardly a blueprint for world governance. There are many reasons for this, but two stand out. First, its structure renders it difficult to both make and enact policy. Although the General Assembly can often arrive at decisions, or more often recommendations, it does not have the ability to implement many of the policies it endorses. That ability mostly lies elsewhere, in the Security Council. And this leads to the second problem. The veto power of the permanent members of the Security Council both leads to stagnation and is undemocratic. The latter is not difficult to recognize. The fact that certain member states can block the will of the rest of all of the other member states gives inordinate power to those particular members. This is abundantly evident, for exam-

ple, in the willingness of the United States to veto Security Council resolutions that are even mildly critical of Israel.[8] The U.S. veto has helped allow Israel's occupation of Palestinian land to continue unabated for nearly half a century. In this, as in others, not only is the will of the great majority of the other states blocked (when votes on Israeli policy are taken in the General Assembly, those supporting its policy are Israel, the United States, and usually one or two other countries); it also prevents the will of the Palestinian people to be realized, or even recognized.

The structure of the Security Council also lends the United Nations to inefficiency. Because the permanent member states can veto resolutions, but cannot enact them by themselves (which would hardly be an improvement), disagreements among those members lead to a multitude of vetoes — or of watered down or withdrawn resolutions in the face of veto threats. This prevents the kind of united action which has been a key goal of the United Nations.

I don't want to leave the impression that the United Nations contributes nothing. There are examples of important work the organization has performed, among them through the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and other constituent groups. However, the question here is one of world governance, and the United Nations does not provide a particularly inspiring model for such an endeavor.

By contrast, the European Union exhibits less stagnation at the expense of less democracy. We can see this particularly in the current case with Greece. Because Greece does not control its own currency, its people are barred from making decisions about their economic future. Policies like devaluation, which might lead toward more exports and a consequent greater inflow of money into the Greek economy, are not an option for them. As has been evident throughout the crisis, Greece's financial future hangs on the eco-

[8] For a list of vetoes, see www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org.

Colin Ward sums up the matter, "we have to build networks instead of pyramids."[11]

One might object here that such network interaction could not be had across groups or localities because it requires too much cooperation. Wouldn't such a system collapse under the weight of the self-interest of the localities involved — or their constituents? There is no reason to believe this would result from such a system. First, cooperation does contribute to the well-being of the participants. Everyone is better off when there is coordination. Coordination might require trust and a deferral of immediate reward, but it does not require altruism. Second, even in the current political structure of hierarchical national states, there are nevertheless plenty of examples of such coordination arising from agreement among the parties rather than impositions from above. As Kropotkin pointed out in *The Conquest of Bread* in 1892, one has to look no further than postal services, railway services, or the history of sea navigation to find numerous examples of such agreement between networks of agencies.[12]

A different objection would ask whether such networks in combination with the kind of federalism advocated by anarchists could actually perform the political coordination required to sustain smooth and fruitful functioning across wide geographical and diverse cultural areas. This is an important question, and one to which we cannot currently offer an answer. Among more utopian anarchists, there seems f o be an assumption that the elimination of hierarchical power would immediately yield such an arrangement. However, I am not so sanguine. If seems to me rather that operating in a true anarchist spirit would require not so much the elimination of the power that lies above, but rather the creation of alternatives from below. Experiments in local

[11] Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (London: Freedom Press, 1982), 22.

[12] Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread and Other Writings*, ed. Marshall Shatz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. 121–7.

tive advocated by Proudhon, Bakunin, and others[10] conceives governance as a bottom-up rather than a top-down. affair. A simplified model would run some- thing like this. There are local councils whose officials are elected or appointed by the people they represent. Their representative role is a limited one; they are not empowered to make decisions independent of those delegated to them by the body they represent. Of course, it is open to those they represent to cede them wider decision-making or discretionary power. However, such power does not belong to them by virtue of their role; it would have to be given to them explicitly by the represented body.

These councils can be replicated at higher levels into regional councils, etc. The replications would retain the structure of the lower level councils, so that movement up the administrative line would not be hierarchical. The decisions taken at the more local levels would be retained at the wider ones. The wider regional councils might be granted forms of coordination that would be impossible to carry out at the more local levels. However, those powers, once again, would have to be granted. They could not be assumed.

