

Property Rights and Capitalist Exploitation

The question was asked at r/AskLibertarians about 5 months ago, “can someone point out the differences and similarities between libertarianism and anarchism for me”, and the following mediocre conversation (and a short split thread) with u/Mutant_Llama1 ensued on the question of property rights and capitalist exploitation.

Skyler: Anarchism, or anarcho-capitalism is taking the non-aggression principle to its logical conclusion. Here’s an explanation:

<https://everything-voluntary.com/what-it-means-to-be-an-anarcho-capitalist>

Mutant_Llama1: Nearly to its logical conclusion, stopping short of the point where killing people over material property turns out to be an aggressive act. People who realize that become anarcho-communists, or just anarchists for short.

Skyler: People who use aggression to attack others or their property are willingly forfeiting their own security. They are proving by their actions that they value someone else’s stuff more than their own miserable lives. Defending what is yours is not aggression, but taking what is not absolutely is. You can disagree all you want, but at some point you’re going to meet the business end of the gun of someone defending their rightfully acquired property, and be the made poorer for it. Don’t be a dickhead, respect other people’s property, and they’ll respect yours.

Mutant_Llama1:

People who use aggression to attack others or their property are willingly forfeiting their own security.

Exactly. Whether they think they have a “natural” right to or not.

Defending what is yours is not aggression, but taking what is not absolutely is.

Arbitrary distinction. Rightful ownership is subjective.

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their rightfully acquired property, and be the made poorer for it.

So their ability to enforce it onto you makes it okay? You must love the state, then.

Don't be a dickhead, respect other people's property, and they'll respect yours.

Yeah, just like if we respect the state's authority, they'll respect our rights, right? OH WAIT, that doesn't actually work.

Skyler:

So their ability to enforce it onto you makes it okay? You must love the state, then.

Ability and right are different things. I say that everyone has the moral right, the moral justification, to defend their bodies and rightly acquired (original appropriation) property. Either this is true, or everyone else has the moral right, the moral justification, to take what others claimed first. I don't want to live in that world. You might, and good for you, but I refuse. And it's for these very reasons that I oppose criminal organizations, starting with the state.

(You can't say the state is criminal, or wrong, if you don't yourself have any basis for judging what is or is not criminal behavior, ie. aggression, ie. an encroachment, ie. a trespass, ie. an uninvited property boundary crossing. And it must be coherent and universally applicable.)

Mutant_Llama1: My basis for criminal behavior is physical harm to the person.

In a society with strict property laws, theft does harm you, because you are unable to use anything that you do not own, and the thing you do own has been brought beyond your reach. Without property laws, theft would be relatively harmless, if meaningful at all, because you yourself wouldn't be restricted in which resources you can use.

Skyler:

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Why?

Without property laws, theft would be relatively harmless, if meaningful at all, because you yourself wouldn't be restricted in which resources you can use.

Integrity and availability matter. Much property is non-fungible, can't simply be swapped out, especially when you've used it for awhile, invested in its maintenance, trust its integrity, etc. If you can't say "this is mine and you can't use it without my permission" then nothing is secure and wealth will be wasted and never replaced. Property rights incentivize certain behaviors a lot more than you seem to think. You're wrong.

Mutant_Llama1:

If you can't say "this is mine and you can't use it without my permission" then nothing is secure and wealth will be wasted and never replaced.

That happens anyway. Theft happens anyway. Whoever gets away with it the best becomes king. Capitalists exploit and prey on those with less bargaining power.

Skyler: Workers exploit capitalists and entrepreneurs as much as capitalists and entrepreneurs exploit workers. It's called the division of labor, and attacking property rights hurts the worse off worse than the better off.

Mutant_Llama1: If a worker quits, the entrepreneur is fine. If the capitalist fires the worker, the worker is in danger of homelessness and starvation. It's not the same.

If the worse thing that can happen to you, is needing to get a real job and do actual labor to survive, the people who are already in that position are not exploiting you. You're exploiting them.

Skyler:

If a worker quits, the entrepreneur is fine. If the capitalist fires the worker, the worker is in danger of homelessness and starvation. It's

not the same.

Entrepreneurs and capitalists are nothing without workers, who are free to find other entrepreneurs and capitalists to employ them, or to start their own businesses, to become entrepreneurs and capitalists individually or collectively. Businesses don't succeed without workers. They have just as much leverage as anyone under a division of labor. It's nonsense to believe otherwise.

Mutant_Llama1:

Entrepreneurs and capitalists are nothing without workers

They are something, just not entrepreneurs. Needing to give up on your business and work like everyone else isn't as much of a death sentence as you think it is. Not being able to earn a living is a death sentence. Is being unwilling to give away the vast majority of your labor's fruit in exchange for the right to live another day worthy of a death sentence?

Businesses don't succeed without workers.

Businesses aren't the lifeblood of their founders. The worst thing that can happen to an entrepreneur, if their business fails, is they become just like everyone else and need to work.

If being an entrepreneur was so precarious as you try to make it out to be, there would be none. Nobody is forcing the rich to stay rich. If an entrepreneur's life were really as dependent on workers as the workers' are on them, they'd pay a heck of a lot more.

Skyler:

If an entrepreneur's life were really as dependent on workers as the workers' are on them, they'd pay a heck of a lot more.

They pay as much as they need to. Wages are set by your labor competition. Improve your skills to reduce your competition, and raise your wage. Or... kill all the low-time preference capitalists and entrepreneurs and see how much wealth is produced by low-skilled high-time preference workers. Hand to mouth is all they'll know.

Skyler: Workers exploit capitalists and entrepreneurs as much as capitalists and entrepreneurs exploit workers. It's called the division of labor, and attacking property rights hurts the worse off worse than the better off.

Mutant_Llama1:

attacking property rights hurts the worse off worse than the better off.

That's like saying that overthrowing the king will hurt the serfs more than the king. People who already don't own property won't know the difference. The people who own monopolies on it sure will.

Skyler:

That's like saying that overthrowing the king will hurt the serfs more than the king.

No, it isn't anything like that. Totally failed analogy. The king is a property expropriator. Overthrowing him is a protection of property rights, an act of self-defense of property rights. You're making less sense as this goes on.

That's as far as it went. The greatest benefactors of the state are not the lowest of us, but the highest, the oligarchs and corporatists that rely on the state to protect their profits through protectionist and fascistic regulations, the total violation of property rights and self-ownership. Always remember: *the wealthiest benefit from the state the most.*