Because the power of decision-making is bottom up, such a structure would encourage interactions between local councils that bypassed wider councils. Political interactions between various localities would arise much the same way economic interactions arise: through on-the-ground engagements. And as long as the representing councils respected the wishes—however those wishes were articulated — of their constituents, the presupposition of equality would remain. Political governance, then, would not occur by means of governments that were divorced from those they represent, but in fact were subordinate to them. As the British anarchist

[10] For a summary of federalism, see Daniel Guerin, *Anarchism: Prom Theory to Practice*, trans. Mary Klopper (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), chap. 2, esp. 63–7.

nomic decisions coming from states like Germany, and to a lesser extent France. This has led to widespread unemployment, hopelessness, and social unrest. The Greek people are subject to the German state financially in a way that reminds one of how the Palestinian people are subject to the Israeli state politically, economically, and militarily. (This is not to imply that the situations are the same — of course they are not — but only that they share an undemocratic character.)

The United Nations and the European Union are attempts to create multi-state governance through multi-state governments. They operate *from above*. That is, they are constructed above and beyond the member states in the same way that their member states are constructed above and beyond their individual citizens. There is a hierarchical relationship that runs from citizen to state to multi-state government. And in both cases, the further removed from the citizens the government is, the more likely those citizens (or in the Palestinian case, non-citizens) are likely to be subject to powers that are not of their own making.

This brings us back to the question of world governance. If the prospect of world governance through world government is not a promising one, how might one conceive world governance? How might there be a type of world governance that operates from below, a world governance that respects, as Rancière would have it, the equality of every speaking being with every other speaking being? In short, how might one conceive an anarchist world governance?

Let's imagine a small company, say a small book publishing operation.[9] This publishing company works on anarchist principles. Everyone has a say in all aspects of the operation, even though it is recognized that some people have more expertise in certain areas

[9] In fact, there is a company like the one I describe in this paragraph, AK Press. I have written about it in chapter 5 of *Contemporary Political Movements and the Thought of Jacques Rancière: Equality in Action* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

than other people. (The presupposition of equal intelligence is not the presupposition of equal expertise. In fact, it might be argued that the refusal to defer to someone with more expertise — or, more precisely, the refusal to recognize the relevance of that expertise — is itself a way of denying the equality of intelligence.) Decisions are taken by vote, although all efforts are made to ensure that the concerns of the minority in any decision are taken seriously. In short, the company works on "Rancièrean" principles.

This book publishing company sells to bookstores not only around the country but around the world. Suppose there is a bookstore in Germany that admires the principles on which it operates. We can imagine that admiration having several effects. One effect might be to try to incorporate principles of the publisher's operation into the bookstore. Or we could imagine the bookstore offering the publisher favorable rates, say for instance giving them a higher percentage on their book sales or covering their shipping costs. This makes it easier for the publisher to be able to operate in an atmosphere of cutthroat book publishing, where larger firms swallow up smaller ones by selling at lower profit margins. This example, or the preliminary sketch of an example, is one of governance.

In fact, it is one of "international" governance. People's behavior — the people of the publishing company and the bookstore, but also and to a lesser extent readers who might be influenced by the books published by the anarchist firm — is being governed by the decisions being made by these two operations. Of course, the people being governed here, at least those who are being governed directly, are the people who are making the decisions. Governance is happening, but it is a governance that operates on the presupposition of the equality of any speaking being.

One might want to object here that this isn't really an example of governance. After all, the objection might run, governance concerns *political* matters and this example is rather an *economic* one. There are at least two responses one might give to this objection. First, it falsely assumes that there is a strict distinction to be drawn between political and economic matters. This assumption is particularly false when it comes to governance. To govern people's behavior is to direct it in one way or another, either collectively or individually. (When we think of governance, it is more often collective, and the example here involves not only individual but also collective governance.) The reason this example might not be thought of as one of governance is that governance is assumed, again falsely, to be something that governments do. If only governments can engage in governance, then there is a strict line between politics and economics. But why should we assume that? The kind of things that governments do when they govern, i.e., directing people's behavior, can happen in many ways that are not rooted in governmental behavior. Moreover, the false assumption that governance can only happen by way of governments is itself rooted in a third false assumption: that governance is something that comes from above. This, however, is precisely what anarchism, at least the anarchism I am articulating here, means to challenge.

If we *define* governance as something that comes from above, then only governments can do it and it can only happen politically. But this definition ignores the manifold ways in which people's behavior is governed from below. And in ignoring that, it further ignores the possibility that governance can happen in a non-hierarchical manner.

There is a second response one might give to this objection. Even if we think more traditionally in terms of non-economic political governance, we need not assume that such governance must be a top-down affair. That is to say, we can deny the third false assumption, and with it the hierarchical character implied by the second. Traditional anarchism has long done this. Federalism, an alterna-